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THE JOPLIN GLOBE

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City Council retreat focuses on best way to represent community

BY DEBBY WOODIN
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Joplin has had access to an unprecedented amount of grant funding for city projects over the past five years, but is seeing those funds dwindle as federal grant programs such as the \$1.9 trillion ARPA economic stimulus package passed by Congress in 2021 come to an end.

The American Rescue Plan Act, known as ARPA, was structured to power

jobs and protect the nation's economy from the shutdown during COVID-19-era years. What was called a contagious novel coronavirus, or COVID-19, was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization in 2021.

In addition, to ARPA, cities such as Joplin benefited from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, also known as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. It triggered distribution of \$1.2 trillion in federal

funds to assist or fund projects by state and local governments, transportation agencies and other organizations intended to keep jobs available and fund all kinds of transportation projects including construction of highways, rail, airports and waterways.

The city of Joplin began officially planning, prioritizing and applying for ARPA funds in 2021 and 2022.

Former City Councils approved contracts for ARPA

infrastructure assistance as early as June 2022 and officially prioritized local project lists in the summer of 2023. The federal ARPA funds were passed by Congress in 2021, requiring the city to obligate all funds and put projects under contract to meet federal deadlines.

ARPA and BIL funding are now coming to an end and the next Joplin city budget will be more stark than those adopted in the past few years, the city's fi-

nance director, Leslie Haase, previously had said at council meetings.

RETREAT SESSION

On Friday, the current City Council met with a facilitator, Michael Brockett, who teaches the Managerial Leadership Academy at Crowder College's Joplin campus, in a retreat session at the North End Zone Facility on the Missouri Southern State University campus. Discussions at the retreat were intended to provide

training to the council, with three of the nine members new to city service.

Mayor Rob O'Brian said that the retreat was suggested before the April election by council member Josh DeTar.

"He thought it would be a good idea, once the newly elected council had a few meetings under their belt, to get together and talk through opportunities to not only work better

SEE **RETREAT**, 6A

Millions pouring into Missouri ballot fights

Amendments would alter taxes, reshape majority rule

BY RUDI KELLER
Missouri Independent

Missouri voters are being flooded with ads over two constitutional amendments that would reshape how the state taxes income and how citizens amend the constitution.

The campaigns for and against amendments 4 and 5 have already raised \$14.5 million. Through Tuesday, ballot measure radio and television spending had topped \$3.3 million — roughly four times what primary candidates in all other contests have spent so far, according to Federal Communications Commission records.

The names in the disclaimers may tell voters what the committees buying the ads want to do. But finding out who is providing the money can require digging through campaign finance reports, corporate records and federal advertising files.

One early example is a Missouri Promise PAC ad attacking "big tech" and data centers as a reason to pass Amendment 5.

"That hum is the sound of big tech making money from online gambling, from porn," the ad states over images of computer servers. "Data centers are money machines making millions every minute. And Missouri's 1917 tax code means they make all that money and get away tax free."

The ad says Amendment 5 would "fix the big-tech loophole," phase out individual income taxes and cut property taxes.

But the tax exemptions for tech company purchases of materials and equipment to construct and run data centers do not date to 1917. The Republican-controlled Legislature voted in 2015 to exempt from sales tax the computer equipment and construction materials used in data centers, plus the energy they consume.

And Amendment 5 would not repeal those exemptions. That would be up to the Legislature, which will decide what will be subject to sales tax — and what will not — if Amendment 5 passes.

Amendment 4 would alter how majorities are tallied for constitutional amendments proposed by initiative petition.

SEE **BALLOT**, 2A

PITCHING SPACE

Newton County economic developers hear proposal for Neosho as new site for space museum

BY JOHN HACKER
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NEOSHO, Mo. — The Space Museum and Grissom Center in Bonne Terre is looking for a new home because it is out of that thing that is in its name — space.

Earl Mullins, founder of the museum, and Lowell Grissom, an adviser to the museum and brother to astronaut Virgil "Gus" Grissom, traveled to Neosho this week to make a pitch to the Neosho Economic Development Committee for Neosho to become the new home of the museum.

SEE **SPACE**, 2A



Earl Mullins (left), founder of The Space Museum and Grissom Center in Bonne Terre, helps Savannah Groves try on a glove Mullins brought from the museum that astronauts wore while training for space shuttle missions. Groves' dad, Jon Stouffer (right), watches. **GLOBE** | JOHN HACKER

Joplin officials, supporters dedicate bridge

Suspension bridge open on Tin Cup Trail

BY JOHN HACKER
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City officials gathered Friday with representatives of Freeman Health System, Leggett & Platt and the Joplin Family Y to dedicate a first in Joplin — a pedestrian suspension bridge over Tin Cup Creek.

About 100 people attend-

ed the dedication and ribbon-cutting at the Tin Cup trailhead behind the Joplin Family Y, 3404 W. McIntosh Circle Drive, formed a parade for a drone video and marched over the bridge as a group.

"Thriving communities offer amenities that are good for the health of their residents," said Joplin City Manager Nick Edwards at the event. "The Tin Cup Bridge is distinct, it brings

SEE **BRIDGE**, 2A



Joplin Mayor Rob O'Brian cuts the ribbon on the new suspension bridge on the Tin Cup Trail. **GLOBE** | JOHN HACKER

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