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GOLF: 3 area high schools get \$5,000 from T-Mobile. 1B

Council widens setback for data centers

Panel counters concern about rescinding special-use permit

BY DEBBY WOODIN
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More data center controversy took up most of Monday night's three-hour meeting of the Joplin City Council.

Twelve residents opposed to the proposed construction of a data center in Joplin spoke mostly about a City Council decision Aug. 3 to repeal a provision requiring that data center developers obtain special-use permits for the facilities. Residents said they were concerned there was no agenda item or advance notice that the council would discuss action to rescind a special-use permit requirement that would have been imposed by city ordinance for data center construction.

Resident Hannah Dwyer told the council, "We were blindsided by the Aug. 3 discussion to remove the special-use permit (requirement)."

However, the council narrowly approved a change in the data center ordinance that expands the buffer zone, or setback requirement between data centers and residential areas. That takes the buffer from 300 to 600 feet on all sides of the data center buildings. The vote was 5-4.

The setback requirement also applies to data centers proposed near a church, daycare, park and lodging establishments including hotels, group homes, senior living facilities, campgrounds and recreational parks and short-term rentals. It also applies to locations of schools. The buffers will be measured from the nearest structure or generator of the data center property to the property line of the area where those other properties are located.

One of the speakers, Sue Godsey, a retired teacher and debate coach, said she was glad to see those other protections in the ordinance, but she believed the public's protections were diminished by the removal of the special-use permit.

"I feel you will not have as much control by removing the special-use permit," Godsey told the council.

Another resident, Ashley Gould, said she wanted to clear up some confusion about the Aug. 3 meeting and asked for more transparency on the issue. She said that residents had previously been told a data center would only generate 10 to 15 jobs but there has since been information that a data center could bring 300 to 500 jobs or even up to 1,000.

Council Josh DeTar said that "if this ever comes to fruition, there will be jobs." A data center would employ a variety of professionals and tradesmen, including security officers, electricians and plumbers. He is one of the council members who toured the large Google data center

SEE **COUNCIL**, 2A

Changing lives



Joplin School Board President David Weaver speaks to a packed Joplin High School Performing Arts Center at the district's annual Rah Rah Day on Tuesday. GLOBE | JOHN HACKER

Joplin teachers, staff, kick off school year

BY JOHN HACKER
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More than 1,000 teachers, staff and administrators gathered in the Joplin High School Performing Arts Center on Tuesday to kick off the coming school year with cheer and messages about how much they can affect students' lives.

The Joplin School District's Rah Rah Day welcomed teachers and staff back to school a little less



Joplin Assistant Superintendent Sarah Mwangi completes a backflip with the help of Assistant Superintendent Matt Harding, Joplin High School Assistant Principal Al Linden and JHS special education teacher Nick Reid to celebrate the school district's assessment test results. GLOBE | JOHN HACKER

than a week before students, who will join them Monday, Aug. 24.

They heard from the 2025-2026 teacher of the year Tarryn Gilbert and support staff of the year Erin Rakes as well as five alumni members, two by video and three in person,

about how teachers affected their lives even after they graduated.

"It's important to get the year started and remember why we're here and remember what has happened recently and also think about where we're going at the same time," Superintendent Kerry Sachetta said. "It's our big pep assembly to get the year started. And you want to make sure that everybody has a little bit of an emotional start too when it comes to the year and hear the stories about how teachers and staff made a difference in kids' lives."

Early in the program the Joplin High School Junior ROTC students presented the colors and the JHS

SEE **YEAR**, 2A

McKinley loses 'cafegymnasium'

BY JOHN HACKER
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Anyone who has been to a school in the last several decades might remember that one big area that served as the multipurpose room.

It had a gym floor and basketball goals.

It had a stage at one end.

It's also the room where students would line up to get lunch and eat.

Editor's note

THIS is the second of three feature stories on improvements to some of Joplin's older elementary schools. Other school improvements will be profiled in Thursday's Joplin Globe.

Dave Pettit, facilities director for the Joplin

School District, said that room has a name — "cafegymnasium," for the combined cafeteria, gym and auditorium.

And it's on its way out in the Joplin School District.

Jefferson, McKinley and Royal Heights elementary schools lost their multipurpose rooms in the rebuild that's wrapping up now. The three elementary schools saw about \$10 million in renovations and

additions that should be mostly complete by the time students walk in the doors next week to begin their 2026-27 school year.

"This is where I think the biggest change took place," Pettit said during a tour of McKinley Elementary School on Aug. 13.

"The stage used to be here because this was what we call a 'cafegymnasium.'"

SEE **SCHOOL**, 2A



Bales of hay up for auction during the 2024 annual Farmers Feeding Neighbors Hay Auction in Seneca. This year's auction is scheduled for Sept. 12. COURTESY | FARMERS FEEDING NEIGHBORS

Annual Seneca hay auction set for Sept. 12

FROM STAFF REPORTS
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SENECA, Mo. — The 20th annual Farmers Feeding Neighbors Hay Auction, benefiting the Seneca Food Pantry, will be held Saturday, Sept. 12, at the Eastern Shawnee Rodeo Grounds, Oklahoma Highway 10 and Bethel Road.

In addition to hay, other

items to be auctioned off include Branson show tickets, homemade treats of every kind from pies and cakes to cookies, brownies and home-canned jellies, preserves, salsa, floral arrangements, and other miscellaneous items.

The barbecue at 4 p.m. is open to everyone for a donation. It features hamburgers, hot dogs and chips

along with drinks, and will be served by the Seneca FFA members.

The band No Apparent Reason will be playing from 4:30-5:30 p.m.

There also will be a raffle of a king-size Christmas quilt donated by the Seneca Stitch and Spice Club. Raffle tickets will be sold up until drawing time that evening.

The auction begins at

6 p.m. and continues until everything has been sold.

The Seneca Food Pantry provides food and assistance to over 260 neighbors and families who live in the Seneca area. It is a partner agency of Ozarks Food Harvest in Springfield. In addition to the monthly food supplements distributed,

SEE **HAY**, 2A