



THE JOPLIN GLOBE

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ROUTE 66: Fire hydrants in Carthage becoming works of art. **3A** | **MARIJUANA:** Missouri preps for license lottery. **6A**

Full funding of Joplin pension expected in '27

City finance director says \$7.7M from sales tax added this year

BY DEBBY WOODIN
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Joplin city officials are still projecting that the Joplin

Police and Firemen's Pension Fund will be fully funded sometime in early 2027. Leslie Haase, city finance director, told members of the city's Capital Improvements and Public Safety Sales Tax Oversight Commission at a Wednesday meeting that \$7.7 million from a sales tax for that purpose has been put into the

fund so far this year. The plan is already over 100% funded, Haase said. A board of trustees, composed of former and current police and fire department employees, oversees the fund and its statements, confers with investment professionals and sets investment policy. At a May meeting, the board was

told that the fund balance at that time was more than \$95.4 million, according to city documents. There has been about \$6.1 million in expenses for the pension paid from the fund so far this year. Separate pension funds for police and fire were first established by Joplin voters in an election April 2,

1946, after the governor had signed off on a bill, according to state records. That law also was made by legislative action to apply to similar-sized cities in first-class counties. The law allowed cities up to 100,000 inhabitants to pension salaried members of their organized police or fire departments. The law allowed Joplin

and other cities to apply a special tax levy on all taxable properties to produce revenue for the pension funds. In past years, public safety sales taxes such as the 2019 half-cent sales tax approved by voters called Proposition B have provided funding.

SEE **FUND**, 2A

'THEY'RE EAGER'



Terry Wright, Joplin's transit driver supervisor, talks with a driver of a Joplin Sunshine Lamp Trolley last year.

GLOBE FILE

Joplin trolley riders look forward to expanded service

BY DEBBY WOODIN
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Those who use the Joplin Sunshine Lamp Trolley for transportation said they are liking what they see in a proposal to expand the number of routes and stops. The city's transportation coordinator, Gina Thompson, on Aug. 10 proposed

the expansion to the City Council, saying residents needed more access to more places in Joplin. "Our system is struggling for the citizens and for our drivers, and we need to be able to respond to what our citizens need," Thompson said. She proposed expanding

SEE **TROLLEY**, 2A



Terry Wright (left) helps Mike Lively study trolley plans Wednesday in Joplin.

GLOBE | DEBBY WOODIN

MoDOT still evaluating new 75 mph speed limit

Agency looking at several factors for rural interstates

BY JOHN HACKER
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JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. — A new law permitting the Missouri Department of Transportation to increase rural highway speed limits to 75 mph takes effect

Aug. 28, but the department is reminding the public that the new limits don't take effect until the signs are changed. On Thursday, MoDOT shared a look into its ongoing evaluation of eligible locations. No changes will take effect until

that evaluation is complete. "There's a balance to be struck here between efficient traffic movement and safety, so we're taking careful consideration of any potential location, what the roadway is like there and how people use it," MoDOT Director Ed Hassinger said. "Our mission at MoDOT is to provide a safe and reliable transportation sys-

tem, so this evaluation helps us make sure any changes to the speed limit don't come at the expense of a safe trip." Hassinger said that under the new law, MoDOT retains the ability to set highway speed limits and has a responsibility to set limits that are reasonably

SEE **LIMIT**, 2A



Ozark Center performance therapist Morgan Christy (left), performance coach Brett Miller (center) and Ozark Center CEO Vicky Mieseler talk about the expansion of a program to provide mental health professionals to work with student-athletes.

GLOBE | JOHN HACKER

Freeman, MSSU make pilot program permanent

Initiative focuses on mental health of student-athletes

BY JOHN HACKER
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For almost two years, Brett Miller, a performance coach and licensed psychologist with Freeman Health System's Ozark Center, has been embedded in the football and volleyball programs at Missouri Southern State University. It's part of a pilot mental health program developed by the two institutions. The results of the pilot program have been good enough that Southern and the Ozark Center announced Thursday that they were partnering to continue it, calling it the Performance Excellence Initiative, and expanding it with the addition of licensed professional counselor Morgan Christy about three weeks ago. "Mental health has become one of the most important conversations in higher education, and nowhere is that conversation more important than in college athletics," said Vicky Mieseler, CEO at Ozark Center. "The integration of mental health services into college athletics is transforming the future of college sports. Mental health integration means embedding mental wellness into the everyday culture of athletics." Mieseler said student-athletes face unique mental health challenges due to the pressures of balancing academics, athletics and personal lives. She also said research shows that collegiate athletes experience mental health issues at rates equal to or higher than their nonathlete peers. They also are less likely to seek help. "This partnership with Ozark Center positions our department at the

SEE **ATHLETES**, 2A



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