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# News Release

## City commissioners designate new Chestnut Park recreation area

*City officials also talk beautification micro-grants, code enforcement town hall*

ARKANSAS CITY, Kan. (September 7, 2016) — Beautification and parks have been on the minds of City officials lately, as evidenced by a pair of discussions at Tuesday night's City Commission meeting.

The Beautification and Tree Advisory Board held a special meeting Aug. 29 and recommended the designation of a new public recreation area on West Chestnut Avenue, to be named "Chestnut Park."

Another special Board meeting is planned for 4 p.m. Monday to discuss downtown beautification and cleanup efforts. It will begin at the Arkansas City Convention and Visitors Bureau, 106 S. Summit St.

The City Commission voted 4-0 on Tuesday to follow the Board's recommendation and create the Chestnut Park designation. This will allow the Kansas Wildscape Foundation to pursue federal grants.

The Foundation is interested in funding improvements to the Arkansas River boat ramp south of the West Chestnut Avenue bridge. The ramp, which is used as for recreational access as well as a launch point for emergency water rescues by the Arkansas City Fire-EMS Department, is in dire need of repair.

The proposed new ramp would serve canoes, kayaks and small boats, but not airboats.

Richard Hensley and the Walnut Valley Trail Builders also are interested in building a mountain bike trail around the small pond north of the bridge and west of the Arkansas River levee.

Eventually, parking and other recreational amenities could be constructed on the east side of the levee, but that area is not included within the currently adopted park boundaries at this time.

No City money is planned to be expended on the Chestnut Park project, other than possibly in-kind contributions of labor and equipment use such as earth moving and tree removal.

Nothing further is expected to occur regarding development of the proposed park if no private funding or grant money comes through.

**For immediate release**

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Commissioner Dan Jurkovich was absent from Tuesday night's meeting.

### **Beautification and code enforcement**

The Beautification Board's special meeting on Monday is only the first in a series of meetings planned to help to jumpstart the efforts of private citizens to clean up and beautify properties before they have to be condemned. City officials also are meeting with representatives of nonprofit organizations.

City Manager Nick Hernandez's goal is to reduce tax dollars spent on the destruction of buildings by allocating smaller amounts on a case-by-case basis for preventative maintenance to combat dilapidation.

He discussed a plan Tuesday with city commissioners to hold a town hall meeting, probably in the last week of this month, to educate the public about these efforts and the code enforcement process.

Fall Cleanup Week will be about two weeks after the town hall meeting, which will be scheduled officially during the Sept. 20 City Commission meeting. It is midway between the Last Run Car Show and the Arkalalah Festival, and City officials hope to get a lot of positive work done in that short period of time.

"Ticketing is always the last thing we want to do," Hernandez said regarding the recently approved charter ordinance that will allow code enforcement officials to issue notices to appear in municipal court.

"We just really want compliance. We really need to encourage neighborhoods — churches, youth groups, whatever it may be — to try to identify areas where they can clean up. Maybe it's cleaning yards out for an elderly or disabled citizen, painting a house, (or) trimming trees."

Hernandez described a model in which the City, under the direction and recommendation of the Beautification Board, could award groups with micro-grants to perform the work they propose to do.

"Maybe we pay for paint or paintbrushes," he said. "Maybe we haul off the trash for them in a designated area. ... We want to try to encourage those local groups to basically step up and provide all the volunteer work to do it, rather than us just going out and ticketing the property owner right away."

He also suggested the idea of the City purchasing several small mowers and loaning them out.

Hernandez said the advantage of relying on neighborhood groups is that they are familiar with their neighborhoods — they know who really needs the help and who doesn't need it.

"(Citizens) come to us and want us to do something," said Mayor Duane Oestmann. "I think it's a good idea to get neighborhoods to get involved with it. I think that does more good than what we do."

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Some of the organizations mentioned that possibly might be interested in participating in this cleanup effort are Angels in the Attic, Boy Scouts Troop 328, Cowley College's ACES program and volunteers.

Citizens may watch the discussion of the town hall meeting at [youtu.be/VhHoqLaDWtg](https://youtu.be/VhHoqLaDWtg). The remaining 1 1/2 hours of the meeting preceding that discussion may be viewed at [youtu.be/ExBRBL3nBfo](https://youtu.be/ExBRBL3nBfo).

### **In other business Tuesday night, the City Commission:**

- Witnessed the swearing in of new Arkansas City Police Department Officer Matt Mayo.
- Heard requests from the Arkalalah Committee and BroCorp regarding upcoming Arkalalah events at which alcohol would be served on public property. The commissioners approved of Arkalalah's plan to serve alcohol at a concert Oct. 27 at the Wilson Park rotunda, with a setup similar to PrairieFest, and will consider an ordinance Sept. 20 to allow it formally. But they did not approve of BroCorp's proposed location for its annual beer garden, which has been on private property the past two years. Hernandez said he will work with BroCorp CEO Kevin Scruggs to find a suitable location and bring the item back Sept. 20 if it's still on public property.
- Heard a report from the Spring Hill Golf & Recreation Association concerning the finances of Spring Hill Golf Course. Association officials did not request any additional funding at this time and project they will end September with a positive cash balance. Hernandez and Association treasurer Dale Kuhn agreed to meet regularly and update the City Commission only as needed.
- Unanimously approved the following consent agenda items:
  - Approval of the Aug. 10 special meeting and Aug. 15 regular meeting minutes as written.
  - Ratification of Oestmann's reappointments of Foss Farrar and Gordon Fry, and appointment of Jean Snell, to the Historic Preservation Board.
  - Ratification of Oestmann's appointment of Chris Tackett to the Public Building Commission.
  - Approval of the City employee health insurance renewal for the 2017 plan year.
  - Approval of Safety Culture, Reporting Safety Issues, Workers Compensation Injury/Illness Procedure, Job Fitness, Off-the-Job Illness or Injury and Fit for Duty Assessment personnel policy updates.
  - Approval of a new cereal malt beverage license for Billy Sims BBQ, 2113 N. Summit St.

- A resolution authorizing the City to accept a donation of property located at 1225 N. Second St. from Susan and Howard Bartlett. Hernandez said it will be used as a test location for the first new home built through an infill housing partnership among the City, Community National Bank & Trust, the Cowley County Economic Development Partnership, Creekstone Farms Premium Beef, Legacy Regional Community Foundation and Skyline Inc.
- A resolution authorizing Hernandez to execute and submit the Federal-Aid State-Wide Bridge Inspection Master Agreement to the Kansas Department of Transportation. The inspection is an 80-20 match, with federal funds paying 80 percent and the City 20 percent.
- Acceptance of a grant awarded to the Arkansas City Fire-EMS Department through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program's e-grant system. The \$48,356 grant is for a diesel exhaust removal system and the purchase of a commercial personal protective equipment washer, with a matching amount of \$2,417.
- Heard first readings of and voted unanimously to approve a pair of ordinances adopting by reference the updated Uniform Public Offense Code and Standard Traffic Ordinance, prepared annually by the League of Kansas Municipalities.
- Unanimously approved a resolution authorizing the City to enter into a contract with Kuhn Mechanical to repair the primary softening basin at the Water Treatment Facility, for an amount not to exceed \$32,000. The Arkansas City company will replace 16 roller/bearing assemblies and repair the rake assembly on the primary clarifier, which has been inoperable for a year.
- Designated Oestmann, Commissioner Jay Warren and Commissioner Karen Welch to serve as voting delegates to the League of Kansas Municipalities' annual business meeting Oct. 8-10 in Overland Park, with Hernandez and Commissioner Charles Tweedy III serving as alternates.
- Discussed alley maintenance and procedures for dealing with recent complaints concerning work being performed in Arkansas City by Kansas Gas Service and its subcontractors.

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