

JEFFERSON COUNTY, MISSOURI – JOURNAL

August 18, 2025
Work Session
Jefferson County Administration Center, Hillsboro, MO
Assembly Room
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The Jefferson County, Missouri Council conducted a Work Session on Monday, August 18, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. in the Assembly Room of the Jefferson County Administration Center, located at 729 Maple Street, Hillsboro, Missouri.

I. CALL TO ORDER

County Council Chair Bob Tullock called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Recited

III. ROLL CALL

District 1 - Council Member Brian Haskins:	Present
District 2 - Council Member Billy Crow Jr.:	Present
District 3 – Councilwoman Lori Arons:	Present
District 4 - Council Member Charles Groeteke:	Present
District 5 - Council Member Scott Seek:	Absent
District 6 - Council Member Tim Brown:	Present
District 7 - Council Member Bob Tullock	Present

IV. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Council Member Charles Groeteke made a motion to approve the Agenda as presented, seconded by Councilwoman Lori Arons.

Vote:

District 1 - Council Member Brian Haskins:	Yes
District 2 - Council Member Billy Crow Jr.:	Yes
District 3 – Councilwoman Lori Arons:	Yes
District 4 - Council Member Charles Groeteke:	Yes
District 5 - Council Member Scott Seek:	Absent
District 6 - Council Member Tim Brown:	Yes
District 7 - Council Member Bob Tullock:	Yes

Motion carried.

V. COUNTY BUSINESS

• Rockford Park

Councilwoman Lori Arons mentioned she had several articles emailed to the Council today regarding the Big River Stream Restoration and their plans for the future. Mrs. Arons said she would like to bring this subject back and have a discussion about Rockford Park and see what our options are for making this park safe.

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Councilman Brian Haskins stated that he had visited Rockford Park over the weekend and observed that many people were present, both in the water and in the picnic area. He noted that three parks located about twelve miles away—Castlewood, George Winter, and Byrnes Mill—have already banned swimming. He also reminded the Council that a vote to ban swimming at Rockford Park took place in February 2024. Mr. Haskins stated Councilman Tullock had come up with a resolution and thinks it is a good compromise.

Councilman Billy Crow Jr. said his only concern with the possible resolution is by the time this goes into effect it will be after Labor Day and then it will expire before Memorial Day. This means swimming will be banned during the time period people where people are not prone to be in the river anyway. Mr. Crow suggested extending the ban until Labor Day 2026 and looking at it periodically.

Councilman Tim Brown said he agrees with Councilman Crow's concerns. He expressed discomfort with the government stepping in to regulate personal behavior, noting that it's not the government's role to fix people's stupidity. He referenced a recent article about a second child drowning at Lake of the Ozarks within five days, pointing out that no one is calling for the lake to be shut down. We need to ask ourselves what the government's role really is in situations like this, emphasizing that individuals must take personal responsibility. Mr. Brown also stated that if action is taken, it should be through an ordinance rather than a resolution. He also mentioned there have been several conversations between the Council and the Executive Branch on whose role it is to do certain things and was under the assumption that the Executive Branch has the authority over the parks and should make the decision regarding the Parks.

Councilman Bob Tullock shared that he had spoken with Counselor Jasha Kuenzel to determine whether the County has the authority to prohibit and enforce a ban on swimming and wading in the river. Counselor Kuenzel explained that the key issue is whether the river is classified as a navigable or non-navigable waterway. According to her understanding, the Big River is a navigable waterway, meaning it is owned by the State of Missouri. Jefferson County's jurisdiction extends only to the low-water mark, which can shift over time. Therefore, if someone enters the river from outside county property, the County cannot prohibit them from swimming. However, the County does have authority over individuals who access the river from county parks. In that case, the County would need to establish specific violations and strengthen the relevant sections of the County Code to allow for enforcement.

Councilman Charles Groeteke shared that he has researched the issue and referenced a 2019 ecosystem restoration study conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the St. Louis Riverfront and Meramec River Basin, which includes the Big River tributary. The comprehensive study outlines various ecological improvements, including the removal of all low-head dams. Although the plan has been approved, it has not yet received Congressional funding. The estimated federal cost is over \$73 million, with an additional \$39 million in non-federal contributions. Mr. Groeteke stated that he has already reached out to the State Senator and Congressional representatives to advocate for funding. He emphasized that focusing efforts on encouraging Congress and state legislators to move the project forward would be beneficial.

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- **Funding for Abatement on Nuisance Properties**

Councilman Bob Tullock distributed copies of Public Nuisance Ordinance 200.025 and the Abatement of Public Nuisances Ordinance 200.030 to the Council. He explained that Ordinance 200.030 outlines the timeframe within which a property owner must comply once notified. Mr. Tullock emphasized that the key issue now is determining how the ordinance will be enforced and how the associated costs will be funded. Executive Dennis Gannon addressed the issue of individual property rights, saying that while a resident may not want to see a 25-foot motorhome, that appears unused for several years, parked in front of their home. The owner of the mobile home has rights as well. Mr. Gannon emphasized that it is inaccurate to suggest these matters are not being enforced. He pointed out that even violators have rights, and many have learned how to beat the system. Councilman Tim Brown asked if the process to have something done so complex, and can be manipulated, that the perception is nothing is being done.

Executive Gannon mentioned there was a discussion regarding Public Nuisance Properties a few weeks ago. The meeting included himself, Counselor Kuenzel, Mr. Groeteke, Mr. Tullock, the Director of Code Enforcement Mitch Bair, and the Director of Administration David Courtway. It was mentioned that Code Enforcement will be at the Work Session on September 15, 2025, to talk to the Council about trying to streamline this process and have these issues concluded much faster.

- **Utilizing Mobile Home Pads For Development**

Councilman Bob Tullock expressed interest in seeing vacant mobile home pads across Jefferson County redeveloped into tiny home communities or 55+ residential developments. He noted that one of the primary challenges is adapting existing pads to meet current building codes. Mr. Tullock questioned whether certain code requirements could be waived, for example, if a septic tank is still in good condition and met code at the time of installation, could the current septic system requirements be reconsidered? He emphasized the potential to transform vacant and problematic mobile home parks, often associated with various nuisance issue, into productive and valuable community assets. Mr. Tullock then asked the Council what the next steps would be if there is interest in pursuing such redevelopment efforts. Executive Gannon responded the next step would likely be to consult with the Code Department before involving Planning and Zoning.

Councilman Brown inquired whether there are specific barriers preventing vacant mobile home parks from being redeveloped into other types of developments. He asked if the cost of removing existing pads and infrastructure is cost effective. Mr. Tullock said as he understands it, the problem is putting in a new septic system, that is up to the current code and putting in new sidewalks and roads that would be required is cost prohibitive. Mr. Tullock wants to know if we can find a way that will allow a developer, or the current owner, to build on that, as long as they meet type of minimum threshold. Executive Dennis Gannon noted that many of the older septic systems fall under the jurisdiction of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR), which would need to be involved in any redevelopment plans. Mr. Brown stated we will need a new section of code that specifically has its own standards for rebuilding on former mobile home parks.

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• 5 Year Capital Improvement Plan

Councilman Bob Tullock stated that he had reviewed the Strategic Plan and identified several concerns. One key issue he raised was the allocation of Capital Improvement funds for 2026 and 2027, noting that a significant portion appears to be directed toward the High Ridge Civic Center. He pointed out that the Civic Center primarily serves approximately 4,700 residents in that area, less than 2% of Jefferson County's total population of 231,000. Mr. Tullock shared that, after speaking with constituents in his district, many expressed disinterest in using the facility and concerns about their tax dollars being spent on a project from which they see little to no benefit.

Councilman Billy Crow Jr. noted that District 1 is one of the fastest-growing areas in the county. He referenced Mr. Tullock's plans to develop 55+ communities in the district and pointed out that the High Ridge Civic Center is located nearby and already offers valuable programs for seniors. He added that it's unfair to claim the Civic Center only benefits a specific minority group; by that logic, the same argument could be made about libraries, Kimmswick Park and pavilion, or any park. Councilman Crow emphasized the importance of considering the Civic Center's overall contributions to the community, especially its positive impact on mental health.

Councilman Brian Haskins stated that the Civic Center in High Ridge was originally built when he was 10 years old and was purchased by Jefferson County 25 years ago for just \$1. Haskins pointed out that the county invested a significant amount in the Animal Resource Center without much public objection, noting that this is simply what communities do. He added that while the library may not serve large crowds, it still holds value. In his view, the Civic Center is a form of economic development, located in the heart of High Ridge and drawing people from across the area. Many participants return because of the connections they build with instructors and fellow class members. As seniors age, he said, they value the opportunity to take classes and socialize.

Executive Gannon expressed that he couldn't imagine living in a county without parks, recreational facilities, or places for people to gather. He emphasized that when building a community, people expect amenities like parks and public spaces. Gannon noted that when a community facility like the High Ridge Civic Center has served residents for many years, it's difficult to justify not maintaining it. He described the Civic Center as a great complex, observing that it's always active during the week whenever he visits. He stressed that while a Civic Center may not generate significant revenue, that's not its purpose. Jefferson County isn't in the business of making money, we're in the business of providing services to our residents—and this is one of those services. Mr. Gannon also pointed out that the county has managed its finances responsibly. We've done a good job stretching our dollars and haven't borrowed any money since he has been in office—we pay as we go. He acknowledged, however, that some future projects, like a new jail or courthouse, may eventually require borrowing funds.

Counselor Kuenzel asked Executive Gannon for clarification regarding the Capital Improvement Plan. She stated her understanding that such a plan is typically used for major capital projects, where a specific project is selected and funded over several years. It is not usually intended for distributing small amounts of money across each district.

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Executive Gannon responded that, generally, a capital improvement is based on a percentage of the replacement cost of an asset. Funds are set aside accordingly, and when the time comes, a capital expenditure is made. He emphasized that this is not a recurring expense, but rather a one-time capital investment.

Councilman Charles Groeteke noted that he has been reviewing these plans for several years and that items have been shifted around as funding becomes available. He expressed concern that some projects scheduled for 2028, 2029, and 2030 are, in his opinion, more important than others currently prioritized. Groeteke emphasized the ongoing effort to implement ADA upgrades and stated that there are still several steps needed to bring the county into full ADA compliance. He believes these should be addressed before moving forward with other expenditures.

Councilman Tim Brown expressed concern that the way the Capital Improvement Plan is currently written sends mixed signals about whether the Civic Center is truly a priority, as it does not appear on the Executive's priority list. In response, Executive Gannon stated that if the Civic Center weren't a priority, it likely wouldn't appear on the Capital Improvement Plan at all. He emphasized that everything included in the plan is intended to be completed at some point. Councilman Brown clarified that he was trying to better understand the distinction between the Executive's priority list and the departmental list. He also noted that while some believe community centers are better placed in high-growth areas, he feels they may be more beneficial in underdeveloped areas where there are fewer businesses. Brown raised concerns that when the County offers classes like karate, martial arts, yoga, or Zumba, it may be unintentionally competing with local businesses that could otherwise thrive in those communities.

The discussion about the potential construction of a new Civic Center continued, with Councilmembers sharing their perspectives.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Council Member Brian Haskins made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Councilwoman Lori Arons.

Vote:

District 1 - Council Member Brian Haskins:	Yes
District 2 - Council Member Billy Crow Jr.:	Yes
District 3 – Councilwoman Lori Arons:	Yes
District 4 - Council Member Charles Groeteke:	Yes
District 5 - Council Member Scott Seek:	Absent
District 6 - Council Member Tim Brown:	Yes
District 7 - Council Member Bob Tullock:	Yes

Motion carried, and the meeting adjourned at 8:36 p.m.