

# FYI

## Park Progress Made

City Crews continued to make good progress this winter on projects in the new park. Much of the area has been leveled, disked, and seeded providing areas for multi-use such as soccer.

A bridge over the Viney Grove drainage basin has been constructed and will allow the Battlefield and Stonecrest Subdivisions east access to the new park. A new sidewalk in Battlefield Subdivision was completed last week, but will not be open to the

new park until a later date.

Crews have also been busy working on the natural trails, cutting brush, thinning river cane, and will soon be building some trail bridges over a few drainage swales in the land purchased along the river.

The City is applying for a 80/20 grant from the highway department to construct a paved trail around the front of the park as well as two pedestrian/equipment bridges.



## Water Treatment Plant Work Underway



Work has begun at the Water Treatment Plant with the general Contractor J.L. Bryson getting a large area cleared for the new chemical building. Last week footings were poured as well as the slab for the new building. The contractor will focus on work that does not effect current treatment first then shift gears to work that

interrupts service, so that the plant can hopefully be shut down only one time until completion. Electrical work, new roof on the operations building, concrete repairs, and equipment replacement will all require the plant be shut down for probably 2-3 months.

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## Tree Damage a Problem in Mock Park

Dr. Mock purchased the land which is Mock Park back in the early part of the 1900's. He planted numerous ash trees throughout the back of the property which have provided wonderful shade throughout the years. Those trees have become diseased in recent years are quickly dying.

One of the diseased trees did over \$10,000 damage to the playground last year and the City just took out another one which was jeopardizing the gazebo.

A plan to replace these trees needs to be developed as they may all be gone within the next 5 years or so.



*Above: A large hollow tree was taken out this month to prevent it from damaging the gazebo, Top right, many of the trees have visible holes and bark loss and are still leafing out but will likely die soon.*



## Sidewalk Construction has Begun

City crews have started on sidewalk projects and have months of construction ahead. A sidewalk from Bush to Highway 62 across property owned by Prairie Grove Schools is underway. The sidewalk crosses two major drainage basins and will have to have bridges across each. In addition, the crossings at Highway 62B into Prairie

Meadows Subdivision and Willow Creek Subdivision will have to be permitted through the State.

Crews also completed a small sidewalk in the Battlefield Subdivision which will eventually connect that area and Stonecrest Subdivision to the new park.



Other sidewalk projects include W. Bush Street and Viney Grove Road this year.



## Basketball Court Replaced

City Crews removed all of the old basketball court in Mock Park and replaced it with new concrete recently. The old concrete was crumbling and was beyond repair. The old court was located on land purchased from the Glidewell Estate back in the 80's and a basketball court was built there about 25 years

ago. The old court was often maligned as being too slick, and the new concrete has a courser finish which will allow better traction. In about a month, once the concrete cures, crews will come back and paint the markings on the court. In addition, one back board was damaged and a new one will replace it.

## Legislative Update

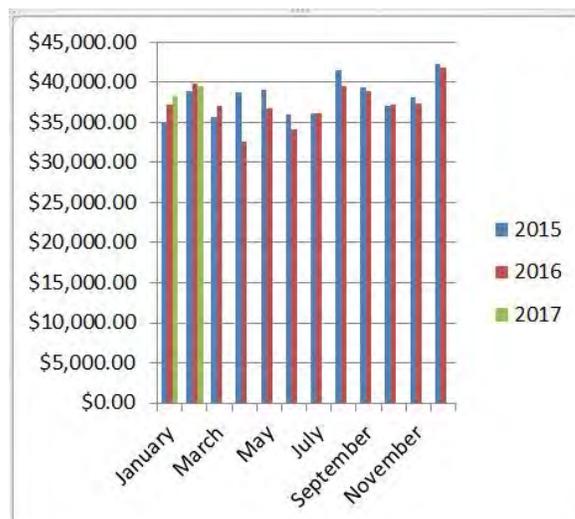
The Arkansas Legislature has certainly been busy this year, but the deadline to submit bills has now passed, so what we see is what we will get. Many of the bills seem to be an effort to remove decision making from local governments.

- Two annexation bills, HB 1335 and HB1018 deal with annexation. 1018 makes island annexation, previously authorized by ordinance, mandatory to have an election and 1335 makes petitions to de-annex easier.
- HB1349 and HB1794 require cities to extend sewer service (1349) with territorial jurisdiction and (1794) would require annexation as mandatory within 5 years if you claim territory as future jurisdiction.
- SB35 would require water service be provided to areas outside city limits if capacity and size is adequate.
- Would restrict Mayors from serving no more than 24 consecutive years.
- HB1551 would remove most of the licensing requirements for many skilled trades such as builders, plumbers, electricians, and mechanical installers. It reaches out and affects other trades as well such as auctioneers and even private school teachers. Attorneys, CPA's, real estate agents, engineers, architects, doctors, nurses are not included in this legislation.
- Fluoridation requirements are addressed in two bills, one which would require a vote of the users (SB299) and a second that changes the mandatory requirement from 5000 population to 22,000 population (HB1865).
- SB140 would make major internet companies that do not have a state home presence required to submit sales tax. This would greatly enhance the sales tax collected by cities.
- HB 1595 would raise the state requirement for competitive bids from \$20,000 to \$35,000.
- HB 1726 would put to the Arkansas voters the extension of the State Highway Bond program, which generates dollars for local roads as well.
- SB 286 would prevent cities from having tree ordinances.
- HB 1558 reduces the petition requirement for alcohol initiatives from 38% to 15%.
- HB 1522 says police and fire departments would not be allowed to have residency requirements for their departments.
- HB 1444 would make it harder and likely more expensive to initiate an eminent domain procedure.
- HB 1387 would prevent officers from pulling over cars simply to determine seat belt compliance and SB630 would restrict local police from issuing more than one ticket per stop on State highways.
- HB1669 cuts the funding mechanism for E-Waste disposal. Funding is guaranteed for 4 years, but unless changes are made the fund will be gone after that period.
- Two bills, HB1550 and 220 place tighter restrictions on non-municipal sewer systems.

## Tax Update

For February, taxes were just barely (.8%) behind last year, but February 2016 still included sales from the closed Walmart.

Year to date the City is up 1.4% which is comparing Jan/Feb 2016 when Walmart taxes were included compared to 2017 when they are not. This is a strong indication that taxes should be up considerably this year over last.



## Master Gardeners

Mock Park has benefitted from the care and nurturing of the Master Gardeners for over 25 years. Master Gardeners have planted and weeded, and maintained the gardens often using their own resources to make it beautiful. Thank you MG's for adopting us!



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## City News

Jackie Baker attended the Spring Code Officials of Arkansas Meeting in Hot Springs March 7-10th.

Larry Oelrich, Ron Corey, Bob King, and Brian Hawkins will attend the annual Arkansas Water Works and Water Environment Conference in Hot Springs on April 30th-May 3rd.

Christine Kelly will celebrate her 5th anniversary with the City this year and was accidentally left off last months list of employee anniversaries.



## Building Update

There has been no slow down in building in 2017, in fact the pace has increased and based on permits issued through March 7th, last years record activity will be blown away in 2017. Through March 7th, 40 single family homes have been permitted and 7 apartment units for a total of 47 dwelling units. The translates

to a population increase of 113 in just over 2 months.

Although permits have not been issued a 32 unit senior development has submitted plans for approval and will permit soon. Additional apartments are also being planning and have already gone through planning commission and city approval.

