

Major upgrades for Fireman’s Park

Hutchinson Fire Department plans \$116,000 in new playground, shelter renovations



This rendering shows the final plan for upgrades to the playground at Fireman’s Park, which will be installed in three phases as funds become available.

BY JEREMY JONES
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Hutchinson park lovers will soon have a new reason to visit downtown Fireman’s Park. The Hutchinson Fire Department, which sponsors the riverside park next to Wells Fargo, has plans for \$116,000 of renovations, including upgrades to the shelter and a new playground.

“We think it’s a good location for a new park just because of the location downtown,” Randy Abelson, assistant chief of the HFD, told City Council last week. “From talking with the parks department, that shelter does get used by people now. We think we can get more use out of it by doing upgrades and doing playground upgrades.”

The project has already started with work on the shelter. New countertops have been built,

new wiring for electrical upgrades is in the ground and awaiting a new paint job to be finished, and a new cement sidewalk was installed from the bike path to the shelter

“We still have some work to do, but we’re working on it to get it looking nice,” Abelson said.

The biggest part of the project is the new playground, which Abelson said the HFD plans to execute in three phases, with each phase building up the playground and expanding on the previous phases.

Estimates for each phase of the playground work are \$29,936 for Phase 1, \$48,651 for Phase 2, and \$36,523 for Phase 3. The plan is to try to complete one phase each year, or as funds are available.

“These are all approximate numbers,” Abelson said. “We do know there is going to be price

Park to A4 ➤



Fireman’s Park in downtown Hutchinson, along the river next to Wells Fargo, is expected to receive \$116,000 worth of renovations over the next few years thanks to the Hutchinson Fire Department. Plans include upgrades to the shelter and a new playground.



Hutchinson park employees are planning for a new splash pad in town and using the Litchfield splash pad that opened in summer 2018 along Lake Ripley as an example. The Litchfield splash pad is free to use and costs about \$20,000 annually for maintenance.

City ready to make a splash

City Council moved forward to begin planning for a new splash pad

BY JEREMY JONES
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Hutchinson residents hoping for a free, outdoor reprieve from summer heat may get their wish. Though it is still in the planning phase, city staff and council members are exploring the addition of a splash pad to the city’s park amenities.

Council members this past week approved a resolution to accept Hoisington Koepler Group’s proposal to plan and design a splash pad at a cost of \$151,000. The firm is familiar with Hutchinson’s parks and recreation system as it completed the city’s Parks, Recreation and Community Education master plan in 2019. It will help the city develop site plans for each potential location and seek input from residents.

A splash pad was one of the most requested amenities from people who provided feedback for the PRCE master plan, and Lynn Neumann, PRCE director, said it would add toward the city’s goal to be a destination for recreation, art and leisure.

“Splash pads are an increasingly popular parks and rec amenity that benefit the community, that are inexpensive outdoor recreation pieces,” she said. “They do feature



Lynn Neumann

Splash pad to A4 ➤

Community Foundation reaches a milestone

The Hutchinson Area Community Foundation has hit its \$1M goal

BY KAY JOHNSON
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Unless you win the lottery, most of us will never know what it feels like to have a million bucks in the bank. The good news is that as residents of Hutchinson, we can bask in the glow of the Hutchinson Area Community Foundation’s recent achievement of hitting its Founders Fund \$1 million endowment goal.

The effort has been a long time coming. The foundation launched its \$1 million capital drive

in 2003. According to Roger Stearns, the president at the time, the endowment fund would ensure the foundation’s longevity.

“The foundation exists to keep Hutchinson the best possible to live, work, play and raise a family,” Stearns said at the time. “That’s about as simple as it gets. If there are groups that want to hear about us, we’ll do it. This is a unique venture. This is the keystone of our whole project. A million dollar endowment generates a lot of money. Thirty years from now, it will generate an incredible amount of money for Hutchinson.”

Although that \$1 million isn’t in our accounts, we have access to its annual earnings through the programs of local nonprofits. If you

Foundation to A2 ➤



The Hutchinson Area Community Foundation uses Founders’ Pathway in Library Square to raise funds. Although the foundation recently hit its \$1 million endowment goal, pavers are still available for donors who contribute \$5,000 or more.

STAFF PHOTO BY STEPHEN WIBLEMO