Introducing new Councilmembers

On June 2, 2020, the residents of Independence voted for the four district council seats. Citizens re-elected 1st District Councilmember John Perkins, and selected three new councilmembers for Districts 2, 3, and 4. Here is a brief biography and contact information for each of the new councilmembers.

Second District Councilmember Brice Stewart was elected to his first term on the Independence City Council in June 2020. He was born and raised in the rural community of Braymer, Mo., located in Caldwell County. He graduated from Hardin Central High School and went on to obtain a Bachelor’s degree in Criminal Justice from Colorado Technical University and an Associate’s degree in Network Administration from Sanford Brown College.

Councilmember Stewart currently works as a System's Analyst for Jackson County, Mo. He has previously worked as a law-enforcement officer for the Ferrelview Police Department for nine years and once held the rank of Chief of Police for three years. He also served the Edgerton Police Department for four years.

He is the father of two daughters, Ollie and Emeline.

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Third District Councilmember Mike Steinmeyer was elected to his first term on the Independence City Council in June 2020. He is a licensed Missouri Realtor with ReecNichols and has more than 20 years of Professional Sales experience in home improvements and finance.

Councilmember Steinmeyer received a Bachelor’s degree in Christian Ministries from Oral Roberts University. He and his wife, Kana, have completed 15 years of missionary work in more than 26 countries.

Councilmember Steinmeyer is the father of three and has two grandchildren.

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4th District Councilmember Daniel Hobart was elected to his first term on the Independence City Council in June 2020. He is a lifelong Independence resident that attended Luff Elementary, Bridger Jr. High and Truman High School graduating in 1991, Leroy Brown's last graduating class. He went on to Graceland College where he earned a B.A. in History in 1995. He then went to Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, where he graduated in 1998 with his Juris Doctorate.

Councilmember Hobart passed the Missouri Bar in 1998 and went to work for the Public Defender's office in Rolla, Missouri. He took the Kansas Bar in 1999 with an eye on returning to the KC area, which he did in 2001. He then went into solo practice in 2003. Earning his Eagle Scout in 1988 and then working as a public defender gave him a greater appreciation for service to community. His interest in City government peaked last summer with the budget issue that nearly ended City retirees' health benefits, which included his dad, a retired Independence police officer.

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CityScene is published by the City Manager’s Office, located at 111 E. Maple Ave., Independence, MO, 64050.
For information, call (816) 325-7086.
The City of Independence announced on June 22 that it will remain in Phase 1 beyond the projected date of July 1. Phase 1 has been modified with a few updates for Parks | Recreation | Tourism Department facilities.

“The gating criteria we developed for the City of Independence COVID-19 pandemic reopening plan has not been met,” Mayor Eileen Weir said in a release. “This included a sustained decrease in positive cases, robust testing and tracing capabilities, and adequate PPE. In the first 21 days of June, eastern Jackson County experienced more positive cases of COVID-19 than we did in March, April or May. Since declaring a State of Emergency on March 12, Independence has committed to an aggressive, proactive, and forward-looking approach to protecting the health of our community. Our Incident Command Team continues to collaborate with area health experts and providers to monitor cases and hospitalization while we work to increase testing and tracing capacity for our citizens.”

As of July 1, all residents of eastern Jackson County are required to wear a mask when in public. You can find details related to this order from the Jackson County here, jacksongov.org/1199/Jackson-County-COVID.

The Independence City Hall, Independence Police Headquarters, and Independence Utility Center will continue to be open 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. Guests and staff will be required to participate in a temperature check and basic health screening prior to entrance. Those individuals found to have a fever or other symptoms of COVID-19 will be asked to complete their business online or via phone calls or digital meetings.

Additionally, the City has made the decision to keep the Vaile Mansion, Bingham-Waggoner Estate, Chicago & Alton Depot and 1827 Log Cabin closed for the 2020 season. The annual holiday events at the Vaile Mansion and Bingham-Waggoner Estate will be evaluated in September.

“These are difficult decisions, but we remain focused on slowing the spread of COVID-19 so we can resume community events and gatherings as soon as possible,” Mayor Weir said. “We are not there yet, and only through continued vigilance will we be able to move forward. I urge every citizen and visitor to limit activities, wear a mask when you leave your residence, wash your hands frequently, and stay home if you are not feeling well.”

You can find an updated overview of the City’s Phases as well as anticipated timelines associated with them here, indep.us/2020phases. Please keep in mind that the timelines and guidelines may change as conditions warrant.

Below is a summary of updates made to the City’s Phase 1 services and facilities reopening plan which went into effect on July 1:

Baseball fields and Independence Athletic Complex will reopen for practices and games with a limit of 50 participants, coaches and spectators. Games and practices will be scheduled to allow cleaning of facilities between each group. Tournaments will not be allowed in Phase 1.

The Independence Uptown Market Farmer’s Market will allow foot traffic beginning on July 11. Vendors, staff, volunteers and visitors will be required to wear a mask. Visitors will also be required to follow markers to move through the space. Vendor spots are limited to ensure proper distancing for all parties.

The Sermon Center, Truman Memorial Building and George Owens Nature Center will reopen with 50 percent capacity and social distancing requirements. Classes will resume at the Sermon Center and Truman Memorial Building with strict social distancing enforced. All patrons will be required to wear a mask. Individuals who are engaged in high intensity activities may not be able to wear a face covering if it causes difficulty breathing but should wear a mask before the activity and as soon as their breath returns to normal.

The Palmer Senior Center, basketball courts, playgrounds and spraygrounds will remain closed until further notice.

On June 15, the Independence City Council approved the 2020-2021 Fiscal Year Budget. This budget was $311 million, down $5 million from the previous year due to budget impacts and forecasts associated with COVID-19. The Council has requested regular updates on the impact COVID-19 is having on the budget. Citizens can watch Council Meetings and Study Sessions live on YouTube at indep.us/YouTube or on City7 (Comcast Channel 7). Agendas can be found online at indep.us/councilagendas.
How to drain a pool

Waste water is removed from your property through either the storm sewer or the sanitary sewer. Ideally, you should drain pools and spas into the sanitary sewer to ensure that water ends up at the treatment plant where all chemicals, including chlorine, can be removed. This can be done through any plumbed drain in your home, including a floor drain. Water entering the storm sewer is not treated, so any pool water that is released to the ground can enter a stream or creek. Chemicals in pool water can damage the streams or creeks and harm wildlife.

To safely drain pool water onto your lawn, be sure to de-chlorinate the water before draining. This means monitoring the pool for 3 to 5 days, and testing the chlorine levels. Once a pH of 7-8 is reached, and before algae starts to grow, it is safe to begin slowly draining the water onto your lawn. Be sure to drain very slowly to limit the amount of runoff. This practice is acceptable only if the water stays within your property boundaries - there should be no runoff onto adjacent lots nor onto the street. Releasing the water too quickly can create nuisances like standing water or eroding soil.

For more information on storm water pollution prevention, contact Municipal Services at 325-7711.
A new look - introducing Municipal Services

In April, City Manager Zach Walker announced the Public Works and Water Pollution Control Departments would be combined into the new Municipal Services Department.

“There is no question COVID-19 has challenged us, but it has also inspired all of us to look at new opportunities for our community,” City Manager Zach Walker said. “This restructuring of the Public Works and Water Pollution Control Departments will streamline the services we provide to the public, remove duplicate services in the two separate departments and continue to provide the Charter-outlined services to our community. This is a service combination seen in several communities across the country and we look forward to the innovations it will allow us to capitalize on in the years to come.”

City Manager Walker named Lisa Phelps, formerly the director of Water Pollution Control, the director of the new Municipal Services Department.

“The Water Pollution Control Department was originally part of Public Works but in the early 80s the decision was made to break the departments up,” Phelps said. “I am excited about the potential we have here to improve on the steps both of these departments had already begun, from new equipment to streamlined technology and services that will positively impact our citizens.”

One step to improve customer service is the transfer of the development engineering staff from Public Works into the Community Development Department, creating a one-stop shop for business and developers seeking to invest in Independence. It is believed this will streamline the development process.

“As the area begins to reopen, we are already receiving positive feedback from developers and businesses regarding this change,” Community Development Director Tom Scannell said. “We look forward to improving the interactions we have with developers as we settle into this new system.”

“From snow removal to street maintenance, the Public Works and Water Pollution Control crews had long worked together,” Phelps said. “We are excited about the opportunities to cross train our staff in more service areas and continue to provide the high-quality response our citizens have come to depend on.

The City is also using this time to reorganize how departments are housed within City Hall. Municipal Services is now located on the second floor across the lobby from Community Development. The Finance and Administration Department has moved to the third floor along with the City Manager’s and City Councils’ offices.

Learn more at indep.us/city7

Where can I...

Pay my Jackson Co. property taxes: Historic Truman Courthouse  112 W. Lexington, Suite 114 Independence, MO 64050 Phone: (816) 881-3232

Apply for a marriage license: Historic Truman Courthouse  112 W. Lexington, Suite 30 Independence, Missouri 64050 Phone: (816) 881-4608

Apply for a business license: Independence City Hall  111 E. Maple Independence, MO 64050 Phone: (816) 325-7079

Pay a ticket issued by the City: Independence City Hall  111 E. Maple Independence, MO 64050 Phone: (816) 325-7230

Some tickets may be paid online at indep.us/paytickets.

For more information on Jackson County offices, visit jacksongov.org.

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Regional Animal Shelter

Help them find a forever home.
Adopt a homeless pet.

21001 E. Hwy. 78, Independence  11 a.m. - 6 p.m. Wed. - Sun.  Call (816) 325-7207

Always spay or neuter.

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