

Talk of the Town

City of Victoria

785 735-2259

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Dollar General opens for business

Since late December, the new Victoria Dollar General Store has been open, welcoming customers. It has been long awaited and has created a lot of excitement. As patrons shop the aisles, you can overhear conversations about how much it means to be able to shop locally and have such a good variety of merchandise.

Mike Rome is the store manager, overseeing all operations at the facility. Rome left his prior position with FedEx explaining that this was a job opportunity he couldn't pass up. Rome kept smiling as he discussed how he was hired for his position and proceeded through the process from number of interviews to on-the-job training. Currently, the store has hired an assistant manager and five sales associates, some full-time and others part-time. Rome says he expects to hire at least two more in the near future.

In discussing some of what he sees as priorities with his operation, Rome stated that his staff will be greeting customers and ensuring good service. The store has one cashier for those who want that personal service and two self-checkout stations as well: one for cards only and one for either cash or cards. For those who are interested, there is a Dollar General app that offers specials.

Keeping merchandise well stocked, maintaining clear aisles, and ensuring the store will be clean are some of Rome's other goals.

The store is open daily from 8:00 am to 10:00 pm.

Because the store is accessed from Highway 40, drivers are advised to use caution when approaching from either direction, being on the lookout for slowing traffic, occasional pedestrians and bike riders.



The ribbon cutting makes it official!
With Mayor John Schulte, Councilman Joe Leroux and Manager Mike Rome doing the honors, the new store is up and running.

New Council Members



City Officials

Mayor

John Schulte

Shultz@ruraltel.net

City Council

Joe Leroux

joemilitary@hotmail.com

Ryan Lichter

ryanlichter@hotmail.com

Harland Rupp

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Matt Sander

mlsander79@gmail.com

Andy Wellbrock

awellbrock@msn.com

City Clerk: Jamie Sterling

Utilities Clerk: Rachel VonFeldt

City Treasurer: Jerry Schmidtberger

City Superintendent:

Brad Schmidtberger

Public Works Assistant:

Terry Riedel

Jeff Dorzweiler

Police Chief: Cole Dinkel

Patrol Officer: Ryan Mauch

Fire Chief: John Weber

Assistant Fire Chief: Scott Wellbrock

St. John's Place Update

In December, the Victoria Community Coalition received an early Christmas present when they were notified that they had been awarded a \$590,000 capital improvement grant from the Patterson Family Foundation (PFF) of Kansas City, Missouri, through their Thriving Rural Grant Program. The money will be used to repair and replace the roof at St. John's Place, the former nursing home.

"This feels like a Christmas miracle," commented VCC Chairman Jeff Pfeifer. "It allows us to move forward with Phase I redevelopment and secure the remaining building for future phases."

Construction of Phase I apartments will begin in early 2024 and will include 12 units for independent seniors and adults with disabilities. In addition to roof replacement and new construction, work will also include asbestos removal in areas planned for future development. VCC has applied to the Kansas Brownfields Program for assistance with the asbestos removal.

Also, following the signing of a lease agreement with the Ellis County Historical Society, work will soon begin on their exhibit and storage space.

To date, thousands of hours have been donated by board members and additional community volunteers toward fundraising, grant writing, building design, interior demolition and more.

Pfeifer stated, "None of our progress would be possible without support from so many. Please keep VCC and St. John's Place in your mind, heart and prayers now and throughout 2024. Please reach out to a board member, visit the VCC website or message us on Facebook if you have any questions, comments or are willing to donate time, service or to make a financial donation."

City merchants

welcome

new residents



Newcomers to the City are now welcomed with a gift bag when they come in to City Hall to sign up for utilities. City Clerk Jamie Sterling and Utilities Clerk Rachel VonFeldt came up with the idea that a goodie bag would be a way of promoting the community merchants and acquainting the new residents with some of them.

Gifts and their providers are as follows: VFW a small flag; Total Convenience a coupon for a 32 oz. beverage; Schwarz Financial a travel mug; Sunflower Bank, a koozie; Nex-Tech the bags themselves; Color Pallet, sample size bottles of shampoo and conditioner; and City Hall, a pen.

According to Sterling, recipients are surprised and happy to receive their gifts.



While February is known for the observances of Ground Hog Day, Valentine's Day and Presidents' Day, here are a few other lesser known dates on the calendar: Feb. 3, Eat Ice Cream for Breakfast Day, Feb. 17, Random Acts of Kindness Day, and Feb. 23, International Dog Biscuit Appreciation Day. Who knew?

City revises new property tax plan

The Neighborhood Revitalization Plan (NRP) that was announced in the November newsletter has been slightly changed and is now in full effect. With the changes that have been adopted, even more of property taxes may be returned to property owners. The increases in potentially refunded taxes are thanks to the Victoria School District and Ellis County also agreeing to participate in the NRP. These refunds are available for 10 years after a project has been completed. Residential properties are eligible for a 70% refund of taxes, and commercial properties are eligible for a 95% refund.

To qualify for the NRP, the value of a property's assessed value has to increase by \$10,000. This valuation is based on the County Appraiser's assessment that is issued each year. Before any project is accepted into the NRP, paperwork needs to be filled out at both City Hall and at the Ellis County Administration Building. If you would like to find out more about the NRP, please stop by or call City Hall at 735-2259 and a meeting can be arranged to discuss your potential project.



Rec Commission concludes productive year

The Victoria Recreation Commission posted a "year in review" look at their activities on their Facebook Page. Here are some of the highlights.

- * Installed adjustable basketball goals in the VES gym.
- * Installed outdoor volleyball court at VES.
- * Installed park benches at the outdoor basketball and volleyball courts through a Heartland Community Foundation grant.
- * Installed six pet waste stations throughout Victoria to help keep our community clean with help from a HCF grant.
- * Adopted the Victoria Greenway Trail, a two-mile, off-the-street trail throughout the town's green spaces.
- * Held the popular Jackie Stiles' basketball camp this summer, bringing over 80 kids from around the area.
- * Served over 100 youth in recreational sports including football, soccer, volleyball, basketball, baseball, and softball.
- * Helped sponsor Little Knights' tennis camp through the Lady Knights' tennis program.
- * Initiated expansion of adult-focused activities including tennis, volleyball, & pickleball.
- * Sponsored two middle school dances and an end-of-summer pool party.
- * Held the Building Better Knights Basketball Camp for 3rd-6th grade boys & girls .
- * Made donations to Herzogfest, Victoria Community Coalition, and the 8th grade graduation dance.
- * Sponsored self-defense class for women in the community.

Board members include Sharon Bleske, Darian Dinkel, Sheena Gagnon, Tammy Lichter, Sean Rodger, Kaylee Robben and Marla Robben.

People in our Neighborhood

Kord and Mcah Hlbert are relative newcomers to Victoria. Since their arrival they have become the parents of a daughter, Royal. Kord has established K & H Woodworks, a venture that keeps him busy and challenged as a cabinet maker and offers him the freedom that comes with being his own boss. His shop is located in the former post office in Catharine.

Kord, who holds a business management degree from FESU, realized after graduation that working with his hands and making cabinets was where his passion really lies. Prior to going into business for himself in 2020, he worked for Heartland Building in Russell and became acquainted with many area contractors and realized there would be potential for him as a builder.

Before making it official, Kord did an apprenticeship which he feels gave him a good foundation. Before that, his time and energy had been spent on small projects including household furniture, which he was doing as a hobby.

Kord enjoys the variety of his work: working in new construction as well as remodels. He also enjoys consulting with his clients and the designing process. Because he is a small business, he is able to meet deadlines more quickly and also offers tiered pricing, something remodelers especially appreciate. So far his clients have come from connections with other contractors, word of mouth recommendations from satisfied customers, and Facebook.

The Hlbert business is a family operation: Kord's wife Mcah is his partner who maintains his website, khwoodworksco.com, handles mailers and more.

Hlbert can be reached by email at khwoodworksco@gmail.com or by phone at 785 829-0504.

McAh has her own personal training business and also serves as the VJHHS cheerleading sponsor.

New Council Members

Two new City Council members are now part of the governing body for our City. Beginning their term at the January 2024 meeting are Joe Leroux and Andy Wellbrock. They replace Erica Dinges and Matt Orr.

Leroux has considerable experience in a variety of community bodies. He was appointed to serve on the Ellis County Commission upon the resignation of Dean Haselhorst. He has also been involved with Grow Hays, the Hays Chamber of Commerce and Imagine Ellis County.

Leroux has lived in Victoria for almost ten years, coming from Colby. He has found Victoria a 'great place to live' and two of his children are VHS graduates.

Andy Wellbrock is originally from Hays but has resided in Victoria for several years. He is the owner of A & A Appliance repair in Hays. His wife Ashley works at Roosevelt School in Hays. They have a son and a daughter.

Wellbrock won his position on the Council as the top write-in vote getter. He commented that he is looking forward to helping the City in any way he can.

REMINDER

It's time to renew pet tags for all dogs and cats. Cost is \$2.00 for spayed/neutered pets and \$5.00 otherwise. Proof of rabies vaccination is required. Deadline is Mar.1.

All ATV tags also need to be renewed. Cost is \$25.00 and proof of current insurance is required.

Sewer averaging for the next year is based on consumption during December-March. New rates begin in May.



Month						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat

School district studying four-day week

USD #432 is currently in the process of examining the pros and cons of changing to a four-day week. Part of the fact-finding for this study was having a representative body visit the Ingalls School District which currently operates on that format. District administrators as well as a group of teachers, two parents, two students and one board member spent the day learning about how that district operates.

A survey has been conducted to get feedback on the pros and cons as seen by the participants. A community meeting was also held on Jan. 13 to provide an opportunity to share information and field questions from those in attendance either in person or by Zoom.

Newly elected Board President Ryan Mauch commented, "We are early in

the feedback stage and are definitely listening to all sides."

The district has identified both pros and cons for all stake-holders who would be affected by this change including the following:

- ◆ At the **administrative** level pros include more time for quality professional development, recruitment and retention of teachers; cons include minimal cost savings and concerns about academic growth.
- ◆ At the **faculty** level, pros include less burnout and increased time for collaboration; cons include adjusting the pacing of instruction and less time for students at their 'safe space';
- ◆ At the **parental** level pros include

less stressed students and a better of traditional and hands-on learning; concerns include the issue of child care and transportation to activities on the off days

- ◆ At the **student** level, pros include more time for work-based learning internships and less stress; cons include longer time required to stay engaged.



Victoria PTO organizers have planned a new, upscale event to raise funds for their organization which supports all district students and teachers. On Saturday, Feb. 3, they are hosting a Red Carpet evening to be held at the Victoria VFW.

Doors will open at 5:00 p.m. and ticket holders will be able to enjoy a cash bar provided by Mack's Liquor Shack and then at 6:30 a catered meal provided by Dickenson's Catering. Live music will begin at 8:00 with the Wes Cossan Band performing.

A silent auction featuring items donated by Victoria, Russell, and Hays merchants will end at 9:00.

Tickets for the event are \$50 per person or \$360 for a table of eight. The number of tickets is limited and those interested are encouraged to call Co-Chairman Kaylee Robben at 785.458.2818 to make reservations. Other Co-Chairman is Andrea Hoffman.

According to Robben, there is no particular dress code for the evening. "We just want people to come out for an evening of fun and support a very worthy cause," she commented.

New Board Members begin their term

Beginning with the January School Board meeting, four new members will be serving the district. Elected from a field of 11 candidates, new members are Terry Dinkel, Haley Gagnon, Brenton Hoffman, and Matt Orr. They replaced Janea Dinkel, Kevin Huser, Tammy Lichter and Jacque Schmidt.



Adding their touch! Students in Kaylene Gabel's Digital Media Class used their skills to give the Police Department's office some wall art. Lindsey Scheck, Kennedy Amrein, Brody Nowak and Sienna Schmeidler have done similar projects for other offices.