

Reflector-Chronicle

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City comprehensive plan, parks plan help secure grants

By Ed Boice

Abilene Reflector-Chronicle

The city of Abilene is creating a new comprehensive plan and master parks plan. The benefits of having the plans are to set long-term goals, give projects purpose and set direction for city staff and commission, said Ron Marsh, city manager. The city's actions should relate back to the plan.

"We want it to be useful for every citizen, and I'm not sure the current plan is," Marsh said. "Things evolve and change overtime, and formats for comprehensive plans have changed over time."

The city is required by state law to have a comprehensive plan, Marsh said. The state does not require cities to have a master parks plan.

Marsh said he does not expect the new comprehensive plan to look like the current one. While he could not give specifics, he said staff is relying on the contractor's expertise for the creation.

The plan should be reviewed yearly, reevaluated at least every five years, and updated at least every 10 years. Marsh said the current plan is about 17 years out of date, approved in 2006. Constant updating is cheaper overall than creating a whole new plan.

Both the comprehensive plan and master parks plan will increase the city's

chances in securing grants for their projects.

"Any time you have an up-to-date comp plan, you stand a better chance in getting federal funding because that is what they will look for," Marsh said. "Does this fit into your comp plan? What are you wanting to do? The money you're asking for, does it fit into your comp plan? Is there an intentional path or growth pattern as to why you want this particular funding?"

Marsh said committee outreach and feedback will be needed to properly create the plans. The city will host public meetings and ask residents to fill out surveys. City staff is creating a place on their website for citizens and staff to communicate ideas and solutions. They have titled it Community Engagement Dashboard.

The end date for the new plan will be around 2045, Marsh said. A 20 year span is typical for a plan and should be pushed back as the plan is updated and reviewed.

The Abilene City Commission approved the proposal from Foster Design Associates to create the comprehensive plan and parks master plan. The city will pay Foster Design an amount not to exceed \$73,825 for both plans. Marsh said city staff is outsourcing the new plan's creation because it would take multiple years for them to complete. Marsh hopes the

plan will be finished before the end of the year.

City staff is setting up an initial meeting with Foster Design. City staff proposed their candidates for the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee to the Abilene City Commission in their Feb. 20 study session.

As for the master parks plan, while one was created in 1999, city staff are unable to locate it.

"Given that it was 1999, which was 24 years ago, it does us no good now," Marsh said. "So I don't care. We'll just start from scratch."

Marsh said the purpose of such a plan is to increase the quality of life in Abilene. The city has a finite number of acres dedicated to parks. They want to ensure that space is best used to meet the wants of the city. Good parks are also a positive attribute for families deciding whether to move to Abilene.

"Generationally, it's going to change, what's important to people," he said. "Right now, we want to upgrade our playground equipment. Well, what's going to be the best layout? What's going to be the best playground equipment for the parks. Pickleball is a big deal. Do we put pickleball in the parks? How many basketball courts do we need?... All that kind of stuff."

Marsh said the city is speculating on creating other types of master plans in future years.



Comprehensive Development Plan Abilene, Kansas



Prepared by:
Community Development Department
September 11, 2006

Courtesy Graphic

The city of Abilene's comprehensive plan was approved by the city commission in 2006.

Inside one of the anti-abortion crisis pregnancy centers that might get millions from Kansas



Rose Conlon • Kansas News Service

Family Life Services employees Marlana Mills and Krysta Wood say they want to make it easier for people to choose alternatives to abortion, like parenting or adoption.

By Rose Conlon
Kansas News Service

If you think you might be pregnant, and you don't have the money to buy a pregnancy test, Family Life Services will give you one for free.

But first, you'll have to answer a few questions.

"If they don't have a support system, if their significant other or the assumed father is nowhere around — that automatically flags to us they're already abortion-vulnerable," said Marlana Mills, the organization's executive director.

"Then," she said, "the question that we ask prior to doing the pregnancy test is, 'If this is positive today, what would be your decision? Are you thinking of abortion?'"

Family Life Services is one of a loose network of crisis pregnancy centers, or what critics call anti-abortion counseling centers. They're controversial for what de-

tractors see as a bait-and-switch approach that targets vulnerable women seeking abortions and lobbies them to carry their pregnancies to term instead.

Now, in a post-Roe Kansas — where abortion opponents faced a stunning defeat last summer — some lawmakers want to funnel millions of public dollars into those centers across the state.

That would amount to a significant taxpayer-funded investment in places like Family Life Services, whose sign advertises prenatal education, adoption services and guidance. A baby doll looks out the window onto the main drag of this Kansas town, a few miles from the Oklahoma border. Three-dimensional models of fetuses sit on display by the reception desk.

Anyone who's pregnant or who has a young infant can come here, but the center aims to reach people dealing with unintended pregnancies.

"That's really what we strive to do — to support and encourage people that find themselves in a hard spot," said Krysta Wood, the center's pregnancy education case manager.

Central to Family Life Services' mission is discouraging the usually young, often low-income people who walk through their doors from getting abortions.

If staff suspect a woman is "abortion-minded," they offer her an ultrasound — with the hope that it might sway her decision.

Once, Mills cold-called a woman whose friend alerted the center she wanted to end her pregnancy. "I said, 'I understand that you're pregnant and that you are considering abortion. You have friends who love you that would like for you to talk with us. Would you like to make an appointment?'" Mills said. "It did not change her mind, but we were there for her."

The Christian nonprofit tries to change minds by coupling anti-abortion counseling with practical support.

The building is stocked with cans of baby formula

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UFOs sighted over Kansas for decades

By Gail Parsons
Abilene Reflector-Chronicle

In the days following the downing of a suspected Chinese spy balloon, the U.S. military shot down three additional objects flying over North America.

President Joe Biden recently said the intelligence community's current assessment is that the three unidentified flying objects were, "most likely balloons tied to private companies, recreation or research institutions studying weather or conducting other scientific research."

On Feb. 15 the Northern Illinois Bottlecap Balloon Brigade reported a Pico balloon they launched and was tracking disappeared over the Yukon Territory around the same location and time a U.S. F-22 shot down one of the UFO.

According to aviationweek.com, Pico balloons are about 3 feet in diameter before they are launched. As they ascend to altitudes of 20,000-50,000 feet they expand to 2-3 times in size and achieve neutral buoyancy, allowing them to float at a roughly consistent altitude. Wind currents then push them through the atmosphere. Some can circle the world several times before they pop or fall. They are tracked with HF and VHF/UHF radio links.

The UFOs shot down this month account for only a fraction of the thousands that people report seeing over America every year. Cheryl Costa, an Air Force and Navy veteran who retired after 32 years in the aerospace industry, co-authored with Linda Miller Costa, "UFO Sightings Desk Reference: United States of America 2001-2020." The

books are a series that includes data on the reported sightings for all 50 states detailed down to the zip codes, counties, towns and cities.

In the 20 years covered in their research, there have been 167,632 eye witness reports of UFOs, a number Costa believes is well below actual sightings.

"About 16.74% of adult Americans say they have seen a UFO," Costa said. "Only about one in 257 people report what they see."

According to their data, Kansas reported 1,498 UFO sightings from 2001 to 2020, which ranks the state at 34th in the nation. Reports came in from 92 of the state's 105 counties, 270 of the 630 municipalities, and 259 of the state's 667 zip codes.

Johnson, Sedgwick, Wyandotte, Shawnee and Douglas counties; and Wichita, Overland Park, Topeka, Kansas City and Lawrence topped the state for reports.

Eight reports came out of Dickinson County. Six were from Abilene and two came from Herington. Of those from Abilene one was described as a blimp shape, one was changing, two were circles, one was a rectangle and one a triangle. From Herington, one was described as a flash, the other as a light.

Across the state, at the start of the data period the number of sightings rose from 35 in 2001 to 131 in 2012 before starting to decrease for a few years. In 2018 there were 52 reports, subsequent years saw another rise with more than double the reports in 2020 with 116.

"There is something else going on because suddenly ... there seems to be

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Weather Watch Record

Today's forecast high — 55

Today's forecast low — 11

Monday's high — 64

Overnight low — 50

Precipitation — 0.00

2023 precipitation — 3.13

Sunrise Thurs — 7:10 a.m.

Sunset Wed — 6:14 p.m.



Thursday

High: 30
Low: 8
Sunny

Friday

High: 33
Low: 8
Partly cloudy

Saturday

High: 52
Low: 32
Mostly cloudy

Sunday

High: 64
Low: 47
Mostly cloudy