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Blue Springs to shift animal services

Council discusses legal concerns behind closed doors but won't offer details publicly

By Mike Genet mike.genet@examiner.net

The city of Blue Springs says it will return animal control as an in-house operation after its contract with the non-profit group Pawportunities ends Oct. 1, citing unspecified legal implications with the current arrangement.

Pawportunities started to provide animal control services for the city in February 2022, and there had been short-term contracts before the one-year extension currently in effect. The non-profit organization had started a few years earlier as an animal rescue and adoption operation, and the

city for years had struggled to keep animal control officers and thus regular service.

Blue Springs Mayor Chris Lievsay said the legal concerns came up during a standard review of contracts, and the city was advised in late March by legal counsel to not continue with

Pawportunities, but he would not specify the legal implications. The council discussed the matter in closed session.

"There were no concerns with their performance, and we've said publicly how appreciative we are of their

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Legislators move to cut all Planned Parenthood funding

Group provides wide range of services, but no abortions, across Missouri

By Anna Spoerre Missouri Independent

A bill that would make Missouri the fourth state to ban Medicaid reimbursements to Planned Parenthood is on its way to the governor.

On Wednesday, the Missouri House in a vote along party lines approved legislation to end Medicaid reimbursements to any health centers affiliated with abortion providers. Republicans are confident they've landed on a strategy that will finally stick after courts struck down two previous attempts a similar restriction through the state budget.

This legislation, originally filed by Republican state Rep, Cody Smith of Carthage, is nearly identical to a bill filed by state Sen. Mary Elizabeth Coleman, a Republican from Arnold, which was blocked by a Democratic filibuster in February.

Senate Democrats filibustered for more than 11 hours earlier this month, arguing that the legislation will harm Missouri's low-income patients. The filibuster was eventually abandoned when Republicans agreed to take out a provision that also would have ended contracts with organizations founded by eugenicists.

Democrats arguing in opposition to the bill on Wednesday said the state's health-care safety net cannot reasonably support the thousands of Medicaid patients

See FUNDING, Page A8

Mondaine takes on new role in historic church

By Mike Genet mike.genet@examiner.net

While Rev. Anthony Mondaine closed the ministry he had founded several years ago, the Restoration Life church, First Christian Church in Independence was seeking a new pastor.

Restoration Life had been conducting services in Independence First Christian's building on Pleasant Street next to the Square, and as First Christian searched for a new permanent minister Mondaine served as a guest preacher several times.

Now, Mondaine is settling into his new role as the minister of the church that dates back to 1835.

"It's going quite well. The opportunity presented itself, and it was the perfect time," Mondaine said of First Christian asking him to be minister following a March 3 congregation



The Rev. Anthony Mondaine introduces himself as the new minister of First Christian Church in a video posted on the church's Facebook page. [PHOTO COURTESY OF BRENT SCHONDELMEYER]

vote, as God is the "master strategist" and helped guide his path.

"Trust his process. Where he guides, he provides," Mondaine

said, and he said this new ministry provided another avenue to serve people in the community, as First Christian Church considers itself

a mission-minded congregation with active outreach programs.

See MONDAINE, Page A7

Constitutional question on the table

Local lawmaker wants members of Congress to live in their districts

Dmitry Martirosov Columbia Missourian.

Rep. Aaron McMullen is fighting an uphill battle — and he knows it.

McMullen, a Republican from Independence, is pushing legislation that would require Missouri's members of Congress to reside in the district they represent.

But there's one problem: His proposal conflicts with the U.S. Constitution.

Article 1 Section 2 of the Constitution states that to be a U.S. representative, a candidate must be at least 25 years old, have been a U.S. citizen for seven years and a resident of the state they seek to represent at the time of the election. Adding further requirements, such as those proposed in McMullen's bill, would go against the Constitution.

McMullen's two-page proposal states that beginning in the 2026

federal elections, a candidate running to represent a congressional district in Missouri must live in that district.

The bill further states that if a candidate runs for a congressional district in which the boundaries have not been changed in the past 24 months, that candidate must reside in that district for 12 months before the election and for three

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State Rep. Aaron McMullen, R-Independence, presents a bill in committee in January. (TIM BOMMEL/MISSOURI HOUSE COMMUNICATIONS).

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# NEWS

## CONGRESS

From Page A1

months if the district's boundaries have been changed. Before a candidate's name appears on the ballot, that person's residency would have to be verified by the secretary of state's office, the bill states.

But all of these requirements conflict with the U.S. Constitution, as determined by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1995.

In that ruling, Arkansas residents amended their state constitution, seeking to limit the number of terms members of their state legislators and their congressional representatives could serve. In a narrowly split decision, the Supreme Court ruled that putting additional requirements on members of Congress is prohibited, and thus unconstitutional. The ruling invalidated similar measures passed by 22 other states, including Missouri.

"This is going to

be a long process," McMullen said in an interview, adding that he and Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft's office are working to amend some language in the bill.

When McMullen first presented his bill last year, he faced stern opposition from Rep. Adam Schwadron, a St. Charles Republican, who called the measure "blatantly unconstitutional" and said he couldn't support it. Last week, Schwadron again laid out his argument for why the bill is flawed when it was heard by the House Elections and Elected Officials Committee.

"I understand where people are coming from," Schwadron later said in his office. "Unfortunately, I don't want to have to spend state money on something that we 100% know will be struck down by the courts."

The question at the heart of McMullen's bill is one of representation. Specifically, whether a candidate who doesn't live in a particular district should be able to represent it.

The Missouri Constitution lays out requirements for members of the legislature, which includes district residency. But the U.S. Constitution does not address the issue.

"The members of the Constitutional Convention were familiar with district residency requirements, and many of the states imposed them in state constitutions. But they did not choose to put them in the U.S. Constitution," said Peverill Squire, a political science professor at the University of Missouri. "While many Americans might agree on requiring district representation, it could only be mandated through a constitutional amendment."

And an amendment is something McMullen, a candidate for Senate District 11, said he is open to.

"I feel like what this bill does is start the conversation to try to look and, you know, amend, possibly, the (U.S.) Constitution," he said. "Everybody agrees with the concept and agrees that

this is something that needs to be fixed. It's just a long and arduous process."

In 1996, Missouri residents passed a constitutional amendment that sought to place term limits on members of Congress to a maximum of three terms for House representatives and two for senators. The measure passed with more than 57% of the vote but was deemed invalid by the U.S. Supreme Court in a 2001 decision.

Opposition to McMullen's bill is sparse, with most either indifferent as a result of the legal hurdles still in its way or concerned with the precedent it might set.

"I get a little bit weary anytime we start confining the requirements that are already in the federal constitution," said Rep. Kevin Windham, a Democrat from Hillsdale, who sits on the House Elections and Elected Officials Committee.

Windham said the bill raises a few red flags for him as it relates to placing boundaries around certain areas of the law.

"The state legislature draws the lines for congressional districts. What happens when what has seemingly been a practice of drawing folks out of certain congressional districts?" Windham said, referring to redistricting every 10 years. "It has a little bit more of an effect when you say that that person can't run at all in that district."

Windham added that he thinks there's a clear conflict of interest when the legislature controls the process of both drawing the lines for congressional districts and narrowing the residency requirements in the U.S. Constitution.

"It puts, at least me, in particular, in a weird space as far as being able to support (the bill)," Windham said.

Squire said candidates can easily find themselves in new districts following redistricting, which could then place them in situations in which they're running for a district they do not live in.

"District lines shift, and candidates may

not want to move with them," Squire said.

"In urban areas," he added, "the lines don't usually match media markets, and members may be sufficiently well-known to run even if they don't currently live in the district."

It's been nearly 32 years since the U.S. Constitution has last been amended, when in May 1992 Michigan became the 38th state needed to ratify the 27th Amendment.

Yet despite the slim odds McMullen's bill might be facing during this legislative session, he remains optimistic.

"The journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step," McMullen said.

And if he somehow manages to pull it off, beginning the process of amending the U.S. Constitution, even Schwadron, McMullen's most ardent opponent, said he would support it.

"I would vote for that," Schwadron said, "I would approve that, so long as it is an amendment to the United States Constitution."

## MONDAINE

From Page A1

"My work for the community is serious," said the pastor, who two years ago became the first Black person elected

to the Independence School District Board of Education. "When you think of Anthony Mondaine and get to know him, you think of Christ as his center. I care deeply about the community I live in, and I have to serve. I don't have a choice."

Mondaine acknowledged that his new role is a change for him and the congregation, but he said he's received some heartwarming response to sermons, and several new church members have joined.

"It is very different,

in many ways, but also similar in many ways," he said. "For the most part it's an all-white congregation, whereas I had more of a diverse congregation. But it's a beautiful opportunity for growth in the kingdom."

In addition to his time on the school board of the district from which he graduated, Mondaine has also worked with the Jackson County Children's Fund.

"Just being in a community choir, being in a community

has always been part of my life, and it will always be a part," he said.

First Christian's official installation service for Mondaine will be 4 p.m. June 2, at the church at 125 S. Pleasant St.

## ANIMALS

From Page A1

work," Lievsay said after he revealed the city's decision this week on social media, shortly after Pawportunities did the same.

"Many of us wish other options were available to maintain what has worked well for the past few years, but that is just not possible," Lievsay wrote on social media.

Pawportunities co-founder Carrie Siems said the organization has tried to learn more about the reason for the city's decision. It learned of that decision April 15.

"We have reached out multiple times but have heard nothing," said Siems, whose son Bentley's passion for animals was the genesis of Pawportunities.

Over the next several months, Lievsay said, the city will have to work out a transition plan and set up animal control to continue the level of service Pawportunities had, which was more than what the city had been able to do in animal control.

"The comments we had from residents was that how we had it previously was not acceptable," the mayor said. "They've set a standard."

The current contract calls for monthly payments from the city to the nonprofit for more than \$317,000 total, and Pawportunities must have at least one officer and one administrator on call during

weekday hours. It had access to the city's animal shelter. Siems said the organization has four animal officers, and it will aim to provide more than the minimum coverage at all times over the next few months.

But now those

employees might need to job hunt, as well.

"We've wanted to provide services - the animals and residents in the city need our help - and try to schedule to maximize our ability," Siems said. "It's definitely complicated."

### Household Hazardous Waste COLLECTION EVENT

## SATURDAY, MAY 4

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**Accepted materials include:** batteries, paint, lawn and garden chemicals, automotive fluids, fluorescent light bulbs and household cleaners.

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