



**VIRGIN GALACTIC**

# Want to go?

Billionaire Branson's space plane success gives astro-tourism boost. **A3**



**RIDGEFIELDS INVITATIONAL**

# Armstrong finds success for second time. **B1**

# Johnson City Press

TRI-CITIES, TENNESSEE | johnsoncitypress.com

MONDAY, JULY 12, 2021 | \$1.00



DAVID FLOYD/JOHNSON CITY PRESS

**A rezoning request before the Johnson City Regional Planning Commission this week includes two vacant plots that used to be part of Optimist Park. The city plans to sell the properties.**

## Rezoning set for former park site

### Former Optimist Park being considered for business development

**By David Floyd**  
PRESS STAFF WRITER  
dfloyd@johnsoncitypress.com

Johnson City is preparing to rezone the now-defunct Optimist Park, which could set the stage for development on a couple

pieces of city-owned property that have long gone unused.

The Johnson City Regional Planning Commission will consider Tuesday whether to rezone six parcels along Novus Drive, a new public road that connects North State of Franklin Road to West Market Street. The request comes from the city manager's office.

If approved, the request would then go to the City Commission, which would consider the pro-

posal on three readings.

Development Services Director Preston Mitchell said the city plans to sell Optimist Park's two northernmost tracts, which are currently vacant and dominated by grass. The city considers the property surplus.

"In preparation for getting that property back into the private market ... we wanted to zone it appropriately to allow for whatever redevelopment needs or wants to occur," Mitchell said.

The parcels east of Novus Drive would change from R-4 (medium density residential) to B-4 (planned arterial business), which would make it consistent with existing zoning in that area. The one property west of Novus Drive would change from R-4 to MS-1 (medical services).

Most of the property is city owned, but the rezoning does include two privately owned

See **REZONING**, Page A2

## Inspiring the next inventors

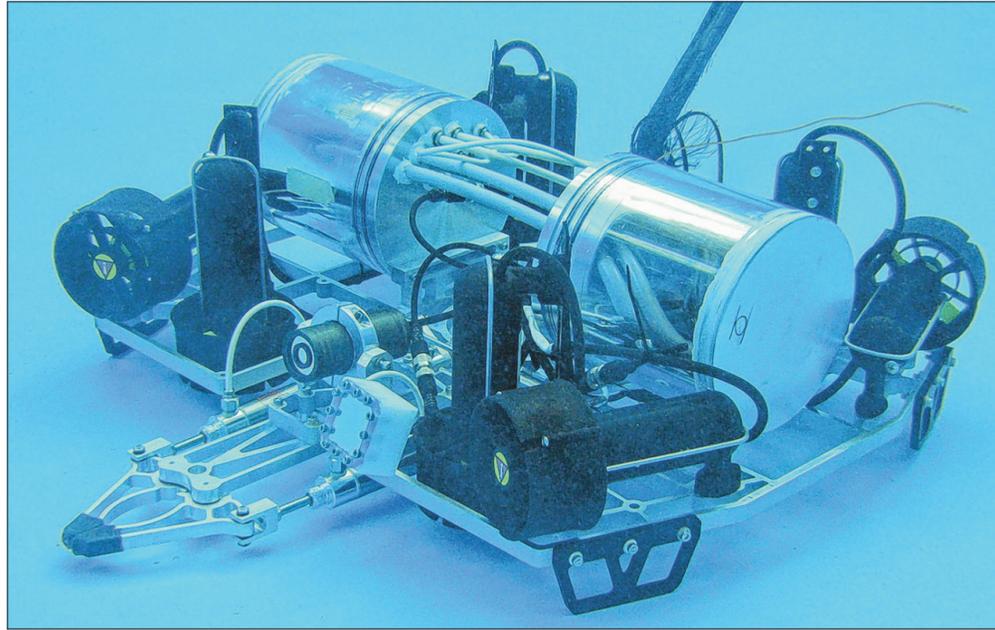
### ETSU to host advanced underwater vehicle workshop

Contributed to the Press

East Tennessee State University and STREAMWORKS will host an "Advanced Underwater Vehicle Workshop" at the ETSU-Eastman Valleybrook Campus in Kingsport from July 12-16. This professional development workshop will focus on the soon-to-be-released remotely operated vehicle SeaMATE Barracuda 2.0.

This workshop is just weeks ahead of the 2021 Marine Advanced Technology Education International ROV World Championship, an underwater robotics competition, which will take place on the main ETSU campus Aug. 5-7.

"There's a need for educators to have access to real-world learning experiences, and part of that is training educators outside of the academic institutions and also partnering with industry, communities and different initiatives like this," STREAMWORKS Director Dennis Courtney said. "ETSU gets that — understanding that STEM education is relevant to everyday life — and they help us facilitate these efforts that impact students' learning outcomes and futures." The workshop will take place



CONTRIBUTED

**This week's workshop at the ETSU-Eastman Valleybrook Campus will allow educators to learn about the SeaMATE Barracuda 2.0 in advance of the ROV World Championship coming up in August.**

on the university's Valleybrook campus, where around 20 participants from across the U.S. will have access to the STREAMWORKS STEM Gym.

The week will end with an ROV challenge in the Basler Center for Physical Activity pool on ETSU's main campus. The program is taught by

Courtney, Tony Suppelsa of Motorola Solutions, and Matt Gardner of MATE.

See **INVENTORS**, Page A2

## Lawmaker resolved to bring help to farmers

**By Robert Houk**  
PRESS SENIOR REPORTER  
rhouk@johnsoncitypress.com

State Rep. Rebecca Alexander, R-Jonesborough, said a recent visit to a goat farm in the

7th District has bolstered her resolve to make agriculture one of her top priorities in Nashville.



Alexander

The lawmaker said touring the farm near the Lamar community provided her with an opportunity to learn more about the economic plight that working farmers face every day. Her goal, the Washington County lawmaker said last week, is to pursue initiatives that improve agri-business opportunities in Tennessee.

"Farmers have struggled so much in recent years that

See **FARMERS**, Page A2

**MYSTERY DINER**

## Project BBQ brings Texas-style specialty to Johnson City on wheels

I've always had a soft spot for food truck vendors. This comes from a guy named Pete who ran "The Dog Cart" across the street from my high school. Pete did a very good business selling Arpeako hot dogs to teenagers like me who'd smelled his business in operation from inside our classroom. Pete was my first exposure to what is required for a man to run his own business, being both entrepreneur and employee at the same time.

Johnson City has such a man as Pete named Alex Weaver. Like Davy Crockett, Weaver had "gone



**The Project BBQ food truck was set up on Mockingbird Drive on this day.**

to Texas," (looking for a college education instead of the Alamo,) and returned with an idea for

serving Texas-style barbecue in East Tennessee.

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Using a food truck to sell his barbecue was an apt one for Weaver. Like a fisherman, Weaver can go where the "fishing" is best rather than just staying in one place. He can also make sure the food truck's menu is a constantly changing one. The food truck can set up anywhere there are hungry people nearby, its daily menu's offerings

See **WHEELS**, Page A2



CONTRIBUTED/MYSTERY DINER

**The Smash Burger's smoky flavor of the brisket was matched perfectly by the just the right amount of its fat content to mouth-filling proportions. Even the "tater totz" were excellent.**



**CONTACT US**

To suggest a story, call 722-1330  
To buy a classified ad, call 722-0509  
For display advertising, call 929-3111  
To subscribe, call 722-0510

**WEATHER A3**

High Low  
**89 67**  
Chance of showers, thunderstorms today, tonight

**DEATHS A6**

Philip D. (Bud) Lauer  
**JOHNSON CITY**  
Effie Grace Brown  
Rupe Miers  
JONESBOROUGH  
James H. "Jim" Eldridge

**ONLINE**

Follow the Johnson City Press for breaking news, sports and information at johnsoncitypress.com, on Facebook at facebook.com/JohnsonCityPress and on Twitter at @jcpres.

**INSIDE**

Appy League B1  
Classified ads B5  
Comics B8  
Editorial A4  
Fun & Games B7  
JC history A5  
Lottery A2  
Muddy Creek B1  
NASCAR B1  
On the Air B2  
Rutledge A5  
TV listing A7

# Leaving for vacation? • BUY TICKET • PACK BAGS • ORDER

# Johnson City Press VAC-PAC

We'll save the day for you, and the next day...and the day after that. Your carrier will save your newspapers while you're away and deliver them in one convenient package when you return. No mess, fuss or additional charge. Before you leave home, call 423-722-1330 or 423-392-1390