

City's Christmas lighting

BY NORM CANNADA
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SENECA — Christmas at Norton Thompson Park may look very different than years past this season if a proposal is approved to spend about \$75,000 for a holiday makeover that would add a new, larger tree with more lights and decorations.

City events coordinator Riley Johnson presented the idea during a city council work session Tuesday night.

"I think it would really take it to the next level," Johnson told the council. "The lighting of the tree has grown. We've got singers, dancers — it's a nice celebration. It's good for the whole community to come to the park and then — 3, 2, 1 — light it up and start the Christmas parade."

Johnson estimated it would cost about \$75,000 to purchase a new artificial tree with lights, along with other lights and decorations for the park. He said he

would have itemized numbers for the next council meeting. That meeting is scheduled for Sept. 11.

City administrator Scott Moulder said, if approved, the project would likely be funded by the city's hospitality and accommodations tax fund.

Johnson said he believes the new decorations and tree would "bring tourism into the city and give people a reason to stay here."

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may get \$75K boost

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"If they're here, hopefully, they'll stay and stop in the shops and maybe eat at one of the restaurants," he said. "Everybody and their brother around Christmas talks about, 'Hey, let's go get in the car and go look at the lights.' Well, we want to be that place where you can come downtown and look at downtown Seneca. I think this will be tremendous."

The plan would have the park ready for the holidays by the time of the Christmas tree lighting and Seneca Christmas Parade on Nov. 26. The tree, lights and decorations would remain on

display until after the New Year, Johnson said.

Johnson said last year's tree lighting was special with music and dancers in the program but also showed the need to im-

prove the decorations, which have included a pole with lights for a tree for the past several years.

"We want the wow factor," he said. "We've got so many things going on now — there's

a sizzle about downtown Seneca. People are talking about it. And we want to continue right on through during the Christmas season to get them to come downtown."

'We want the WOW factor.'

Riley Johnson
Seneca events coordinator



City of Seneca employees set up Christmas light displays at Norton Thompson Park in Seneca in 2014. City events coordinator Riley Johnson hopes to spend about \$75,000 to take the park's holiday decorations to "the next level" this year.

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