

May 28, 2025

It is no secret that I have my concerns about this park design. Specifically, I have been vocal about the fact that a new concrete circle with concrete pathways have been added where originally a substantial amount of open green space was to be appropriated. I still believe the changes to the original concept are regrettable, however I do understand the concerns from others as to why it did change. The way it was described to me was that there were concerns about the exclusion of a pathway through the center of the park – that it would make it more difficult for citizens generally to get from one side of the park to the other. I believed those people could simply walk around the park to access the other side. I am also concerned that having that circle in the middle of the park to house the Christmas Tree for just two months out of the year would leave it under-utilized the other ten months. However, in meetings with CJL Engineering and UpStreet Architects, my concerns have been addressed. If this design passes today, it is vitally important that we ensure the circle is utilized throughout the entire year, not just during Christmas.

When I was appointed to this council, I made the residents of our city a very specific promise, and that was that I would never lie to them. In complete transparency I considered proposing mothballing this project and sending the money that was allocated back to the Federal Government. However, if that were to happen there would be detrimental implications the city would have to endure. The criticism of this council and our local government would be deafening. Incompetence would be projected throughout our community. Spending \$1.6 million on brand new designs for Central Park and then having absolutely nothing to show for it would be a total and complete embarrassment. Moreover, it would prove very difficult for the city to receive targeted state or federal funding moving forward because we would have proven that we cannot get a project completed with the money that was allocated to us. I am not willing to put our city in that precarious position, the last thing that I would ever want to do is hurt the city or the citizens.

Although I have stated from the beginning, agreeing with certain members of this council past and present and before I had the honor to represent the people of this city, the money that we received from the American Rescue Plan funds could have been used in so many other areas of need within the city. The City council preceding me made the majority decision to allocate the money to this

specific project. I think it is very important to understand the point at which we are at right now – it is either we move forward with this Central Park Project, or we give the money back – it really is that simple. While I and others on this council have concerns with this design, I must say at the end of the day that I am not willing to give up all the good about the Central Park Project because of the aspects that I disagree with. We cannot potentially lose a brand-new park, three phase electricity, seven new water outlets, a brand-new extension onto Gazebo Park Place, a new Walk of Honor, a new irrigation system and overall, a new park that will be ADA compliant and more inclusive for all to use. Ultimately this is about doing what is best for the citizens of Johnstown. I believe forfeiting this project when we are so close to beginning the real work would not only be detrimental to the city's future, but would be extremely short-sighted. The reaction to this project is akin to that of the announcement by Discover Downtown Johnstown of the addition of the Christmas Tree in the park. I was part of the group of people that originally said that the tree was a vast waste of money, and it would do little to benefit the downtown area. As we see today, I and others could not have been more wrong. I see the Central Park project in a similar way. It may be difficult to visualize a new park now, but in the future, I truly believe this new and vastly improved park will be a tremendous asset for the Central Business District and indeed to the entire city.

It is important that we finish what was started. We have a real opportunity to make some good changes to our city; therefore, I must urge this council and the public to please not be short-sighted and attempt to see the good of what this project will ultimately bring to downtown Johnstown and our surrounding community. Let us always remember that this city and its citizens deserve the very best from us every single day. So please – let us finish what was started. Thank you

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Taylor B. Clark', with a stylized, cursive script.

Taylor B. Clark