



NEWS RELEASE

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City Council approves effort to transfer Black Cat Cave site to MTSU *Native American site discovered, secured to protect site*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 2, 2015

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. – The Murfreesboro City Council has authorized the Parks & Recreation Department to continue to work towards the transfer of 2.4 acres of property which includes the entrance of Black Cat Cave to MTSU subject to final administrative and legal approvals. The Murfreesboro Parks & Recreation Commission and the Murfreesboro Planning Commission previously approved transfer efforts.

“There are many factors that are being researched regarding the current and future preservation of the site in reference to its status as a Native American cemetery,” said Parks & Recreation assistant director Angela Jackson. “We believe that MTSU is likely better able to preserve, protect, and continue to study the history contained in this site for the long-term.”

The 2.4 acre site was at one time federally owned. On Sept. 9, 1971, the United States quitclaimed the 2.4 acre parcel that includes the entrance to the cave to the City of Murfreesboro. With stipulation that the deeded property be used for “public park and recreational purposes,” Murfreesboro Parks and Recreation maintained the area as a roadside park with picnicking amenities. The cave’s entrance had been closed and fenced.

Black Cat Cave was well known among Rutherford County locals as the reputed location of a speakeasy during the 1920s Prohibition Era. After discovering that an area of concrete floor that had years ago been placed over parts of the cave’s natural floor had been broken and the soil beneath it dug away, a team of MTSU professors and students, along with archeologist Aaron Deter-Wolf from the Tennessee Division of Archeology, worked to replace the soil to its prior location. During that process, human remains and human artifacts were discovered.

After the discovery of this Native American cemetery at the Black Cat Cave, the City of Murfreesboro took steps to better secure the site. The City retained Griggs & Maloney Inc., a Murfreesboro engineering and environmental consulting firm, who along with the Murfreesboro Parks & Recreation Department, the MTSU Department of Sociology and Anthropology and

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the Tennessee Division of Archeology, the Native American Association and Rollins Excavating Company to plan, design and construct the new gate system. The gate is designed to better protect the site while allowing appropriate access. The park remains closed to the public.

Until uncovered by the vandalism, the City had no knowledge of any evidence of prehistoric or ancient activities within the cave.

Traditionally, historians and archaeologists believed that for thousands of years much of Rutherford County was used simply as a hunting ground. But the recent discovery of the Black Cat Cave site is expected to rewrite that history.

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Photos attached captions:

Photo by Jim Davis, Murfreesboro Parks & Recreation Department

1. *Exterior View of Black Cat Cave entrance.jpg*

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