

AP Explains: What could be in the long-secret JFK files?

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER
Associated Press

BOSTON — For decades, the existence of secret government files linked to President John F. Kennedy's assassination has helped fuel conspiracy theories that others besides Lee Harvey Oswald were involved in his murder. Now the public is going to get a deeper look at the collection.

The government is required by Thursday to release the final batch of files related to Kennedy's assassination in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963. Experts say the publication of the last trove of evidence could help allay suspicions of a conspiracy — at least for some.

"As long as the government is withholding documents like these, it's going to fuel suspicion that there is a smoking gun out there about the Kennedy assassination," said Patrick Maney, a presidential historian at Boston College.

Here's a look at what to expect from the files:

How many files are there and how can I see them?

The collection includes more than 3,100 documents — comprising hundreds of



AP Photo/Jim Altgens, File

In this Nov. 22, 1963 file photo, President John F. Kennedy waves from his car in a motorcade in Dallas. Riding with Kennedy are First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy, right, Nellie Connally, second from left, and her husband, Texas Gov. John Connally, far left. President Donald Trump says he plans to release thousands of never-seen government documents related to President John F. Kennedy's assassination.

thousands of pages — that have never been seen by the public. About 30,000 documents were released previously with redactions. The National Archives is planning to post the files on its website.

Will all of them be released?

It's unclear exactly how

many files will be released. President Donald Trump is the only person who can stop any of the documents from becoming public and he's not tipping his hand. On Wednesday, the eve of their scheduled release, Trump tweeted: "The long anticipated release of the #JFKFiles will take place

tomorrow. So interesting!"

On Saturday, he had tweeted that — "subject to the receipt of further information" — he will allow the "long blocked and classified JFK FILES to be opened."

The CIA and FBI, whose files make up the bulk of the final batch, have refused to say whether they're

lobbying the president to keep any of the files under wraps. Experts expect certain IRS files to remain secret, like the tax return of Jack Ruby, the man who killed Oswald two days after Kennedy's assassination when the suspect was in police custody.

Why are they becoming public now?

President George H.W. Bush signed a law on Oct. 26, 1992, requiring that all documents related to the assassination be released within 25 years, unless the president says doing so would harm intelligence, law enforcement, military operations or foreign relations. The push for transparency was driven in part by the uproar in the wake of Oliver Stone's 1991 conspiracy-theory filled film "JFK."

Will there be any bombshells?

The chances are slim, according to the judge who led the independent board that reviewed and released thousands of the assassination documents in the 1990s. The files that were withheld in full were those the Assassination Records Review Board deemed "not believed relevant," Judge John Tunheim of Minnesota told

The Associated Press. But Tunheim said it's possible the files contain information the board didn't realize was important two decades ago.

JFK experts believe the files will provide insight into the inner workings of the CIA and FBI. But they stress that it will take weeks to mine the documents for potentially new and interesting information.

What will the files show?

Some of the documents are related to Oswald's mysterious six-day trip to Mexico City right before the assassination, scholars say. Oswald said he was visiting the Cuban and Soviet Union embassies there to get visas, but much about his time there remains unknown.

The to-be-released documents contain details about the arrangements the U.S. entered into with the Mexican government that allowed it to have close surveillance of those and other embassies, Tunheim said. Other files scholars hope will be released in full include an internal CIA document on its Mexico City station, and a report on Oswald's trip from staffers of the House committee that investigated the assassination.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Children play on new playground equipment on Wednesday at Sunset Park in Hermiston.

PLAYGROUND: Hermiston received more than 19,000 votes in the contest

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ribbon cutting ceremony Wednesday. Parks in Portland, Tillamook and Hermiston were up for consideration for the grant, and many residents voted over and over again each day to help Hermiston pull ahead of Portland.

"In February an epic battle ensued between the biggest city on the west side — Portland — and the biggest on the east — Hermiston," he said. "... When the dust settled, the clear winner was the children of Hermiston."

Ryan and Christina Schaan were some of the voters who helped make it happen, and were on hand with their son Cameron, 8, on Wednesday to help celebrate.

"It's fun to see stuff like this go on in Hermiston," Ryan said. "You don't see it happen very often so we wanted to support it."

Christina said she liked the variety of the equipment, including pieces like the drums and other noise makers that are accessible to children with disabilities.

"It makes it more versatile," she said.

Rebecca, Natalia and Camille LaBelle also voted in the online contest and came out Wednesday to see the fruits of their labors. Rebecca said their family frequents all the parks in Hermiston, and Natalia said she was glad to see Sunset Park expanded and improved with equipment that seemed safer than the old playground.

Camille, 10, said she thought the giant bears were "cool" and fun to climb. She was one of about 40 children participating in basketball clinics at the park on Wednesday, hosted by the Trail Blazers.

Matt Dietrich, lead youth development coach for the Blazers, said he enjoys



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Avery Warner, 4, of Hermiston, watches her spin on a question wheel as Mike McGuffey, with Moda Health, waits to ask her a question for a prize Wednesday at Sunset Park in Hermiston.

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— Matt Dietrich, lead youth development coach for the Trail Blazers

hosting clinics around the state to help the Blazers' youngest fans get active and have a positive experience with basketball.

"I can't believe I get paid to do this," he said after one of the half-hour clinics that involved passing drills, defensive drills, shooting drills and basketball pointers.

Dietrich worked with the kids on good defensive stances, accurate shooting, effective passing and quick hands and feet.

"The most important thought of the day today was really about building healthy communities, to get them active," he said. "We did as many active drills as possible."

Christa Stout, the Blazers' vice president of social responsibility, said children today are less active than they have ever been, and thanked the city and its partners for helping create a park that will help children in the community be more

active. Robin Richardson, senior vice president for Moda Health, told the crowd at the park that the Moda Assist grant program was a "cool example" of how the Blazers and Moda work together to help children.

"Healthy kids need places to play," he said.

The Hermiston playground is the third paid for by the Moda Assist program. Each year Moda Health and the Trail Blazers choose three projects in cities around Oregon and sponsor an online voting contest. The city with the most votes gets \$10 per assist made by the Blazers during their season. Last winter businesses like Smitty's Ace Hardware and organizations like Altrusa helped parks and recreation director Larry Fetter publicize the contest, rallying more than 19,000 votes for Hermiston.

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.

BMCC: Currently has 2,766 students

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another stream of words: big, scary, expensive, huge, money, dorms and debt.

He segued into a discussion of why small can be good. BMCC has an average class size of 15, he said, quite different from four-year institutions where freshmen often find large lecture halls and little or no one-on-one time with instructors. Students asked about programs, financial aid and how to find scholarships. When the recruiter wrapped it up, students crowded around him to ask follow-up questions.

What Hill is doing seems to be working.

BMCC reported enrollment of 11 percent more students compared with last fall term — while the nation's community colleges are collectively experiencing a downward trend. Lane Community College in Eugene, for example, experienced a 6.5 percent decline compared with last fall according to an article in "The Torch," the college's media organization. The BMCC number, which is 2,766 students, up from 2,491 in 2016, is just a snapshot, a moment in time, but administrators are ecstatic. BMCC Vice-President of Student Affairs Diane Drebin said the Pendleton college has managed to buck a trend.

"It is unusual to see a rise in enrollment when it isn't associated with a decline in the economy," Drebin said.

BMCC President Camille Preus credits a switch in recruitment strategy that began three years ago. It didn't — Shazam — just happen, she said.

The college got inten-



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

BMCC outreach assistant Abby Pierson uses humor as she engages a group of middle school students during a recent campus tour.

tional about face time with potential students and outreach is at full-throttle. Hill treks to each high school in BMCC's 18,000-square-mile district at least twice a year.

He said he tries to bust the stereotypes that community colleges are small and cheap. "They aren't cheap," he said. "They are more affordable."

Hill said he likes hearing teenagers tell their stories.

"High school students are awesome," he said. "I just talk with them hoping to spark questions. Seniors have a lot of questions and college is on their minds. A lot of what I do is to stay patient and wait for them to ask."

The other full-time recruitment person, program assistant (and BMCC graduate) Abby Pierson, focuses on younger students.

Pierson engaged several dozen Hermiston middle school students during a recent campus tour. Pierson connected with them by revealing her silly side.

"Fun fact," she said. "I can lick my elbow."

She demonstrated, eliciting giggles, then did a quick blast of BMCC

history, telling students they would need to regurgitate the information in a Jeopardy-esque game at the end. She explained the FAFSA (otherwise known as the Free Application for Federal Student Aid), the cost of attending college and the relationship between education and future earnings. A list of all 70 BMCC degrees and certificate programs flashed onto a screen. Pierson sped up, slowed down, changed gears and pulled them along. Afterwards, the students toured campus, visiting the library, bookstore, athletic center, art museum, the farm, diesel lab and other buildings on campus. By the time they climbed back on the bus, they could imagine themselves at BMCC.

Outreach with the high school seniors continues via social media. The outreach office tracks the journey each potential new student makes from FAFSA to enrollment.

"We've shifted from a passive approach to an intentional one. Once we get their attention, we stay connected and do a lot of follow-up," Drebin said. "It isn't just opening our door and saying, 'Y'all come.'"

INTRODUCING

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