

QUARTERLY ISSUES REPORT FOR

WOKZ-FM Fairfield, IL

Q1 – 2024

The following is a rundown of local issues covered on the airwaves of 105.9 WOKZ-FM from January 1, 2024 – March 31, 2024

Grayville Commissioners closed out the 2023 year with a Wednesday night meeting. Highlights include all employees of the City are getting a \$1 per hour increase to coincide with the state minimum wage increasing on January 1st. Two TIF requests were approved; one for Elisa Pearce of Epic Nails. She'll receive up to \$35,400 for her building and associated renovation costs. CC's Boutique is also receiving up to \$2,250 for a furnace replacement. The City of Grayville also entered into a revolving loan agreement with CC's for \$2,250. Commissioners approved a purchase from Great Lakes Water for shoring equipment at a cost of \$8,145 plus shipping.

During the meeting, council also approved a resolution to commit local funds for a sewer lagoon/sewer system upgrade grant that will be facilitated through Greater Wabash Regional Planning. Jeff Vaughan, grant writer, addressed council in a public hearing prior to regular session. The city will be requesting funding to the tune of \$1,385,000 to renovate the facility and has committed just over \$150,000.

Other, future community development the city is looking at includes a connective sidewalk, bike and golf cart path to connect the I-64 plaza to downtown Grayville, infrastructure improvements including additional water line replacements, and affordable new housing.

The Second Judicial Circuit is honored to recognize Associate Judge Mark L. Shaner in his retirement this month from the judiciary. Judge Shaner began his judicial career when he was appointed to the bench on March 2, 2005. His last date of service was December 15, 2023. During his tenure, he presided over cases throughout the Second Circuit. Judge Shaner was known for his commitment to the Second Judicial Circuit's drug courts and he also served as a New Judge Mentor providing guidance and support to new judges in their first years of service.

Second Circuit Chief Judge Melissa Morgan stated, "Judge Shaner has served the Second Circuit for over 18 years, leading by example with his outstanding dedication to the administration of justice. The Judges of the Second Circuit are honored to have served alongside him and we congratulate him on his retirement." The Second Judicial Circuit is comprised of the counties of Crawford, Edwards, Franklin, Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Jefferson, Lawrence, Richland, Wabash, Wayne, and White.

Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul is highlighting three new laws initiated by his office that will go into effect today. House Bill 1541 protects vulnerable residents from gas or electric utility service disconnections for nonpayment of bills when temperatures are 90 degrees or above, or when the National Weather Service issues an excessive heat watch, heat advisory or excessive heat warning. House Bill 2222 increases oversight of health care mergers and acquisitions. Finally, House Bill 3301 closes a loophole that allows non-custodial parents to avoid making child support payments.

State police are investigating an officer involved shooting in Fayette County. Authorities say officers received a call Saturday night about a burglary in progress with shots fired at a home in Brownstown. Tyler Roe fled the scene in a vehicle he stole from the victim's home. The Fayette County Sheriff's Department chased the vehicle until it stopped in Saint Elmo. As officers approached the vehicle, a Farina police officer shot Roe, who was taken to an area hospital. He was later released and booked at the Fayette County Jail.

A number of laws go into effect today in Illinois. Workers in the state will now be earning up to 40 hours of paid leave in a 12-month period. Another Illinois law prevents public and school libraries from banning books. Electronic cigarettes are now banned from being used in indoor public spaces. In order to increase road safety, a new law makes it illegal to Zoom, watch or stream videos, or access social media sites while driving.

A few traffic accidents were reported in Wayne County over the New Year's Holiday Weekend.

In Saturday at 11:40 PM, Wayne County Sheriff Officials were on the scene of a hit and run accident at the intersection of County Highway 1 and County Highway 16 in Elm River Township.

According to reports, a 2016 Freightliner operated by Jasufi Faton of Yorkville, IL when the first semi with trailer passed Faton's unit and collided with the front his truck. Faton refused treatment at the scene. The truck Faton was driving was owned by DRA Incorporated. Deputies were on scene of the crash for 40 minutes. No injuries were reported and over \$1500 was sustained to Faton's truck.

On Sunday Morning, Wayne County Sheriff's officials were on the scene of a car vs. deer accident in Arrington Township. The accident at 7:15 AM Sunday involved a 2004 Chrysler 300 operated by Brodie M. Toombs of Wayne City. According to sheriff's officials, Toombs was driving westbound on IL Highway 15 when a deer came into the path of Toombs. The vehicle was towed away from the scene. No injuries were reported. Over \$1500 was estimated for damages to Toomb's vehicle.

A pair of individuals were arrested following a traffic stop on Monday.

According to the information from the Wayne County Jail, 38-year-old Jessi R. Irwin of Mount Vernon and 40-year-old Everett Earl Irwin of Wayne City were taken into custody. Everett Irwin was wanted on Wayne County Warrants for possession of Meth, Possession of a controlled substance, and possession of drug paraphernalia. Jessica Irwin was wanted on a driving while suspended/revoked/ or cancelled charge.

Both are being held in the Wayne County Jail.

Fairfield Police responded to a residence on Spring Street for a report of a gun shot wound to the arm at 8:30 PM Monday. Officers are still investigating the circumstances of the shooting, but all indications are that this was an accidental shooting with the victim's own gun. No other injuries have been reported at this time.

The Illinois State Police have released information involving a two vehicle crash on Illinois Highway 15 on Saturday

According to the report, the accident happened at 12:46 PM. A 2007 Volkswagen Passat that was being driven by 18-year-old Quincy J. Riley of Montrose, IL was traveling northbound on County Highway 3 at the intersection of Illinois Highway 15 when the vehicle failed to stop at the stop sign and collided with a 2017 Ford Explorer operated by 37-year-old Tiffany L. Blankenship of Albion. Riley and a 16-year-old female passenger from Fairfield were airlifted to regional hospitals with serious injuries. Tiffany Blankenship and a passenger in her vehicle, 34-year-old Kevin Blankenship of Albion were transported to an area hospital with serious injuries.

The entire Eldorado Eagles Boys Basketball coaching staff has been fired following a special school board meeting in Eldorado Tuesday Evening.

At the meeting, school board officials terminated Head Coach Josh Bradley, JV Coach Austin Bradley, Varsity Assistant John DeBose, Varsity Assistant TJ Zuriline, and Freshman Coach Adam Nannes. The termination came following an executive session at Tuesday's special meeting. Events from Eldorado's basketball game against Hamilton County led to the measures put in play by the school board. The Eldorado school board will release more on the situation in the coming days.

It is currently unclear if any students have been disciplined for their actions in the game. Meanwhile, last night's boy's basketball game with Mount Carmel was canceled.

After the termination of the coaching staff, the board hired Rod Wallace to serve as an interim coach for the Eagles.

The Eldorado Eagles compete in the Black Diamond East Conference with Fairfield, Edwards County, Hamilton County, Flora, and Carmi-White County.

The Albion City Council met in a regular session on Tuesday Evening.

Before the meeting, a hearing was held concerning an application for a community development block grant which the money would be used for a new water line on Main Street and housing rehabilitation in the city limits. The total grant application amount is \$1,251,000. The Greater Wabash Regional Planning Commission presented the information for that public hearing. Later in the meeting, the council approved that grant application.

In regular business,

the council approved the payment of \$2875 per month to the 911 dispatch service. The amount before the raise was \$1550 per month. The council agreed to continue with the Marshall Electric Company work to survey water lines entering homes in Albion.

The total grant received was \$40,000,

however, that money has already been spent and an estimated \$20,000 in additional cost to do the balance of that 1500 water hookups was approved. It is hoped that the grant will pay another round of \$40,000 for the required survey work. The council approved the addition of the Juneteenth holiday and even-year election holiday for city workers.

The council again discussed the city website and the cost of \$3795 annually. The council will ask the Greater Wabash Regional Planning Commission to investigate possible grants for the communications system.

There was more talk about slowing down drivers on Elm Street. There was some discussion of a radar unit resembling a unit at the K-12 being installed as a deterrent. However, no action was taken by the council.

Women may be an underrepresented group in the field of agriculture, but thanks to a local course, area participants can receive support and guidance. Annie's Project is a training program designed to empower women in agriculture through education, networks, and resources. Illinois Extension will kick off the six-week program on February 29 in Edwards County.

Annie's Project brings women together to learn from experts in production, financial management, human resources, marketing, and the legal field. The program covers many topics dedicated to strengthening women's roles in modern farm and ranch enterprises, including business plans, crop insurance, diversifying farm operations, estate planning, farm appraisal, and much more. Local Foods and Small Farms Educator Katie Bell will lead the program.

"Annie's Project is a great learning opportunity for women at all levels of agriculture. Whether you are just starting out with your own farm or preparing to pass the reins to the next generation, there is something in this program for you," said Bell.

Annie's Project participants will meet on Thursdays from 5:30 – 8:30 p.m. at the Edwards County Farm Bureau Office at 15 South 5th Street in Albion, Illinois. A lite meal or snacks will be provided at each session.

The cost to attend is \$25, which covers the six-week program. If you require financial assistance to participate, please contact Katie Bell at kbell@illinois.edu to inquire about scholarship opportunities. Interested participants can learn more or register at go.illinois.edu/anniesproject2024 or by calling (618) 445-2934. The program registration deadline is February 15.

The Wayne County E911 Center, which is answered by Fairfield Police Department telecommunicators, has released information for calls taken during the 2023 calendar year.

According to officials at the center, they answered 22,915 calls. Of those calls, 5,370 were Enhanced 9-1-1 calls, 6,335 were Administrative 9-1-1 calls, and 11,210 were for Police line calls. Dispatchers received 27 text to 9-1-1 calls during 2023.

Telecommunicators processed 12,060 calls for service, Of those, 7,999 were for law enforcement calls, 2,272 were for emergency medical service calls, 1,262 were for fire service calls, 106 were for other emergency services, and 421 miscellaneous calls.

The Midwest Alliance for Patient Safety Patient Safety Organization announced the recipients of two MAPS PSO Patient Safety Champion awards in recognition of extraordinary efforts to improve patient safety in healthcare. Fairfield Memorial Hospital was one of the organizations receiving an award. That award was the Patient Safety Champion team award.

For the 2023 Patient Safety Champion team award, the committee honored the following emergency department staff members at Fairfield Memorial Hospital:

- Bobby Bridgeman, CPhT
- Merri Corbett-Mercer, EMT-P
- Rachel Jennings, RN, BSN
- Dawn Murbarger RN, EMT-P, LI
- Hattie Schoepf, RN
- Jennifer Young, RN

The Fairfield Memorial Hospital ED team was recognized for observing the plunger of a 3 cubic centimeter syringe had extra adhesive that was being pulled down into a syringe, which could have been injected into a patient and caused harm. After this finding, multiple syringes in the lot were tested and found to have the same issue. All syringes were removed from stock, and the manufacturer was immediately contacted with the finding. Due to the attention of the ED team, potential harm was prevented to incoming patients. Luke McDaniel, Chief Quality Officer at Fairfield Memorial Hospital, nominated the ED team.

The awards were presented by MAPS, an Illinois Health and Hospital Association company, at the MAPS PSO Annual Culture of Safety Workshop in November of 2023.

The MAPS PSO Patient Safety Champion Program has been federally certified since 2010, MAPS PSO assists its members with the important work of reducing adverse events so they can provide a safer healthcare experience for their patients. As part of its commitment to member excellence, MAPS established the Patient Safety Champion Program to highlight and reward members' commitment to patient safety.

“IHA and MAPS are proud to congratulate this year’s awardees from Fairfield Memorial Hospital for their steadfast commitment to prevent harm and improve patient safety,” said IHA President and CEO A.J. Wilhelmi. “The extraordinary work happening at these hospitals showcases the integrity and dedication of the Illinois healthcare community to provide a safer healthcare experience for their patients.”

MAPS PSO has a vital role in coordinating adverse event reporting and aggregating the data to drive collaboration and change. MAPS PSO members use this information to guide their efforts to improve care. MAPS PSO members include Midwestern health systems, hospitals, Critical Access Hospitals, physicians groups, long-term care and specialty outpatient clinics. Each benefits from the security of a protected PSO environment to collect, analyze, and learn from adverse event data and best practices.

To learn more about MAPS PSO, visit www.alliance4ptsafety.org.

The Olney Police Department in Richland County is paying respects to one of their finest. Sergeant William Joshua Schlick passed away due to cancer on January 2nd. Schlick had been a police officer with the Olney Police Department, starting in 2005 and served as and had served as a sergeant for 15 of the 17 years he was on the force.

A Visitation will be held on Sunday, January 7, 2023 from 2:00 – 5:00 PM at Mt. Gilead Church in Olney. A Memorial Service for Josh will follow the visitation time at 5:00 PM at the church.

In a statement on the City of Olney’s Facebook Page, officials say, “We appreciate Sgt. Schlick’s dedication as a civil servant to this community. He will be missed by many! Our deepest condolences go out to the Schlick family”.

The Greater Wabash Regional Planning Commission and the University of Illinois are hosting Community Kick-Off meetings for the FEMA 5-County Hazard Mitigation Plan, which aims to identify potential environmental hazards and create a community plan to address those hazards. These meetings are open to the public and

everyone is encouraged to attend. In the area of Wayne, Edwards, and Wabash Counties, the meeting will be held on January 23 from 9-10 in the morning at the Illinois Farm Bureau Office in Albion. For Lawrence and Crawford Counties, the meeting will be held from 1-2 PM at the Robinson Community Center. There will also be a virtual meeting option on January 25th from 5:30-6:30 PM on Zoom. We will have the meeting id with this story at WFIWRadio.com

Fairfield Community High School was under a precautionary lock down earlier this morning.

In a statement released by FCHS officials, "At the advisement of local police FCHS was placed on a soft lockdown as a result of a potential threat within the community. (Not in the building) After investigation by local law enforcement the threat was false and the building came off the soft lockdown".

We will release more information as it becomes available.

At 1145 AM this morning, Fairfield Police placed FCHS and Center Street School on lock down for approximately 25 minutes. Police say the reason was in reference to a citizen report of a vehicle traveling east from SW 7th ST. The vehicle, a silver SUV, had a passenger sitting out of the passenger window with a possible firearm. Fairfield Police and the Wayne County Sheriff Department responded to the area in search of the vehicle. The vehicle was not located. There was no report of a direct threat to the schools, the lock down was precautionary in nature.

Officials at the National Weather Service Office in Paducah are continuing to show concern for the weather system that the area will see Tuesday and Wednesday of next week.

In the latest briefing to media outlets from the National Weather Service Office in Paducah, the closer to Mount Vernon you area, the better of a chance of measurable snowfall you have. Officials believe with the winds expected, a wind advisory may be issued on Tuesday.

Weather service officials are continuing to monitor another system for Friday of next week, but they feel it's too early to tell what will happen.

The Fairfield City Council meets Tuesday night for their first meeting in the new year.

Items on the official agenda include the recognition of the retirement of Loren Dunn, an Audit Report from Kemper CPA, an ordinance TIF agreement, and an ordinance allowing reimbursement for Hazardous Material Responses. The council is also expected to award a bid for West Tower Repainting, as well as discuss no parking on both sides of the 400 block of Sluder Street. A Business Tax District is also listed on the agenda.

Tuesday night's meeting will get underway at 6 p.m. at the Fairfield City Hall Chambers.

Respiratory illnesses are still on the rise in Illinois. The respiratory illness level increased from Moderate to High in the past week and more than half the counties in the state are at an elevated level for COVID-19 hospitalizations. Flu activity is now surging to match the pre-COVID-19 2019-2020 season. The Illinois Department of Public Health is reminding the public to stay up-to-date on all respiratory illness vaccines and to stay home and seek treatment if you are sick.

The U.S. Supreme Court is denying an Illinois lawmaker's request to review Illinois' high court ruling that upheld the state's assault weapons ban. The denial of State Representative Dan Caulkins' request essentially closes the door on any legal challenges to the law. The Illinois Supreme Court ruled in August that the gun ban doesn't violate the state constitution. Governor Pritzker signed the law last year in response to the deadly Fourth of July shooting in Highland Park in 2022.

More than two dozen concerned citizens showed up to weigh in on recent changes at the Mill Shoals Community Center during the January 4th Village Board Meeting. Residents and citizens of neighboring communities said that the Bare family running the Community Center was a positive for the community and questioned why changes had to be made. According to the minutes from the gathering, some in attendance frowned upon the changes proclaiming that Mill Shoals now has nothing at all. Dana Bare chimed in with a list of efforts and events they've held at the Center over the years, emphasizing that no one was turned away from coming in or renting the building. Trustee Young asked Mr. Bare why he left in the first place and did not ask for a new agreement. Bare responded stating that once he heard that rent would change from \$100 a month to \$100 a day, he felt he had no choice but to pack up and get out. President Gray then reiterated that no rate had been set at this time, and the building would not be for rent in the future. Public comments were closed with no resolution to the situation.

Engineer Haley Ing informed the board that an EPA grant for \$30,000 was approved for the Village. President Gray and the other members of the Mill Shoals board approved Horner and Shifrin's offer to handle the required work for the ILEPA regarding line service inventories and GIS Mapping, which are expected to be a mandated statute in the coming year. The total cost will not exceed \$37,118.70.

Morgan Doggett with Drew Lane Consultants attended and explained that the Village was awarded a \$30,000 grant from the Illinois EPA Lead Service Line Inventory Grant Program in December. The Village will use this grant to meet required regulations for the Illinois EPA regarding the inventory and accounting of all water service lines in the Village limits.

Doggett elaborated that the USDA is reviewing the USDA Emergency Community Water Assistance Grant application and that an application for the Walmart Local Community Grant Program will be submitted for the Village Police Car in March when the program reopens.

Village Attorney Jonathan Turpin was present and reviewed Officer Titzer's 6-month contract renewal. The proposed contract runs from January 1 to June 30 of this year, and Officer Titzer is expected to sign upon his review of the contract.

Clerk Tullis informed the members that he has contacted the ITSB since November and believes he is getting nowhere with the agency. Attorney Turpin offered to contact the ITSB to get communication so the Village could start a police department and get Officer Titzer out on patrol.

Up next was Village Treasurer James Murphy, who discussed that the W2s and the 1099 forms would be out in the coming days.

Trustee West reported in old business that the Robbins Alignment was repairing the front-end issues with the police car. Once the repairs are fixed, the police car will be in good shape.

Lastly, a Key Control Box approval for all the town's keys was completed thanks to Clerk Tullis stating a need for it.

The next Mill Shoals meeting will be on Thursday, February 6, at 7 pm.

The FCHS Board will meet in a special session on Thursday at 5:30 PM in the Study Hall of Fairfield Community High School.

The main purpose of the meeting is to hear a presentation from Mike Ewald of Remedy Design LLC on potential Gym Renovations.

The agenda shows a closed session as well for the board to discuss the appointment, employment, retirement, or dismissal of an employee,

The Fairfield City Council met last night for their first session of 2024.

Guidelines for the new Business Tax District dollars were discussed at length with several details proposed.

The dollars will be allocated in 3 separate areas:

New Project \$200,000 in funding

Municipal Works \$400,000 in funding

Facade Improvement \$100,000

The fund balance is currently \$680,000.

The dollars must be spent within the taxing district, with the Facade Improvement requiring a match of up to \$10,000. Mayor Moore stated that the fund will require an application for funding and will be managed by the TIF Committee, with council approval required. The funding requests must be from a retail establishment, with residential properties excluded. Mayor Moore is requesting input on the guidelines from alderman and the public. The guidelines will be brought up for a vote at a future council meeting.

Michelle Smith with Kemper CPA presented the fiscal audit for the city with no discrepancies noted in the report.

Mayor Moore used the numbers from the audit to challenge the council to prepare for increasing revenues from the water distribution department since the gas and electric departments are subsidizing the water department. He quashed a Facebook suggestion that bankruptcy was an option, but did admit the city's financial picture could be better. The city's water engineer is preparing a rate study for future council presentation.

All bids were rejected for painting the west water tower. The item will be rebid in the future.

A discussion was held regarding parking problems in the 400 block of Sluder. The police department will be taking measurements to establish a no parking zone for the area in question.

Aldermen voiced their concern over the animals running loose in Fairfield, with one alderman asking what they were getting from the Humane Society for the \$2,000 monthly fee. Mayor Moore agreed that loose animals were a problem and stated that he was waiting for action from the Wayne County Board on the issue before moving forward.

A TIF Agreement with Jim and Cindy McCleary was approved for \$4,000. The money was used to install a new roof on the old Servicemaster building on East Delaware. The total project cost was \$20,000. The TIF Committee had approved the amount.

The highlight of the meeting was the retirement recognition for longtime city employee, Loren Dunn. Mr. Dunn served the city for 50 years, working under 12 administrations. He began his duties on February 26, 1973. He was presented with a plaque of appreciation and received a standing ovation from those attending. Several of Dunn's family members and city employees attended the ceremony.

Fairfield National Bank has announced that Jarod Weaver has joined the bank's Board of Directors. He replaces long-time Director Kent Vinson, who recently retired after twenty-five years of service to Fairfield National Bank.

Weaver obtained a bachelor's degree from Southern Illinois University-Carbondale. He farms in Wayne and Edwards Counties and owns a large farm equipment business located south of Albion. He and his wife, Carissa, reside in Albion and have three children: Peyton, Jaron, and Ashlyn. He enjoys serving as a Deacon of West Village Christian Church and is a member of the Board of Directors for the Edwards County Farm Bureau.

Weaver joins a team of eight other Directors at Fairfield National Bank, all committed to the bank's mission of regularly exceeding the expectations of customers, employees, shareholders, and communities.

Grayville wants you...and they want to pay you to take up residence there. At Monday night's Grayville council meeting, Mayor Travis Thompson laid out how he'd like the New Resident Attraction Program to work.

“A family, \$8,000 after two years and it's for purchasing a home valued at \$60,000 or more. The mayor and council could consider a home purchased for less than \$60,000 at any time on a case by case basis. And then one summer free of swimming at the Grayville swimming pool for the children of the new residents. If it were for a couple with no children, it'd be \$6,500 and then if they're single, it'd be \$5,000 after two years purchasing a home. At the

end of the two years with proof of the following, they'd get their money: proof of ownership and residency; they must not be late on any utility payments for two years, and any children must be enrolled in Grayville schools. If they're below school age, consideration would be given in year 3 and 4 to grant the full family incentive."

Thompson says the goal is to get more people into Grayville, and even more importantly to get more kids into the city and school system.

"The more people we have, the more residents or dwellings and businesses we have, is when you can start to look at lowering taxes and your rates as far as gas, water, and sewer would equalize and not have to constantly be raised. Because you'll be selling more water, sewer, gas thus bringing in more money."

The mayor says he wasn't looking for a vote, but just wanted to put some verbiage out there and for commissioners to take that, give it some thought and come back with their own thoughts. With that, discussion was tabled for future meetings and continued discussion.

Additionally Monday night, Grayville Council considered a lease to own program for new police vehicles through a dealership in Salem, Indiana. Commissioners agreed the dollars and cents looked like a good decision, but decided to wait until Treasurer Sharon Walden and City Attorney Jay Walden returned to examine the opportunity more thoroughly.

Chief Robert Hatcher also gave a police activity report Monday night.

"We had 189 calls for service in December. 13 case files open, 3 arrests made, 38 citations issued and 14 written warnings, no motor vehicle collisions."

Council also took an ask for a loan from a local business and turned it into a grant Monday night citing the businesses circumstances and it's commitment to community as the reason.

"So Chappy's is not part of a TIF District. The reason being the person who owned the bar at the time at the time of the TIF District being created was the mayor at the time. So my recommendation is that we grant Chappy's the grand total of \$25,248 with no loan. It would be a simple grant due to their property taxes they've paid in that would normally have gone into TIF funding."

That money will be used to help the popular local eatery get a new oven, new bar stools, tables, and other assorted merchandise.

Grayville Council adjourned about 7:30pm and will next gather on Monday, January 22nd at 7pm.

Our sister station, WRUL contributed this story.

The Annual Wayne County Chamber of Commerce Dinner Meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 11, 2024. During the meeting, the Business of the Year and Community Service Award will be presented.

Nominations for recipients of these awards are being accepted at the Chamber office through Wednesday, January 31, 2024.

You can make nominations by calling 842-6116, writing a letter to the Chamber at 121 E. Main, through the FairfieldIL Chamber of Commerce Facebook page, or email at chamber@fairfieldilcitygov.us

In 2023, Classic Pizza and Pasta was named business of the year and Clifford Reeve was named the Community Service Award winner.

The Clay County Sheriff's Office, ILEAS SRT and U.S. Marshals Service conducted an operation in Xenia on Wednesday relating to a Clay County Arrest Warrant. Around 8:30 in the morning, law enforcement in the area the wanted say that the subject fled from a residence. Law enforcement was able to locate the subject a short time later hiding in a nearby wooded area. The subject was taken into custody without further incident and transported to the Clay County Jail.

As a result of this incident Christopher S. Brown, 42, of Xenia, who is currently on Mandatory Supervised Release from I.D.O.C., was arrested on a Clay County No Bond Warrant on a theft charge. Brown was incarcerated at the Clay County Jail at the time of this release and is awaiting his first appearance in Clay County Court.

Weatherwise, today will be the best day fro a few days. Tonight, a weather system bringing heavy rain and potential snowfall will start to come into the region. Beginning tomorrow morning, a Wind Advisory will go into effect for Jefferson, Wayne, Edwards, Wabash, White, Hamilton, Gallatin, Franklin, and Saline Counties until Midnight heading into Saturday. Weather service officials say wind gusts of up to 50 miles per hour are expected. Weather service officials are not ruling out a potential for snowfall in the area north of Interstate 64 for the system in the area thru tomorrow night.

Next week, weather service officials are forecasting a Winter Storm in the early portion of the week. While officials are not certain about the amount of precipitation quite yet, they are confident in the extremely cold temperatures that will be coming to the area.

With the coming weather over the next few days, some area businesses and churches are announcing that they will be warming centers for those who need them.

Fairfield Memorial Hospital has announced that they will be a warming center in the Fairfield area for those who are stuck in the elements or are without heat.

In West Salem, the fellowship hall at the First Christian Church has announced they will be a community warming center. We will update this information as it becomes available.

We will be adding warming centers to this story as the information rolls in. If you are going to host a warming center, email dustinfuller@wfiwradio.com to be added to this list.

A Johnsonville man was arrested by Wayne County Sheriff's Officials after a call about erratic behavior on Sunday. Upon arrival, deputies met with the complainant and located 30-year-old James R. Fenton of Johnsonville. Deputies discovered while on scene Fenton was in possession of a firearm and knew he was a convicted felon. According to deputies, Fenton attempted to go towards the firearm before it was secured. Deputies restrained Fenton before he could get to the firearm. While restrained, Fenton allegedly spat on authorities and continued to resist arrest. Deputies were eventually able to handcuff Fenton and search the property. While searching, deputies located suspected methamphetamine. Fenton faces charges of aggravated battery, aggravated assault, possession of a firearm by a felon, possession of methamphetamine, and resisting and or obstructing a peace officer. Fenton was booked into the Wayne County Jail.

Wayne County Sheriff's Deputies arrested a Fairfield Man on Monday who they say was walking along the roadway. Deputies arrested 18-year-old Bryan A. Bailey on warrants for obstructing justice, possession of methamphetamine, and for operating a vehicle while not licensed. A search of Bailey found methamphetamine in his possession. Bailey faces an additional count of possession of meth and was booked into the Wayne County Jail.

Wayne County Authorities on Monday were looking for a man at many places, but found him at a residence on Monday. Deputies were looking for Eddie D. Brooks the Third. Deputies searched several locations, but found him in a residence. Deputies ordered Brooks out and he was taken into custody without incident. Brooks was wanted on warrants out of Clay, Wayne, and White Counties.

The Norris City Village Board held their monthly meeting earlier this week.

The board gave Mayor Skip Land permission to get a release of funds that were obtained from a Community Development grant, for Phase V of the Water Line Project.

They agreed to approve a one year dispatch contract from the White County Sheriff's Office for non-emergency calls and record keeping, at a cost of \$16,100. It will be paid in a lump sum.

The board approved a three year contract with Botsch & Associates for \$13,200 a year, which is up from \$12,000 a year in the previous contract, to work on the budget, the audit, and the tax levy. The village will be able to opt out of the deal at any time, as they are currently looking at proposals from other companies.

Also approved was an agreement with Utility Gas Management, which purchases extra gas for the village throughout the year.

Brian Ray of the Wonder Market asked for TIF money to help pay off the balance of outstanding loans they currently have, but Mayor Land said that doesn't fit the criteria for TIF money. But they will ask the TIF attorney if there is any way he can meet with the Wonder Market and possibly work something out.

Concerning the Wakeford property, a contract has been signed with the Overland Group for the property and there is a 180 day inspection process taking place.

The land at Hulett field was surveyed and new survey markers were put up. Also, a three inch PVC pipe was installed over the markers.

They are still working on the alley closure and should have everything finalized at the next meeting.

The F-250 snow plow truck is down. It needs a computer module and they are looking for a new one.

In the police report for December, there were ten reports written, one accident report, no arrests, 12 traffic stops and warnings, and two citations issued.

Stone Outdoor Services of Harrisburg installed the fence at the playground and they are still waiting on the walk-through gate at the entrance. Parks Committee Chairmen Wayne McKenzie and the Mayor will meet with the NCAA to discuss improvements to the concession stand and ball fields.

The meeting adjourned at 7:44 PM. The next meeting of the Norris City Village Board will be on February 5th at 7 PM.

Enfield Village Board held their January board meeting earlier this week.

It was brought to the board's attention that the utilities department was in the red to the tune of about \$36,000, and there needed to be a utility rate increase to close that gap. After several minutes of discussion, it was decided unanimously that there would be a one dollar per month rate increase each on customer's water, gas, and sewer bills. It will be effective with the February bills. It was also decided that the board would revisit the issue in a few months to see where things stand.

By the way, six people have had their water shut off recently after going several months for not attempting or making a good effort to pay their bill.

The board members voted three to two to pay the \$3,600 dispatch fee for 2024 with the White County Sheriff's Department. No one, however, was happy about having to pay the fee.

The board accepted the lowest bid as required for water meters, as part of Phase II of the Water Project, which was from Followell of Marion, for \$248,777. The only other bid was from Wiggs Excavating of Benton for \$293,550.

Concerning street lighting, work is still ongoing.

Beverly Thompson of Animal Control is recuperating from some ailments and is unable to go around the area, but she will still be accepting phone calls from residents that have any problems or questions. You can also contact White County Animal Control, as they will help pick up the slack.

Before the regular session, a Closed Session was held starting at 6 pm. Afterwards, the board members voted to apply for a USDA grant to help stimulate growth for small businesses in the area. This was the result of a discussion on the subject that also took place at last month's meeting.

Recently, FMH donated an AED to the Fairfield Elks Lodge #1631 to help ensure the health and well-being of the individuals using the facility throughout the year. Fairfield Memorial Hospital is proud to be able to support the community by donating this life-saving piece of equipment.

The Fairfield Elks Lodge #1631 is a charitable foundation that gives back all year round and houses many events throughout the year. This AED will help provide emergency care to the Lodge until medical personnel are able to arrive. Having an AED on-site, as well as, trained individuals who can use the device helps increase a person's chance of survival in the event of a medical emergency.

The FCHS Board held a special section Thursday Evening in the district office at Fairfield Communit High School. Board Members heard a proposal on how a remodeled Mule Barn would look like.

Items on the renovation include a new gym floor, bleacher renovation, a new sound system, widening of the aisles, led screens, volleyball sleeves, exhaust fan replacement, electrical, and scoreboards. According to Remedy, they say the bleachers would be retrofitted with a vinyl bottom with aisles being widened and handrails being added. Principal Wells noted to the board that he had looked into replacing the motors on the currently bleachers and current costs of the motors according to him are not worth the effort.

According to information discussed at the meeting, a total of 4 LED screens would be installed potentially in place of the trophy kiosk that was discussed to replace the trophy case.

The proposed new sound system would have 10 top, mid and high end speakers with 4 low end frequency speakers as well as a new rack enclosure. The renovation would call for a pair of new LED scoreboards. The scoreboards in the gym were updated in the early 2000s.

The new gymnasium floor would be a level 2 floor. Board members asked the difference between grades 1, 2, and 3 with 1 being a top tier, 2 being middle of the road, and 3 as serviceable.

No decision was made on the renovation of the gym at the meeting. Superintendent Diane Zurliene mentioned that a decision needed to be made by next week so the project could begin around May 1.

The Albion City Council met in special session Thursday night to discuss the ongoing leaks in the roof on the west side of city hall which houses the ambulance service.

The council after discussing the leaky roof with local contractors voted to have David Lear and Mike Speir examine the roof to see how much of the actual roof needs replacing.

The council then adjourned

The Wayne County Board met last night for their regularly scheduled monthly meeting.

The board unanimously approved a contract with Clay County Hospital to provide ambulance service for Garden Hill, Zif, and Keith Townships. Since the dissolution of the North Wayne Ambulance Service, it became necessary to seek alternative service to many parts of Northern Wayne County. The contract will run from February 1 to November 30 of 2024.

The board approved an ARPA request from Coroner Carrie Dagg to purchase 12 AED's for use in the Sheriffs Department Vehicles and Coroner's vehicles. The total for the request is \$31,626.

County Clerk Lizann Woodrow informed attendees that all of their voting machines had undergone maintenance and were ready for the March 19 election. Early voting begins on February 8.

County Treasurer Yvette Anderson reported that 320 parcels were sold at the annual tax sale.

The board unanimously approved resolution to replace a bridge at Skillet Fork along 1550 N RD.

Building and Grounds Committee Chairman Eddie Barbre reported that a final punch list on the courthouse project had been completed and final payment to the contractor was approved.

Coroner Dagg conducted a presentation, outlining the physical improvements to their building and the new equipment that is being installed.

High winds, and cold temps are the current weather story for the area. In the latest information from the National Weather Service at Paducah, a wind advisory is in affect today for Wayne, Jefferson, Marion, Clay, Richland, Lawrence, Hamilton, and Franklin counties. Meanwhile, a high wind warning is in place for Edwards, White, Gallatin, and Saline Counties. The advisories and warnings are in place thru Midnight tonight. According to info from the weather service, the worst of the winds in our area will be between Noon and Midnight.

Heavy rain will be in the area as well through much of the day. Projected rainfall totals are between 2 and 3 inches in the area.

On the snow side of things, the chances of snowfall are diminishing. Through much of the area, meteorologists at Paducah are forecasting a 10 percent chance of snowfall. The paducah area has the greatest chance of snow in the entire region at around 30 percent.

One thing that is not subsiding though is the cold temperatures and wind chills. According to the latest data, Lows in Western Wayne, Jefferson, Marion, Clay, and Northern Hamilton and Franklin Counties are forecasted to be between 0 and 4 above. Eastern Wayne, southern Hamilton, southern Franklin, Gallatin, Saline, Edwards, Wabash, White, Richland, and Lawrenceville Counties are projected to be between 5 and 10 above. The Wind Chill data shows the wind chills in the area will be between -5 and -15 throughout the area.

Weather service officials say with all of the wind and rain, power outages may be possible. It is recommended you have your utility company's app or contact information available to report outages.

During the extreme cold, weather service officials recommend tips on staying safe from the elements and in the event of you get stranded. Tips include dressing in layers, avoiding sweating and or getting wet, checking in family and neighbors, and knowing the symptoms of hypothermia. Those symptoms include uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, slurred speech, or apparent exhaustion. For Winter Traveling, they say to share your travel plans with friends and family, winterize your vehicle, pack an emergency kit with food, water, medicines, and blankets, and to check road conditions.

The Village of Crossville's Tiger Park will be getting an upgrade soon.

\$324,047 will replace the outdated facilities and enhance the park with ADA-accessible sidewalks, parking spaces, and restrooms. The grant will also be used to update the pavilion with a new wiring system, and pickleball courts will be added to attract more individuals to Tiger Park.

The funding for this grant comes from the Park and Recreational Facility Construction Act (PARC) grant program, a bipartisan from Governor Pritzker's Rebuild Illinois Capital Improvement Program.

State Senator Terri Bryant of Murphysboro stated, "This PARC grant for Tiger Park is a transformative opportunity for the Village of Crossville. This funding will help revamp the park's community space. The modernization of Tiger Park will create a more vibrant and accessible recreational area that everyone can truly enjoy."

The PARC grant program provides up to 90% of project costs to help build, renovate, and improve recreational buildings used by the public or purchase land to be used for public access and recreational purposes, with local governments matching the value of the grants awarded.

Officials with SSM Health, the operators of Clay County Hospital in Flora as well as Good Samaritan Hospital in Mount Vernon say that there was a data breach with NAVVIS & Company, LLC. Navvis is a provider of health management services to health care organizations, including SSM Health. They are sending out letters to patients that could have been affected by the breach. If you receive one of these letters, please call the number listed on the letter, 1-888-996-4022. This number is the dedicated line for the most up-to-date information.

Official with SSM Health would like to apologize for any concern or inconvenience this may cause.

Fairfield Police on Friday arrested a man on charges of disorderly conduct and criminal trespassing. Harry Howard Sapper the Third was taken into custody on the charges and booked into the Wayne County Jail.

Richland County Authorities arrested a man Saturday Evening on county of aggravated domestic battery and aggravated sexual assault. 26-year-old Elijah D. McGhee was taken into custody on the charges and was booked into the Richland County Jail.

The National Weather Service at Paducah has announced a few Severe Weather Storm Spotting Classes in our area.

The first class in the area is set for February 1st in Mount Carmel at the Mount Carmel Street Department. The street department is located at 604 East 5th street. The time of the class is set for 5 PM that evening.

The next area class is in Benton, IL on March 5th at the U of I Extension office at 1212 Ag Street in Benton. The time of that class is set for 6 PM.

The third and final class scheduled for the area will take place in Mount Vernon on Thursday, March 19th at 6:30 PM at the Mount Vernon Outland Airport.

The classes are free and open to anyone who has an interest in Severe Weather. Weather service officials say the class is about 2 hours in length.

Virtual classes are available January 23, February 22, and March 11.

For more information and to registration, <http://www.weather.gov/pah/spottertraining>

The bitterly cold temperatures according to National Weather Service officials are expected to continue through Wednesday. According to data from Paducah, wind chills could be as low as negative 15 degrees. The weather forecast is calling for temperatures to reach 32 degrees on Wednesday as winds are expected to be out of the Southwest and bring in warmer weather. Another cold shot is expected next weekend as temperatures are expected to be back to single digit lows, but the cold snap is not expected to last as long as the current stretch.

On Sunday at approximately 10:00am, Wayne County Sheriff's Officials were called to respond to a rural residence in Keenes, IL. The caller advised they believed someone was being held inside a residence against her will by David L. Young and that Young was armed with a knife. Deputies immediately responded to the residence and were assisted by an Officer from the Fairfield Police Department and the Wayne City Police Department. On scene deputies made contact with the occupants through the door but Young refused to open the door and made threats to responding officers if they entered the residence. A female then began screaming for help inside the residence and deputies breached the door and observed Young holding a female by her foot and observed blood and Young holding a metal object. Deputies immediately deployed the Taser on Young and quickly took him into custody.

The female was treated at the scene by Wayne City Ambulance personnel and was released. The female stated that Young had held her captive since approximately 1:30am, and threatened her with knives, pliers, and a screwdriver. The victim stated Young believed she had some device imbedded in her foot and he was using these instruments to try and remove it. The victim stated Young threatened to kill her numerous times.

A search warrant was later executed on the residence and Deputies recovered methamphetamine and numerous instruments with blood on them.

David L. Young (46) of Keenes, IL. was booked into the Wayne County Jail pending a detention hearing.

Preliminary Charges include:

- Unlawful Restraint
 - Aggravated Domestic Battery
 - Domestic Battery
 - Aggravated Assault
 - Aggravated Battery
 - Possession of Methamphetamine
-

The Board of Trustees of the Illinois Eastern Community College District No. 529 met Tuesday night, January 16th at Wabash Valley College, Robinson, Illinois.

As part of the meeting of the Board of Trustees, the Decennial Committee met to study local efficiencies and report recommendations regarding efficiencies and increased accountability.

The Board approved revisions to Policy 500.12 Student Optional Disclosure of Private Mental Health Information as presented. The revisions address gaps in mental health services on college campuses through training, peer support, and community-campus partnerships.

The Board approved a Behavioral Health Services Agreement with Lawrence County Health Department.

An affiliation agreement was approved with Stone Bridge Memory Care.

The Board approved a Trust Agreement with the State of Illinois to complete an electrical services upgrade at Wabash Valley College.

The Board authorized the sale of five acres owned by IECC in Crawford County, located on Route 1, formerly the location of the Lincoln Trail College "South Campus" (Harry L. Crisp Building).

The Board approved the easement for Ameren Illinois at the new athletic facility at Lincoln Trail College

The following personnel were employed: Lyndon Huey, Director of Business at Wabash Valley College effective January 22, 2024 and Shani Quarton, Adult Education Office Assistant at Frontier Community College effective January 22, 2024.

Changes in employment status or title change effective January 22, 2024 were approved for Alex Cline from Director of Information Technology to Chief Information Office, DO; Andrea McDowell from Director of Human Resources to Executive Director of Human Resources, DO; Collin Maynard from Interim to Full-time Head Baseball Coach, LTC; and Julie Auteberry from TRIO Upward Bound Coordinator, WVC to TRIO Upward Bound Coordinator, OCC. Change in status was also approved for Amy Tarr from Director of Instructional Service, OCC to Associate Dean of Instruction, OCC effective July 1, 2024.

Resignation was approved for Karissa Perry as Student Services Specialist effective January 16, 2024.

Retirement was approved for Clay Atkins as Maintenance Worker/O&M Team Leader, OCC effective January 19, 2024.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Trustees will be Tuesday, February 20, 2024 at 6:15 p.m. at Frontier Community College, Fairfield.

The IECC schools have announced the dates for a series of "FAFSA Nights." According to IECC Program Director of Financial Aid, Krystle Riggle, filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid is the most important thing students can do to secure funding for college. She says to support students and families in this crucial step, Illinois Eastern Community Colleges will host a series of FAFSA Nights. The Financial Aid Team will also participate in individual high school FAFSA Nights throughout the IECC District. To learn more visit iecc.edu/financial.

- February 8 — Lincoln Trail College from 4 to 7 p.m. in Williams Hall Room 112
 - February 15 — Olney Central College from 4 to 7 p.m. in Wattleworth Hall Room 205
 - February 20 — Frontier Community College from 4 to 7 p.m. in the Workforce Development Center Room 32
 - February 27 — Wabash Valley College from 4 to 7 p.m. in Main Hall Room 205
-

Bitter Cold Temps are slated to return to the area for the weekend. According to National Weather Service Officials in Paducah, low temperatures in much of our area will be between 0 and 5 degrees with wind chills as low as -15. Highs both Friday and Saturday are expected to be in the upper teens to lower 20s. Temperatures will start to rebound on Sunday with the next day of above freezing temperatures slated for Monday. By next Wednesday, weather service forecast officials are showing temperatures near the 50 degree mark.

FCHS and ISAC will be presenting the 24-25 FAFSA Workshop night. Senior Students and parents are invited to join FCHS officials in the 3rd Floor Computer Lab on Monday, January 22nd at 6:00pm to get help completing the 2024-2025 FAFSA. You must have created your FSA ID prior to attending the workshop. Your FAFSA account username and password combination, called your FSA ID, gives you access to certain information online and allows you to sign your FAFSA form and promissory notes electronically. You all need your social security numbers, both parents and students, and your parents 2022 tax information.

Wabash Area Development, Inc. would like to thank the Fairfield National Bank in Fairfield, Fairfield Community High School students and athletes as well as the community for their contribution to the Salvation Army Red Kettle Bell Ringing Program this year. FNB challenged the FCHS students and athletes by promising to match what they raised, up to \$500. They went on to easily surpass that goal, and according to officials with WADI broke the record for the most money collected in one day in Wayne County.

Wabash Area Development Inc. facilitates the funds raised for the Salvation Army. The funds will be used to assist eligible Wayne County customers with utility and rent payments.

The FCHS Board met in regular session Thursday evening with all board members present.

The board unanimously approved the hiring of Baysinger Architects ,LLC as the gym renovation project architect.

In personnel matters:

The board unanimously voted to hire Mariah Vaughan as a Computer & Information Technology Instructor for FY25.

The board unanimously voted to hire Lori Robson to cover the maternity leave of Meghan Pearce.

All proposed curriculum changes for FY25 were unanimously approved.

A slight bit of light snow has blanketed portions of the WFIW Listening Area this morning. Temps will be working on cooling off starting today and wind chill readings are between 0 and -10 in the area. A wind chill advisory has been issued for the entire WFIW Listening Area thru 9 AM with the wind chills getting down to the -15 range potentially. Temperatures will rebound next week with temperatures expected to reach the 50s in the middle of the week and rain returning to the forecast. For the latest in Illinois road conditions, you can call 1-800-452-4368 or visit getting around illinois dot com. You can also get the IDOT Mobile App from the App Store or Google Play Store.

Two men from McLeansboro have been arrested on felony and misdemeanor charges related to their conduct during the breach of the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021.

Justin LaGessee, 37, and Theodore Middendorf, 36, both of McLeansboro, are charged in a criminal complaint filed in the District of Columbia for destruction of property after witnesses approached the FBI. LaGessee and Middendorf posted pictures on their personal Facebook accounts showing that they were, in fact, at the Capitol building taking part in the riot, with LaGessee commenting on his photo, "I made the cover of AP News on Youtube from my Washington trip." FBI officials could identify the men with help from the witnesses that came forward.

LaGessee and Middendorf were arrested on Wednesday by the FBI in Illinois and will appear in the Southern District of Illinois. According to allegations contained in court documents, both men illegally entered the U.S. Capitol building through a broken window. LaGessee can be seen carrying a yellow Gadsden flag, and Middendorf carrying an American flag.

After parading through the Capitol, the men went outside and approached a line of Metropolitan Police Department officers yelling obscenities at them. The men then walked off to a window, using their flagpoles to strike the window numerous times, resulting in \$41,315.25 in damages determined by the architect of the Capitol.

They are being charged in a criminal complaint filed by the District of Columbia with felony destruction of property. They also face misdemeanor charges of entering and remaining in a restricted building or grounds, disorderly and disruptive conduct in a restricted building or grounds, engaging in physical violence in a restricted building or grounds, disorderly conduct in a Capitol building, act of physical violence in the Capitol grounds or buildings, and parading, picketing, and demonstrating in a Capitol building.

The U.S. Attorney's Office is prosecuting this case for the District of Columbia, the Department of Justice National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section, and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Illinois. The investigation is being done by the FBI's Springfield and Washington Field Offices, the U.S. Capitol Police, and the Metropolitan Police Department.

With Dustin Harmon of Bellwether Advantage corralling things, the White County Board met with it's most expediated gathering in months. It took the board just under 40 minutes to get through business Wednesday night. Most of the time was spent discussing making changes to the ordinance regulating commercial solar farms and then specifically replacing the decommissioning bond with a letter of credit for Boomtown Solar/Invenergy. The board ended up tabling the ordinance changes after giving Harmon direction on drafting actual changes on the ordinance, namely to give it more teeth. The replacement of the decommissioning bond to a letter of credit passed with Ken Usery voting no.

It appears the financial effect of the Pre Trial Fairness Act is beginning to be felt according to information provided by Circuit Clerk Kelly Fulkerson.

"I think this has to do with Pre Trial Fairness Act, but I started watching our monthly voucher reports showing what our income and revenue is. In the last two months, we've gone down about \$30,000 a month in revenue and I really feel like it has to do with the

PTFA because we no longer have bond. I didn't think it was going to hit us this fast. In October, we collected almost \$82,000. September 19th I believe is when the PTFA went into effect and we still collected the normal amount, but when I compared it to what it was this time last year, we're \$30,000 down in November and the same amount down in December. I just wanted to make the board aware that's not something we're not collecting because 'we're not collecting'...it's most likely it's bond fees and money we're not getting."

Also Wednesday night, Brent Floyd was appointed to the White County Housing Authority Board for a term retroactive to August 1st of last year and for the following 4 years.

Amanda Cannon was also reappointed to the Egyptian Health Department Board beginning January 31st.

Highway Engineer Brian Ray provided perspective for folks regarding taking care of winter roads compared to the IDOT outfit out of Enfield.

"They've got 370 lane miles of road, 12 trucks, 19 employees, and use 1500 to 2000 tons of salt to clear snow off roads. If you break that down, that's basically a truck for every 28 lane miles to plow snow from. We have 3 employees, 3 trucks, 328 lane miles so we have 1 truck for 109 lane miles. The math doesn't work. You know, we could work 24 hours a day and not do as good of a job as IDOT does. I just want you, the board to have that information, so that when you're hit up somewhere and people are unhappy, you can say, 'listen, these guys are doing the best they can with what they have to work with'".

The White County Board adjourned just before 7:40pm and will next meet February 21st.

Reports out of Effingham, IL say a Flora man was arrested Friday for attempted kidnapping.

The incident happened at about 7 a.m. Friday when Effingham police and Effingham County Sheriff's deputies responded to a hotel lobby in the 1300 block of Mid America on a report of an attempted kidnapping. Police said a physical altercation between the subject, identified as 37 year old Matthew J. Kelledees of Flora, hotel staff and patrons occurred prior to police arriving. In a matter of minutes, police engaged Kelledees and the use of non-lethal tasers were deployed. A child was unharmed in the incident.

Kelledees was taken into custody and lodged in the Effingham County Jail for an Illinois Department of Corrections warrant and pending charges from Friday's incident. Kidnapping is a Class 2 felony punishable by 3 to 7 years in prison, and a fine of up to \$25,000.

The incident is being investigated by the Effingham City Police and Effingham County State's Attorney Office.

Time is running out to get your taxes paid in White County. The good news, according to White County Treasurer Mike Baxley, is that about 98% of the 2022 payable 2023 property taxes are in. For that remaining 2% of folks however, the deadline is approaching with the tax sale date set for February 2nd. The last day to pay taxes and keep your property out of the tax sale is February 1st. The office will be closed on the 2nd while the tax sale is in progress. Baxley says at this point, tax payers have three options for payment including cash, cashiers check, or money order. The deadline to participate in the tax sale is Monday, January 22nd. There is a \$50 fee to register for the tax sale. You can reach the County Treasurer's office by calling [618-382-8122](tel:618-382-8122).

The Albion Area Chamber of Commerce held their annual awards banquet over the weekend at Grayville. Rigg Family Care Pharmacy was named business of the year while the Albion VFW Post 8222 was named non-profit of the year. Nathan Gentz was named citizen of the year while the Brick Pillar Legacy Award went to Ed and Mary Bailey. The Community Choice award went to What's Happening Edwards County.

Some of the northern counties in the WFIW Listening Area are under a Winter Weather Advisory. The National Weather Service at Lincoln put the advisory in place and says that early morning precipitation in the Clay, Richland, Jasper, Wayne, Jefferson, Hamilton, Franklin, Marion, Edwards, and Crawford County areas may fall as freezing rain. According to weather service information, the best chance for freezing rain and snow in to the north and the west of the area. Temperatures are expected to warm up and get above freezing later today, but rain is expected for much of the area several days this week. Thursday is supposed to be the high point of the week with a temperature of 55.

FCHS and ISAC will be presenting the 24-25 FAFSA Workshop night. Senior Students and parents are invited to join FCHS officials in the 3rd Floor Computer Lab Thursday at 6:00pm to get help completing the 2024-2025 FAFSA. You must have created your FSA ID prior to attending the workshop. Your FAFSA account username and password combination, called your FSA ID, gives you access to certain information online and allows you to sign your FAFSA form and promissory notes electronically. You all need your social security numbers, both parents and students, and your parents 2022 tax information.

Trash in Cisne is a situation that is continuing to pop up in the village. In December, WFIW News reported that the village dumpsters were being closed off because of abuse. Since then, the village compost area has also been closed off until further notice. According to the village's group on Facebook, the problem is now spilling over to businesses in the community. Officials in the village say that the waste bins provided by the trash service provider are for residents only, not for those who want to just put their trash. Dumpsters are for use on commercial property by the business only. Village officials say the village has one of the lowest trash rates in the area and part of that is based on the anticipated waste that comes out of the village. Those who are allowing the additional waste from outside family are putting the rate that consumers are paying for trash service at risk.

Jasper Water Works has announced that customers in the Mount Erie area are under a boil order until further notice. Crews were repairing a water leak in that area on Monday.

Fairfield Police are investigating multiple car burglaries in the area of Clarence Ave, Manor Circle, Windsor Lane and West Center Drive. The thefts occurred overnight. We are asking for anyone who may have video (door cameras, video surveillance, etc.) from the area to contact us at 618-842-2152.

The Fairfield City Council met this evening, working through a 5 item agenda in 25 minutes. The council unanimously approved a \$16,000 expenditure from the Recreation Fund for expenses related to the upcoming Solar Eclipse. The money will be used for apparel and to help defray the cost of the band Little Texas. The Recreation Fund currently has a balance of \$24,000. The Recreation Fund is funded by hotel, motel, and commercial lodging occupancy fees and can only be used for public recreation and entertainment. Mayor Moore said with the influx of people coming into Fairfield for the event, the Recreation Fund should recover most of the expenditure. The council entered into a service contract with B-All Technology Solutions, LLC of Fairfield. The agreement is for computer and software maintenance. B-All Technology Solutions, LLC is a new Fairfield business owned by Chad Barbre. Bids will be sought to paint the west water tower, 2 bids were rejected last month due to them far exceeding the engineering estimate. The council discussed the TIF Fund and the distribution to the taxing bodies. Mayor Moore recommended that the taxing bodies receive 70%, which is an increase from the 40% formula used in the past. With 2 of the taxing bodies undertaking major projects, Mayor Moore stated that the extra funds could be put to good use. The 2 projects are the proposed Splash Pad at Leo French Park and the building project at Frontier Community College. With the implementation of the new Business Tax, the council can increase the dollars to the taxing bodies. The TIF Joint Review Board recently met to discuss the distributions.

With three bids turned in, city leaders in Grayville opted to test the real estate market instead and rejected those in favor of listing the former Grayville City Hall building at 122 S. Court Street with a realtor at 6% commission. The bids turned down include a \$40,000 offer from Loren Dickirson; an \$11,500 bid from Shamon Berti of Eldorado; and a \$6,500 submission from Bapr Properties, LLC of Norris City.

Also Monday night at the Council Meeting, commissioners heard updates on the water main replacement project which is expected to be bid next month or in March. The Albion/Grayville Water Treatment Plant Project W2E is eligible for an additional \$6 million in loan forgiveness it was reported. A grant application for the sewer project was submitted last Thursday, the 18th.

Council formally agreed to the loan grant agreement previously discussed with Chappy's. Grayville will also be getting a new police vehicle through a Lease to Own agreement. Council signed off on a 4 year lease through Tri-County Bank. Commissioners also approved putting \$7,000 in the budget for Friends of Grayville events upcoming in 2024. Finally, leaders approved a \$20,000 loan at 3% interest over 7 years for Elisa Pearce for Epic Nails.

An Illinois lawmaker is pushing for a ban on a group of potentially harmful ingredients commonly found in food and drinks. A measure introduced by state Senator Willie Preston would ban brominated vegetable oil, potassium bromate, propylparaben [[pro-pyl-par-A-ben]]and red dye number three. The Chicago Democrat is also planning to amend the bill to include a ban on titanium dioxide. California has already passed its own version of a food additives ban.

Illinois' unemployment rate is up. The Illinois Department of Employment Security says the state's jobless rate increased by point-one-percent last month to four-point-eight-percent. Non-farm payroll jobs increased by 12-hundred in December.

Several sentences were handed down in Wayne County Court on Tuesday.

19-year-old Julia L. Cox of Eldorado pled guilty to unlawful possession of cannabis, a class B misdemeanor. Cox was required to pay \$1461 in court costs.

49-year-old Phillip A. Newman of Taylorville was sentenced on a count of obstructing justice. Newman was sentenced to a year of time in the IDOC with credit of 245 days of time served. Newman is serving a sentence out of White County that was handed down a year ago for violating the sex offender registry. The sentence for White County was for 3 years with credit for 29 days served. Following the sentence, Newman will serve 6 months of mandatory supervised release and will pay court costs of \$680 in Wayne County.

56-Year-old Christopher W. Hedden of Sims was sentenced in court Tuesday for unlawful possession of meth. The incident dated back to February of 2023. Hedden will serve 18 months of probation and will be required to pay court costs of \$3990.

A Fairfield Man will spend the next 3 years in the IDOC and will have 6 months of mandatory supervised release following his sentence in Wayne County. Judge Denton Aud sentenced 39-year-old James A. Chambers of Fairfield on the count of unlawful residence of a child sex offender. The offense took place in July of 2023. As part of the plea agreement, a charge of unlawful possession of meth that dated back to October 24th were dismissed.

A Bicknell Woman was sentenced in Wayne County, Illinois Court on Tuesday on a single count of unlawful possession of meth. 51-year-old Melissa R. Auberry was sentenced to 18 months of probation and will be required to pay \$4865 in court costs. The incident took place in August of 2023.

After the cold weather of last week, National Weather Service Officials say that flooding and flash flooding may become a possibility throughout the area.

According to Weather Service Forecasters in Paducah, the ground, following the melting of the snow in the area followed with the amounts of rainfall has caused the ground to be saturated with almost all of the moisture that it can handle. Rain returns to the forecast today as well as for the weekend.

A Flood Warning has been issued by the National Weather Service at Lincoln for the Little Wabash River in Clay and Richland Counties. Officials are estimating the flooding to be minor with a crest at 19.6 feet on Friday. The flood stage on the Little Wabash in that area is 18 feet. As of this morning, the river was around 18.6 feet.

Since September and the implementation of cashless bail, the Wayne County Jail has been hovering around 10-12 people on average. That figure has been steady according to jail officials for the past month. Some of those arrested in the area have been arrested multiple times for multiple crimes.

According to officials at the jail, the reason they are releasing offenders is because they are granted pretrial release without cash bail as part of the pretrial release provisions of the Safe-T act. Judges have the authority on the seriousness of the crime to hold offenders until trial if they violate the terms of their pretrial release, but in Wayne County, that has not taken place but on a few occurrences.

Between September 16th and January 16th, court records indicate that alleged offenders being arrested 3 or more times.

Randolph Reid is one example of the cycle. Since September, he has faced charges of criminal trespassing to real property. We have attempted to look more into the cases, but some items have been sealed. Others indicate Reid failed to appear in court multiple times. A status update on the cases for Reid is set for February 13th at 9:30 AM.

Another alleged multiple-time offender is Edward Riley. Since September, Riley has been arrested and charged with crimes at least 3 times. As of the release of this report, Riley is awaiting a court appearance on initial charges of Theft and criminal trespassing. In other instances, Riley has been charged with theft.

Wayne County Circuit Clerks staff told us about the training received in regards to the Landmark Safe-T Act. According to the staff, they say that they received 45 minutes of training over zoom about the pre-trial release and how that is supposed to work. Staff at the courthouse feel that more training is needed to understand how the act is supposed to work.

We have reached out to the Wayne County States Attorney's office, but not comment has been received at this time. We will update the story once we receive comment.

Until more clarity is given on the rules, police and sheriff's departments throughout the state will be playing the catch and release game with alleged offenders of the law on low level crimes.

The Illinois Department of Revenue will begin accepting 2023 state tax returns on Monday. That is the same date that the Internal Revenue Service begins accepting federal individual income tax returns. Taxpayers are encouraged to file electronically as early as possible and choose direct deposit in order to ensure the fastest processing and issuance of any refunds.

Ameren is warning its customers in Illinois to be aware of an increase in online scams. The scammers are developing fraudulent website listings that mimic the company's website and include fake contact phone numbers and email addresses. An individual who uses an Internet search engine to contact an Ameren representative, pay their bill or change service may come across several "legitimate looking" but fake Ameren website listings. Once the customer calls the fake phone number or clicks on a fake link, they are tricked into thinking they are engaging with an Ameren representative or visiting the company's official website.

Health officials want to urge the public about a recall of Robitussin cough medicine. A national voluntary recall was recently issued for the medicine. The recall is for the Honey CF Max day and Honey CF night products. They say the recall is due to microbial contamination. According to the manufacturer, no issues have been reported so far.

The boil order was lifted yesterday afternoon for Jasper Water Works Customers in the Mount Erie area. Customers in Mount Erie has been on the order since Monday.

The Fairfield National Bank and the Wayne County Farm Bureau are bringing back the Farm Finance Forum on February 2, 2024. The forum will feature a series of well-known speakers that will cover a variety of topics related to financial matters on the farm. Keynoting the event this year is Andrew Pritchard, Atmospheric Scientist for Nutrien Ag Solutions.

This year's speaker lineup includes...

Grain Market Outlook & Strategies

Dewayne Kissner, Grain Marketer, Heritage Hedge, Fairfield, IL

Farm Service Agency Program Update

Lindsey Edmison, Senior Farm Loan Officer, USDA Farm Service Agency, Fairfield, IL

Update from the Hill

Congressman Mike Bost (IL-12)

Legislative & Regulatory Issues Impacting Your Farm

Kevin Semlow, Executive Director of Governmental Affairs, Illinois Farm Bureau, Bloomington, IL

Tax Saving Strategies Near Retirement

Jon Farmer, VP of Tax & Accounting, FNB Asset Management, Fairfield, IL

Luke Harl, VP of Asset Management, FNB Asset Management, Fairfield, IL

High Impact Meteorology in Production Agriculture

Andrew Pritchard, Senior Meteorologist, Nutrien Ag Solutions, Champaign, IL

The Farm Finance Forum will be held on Friday, February 2 at the Fairfield First Christian Church, located at 100 W Center Street in Fairfield. Registration and breakfast refreshments will begin at 8:30 a.m., with the program to begin at 9:00 a.m. The forum will include a catered lunch by Matt Kinney.

The Farm Finance Forum is free and open to the public. We ask that you RSVP your attendance by registering online at www.waynecfb.com/forum or by calling the Wayne County Farm Bureau at 618-842-3342 by January 26.

The 2024 Farm Finance Forum is sponsored by the Fairfield National Bank and the Wayne County Farm Bureau.

The Village of West Salem's Board met on Monday, January 22, 2024 at 6:30pm.

At the meeting,

o The Mayor shared that Assistant Water Superintendent Mike Clark has started his water licenses classes.

o In response to complaints from residents, the Board discussed a revised Garbage Ordinance. The proposed Ordinance states that trash receptacles should not be left at the curb for more than 48 hours. Residents should store their trash receptacles adjacent to their residents or other structures on the premises. No action was taken. The Ordinance will be voted upon at the next scheduled meeting, February 26, 2024.

o The Board discussed a revised Nuisances (Weeds) Ordinance. The proposed Ordinance provides more clarity on defining 'overgrowth.' No action was taken.

The Ordinance will be voted upon at the next scheduled meeting, February 26, 2024.

o The Village Attorney reported that the owner of two abandoned and dilapidated properties in West Salem has been served legal notice.

The village board took action on several items.

o Approval of a Change Order for the Sewer Lagoon project. A replacement valve, costing \$10,669.00, will be covered by the grant that was awarded for this project.

o Approval of a raise for Treasurer Kelli Higgins following a positive annual performance review. It was noted that Ms. Higgins has successfully handled many challenges this year.

o Approval to seek Janitorial Services for Village Hall. The Board directed Treasurer Higgins to look into finding a janitorial service for Village Hall. This is a budgeted expense.

The Edwards County Soil and Water Conservation District will be hosting a cover crop coffee shop event on Wednesday, February 7th. That event will take place from 8 AM until 12 Noon at the House of Prayer, located at 230 North 5th Street in Albion. The guest speaker for the event will be Cliff Schuette. Schuette is a cover crop seed specialist that is based out of Breese, IL. Panelists for the event include Terry Taylor, Doc Roser, Greg Dickey, and Jerry Seidel. Officials with the event say that there are several giveaways at the event.

Officials with the event ask for an RSVP by Wednesday, January 31st. To RSVP, you can call the Edwards County Soil and Water Conservation District at 618-445-3615 or the Wayne County Soil and Water Conservation District at 618-842-7602 ext 3. You can also RSVP by email by emailing ecswmd18@outlook.com or kathy.birket@il.nacdnet.net

The event is sponsored by Citizens National Bank of Albion and the Edwards County Farm Bureau. Breakfast will be provided by The Green Pig and sponsored by Fairfield National Bank.

A Fairfield man was sentenced to 4 years in the Illinois Department of Corrections followed by up to a year of mandatory supervised release Thursday in Wayne County. Special judge Michael Valentine handed down the sentence to 25-year old Jacob Chrtt. Chrtt was originally sentenced to probation for this case, dating back to 2020 for aggravated fleeing and eluding of police. Chrtt will also have to pay court costs of \$8052.24

A Sims man pled guilty in Wayne County Court on Thursday on a charge of theft. 20-year-old Gage L. Bittles was sentenced to 2 years of probation by special judge Michael Valentine. Bittles will also be required to pay court costs of \$3149. As part of the plea, a burglary charge was dismissed.

The Clay County Sheriff's Office is currently investigating multiple motor vehicle burglaries and thefts that occurred in Louisville between 10:00 p.m. on Thursday, January 18 and 6:00 a.m. Friday, January 19. The Sheriff's Office is asking for your assistance for additional video from those times and in identifying the subjects in the attached video.

(Video Link) <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/H8Zin5fmnA9BTXUe/?mibextid=KsPBc6>

Anyone with any information about the burglaries or thefts or that can help in the identification of the subjects please submit your information by texting XCRIME to tip411 or by using the XCRIME app on your smartphone to remain anonymous or contact the Clay County Sheriff's Office at 618-665-3316. Tips submitted to XCRIME that lead to the arrest of the individuals responsible for these crimes may be eligible for a cash reward.

On January 25th, a responding officer observed a 2007 black Chevrolet Silverado stopped in the middle of the road on Foley Drive. The officer did a check of the vehicles registration and it came back for a 2014 black Toyota Tundra. As the Silverado left the scene, the officer followed it and proceeded to pull it over on Stewart Street Mark Davis and Britney Barton were identified as the occupants of the vehicle. The officer noticed the smell of raw cannabis and asked the driver, Davis, if he had any on him. Davis answered yes and gave the officer a baggie. The officer stated he would have to search the vehicle now, and Davis informed the officer of a shotgun un-cased in the front seat.

During the search, the officer found a glass smoking device with a crystal like substance inside, a purse that belonged to Barton also contained the crystal substance, and the un-cased camo shotgun was found in the vehicle. Both of the items containing the crystal substance came back positive for Methamphetamine.

Both Davis and Barton were arrested and sent to the White County Jail. Barton's citations include: possession of adult use cannabis in a motor vehicle, unlawful use of property, possession of methamphetamine, and possession of a controlled substance. Davis' citations include: unlawful display of registration, possession of adult use cannabis in a motor vehicle, unlawful use of property, possession of methamphetamine, and possession of controlled substance.

Last night, the Albion Fire Department responded to a car fire. According to fire officials, the car fire was extinguished before any damage occurred with a nearby structure. While on scene, a call came in for a rural shed fire. Units responded to find a fully involved shed near a house. While firefighters responded to this call, one engine remained at the car fire. The fire was extinguished with minimal damage to the home.

Rainfall the past week has pushed area rivers higher. Most are now near or above their flood stage, and are higher than Saturday's levels.

The Little Wabash River east of Fairfield as of this morning is at 23.26 feet, above the 17-foot flood stage. At Clay City the stage is 20.05 feet. Flood stage is 18 feet. At Carmi the river is below the 27-foot flood stage, at 23.23 feet. The Skillet Fork at Wayne City reads 13.13 feet. Flood stage is 15 feet. The Wabash River at Mt. Carmel is at 15.29 feet, below the 19-foot flood stage. Bonpas Creek at Browns is at 13.9 feet.

Rainfall is expected to exit the region this morning, with cloudy skies continuing for today. The current forecast indicates some sunshine in the area for the first time in about a week on Monday. Drier conditions are expected this week, with only a small chance of rain Tuesday morning. Temperatures are expected to remain above normal for this time of year, with high temperatures in the upper 40s and lower 50s later this week. The extended forecasts, into early February, also indicate above-normal temperatures expected in the region.

A retired judge believes the courts should decide whether former President Donald Trump should be removed from Illinois' primary ballot in March. Trump's lawyers and citizens seeking to keep him off the ballot presented their arguments Friday before hearing officer Clark Erickson. The retired longtime Kankakee County judge said it's clear Trump engaged in insurrection in the January 6th U.S. Capitol attack in 2021. He recommended that Trump should be removed from Illinois' primary ballot, but the state's election board shouldn't be in charge of making that decision. The Illinois State Board of Elections is expected to consider the recommendation tomorrow.

IDOT maintenance crews are repairing potholes on state highways and interstates across Illinois. Non-emergency patching operations usually take place during nonpeak travel periods and often require temporary lane closures. Recent heavy snow, rains and freezing temperatures have caused an increase in potholes throughout the state. Drivers are required to slow down, use caution and move over for workers.

Five people are facing charges following an anti-human trafficking operation conducted by state police in the Effingham area. The operation took place Thursday, focusing on identifying individuals seeking to engage in commercial sex acts. One suspect is charged with Indecent Solicitation of a Child, Traveling to Meet a Child, and Solicitation to Meet a Child. The other are charged with Solicitation of a Sexual Act.

As the state of Illinois faces a shortage of court reporters, training classes are designed to rebuild this vital labor force and direct trainees to courthouse jobs.

While some consider the court reporting field in jeopardy because of technology, Melissa Clagg, instructor for the Court Reporting Services of Illinois, said this is far from true.

"I heard that 40 years ago, and we know technology has advanced but it's nowhere near the accuracy that needs to happen in a court of law for somebody's case," Clagg told The Center Square.

Over a period of two years she said the training will get students ready for careers as courthouse reporters, which are especially needed in Illinois.

"We have a little over 500 positions, and of those, a little over 100 are vacant," Clagg said.

Abounding in enthusiasm for her 40-plus years in the field, Clagg is signed on as an instructor/recruiter for the classes offered by the Court Reporting Services of Illinois. The spring pilot program recently started in Urbana but the fall program is another opportunity for those who apply by April 30.

Clagg, who spent 33 years at the Champaign County Courthouse, remembers the excitement of the court cases and described the field as “very rewarding.”

Like many potential students, Clagg didn’t know anything about court reporting when her guidance counselor suggested it years ago due to her typing speed.

“This will be a good field for a lot of people. It’s just something that for whatever reason people don’t necessarily think of,” she said.

Those who complete the approximately two-year, tuition-free program won’t have to worry about getting work. According to Clagg, “We also guarantee job placement once they complete our course, and they pass the speed test.”

While the pilot program started in Urbana, there’s hope of expanding the opportunity throughout the state, Clagg said.

To learn details and how to sign up for fall classes, visit the Court Reporting Services website at ilcrs.com.

Court Reporting Services is the administrative office that oversees court reporting services for Illinois trial courts.

Wayne County Sheriff’s Officials were on the scene of a single car crash on County Highway 2 in Mount Erie Township Late Tuesday. According to the traffic accident report, 46-year old Tracy D. Fox of Mount Erie was traveling east on County Highway 2 near County Road 2300 North around 10:47 PM when his vehicle left the road way and overturned onto property owned by the Nazarene Church in Mount Erie. No injuries were reported with the accident. Over \$1500 of damage was reported to Fox’s Ford 500. The only damage reported to the property of the Nazarene Church was in the yard. The vehicle was towed away from the scene.

pair of Senior Centers in Edwards County are seeking help in the kitchen for their operation.

According to information on the Edwards County Council on Aging Facebook, the West Salem Senior Center is looking for a cook as well as the Grayville Senior Center.

The work is part-time and takes place Monday thru Friday with exception to holidays. Officials also say that some fundraisers are also on the list.

Duties include:

1. All aspects of food preparation, including placing food and supply order from the home office. Fried food will be provided from Albion.
2. Cleans and keeps the kitchen area in an orderly condition.
3. Assist in packaging all food for home delivered meals.
4. Assists in the serving of food for the congregate (dine in) meals.
5. Assist in the cleaning of the dining room area.
6. Washes dishes, cooking utensils, and kitchen equipment.
7. Participates in fundraising activities.
8. Performs other assigned duties as required.

QUALIFICATIONS:

Ability to work closely with members of the senior community, maintain effective working relationships with peers.

Possession, or willingness to obtain, Safety and Sanitation Certification.

Possession of a valid Illinois driver’s license.

EDUCATION AND/OR EXPERIENCE

High school graduate, or the equivalent. Program-related education and training may be required and may be paid by the program.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS:

While light duty is not available, reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions. While performing the duties of this job, the employee is regularly required to stand for extended periods of time. Lifting of up to 40 pounds is possible.

If you are interested, please stop in the Albion or West Salem center and pick up an application.

The Village of Cisne as well as Bedford Township is dealing with an issue involving trash. Both organizations have been dealing with the issue for a few months. The issue has led to the removal of public dumpsters that were rented by Bedford Township, the temporary closure of the compost area and burn pile in Cisne, and issues in the public involving individuals using business dumpsters that are privately paid for and not paid for by taxpayers. According to village officials, the village of Cisne has been helping pay for the dumpster and at the last billing for the dumpster, village officials paid nearly \$1000 to help with the removal of trash. Another issue that has arose from the removal of the dumpsters is the use of those who do not live in Cisne. According to the contract involving Sunrise Sanitation and the Village of Cisne, the trash rate they have is for the normal amount of waste in the village.

In February, village residents will notice on their village bills a fifty cent increase for their trash bill to \$12.75 per month. Officials in the village feel that they need to point out the increase is part of the agreement and not related to the situation with dumping. Village officials fear that the additional trash if it continues to be out of hand will lead to a price increase.

According to the service contract with Sunrise Sanitation, the village trash service provider, the initial base price or any succeeding price may be adjusted when circumstances, unexpected economic conditions or additional requirements which are beyond the control of the contractor, dictate a reasonable price adjustment so as to maintain adequate solid waste disposal services to the Village. The Contractor shall give a minimum of 60 days notice of its intent to request such an increase.

The Village Burn and Compost area will remain closed until further notice. If something were to happen that would create the need to open the area, village officials will address the situation.

Wayne County Authorities made several arrests over the weekend

33-year-old Marion C. Brown Jr. of Wayne City was arrested on Friday. Brown was wanted on a Caldwell County, Kentucky warrant on charges of 2nd degree rape and unlawful transaction with a minor. According to information from Caldwell County, the person was 13 at the time of the incident and the events took place at the Faith Apostolic Church. Investigation into the alleged incident took place on July 24, 2022.

A Geff man was arrested on Sunday on a charge of domestic battery. At 10:13 PM, Wayne County Sheriff's officials arrested Randall S Trout of Geff on a warrant for failure to appear on a domestic battery charge. The warrant dated back to December 7th of 2022. Bond was set at \$845 cash only.

A Fairfield Man was arrested by Fairfield Police on a count of domestic battery. On Friday at 12:12 PM, 50-year-old Terry Edward Richardson was arrested and booked into the Wayne County Jail. He is being held until he makes a court appearance.

A Fairfield Woman was arrested by Illinois State Police following a traffic stop on Sunday. 22-year-old Rebeca Nunez was stopped by police following officers observing improper lane usage. Officials during the stop learned Nunez was operating on cancelled, suspended, or revoked registration as well as operating on a drivers license what was suspended or revoked. Officers also conducted a sobriety check and found Nunez to be operating with a blood alcohol level above .08. Nunez faces charges of improper lane usage, DUI, driving while suspended or revoked, and driving on suspended, revoked, or cancelled registration.

A Fairfield man was arrested by Fairfield Police on a single count of disorderly conduct. At 6:39 PM, authorities took into custody 33-year-old Steven Michael Thomas. He was booked into the Wayne County Jail.

On Friday, 39-year-old James M. Payne was arrested by Jefferson County Sheriff's Deputies at his home on E. Providence Rd in Scheller, IL. He was arrested for an active Jefferson County warrant charging Child Pornography. Payne was transported to the Jefferson County Jail and incarcerated to await his pre-trial detention hearing. The warrant and arrest were a result of a Sheriff's Office investigation, initiated on December 15th, 2023 when Jefferson County Sheriff's Deputies, members of the Internet Crime Against Children Task Force received a cyber tip from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. The tip led to multiple search warrants for data and records, which led to a search warrant for Payne's residence, which was served on January 2nd, 2024. Evidence was discovered and collected during the search. Payne was interviewed and released, pending the forensic examination of the evidence collected, which when completed, was sufficient for the issuance of the arrest warrant. Payne is innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

The Flora Chamber of Commerce held their annual Chamber Awards Banquet.

The Business of the Year award went to Ace Tire and Auto. The business is owned by Troy and Amy Leonard.

The New Business of the Year went to Eckelberry Barber Company. Nicholas and Rebecca Eckelberry are the owners of the shop.

The 2023 Citizens of the Year, named by the chamber, were Ryan and Angie Scott. Together, they own Julian's Drive Inn.

A Special Recognition Award was handed to Dave and Marlee Johnson. The Johnsons retired in December after 30 plus years of service to the Flora community.

The Mount Vernon Township High School will be hosting a FAFSA Workshop for 4 days over the next two weeks.

Sessions will take place from January 30th and February 8th from 5 to 7 PM and January 31st and February 7th from 9 AM until 12 noon. The sessions will take place in the Media Center at the high school.

Parents and Students who need help filling out the FAFSA only need to be on hand for one session. Items needed include 2022 tax returns for the parents, W2s, records of income and assets, and an FSA ID for both the student and parents.

For more information, you can contact Mount Vernon Township High School.

Over the weekend, a 19-year-old Firefighter for Salem and a dispatcher from the Marion County Sheriff's Office passed away.

According to the obituary from Crouse Funeral Home in Salem, Harley Douglas Carter passed away at his home.

Harley worked as a dispatcher for the Marion County Sheriff's Department and was a dedicated volunteer for the Salem Fire Protection District. He enjoyed being able to serve his community and his county in his career. He enjoyed playing the guitar, driving his truck, and being with his friends and family.

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Celebration of Life for Harley Douglas Carter will be held at 1:00 pm on Wednesday, January 31, 2024 at Grace Church of the Nazarene in Salem with Pastor Trent Ice officiating. A visitation will be held from 10:00 am until the time of the service. The Salem Fire Protection District and the Marion County Sheriff's Department will be providing an Honor Guard during the visitation. A flag presentation and Honors will be conducted by the Marion County Fire Service Honor Guard. For those who wish, memorials can be made to the Salem Fire Protection District or to a fund for his niece and nephews, and can be left at Crouse Funeral Home in Salem.

The Hamilton County Board will hold a special meeting Wednesday Afternoon at 4:30 at the Hamilton County Courthouse,

According to the agenda, the board will look to discuss and approve an appropriation of funds from the motor fuel tax fund to the county highway department for road maintenance.

The meeting on Wednesday is open to the public.

Three awards are given out at the Hamilton County Chamber of Commerce Dinner every year to very deserving and outstanding individuals/businesses, and this year was no exception.

Tequila Mexican Restaurant was the winner of the Business of the Year award. Justin Drake shared that, "One of the first restaurants in Hamilton County that helped establish us. Whether in the restaurant or in one of their two food trucks, Sal and his staff always provide great service at local events. But just like all businesses, Tequila believes in giving back to the community with their time and effort with supporting our local schools and organizations." Salvador Tapia, accepted the award and thanked the community and Chamber for the opportunity to grow within the community.

The Ted Satterfield award is given to an individual who has demonstrated commitment to the betterment of Hamilton County through local business and community activities. Mike Harre was recipient of the special award. Harre shared a few words, "One thing I remember about Ted Satterfield was that he was always positive about his community." Harre continued with discussing the importance of supporting one another not just in business but within the community. "Always ask yourself, what did you do for Hamilton County today? I'm proud to accept this and thank you."

Twice elected Chamber President Sam Wilson presented the last award of the night, the Civic Community Service Award. Wilson explained, "There are a lot of community service groups in our community, but there is one that has been making waves lately in the past five years with putting new ideas in the community. I am proud to give this award to the Women's Leadership Council of Hamilton County." Letitia Wiggins and Chelsea Miller, who help make up the organization, accepted the award.

To close out the night, the Chamber thanked and awarded Mindi Kolts for all her years of service to the Chamber board. They also thanked the many sponsors for this years Chamber dinner: The Heritage Place/Cindy Horacek Venue, Irvin's Jewelry Hidden Gems, Ferrell Hospital McLeansboro Family Medicine Registration, The Liquor Hut Social Hour, Esther Bloom Photography Photo Booth, Lasting Impressions Decorations, and Terry Wells Event Music.

An overnight fire has destroyed a Colony West home belonging to Carmi-White County High School Athletic Director Kurt Simon and his wife Stacy, a teacher in the school system as well. Fire Chief Daniel Ballard says it was 2:19am when crews arrived to an already engulfed blazed. He says flames were already through the roof by the time firefighters arrived on scene and high winds made battling the flames difficult. Norris City and Enfield fire departments assisted with mutual aid. The fire resulted in a total loss despite crew efforts. No cause has been determined. We Love White County, of which the Simons are integrally involved, has set up a PayPal link to help the family.

Illinois seeks to better provide parents and children more access to behavioral health services through a new partnership program with Google.

On Monday, Gov. J.B. Pritzker was at Google Chicago to announce the creation of BEACON, or the Behavioral Health Care and Ongoing Navigation, a service access portal for Illinois families to access behavioral and mental health resources for children. The plan will incorporate artificial intelligence and create an online portal that provides families with access to behavioral and mental health resources.

“We are doing away with decentralized, difficult-to-navigate behavioral health resources scattered across different agencies, providers and websites,” said Pritzker. “Instead, families will have a modern, easy-to-use online system to guide them through the behavioral health universe.”

A state news release didn't disclose the taxpayer cost of the partnership between the Illinois Department of Human Services and Google Public Sector.

“Google Public Sector is proud to collaborate with the state of Illinois to launch BEACON, a centralized resource hub powered by human-centered AI,” said Chris Hein, director of Customer Engineering for Google. “Our team designed this system by working backward from the needs of families to create a seamless experience that will help reduce barriers to care.”

State Sen. Sara Feigenholtz, D-Chicago, said legislators have responded well to the new portal.

“After our meetings and hearing how legislators feel about the work that is being done, wow, wow, wow, is what what I got last week from three or four legislators,” Feigenholtz said. “We are really excited about this partnership.”

According to a state news release, the portal will look to achieve five different goals by making it easier for youth and families to access services, adjusting capacity to ensure the right resources are available, intervening earlier to prevent crises from developing, increasing accountability to ensure the state has a transparent system and developing agility so that the system can adjust to meet the evolving needs of youth.

The Illinois State Board of Elections is expected to vote today on whether to remove former President Donald Trump from the state's primary ballot in March. The vote comes after retired Kankakee County judge Clark Erickson recommended over the weekend that the courts should dismiss a voters' petition to remove Trump from the ballot. However, Erickson did say it was clear Trump engaged in insurrection in the January 6th U.S. Capitol attack in 2021.

Wayne County Sheriff's Officials took a desk report of a Truck vs. Deer collision in Orchard Township on Monday.

At 7:00 AM, Authorities received a report from Lonnie D. Holleman of Johnsonville about his 2018 Dodge Ram 1500 colliding with a deer on the left front side as he was driving Southbound on County Highway 13. Over \$1500 of damage was reported to the truck. No injuries were reported

A Fairfield Man is in custody after he was arrested by Fairfield Police Monday Evening.

Just after 8 PM, officials reported that 58-year-old Jesse Oran Hedden was taken into custody for failing to register as a sex offender. He was booked into the Wayne County Jail.

Fairfield and Cisne FFA Chapters recently participated in the FFA Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAEs). Used to, the event was known as record books.

For Fairfield, 1st place finishes came from:

Layne Weber-Trades
Devon Smothers-Ag Mechanics
Lainie Clark- Agriscience
Caleb Vaughan-Fiber/Oil Crop
Maggie Koontz- Food Service
Miller Simpson-Forage
Sarah Ruhl-Goat Production
Wren Braddock- Outdoor Recreation
Ryan Vaughan- Service Learning
Grant Jennette- Speciality Crop
Jacob Combs-Wildlife Management

For Cisne, 1st Place Finishers were:

Agricultural Mechanics Design & Fabrication – Ashton Stine
Agricultural Mechanics Repair and Maintenance – Entrepreneurship – Brock Allen
Ag Sales – Entrepreneurship – Allie Brach
AgriScience Research – Plant Systems – Aidyn Dickey
Environmental Science & Natural Resources Management- Alex Paul
Landscape Management – Spencer Brach
Small Animal Production & Care – Chloe Owens
Turf Grass Management – Joshua Biggs
Vegetable Production – Ava Greifzu

First place winners will advance to District V interview competition to be held March 6th at Mt. Vernon Township High School.

Water officials have reported a water main break in the area of Sunset Lake. Workers have since restored water service, but now a boil order will be in effect until further notice.

The Wayne County Chamber of Commerce is pleased to announce the selection of the 2024 Business of the Year recipient. This is the 57th year the award has been granted. Recognition will be at the annual Chamber dinner on Monday, March 11th at the Willow Creek Venue with happy hour beginning at 5:00 p.m.

The 2024 Business of the Year is: The Chop Shop

That evening the recipient of the 2024 Community Service Award and the New Business of the Year will be announced and we will recognize The Chop Shop.

The Chop Shop has been at the current location, 400 W Main St., for 10 years in March of 2024. Chasity Fry, the owner of The Chop Shop, has been cutting hair for 29 years. Chasity has a great team: Kasha Foley, Verla Foley, Ivy McCune, Julie Rockett, Riley Ellis, and Kaytie Elliott. Chasity credits her husband, Brandon Fry, for pushing her to open in her current location and for all the work he does on the building. The Chop Shop is a full-service salon for the whole family.

A 37-year-old Flora man will remain in the Effingham County Jail on charges of attempted kidnapping and battery of a person over the age of 60.

Matthew Kelledees was arrested in January in the lobby of an Effingham hotel. He's accused of attempting to take a girl under the age of 13 from the hotel. He reportedly was then involved in a physical altercation with hotel staff and patrons before police arrived. The child was unharmed.

Kelledees was scheduled to appear in court Wednesday on charges of Class 1 attempted aggravated kidnapping as well as Class 2 felony aggravated battery of a person over the age of 60 and Class 3 felony attempting to disarm a peace officer.

However, due to his reported disruptive behavior at the jail, his preliminary hearing was first held via Zoom, and then rescheduled for February 14.

Kelledees will remain in custody as he is on a parole hold for the Illinois Department of Corrections on convictions out of Clay County for meth possession and violation of a protective order.

Mt. Vernon, IL high school superintendent Melanie Andrews has announced she will resign her position effective the end of this school year.

Media reports say the decision was made due to her father's dementia diagnosis last year, and wishes to spend more time with him. Andrews' last day as superintendent will be June 30th. She was named the region's Superintendent of the Year in 2023.

For the first time in several weeks, the latest U.S. Drought Monitor map has removed all of the drought conditions from Wayne County and the state of Illinois, as the result of recent rainfall.

The map for this past Wednesday, released on Thursday, shows Abnormally Dry conditions in the north and west portions of Wayne County and several counties to the north and west of that area. Another area of Abnormally Dry conditions is in the west-central tip of Illinois. The rest of the state is shown with no dry or drought conditions.

The extended forecasts, which run through February 16th, show above normal temperatures expected to continue, with above normal precipitation for the six-to-ten day outlook, which runs from February 8th through 12th.

Here's the latest on area river stages as of this morning, most of which are now below flood stage: the Little Wabash River east of Fairfield is at 24.42 feet. Flood stage is 17 feet. At Clay City the river stands at 10.31 feet. Flood stage is 18 feet. The reading at Carmi is 25.86 feet. Flood stage is 27 feet. The Skillet Fork at Wayne City is at 6.03 feet. Flood stage is 15 feet. The Wabash River at Mt. Carmel is at 17.48 feet. Flood stage is 19 feet. Bonpas Creek at Browns is at 3.51 feet.

A fire in West Frankfort Saturday destroyed a home and killed five family pets.

Reports said no one was injured, but at least five animals died in the fire. West Frankfort Fire Chief Derek Sailliez said in the report the family lost everything in the fire, and had no home insurance. Fire officials arrived at the scene around noon Saturday. Multiple departments responded. Three family members were inside the house at the time of the fire but were able to get out.

A cause of the fire was not immediately determined, but officials didn't believe there was any suspicious activity.

The spread of respiratory illnesses is going down in Illinois. The Illinois Department of Public Health announced the state's overall respiratory illness level decreased from Low to Minimal in the most recent available CDC data. The state is also now at a Low level for COVID-19 hospitalizations.

The 1099-G tax forms are now available for claimants in Illinois who received unemployment insurance benefits in 2023. Claimants who collected UI benefits last year need the 1099-G tax form to complete their state and federal tax returns. Those who opted to receive their 1099-G tax form electronically have received an email notification with instructions to access the form from their Illinois Department of Employment Security account.

The Greater Wabash Regional Planning Commission has announced a promotion and advancement. Jeff Vaughn has become a grant administrator for the commission. Jeff will be involved with infrastructure projects and various other grant administration work through the region. The Greater Wabash Regional Planning Commission serves Crawford, Edwards, Lawrence, Richland, Wabash, Wayne, and White Counties.

In order to meet the growing needs of our patients, Fairfield Memorial Hospital Horizon Healthcare has expanded its Behavioral Health Counseling Services with the addition of Lauren Griswold, MSW, LCSW, Behavioral Health Therapist, as the newest provider at Horizon Healthcare.

Lauren completed her Associate's Degree from Frontier Community College in May of 2008. She then went on to complete her Bachelor's of Social Work in 2010 and her Master's of Social Work in 2011 from the University of Southern Indiana. Lauren achieved her Board Certification as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in 2014.

Lauren has worked at Fairfield Memorial Hospital the past 12 years in Senior Life Solutions. She has provided counseling to older adults dealing with depression, anxiety and other life challenges.

The FMH Horizon Healthcare Outpatient Behavioral Health Therapy Program provides counseling services to individuals, couples and families, including children, teens, and adults in both the Fairfield and Carmi Clinics. Those dealing with issues of anxiety, depression, family conflict, medical illness, and behavioral difficulties could benefit from the program, as well as those with a more severe mental health diagnosis. A variety of interventions and coping skills are offered based on individual treatment planning and agreed upon by the patient and the healthcare team.

To schedule an appointment with any of the FMH Horizon Healthcare Providers please call 618-842-4617.

The Albion park board Monday night voted to accept a donation from the farm bureau in the amount of 3000 the money came from a rural development grant. The board voted to lay the first installment of 111,243.00 for the new playground equipment recently purchased.

The Albion City Council met Monday night and voted to approve the first reading of a 14 page document to finalize the agreement with the W2E water. This agreement is an agreement to sell water to the city of Albion and city of Grayville. The documents will then be sent to the IEPA for possible funding of a new water plant to be constructed just north of Grayville. Speaker: The reading will be held Tuesday night at 6 p.m. with a final vote of approval coming at that meeting.

The council approved the asphaltting of the rights of way on Fourth Street from railroad bridge to Pine Street, also known as state route 130. The state is wanting to resurface the roadway and the city would be responsible for the asphalt meeting up with the curb and gutter. The estimated price which is much lower due to federal and state funding was \$27,500. This does not include additional work to the adjacent sidewalks. This work is to begin in 2025.

It was also announced that the county has decided to keep open the center drive on the east side of the Courthouse Square only. The two other openings at either end of the parkway will have curbing installed.

More discussion about the upcoming eclipse party on the bricks. The city is to provide dumpsters and six porta potties for the square area near the entertainment area.

Mike Speir told the council that some tape of some seams on the city hall and ambulance headquarter roof should take care of the leaky roof. That work will be done in the weeks to come.

Mayor Harris reported to the council that city superintendent Ron Cullison will be retiring at the beginning of May. Cullison will retire with 62 years and 4 months of service to the city of Albion.

The city is facing some major expense with two of the city's water wells. Wells one and two will need their plumbing reworked at an estimated cost of \$59,622 for well number 1 and \$30,964 plus a possible \$12,500 repair to the plumbing on well number 2. The council accepted the estimate from Brodsky wells service.

Many years ago, electric poles were installed in the block of Elm from Seventh to Eighth Street. However, during the installation years ago, the sewer lines were near enough to the auger that some damage to the sewer lines developed. So now the city will need to repair those holes left by the poles and an estimated cost of \$52,750.

The council approved to spend an estimated \$60,000 to oil and chip some city streets and alleyways this summer.

After executive session, the council voted to employee Zachary Murray as a city worker animal control officer.

The Norris City Village Board met Monday Evening.

The board was originally going to approve two alley closures, but Willie Gladd, who was involved in one of them, addressed the board asking them to consider closing all of the alleys in Norris City. He said that would end any litigation and easement would be returned to the landowners. Mayor Skip Land said he had also thought about closing all the alleys, but board member Wayne McKenzie thought it wasn't a good idea. After much discussion, the board approved Mayor Land's request to table the alley closings until he could talk with village attorney Nathan Roland about the situation, and asked Larry Garlick and Kevin Pettijohn of the Street and Alley Committee to look into the matter as well. They will take the issue up again at the March board meeting.

Concerning tree limbs falling onto Cherry and Orchard Streets, the village can use up to \$25,000 in MFT funds to trim the branches. If it would cost more, they would have to bid it out.

The village will look into modifying their cat policy, as it has become a problem because there's no place to hold them.

The board members approved doing away with the Nepotism Ordinance and putting the issue in the board's hands. Board member Garlick abstained.

The Overland Group was in and inspected the Wakeford property, taking samples to analyze. The process is still ongoing.

The Village is looking at splitting costs with the Township for a Warming/Cooling Center for residents during extreme temperatures. They are looking at possibly getting grant money or using TIF money for a generator to power the building.

They tabled a request from Red's Recoil to move his TIF money from repairing the roof to getting awnings for the front of their building. He's already spent half of his allocated monies. The village is looking into the matter.

The situation with La-D-Da is being turned over to a process server.

The village has taken in over \$80,000 from their Credit Card.

The Dale water tower needs to have a pump and a valve replaced and it would cost about \$16,000 to fix. Norris City provides Dale's water and they will look at whether or not to help them pay for the work.

Brian Ray provided the board with a comparison in allocation with MFT funds between 2007 and 2023 to give people an idea how much the monies have increased. In 2023 Norris City received \$49,000 in funds, compared with \$30,000 in 2007. By the way, Carmi's amount was \$418,204 last year, compared with \$417,274 in 2007.

In the Police Report for January, there were 15 reports written, two accident reports, two arrests made, nine traffic stops and warnings, and five citations issued, including 30 calls to Dispatch.

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On Friday, at 2:54 a.m. the Clay County Sheriff's Office was dispatched to Vic's Café in Wendelin for a burglary in progress. Upon the arrival of deputies it was discovered the suspect(s) had fled from the scene. Illinois State Police Crime Scene Services were dispatched to process and collect evidence at the scene. Later that afternoon with assistance from neighboring law enforcement agencies the sheriff's office was able to identify the suspect(s) in the burglary.

On Sunday the sheriff's office received information from the Jasper County Sheriff's Office that they had taken individuals into custody in reference to a burglary that occurred in Jasper County. Upon further investigation deputies determined that two of individuals in Jasper County's custody were suspects in the Vic's Café Burglary.

As a result of the investigation, Trevor L. Lindemann, 33, and Haleigh J. Bail, 21, both of Newton are being held on local charges in the Jasper County Jail and also for the offense(s) of Burglary relating to the incident at Vic's Café. The sheriff's office was assisted by the Effingham Police Department, Jasper County Sheriff's Office, Newton Police Department, Illinois State Police Crime Scene Services and Clay County State's Attorney's Office.

The Illinois Athletic Trainers Association on Tuesday announced their yearly awards on the athletic trainer at Fairfield Community High School is on the list of honorees.

Sarah Turner is the athletic trainer at FCBS and has been at the high school for 8 and a half years. Turner was announced as the Young Professional Award Recipient. She works with Wabash General Hospital based out of Mount Carmel and has been with them for 12 years.

Other awards for this year include Tanya Marquez for induction into the Illinois Athletic Trainer Hall of Fame, Andrea Kovalsky for the the Rich Carey Dedicated Service Award, Christopher Murphy for the Impact Athletic Trainer of the Year, the Special Recognition Award to Albert Maurer, and the Karen Hovorkan Humanitarian Award to Dale Grooms.

All of the athletic trainers mentioned will be honored at the Illinois Athletic Trainers Association meeting in Naperville on June 7th and 8th.

Crimestoppers of Wayne County is offering a reward for the arrest of the person or persons who entered a rented storage building by Marvin Bailey and removed from the storage building oxygen & acetylene tanks, 3 compound bows & accessories, 2 deer stands, 3 roku tvs, a Nintendo system plus 100 games, snap on tools, baseball cards, still backpack leaf blower, army gear, air compressor with 50' hose and 5 floor jacks. If you have any information on the theft, you are asked to call or text Crimestoppers at 618 842 9777

The Albion city council met in a special session Tuesday night to discuss the proposed agreement with w2e to sell water to the city of Albion and the city of Grayville once the new water filtration plant is built. The Albion City Council had the first reading last night and voted to approve the agreement Tuesday night

Illinois lawmakers are pushing to eliminate the subminimum wage for tipped workers. The proposed legislation would raise the hourly rate for tipped workers to minimum wage. The measure would phase out the subminimum wage over a two-year period. The proposal mirrors one recently passed in Chicago.

Illinoisans are being encouraged to take advantage of savings offered by the newly expanded Illinois Earned Income Tax Credit. The EITC is a benefit that helps low to moderate income workers get a tax break. For tax year 2023, coverage has been expanded to include taxpayers with an IRS-issued Individual Taxpayer Identification Number, as well as workers ages 18 to 24 and over 65. Those claiming Illinois EITC this year will also see their amount of tax relief increased to a 20-percent match of the amount given federally.

The date has been set for the 2024 Edwards County Farmer's Share Breakfast has been set for March 23rd. The breakfast is being sponsored by the Edwards County Farm Bureau and the Edwards County FFA. It will be held from 6:30am until 9:30am on the 23rd in the community room of the Edwards County Farm Bureau. The breakfast will feature pancakes, eggs, sausage and drinks. The cost of the breakfast will be \$0.14 per person.

"14.3¢ is the amount farmers and ranchers receive for every food dollar consumers spend," stated Rebecca Perry, manager of the Edwards County Farm Bureau.

"The purpose of this breakfast is to show consumers how much the farmer actually receives out of every dollar they spend on food," stated Perry.

The amount of money a farmer receives from the food dollar has gone down six cents from 2016.

The Albion Park was awarded \$3,000 in funds from the Illinois Farm Bureau (IFB) Rural Development Grant Program. The funds will be used to assist with expenses associated with the second phase of a multiphase improvement plan. In 2024, these plans include new playground equipment, including near the softball diamond, updating one set of bathrooms, and building pickleball courts.

"We are proud to support the park board in their efforts to revitalize the park and our community and are grateful that we can bring these funds to them," stated Kenny Clodfelter, president of the Edwards County Farm Bureau.

The Edwards County Farm Bureau uses the park for organizational programs and applied for the IFB Rural Development Grant funds to assist Albion Park in their renovations. The park's long-term plan fits within the general standards for funding- community beautification, expanding recreational opportunities and revitalizing community spirit.

Rural development is a high priority for the Illinois Farm Bureau, and a current focus of the Local Government Team in the organization. To further enhance IFB's engagement with and support of rural development efforts that benefit its members, funds were allocated to support local community efforts to improve and enhance their communities, through the first ever IFB Rural Development Grant Program.

The main purpose of the IFB Rural Development Grant Program is to provide funding for investment in projects being implemented in rural communities that will positively impact Farm Bureau members and other residents.

The Fairfield FFA Alumni is hosting the annual Scholarship Fundraiser Dinner on Friday February 16th at Fairfield Community High School Cafeteria before the FCHS Boys Basketball game with Carmi-White County. The meal will begin at 5 pm including Pork Chops and sides.

All proceeds go the Fairfield FFA Scholarship Fund and the meal is open to the public.

Kindergarten registration for Johnsonville Elementary School will be held on Monday, March 11th from 3:30-5:30p.m. This registration is for all students who will be entering Kindergarten in the fall at Johnsonville School.

Your child must be five years old by September 1, 2024 in order to enroll for the 2024-25 school year. Officials ask that parents please bring a certified copy of your child's birth certificate (from the courthouse), and your child's social security number. Immunization records, eye exam, and verification of lead screening are due by the first day of school.

The registration will consist of providing the above paperwork and speaking with the Kindergarten teacher. The school nurse will also be available to talk to parents. Please call the school office at 618-673-3044 to schedule an appointment to register your child.

Meanwhile, Kindergarten registration for the Mt. Erie School will be held on Monday, March 18th from 3:00-5:00 p.m. This registration is for all students who will be entering kindergarten in the fall at Mt. Erie School.

In order to enroll in kindergarten, a child must be five years old by September 1, 2024. Please bring a certified copy of your child's birth certificate (from the courthouse), and your child's social security card or number. Immunization records, eye exam, dental exam and verification of lead screening are necessary by the first day of school.

The registration will consist of processing the above paperwork and meeting the kindergarten teacher. The school nurse will also be

available to talk to parents. In order to cut down on waiting time, please call the school office (618-854-2611) to make an appointment to register your child for kindergarten.

The Salem Police Department is saddened to announce the passing of retired K-9 Freddy.

K-9 Freddy served the City of Salem and surrounding area for nearly 7 years from 2015-2022. Throughout his career K-9 Freddy was an invaluable member of the city's police department. According to officials with the Salem Police Department, he was deployed hundreds if not thousands of times for everything from person tracks, narcotics and area searches, to apprehensions. He always served with loyalty and courage. K-9 Freddy and his handler also conducted numerous demonstrations for local schools and community groups.

Clay County Hospital would like to welcome their new EMS Manager, Krista Anthony. Krista comes to Clay County Hospital from Mississippi but grew up in Eastern Tennessee.

Krista has worked in public safety for 15 years, including EMS, Fire, Hazmat, Emergency Management and EMS Education. She has a degree in Healthcare Management with an emphasis in Medical Ethics.

When asked what her goals were for Clay County Hospital, she says her goals are to get to know the EMS crews and how best to support them, local residents and their needs, train with and support the local first responders, and inspiring passion in our current and future first responders to provide excellent care for the citizens of Clay County and beyond.

Early voting in Illinois begins today across the state. Different counties have different procedures on how the early voting will work.

In Wayne County, early voting will take place in the County Clerk's Office on the 1st level of the courthouse between 8 AM and 4 PM.

County Clerk Liz Ann Woodrow says that voter registration can also take place in her office. She also says if you are registering to vote after February 21st, voting will be required to take place in her office.

The official Election Day in Illinois is set for Tuesday, March 19th.

For early voting in your local county for those not in Wayne County, it's recommended you contact your local county clerk.

Below are the list of filings in Wayne County from the WFIW News File on December 4th:

States Attorney – Kevin Kakac (Republican)

Wayne Co. Circuit Clerk –

Georgiana Fletcher (Republican)

Ellen Sitzes (Republican)

Coroner – Carrie Jo Dagg (Republican)

Wayne County Board Dist#1 – Quinton Greenwalt (Republican)

Wayne County Board Dist#2 –

Andy Glover(Republican)

Debra Wilkinson(Republican)

Greg Keyser(Republican)

Wayne County Board Dist#3 – Brandon Bittles (Republican)

Wayne County Board Dist#4 –

Brandon Thomason(Republican)

Steven Manning(Republican)

Wayne County Board Dist#6- Vern Hutson Sr(Republican)

Wayne County Board Dist#7 – Steve Troyer Republican)

Republican Precinct Committeeperson –

Ellen Sitzes(Indian Prairie)

Brandon Thomason(Orel)

Ronald Woodrow(Barnhill)

Yvette Anderson (Four Mile)

Marvin Cole – (Bedford)
Louise Morlan (Grover)
Garry Atteberry (Mt. Erie)

Democrat Precinct Committeeperson –

Judy Cates (Fairfield 1)
Cheryl Holder (Jasper 2)
Gordon Endsley(Massilon)
Cassie Fuller (Fairfield 2)

A Cook County judge is rejecting a bid to delay a challenge to former President Donald Trump's candidacy in Illinois. Lawyers for Trump filed a motion to halt legal proceedings in Illinois until after the U.S. Supreme Court rules whether he is constitutionally eligible to seek reelection. The judge also denied a request by voters seeking to remove Trump's name off the March Illinois primary ballot for an expedited court schedule. Instead, the judge set a February 16th hearing for an appeal of the Illinois State Board of Elections' decision to keep Trump's name on the ballot.

Illinois lawmakers are pushing for a statewide child tax credit. A bill introduced yesterday would offer 300-dollars per child starting in 2025 for families who earn less than the median income. If approved, Illinois would become the 14th state to pass a statewide child tax credit.

The Woodlawn School District is in mourning this morning after reporting the loss of a student.

In a letter released by Woodlawn Superintendent Eric Helbig, it says:

It is with deep sadness that I inform you about a tragic loss to our school community. On February 7th, a student at Woodlawn Grade School lost his life. The event will undoubtedly raise many emotions for our entire district.

Our district is committed to doing everything we can to help our students, staff, and community with the grieving and healing process. The district has social workers on staff and will have extra outside counselors available for any student, staff member, or parent who may need any sort of assistance surrounding this loss.

This loss will affect everyone in our school family and in the Woodlawn Community.

Students may have a difficult time dealing with the loss, and we encourage you to talk with your child.

At this time, the district will not be releasing the name of the student out of respect for the privacy of the families. I appreciate your continued support of our students.

It took around an hour for the Wayne County Spelling Bee to commence. The bee took place at Fairfield Call. This year's winner of the spelling bee is Esme Krupp. Krupp is an 8th grader at Cisne Middle School. Krupp is the daughter of Adam and Aleshia Krupp.

Krupp's final word that clinched the victory was plastron.

The runner up for this year's spelling bee is Wayne City 5th Grader Alex Barbre. Barbre is the son of Jonathan and Heather Barbre.

The spelling bee was moderated by Jeff Vaughan and put together by Shari Berger.

The Wayne County Board met for their monthly meeting last night at the Wayne County Courthouse.

With only 1 dissenting vote, the board voted to rescind a resolution that was passed at the December 2023 meeting. The resolution rescinded was presented in December by Wayne County Supervisor of Assessments, Jodi Poole. She had requested that the county be divided into quadrants for assessment purposes. Several board members stated that they didn't feel like they were fully informed on the issue by Poole and had sought more information on their own, leading to the vote. Board members also voiced concern that a severe lack of communication existed between the Assessors and Poole's office. Poole was also criticized for her lack of attendance at most board meetings.

Office Reports:

County Treasurer Yvette Anderson reported that the final distribution of taxes had been completed

County Clerk Lizann Woodrow advised those attending that early voting began yesterday, with 10 people casting ballots. She stated that over 500 mail in ballots have been requested. The board approved an \$8,000 expenditure for new batteries for the county's electronic voting machines.

Coroner Carrie Dagg updated the board on the new refrigeration equipment being installed at her office. She also stated that Lucy Britt was working in her office as the result of a grant. Britt is currently in college, pursuing a career in Law Enforcement.

Sheriff Chris Otey informed the board that local business owners Bryan & Barbara Williams had provided a donation to his department that was used to purchase 7 new ballistic helmets for his department. The sheriff and board extended their gratitude the Williams for

their generosity. The Sheriff said that Active Shooter Drills have been completed for all North Wayne Schools, with drills being planned for Wayne City and the remaining county schools. The sheriff updated the board on several pieces of surplus equipment they will be receiving. The equipment includes an RV that will become a Mobile Command Center along with 7 helmet mounted night vision scopes. The equipment was obtained at no taxpayer expense. Ambulance Coordinator Tom Windland advised the board that the contract for providing ambulance service to Garden Hill, Zif, Keith & Berry was approved by the Clay County Hospital and the Clay County Board will vote on the contract at their next meeting.

Hamilton Memorial Hospital District in McLeansboro invites the public to join them at 11:00 am on Tuesday, February 20th at Hamilton Memorial Hospital Cafeteria for a Heart Health Lunch & Learn. The event will include information on heart-healthy habits, Medicare Annual Wellness Visits, and much more! Lunch is provided by the Hamilton County Senior Citizen Center. Flu shots will be available at no cost for anyone 65 and older who provides a valid Medicare or Medicaid Card or for a fee of \$25. For more information or to RSVP, contact Elaine Miller at Hamilton Memorial Hospital by calling 618.643.2361 ext. 4300 or emailing emiller@hmospital.org. The event is free and open to the public.

Clay County Illinois turns 200 later this year. County officials are wanting to put an event together to celebrate the occasion. Officials will be holding a meeting on Monday, February 12, 2024, at the Clay County Courthouse at 6:00 p.m. to discuss the celebration of Clay County's 200th Year. The public is invited to attend.

The North Wayne School District has launched their new communication app through TeacherEase. Parents and students should have received an "opt in" text message on Friday.

Parents and students wishing to receive notice and or messages through this system needs to opt in. This will eventually replace blackboard connect and will be the school's primary source of communication for emergency and non emergency messages.

Officials ask that If you do not receive the "opt in" message on Friday to contact Shawn Levi at slevi@northwayne.net with your information.

After the success of their first fundraiser in 4 years, the Edwards County Senior Center in Albion is working on a fundraising during the eclipse weekend. The breakfast will take place on Monday, April 8th. Very little information is out on the fundraising idea currently, but the breakfast according to the Senior Center's Social Media Page says breakfast will be from 6 AM until 10 AM. More information on the fundraiser will be announced soon.

Reports out of Mt. Vernon say an 18 year old man has been formally charged pending a detention hearing on weapons charges.

Dreydyn Hart faces formal charges of possession of a stolen firearm, possession of a firearm without a valid FOID card and aggravated unlawful use of a weapon and aggravated unlawful use of a weapon as a minor, all felonies.

Police responded to a location in the 300 block of South Ninth Street in Mt. Vernon around 1 a.m. this past Wednesday on a report of a fight at DeeBee's Bar. Upon arrival, one subject had fled on foot but was quickly captured. A search of a vehicle in the bar's parking lot revealed, according to the report, a loaded, stolen firearm. Witnesses said Hart was the person in possession of the weapon, however he had left the parking lot as police came upon the scene. He was later located on Thursday and brought to the police station for an interview, and later taken into custody and taken to the Jefferson County Jail. He's in custody pending a detention hearing set for this coming Tuesday.

A batch of showers and thunderstorms rolled through southern Illinois early this morning, the first thunderstorms of the new year, dropping rainfall in the area around 2 a.m. today. No storm warnings or watches were in effect at the time.

The rainfall has exited the area, and should give way to cloudy conditions for today, with a gradual cooldown in temperatures. Highs generally in the 40s and low 50s are expected the next few days, along with a chance of rain Tuesday, which could mix with some snow Tuesday morning before temperatures warm up by afternoon. No impacts are currently expected.

Prior to this morning's rainfall, the latest Drought Monitor from the National Weather Service showed the northwest half of Wayne County still considered in "Abnormally Dry" conditions for the map released this past Thursday.

Rivers remain within their flood stage, including the Little Wabash River. East of Fairfield it is at 15.09 feet. At Clay City the stage is 6.5 feet. At Carmi the reading is 15.5 feet. The Skillet Fork at Wayne City is at 5.52 feet, and the Wabash River at Mt. Carmel reads 10.5 feet.

Media reports say a Mt. Vernon, IL man fled police in a stolen vehicle through Williamson County on Saturday.

The Williamson County Sheriff's Office indicated the chase began when officers in Herrin attempted to pull a vehicle over for traffic violations early Saturday afternoon. Reports said the vehicle took off, leading police on a chase through the county. Police later attempted a rolling road block which did slow the vehicle to a near stop, then the suspect reportedly went off the road and through a median, and onto another county road, where police conducted what's known as a PIT, or Precision Immobilization Technique, maneuver. The vehicle was eventually stopped as police blocked the vehicle in.

The driver of the vehicle was identified as Jake A. Gilmore of Mt. Vernon. Two other passengers were in the vehicle. They were not identified and removed from the vehicle and detained.

Gilmore was taken to the Williamson County Jail. He faces charges of aggravated fleeing and eluding, possession of a stolen vehicle, reckless driving and driving with a revoked license.

The Williamson County Sheriff credited police with quickly locating the stolen vehicle, saying the vehicle owner was still in the process of reporting it stolen when the pursuit took place.

The investigation remains ongoing.

A fire Saturday morning has destroyed a Mt. Vernon, IL business, and the State Fire Marshall's Office was called in to investigate the cause.

Reports indicated Jefferson County fire officials were called to the Phoenix Tops company on the east side of Mt. Vernon, and upon arrival in the 400 block of Meadowbrook, flames were coming through the garage door. A track hoe was brought in to remove the roof and most of the walls of the business still standing to help fight the fire.

Jefferson Fire officials received mutual aid from several area departments, including Wayne City. The report said the business made handcrafted wooden flag displays and cremation urns and had been family-operated since 2016.

Firemen were first called to the scene shortly after 5 a.m. Saturday.

The annual Veterans Honor Flight is seeking assistance from local businesses. The flight takes place on May 7th and will allow local veterans to travel to Washington, DC to receive honors for their service. The group is looking for partners from the Southern Illinois region. Donations of small mementos that can be taken to DC are being accepted through April 23rd through Veterans-Honor-Flight-dot-org.

The National Weather Service at Paducah continues to call for up to an inch of snow throughout much of the area this evening. With that in mind, National Weather Service officials have issued a Winter Weather Advisory for White, Hamilton, Gallatin, Saline, and Franklin Counties in the WFIW listening area.

In the information that was discussed with media outlets on a remote meeting call at 7:30 this morning, weather officials say the situation is fluid and the current forecast confidence is low. They say the forecast will change throughout the day.

Wayne County Crimestoppers is offering a reward for the arrest of the person or persons who stole tools from a service truck operated by Brandon Taylor of Midsates Service. Taylor says that items removed from the vehicle include a M18 fuel hatchet saw, M18 forge grinder kit, M18 forge sawzall kit, M18 greater gun kit, M18 Gen II 3/4 impact, M18 1/2 high torque impact, 4 M18 batteries, M12 spector 360, M18/M12 rapid charger, M18 multi-tool, M18 led flood light, M18 led light, 2 M18 batteries, M18 1/2 mid torque impact, M18 hammered drill. If you have any information that can help authorities, you're asked to call or text Wayne County Crimestoppers at 618 842 9777

Several Fairfield FFA members were recommended for the State FFA Degrees Monday at Section 23 FFA interviews. Successful candidates include Lauren Wolfe, Alex Bond, Maggie Koontz, Ava Kreiter, Lainie Clark, Miller Simpson, and Devon Smothers applications will now be forwarded to the state level for approval. The State FFA degree is the highest degree a member can obtain at the state level. Meanwhile, Lainie Clark was named the Section 23 Star in Agriscience after Star interviews that were held on Monday. She will now advance to interview for the District 5 Star in Mt. Vernon in March.

The Wayne County Senior Center is preparing for a fundraiser for this upcoming weekend. The Center on Sunday will be serving up fried chicken, mashed potatoes, green beans, a roll, and dessert from 11 AM until 1 PM. The cost is \$10 for adults and \$7 for children. This is the first fundraiser for the new senior center. The meals will be served by drive-thru and carryout only. For more information on events at the Senior Center, call 618-919-3850 or find the Wayne County Senior Center on Facebook.

In this part of Illinois, you have felt the pain at the pump as gas prices over the last week have jumped 40 to 50 cents per gallon. Patrick DeHann with Gasbuddy says that gas prices are going to continue to stay higher than they should be.

DeHaan says the outage at the BP refinery in Whiting, Indiana has been more significant than previously thought. He says, based on the latest information, the refinery has still not gotten back to full capacity.

Checking pricing throughout Southern Illinois from AAA, the price ranges from \$3.24 per gallon to \$3.66 per gallon. The average Illinois Gas Price is \$3.39 per gallon.

In our area, gas prices according to AAA show Edwards County paying the highest at #3.49 per gallon. Average in Wayne County is currently sitting at \$3.33 per gallon. Richland County has the cheapest average gas price at \$3.31 per gallon.

DeHaan says relief may come soon with the change over from winter to summer blend gasoline, which is cheaper to make.

Country Financial and the Country Companies have recently made a donation to the Village of Cisne for their Zip Code Day. Alex Atwood with Country Financial as well as several village officials were on hand. The donation of \$1500 will go towards a veterans memorial that the village is working on constructing.

The Fairfield City Council met for their first February meeting at city hall.

A discussion was held concerning fees charged at Maple Hill Cemetery. Currently, The fee to open a grave from Monday afternoon through Friday is \$400.00, with the fee for Saturday, Sunday, and Monday morning set at \$500.00. The proposed changes would leave the Monday afternoon through Friday fee at \$400.00, with the Saturday, holiday, and Monday morning fee increasing to \$600.00. No Sunday burials will be permitted under the new proposal. Since this was only a discussion item, the City Attorney will draft the ordinance changes for action at the next council meeting.

A TIF agreement was approved with Richard & Amy Hooper, who have remodeled a building in the 100 block of NE 4th St. into a barber shop. The total cost of the project was \$42,000, with \$10,500 in TIF dollars approved.'

A no parking ordinance was unanimously approved by the council for certain areas of Sluder St. Driveaway accessibility and room for emergency vehicles have been an issue on this street. No Parking signage will be installed in the area.

The council officially declared a TIF Surplus, with 70% for the taxing bodies.

The council approved a Family Medical Leave Act consisting of 12 weeks of unpaid leave within a 12 month period. Previously, the city had not adopted any type of Family Medical Leave.

The council unanimously approved an ordinance forming a Business District Committee and Procedure for Implementing the Business District Plan. The committee will be the same as the current TIF Committee.

The NCOE Pre-k School will be conducting Child Find/Preschool Screenings for 3 to 5 year old children not yet enrolled in public schools and who will not be kindergarten eligible in the fall. The screening checks each child's progress in hearing, vision, speech, language, and coordination skills. This will give parents a better idea of how their child is progressing at this very young age before he/she begins school. This screening program is free and parents will receive immediate feedback on how their child is developing. Head Start personnel may also be present to explain their program and services.

In March, the Child Find/Preschool Screening will be held at United Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Norris City on the 18th and 19th from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The screening procedure takes about 45 minutes, and appointments must be made so that children do not have a long wait period. Parents should call NCOE at [618-378-3212](tel:618-378-3212) to make an appointment or to get more information.

The Enfield Village Board met Tuesday evening. Our sister station, WRUL reports that the main order of business was near the end of the meeting when the board approved the resignation of Nathan Poore as Police Department patrolman, also working part time with the Utilities Department, due to him accepting another job offer. Poore offered to help out in both departments when possible. He thanked the board members for their support over the years and they in turned thanked him for his service to the community.

Robert Zirkelback of the Utilities Department was at the meeting and said that now he and Utilities Superintendent Steve Bishop were the only two in the department, and while the work load isn't a problem, he has a family and needs to make more money, especially since he will have to be on call at various times and might not have any time for outside activities.

After much discussion the board decided to go into an Executive Session to discuss the matter. After an hour and two minute session, it was decided that Zirkelback would receive a salary increase from \$20 to \$25 an hour and Bishop would have his salary raised to \$30 an hour, with both receiving \$150 when on call, effective immediately. Police Chief Mark Wheeler received permission to look for a part-time certified officer, and anyone qualified that's interested can contact the village.

Earlier in the meeting, the board gave the village the authority to proceed on the next phase of the water project, approved payment for Phase II, and approved payment of a loan agreement with the Illinois EPA.

They also agreed to lock in gas rates from now until February of 2026 at \$4.02 a dekatherm, which is a cheaper rate than they are now paying.

Work on the street lights will resume soon and they are still working on the USDA grant for small businesses.

Taegan Garner of the Greater Wabash Regional Planning Commission addressed the board concerning the police grant, as the HWGRPC is helping the village obtain a grant for two body cameras at \$1,600 each. One of the cameras will be totally paid for with the grant money and the other must be paid for by the village. Garner said there may be grant money available in the future to pay for a new police officer and pay their salary for one full year, as well as other grants. The board members said they would keep that in mind for the future.

Wayne County Sheriff's Officials made 3 arrests on different events that took place on Wednesday.

At 10:40 AM, deputies were called the residence of 44-year-old Shane Nettleton in Geff for a probation compliance check. On the scene, deputies allegedly located 5 grams of methamphetamine along with packaging materials. Deputies also discovered a pair of firearms as well as many rounds of ammunition. Nettleton faces charges of possession with the intent to deliver methamphetamine, unlawful use of a weapon, and possession of drug paraphernalia.

At 2 PM, deputies were called to a probation check at the residence of 35-year-old Ronald Stark in Fairfield. During the check, deputies allegedly located methamphetamine and drug paraphernalia. Stark faces charges of possession of methamphetamine and possession of drug paraphernalia.

At 4 PM, deputies were sent to conduct a probation check at the residence of 47-year-old Jevon Sork. At the scene, deputies allegedly found 3.5 grams of meth in Sork's possession. Sork faces a count of possession of meth.

All 3 were booked into the Wayne County Jail, awaiting a detention hearing.

A state bill has been proposed that would require autopsies to be done by board-certified pathologists. Currently there is no law requiring this in Illinois. Advocates say that there is a heightened need for correct cause of death reports.

The Fairfield Community High School Board of Education met last night for their regular monthly meeting with all board members present. Personnel matters highlighted most of the business conducted.

The board accepted the bid from Wabash Valley Service Company for fuel for the FY2025.

Iconik Studio received a 3 year photography contract.

The board unanimously approved the 2025-2025 school calendar.

Seward Masonry received a contract to complete tuckpointing on the building.

In personnel matters:

The board voted to accept, with regret, the resignation of Jason Musgrave as a Social Science instructor.

Coleman Fitch was employed as the new Social Science instructor, replacing Musgrave.

Josh Braddock was hired as Boys Tennis Coach, while Josh Rockett was hired as a volunteer Boys Tennis Coach.

A state child tax credit would be a game changer for thousands of low-income working families in Illinois, says Nicole Robinson, CEO of the YWCA of Metro Chicago.

“The additional influx of cash to take care of basic needs could reduce the number of Illinois children now living in poverty by 45%,” Robinson said. “I’m excited about it.”

Under legislation now being considered during the current session in Springfield, working families making under \$70,000 a year and single heads of households making up to \$50,000 a year would receive a tax credit of \$700 a month per child. Robinson said the money would be

“life-changing.”

Another proposal would give up to \$300 a month for a child tax credit for qualifying families.

Robinson said when a family's basic needs are met, that family can focus on the future, a better job, education and home ownership.

"I see the child tax credit as an investment in a family's future," she said. "When parents are less worried about how they are going to eat, how they are going to pay the rent, that unexpected health bill, that unexpected car repair, whatever it is, there is a little less stress."

According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Illinois has more than 440,000 children, 16% of the children in the state, who live in poverty. A four-person household with a combined income of \$27,500 a year is an example of a family living at the poverty level.

"When it comes to the well-being of our children, Illinois is not where we need to be," Robinson said. Passing the child tax credit would be a seismic shift, she said.

Robinson is heartened by the momentum on the issue at the state legislature during the current session. Legislators return Tuesday.

According to Gasbuddy, Gas Prices in the Fairfield area are slightly down compared to last week. On Thursday of last week, area gas stations were selling fuel at \$3.49 for regular grade. As of early this morning, gas was being sold as low as \$3.35 per gallon at the Murphy USA on the city's west side.

According to gasbuddy, the lowest price for fuel in the state is around \$2.91 per gallon while the average price for fuel is around \$3.48 per gallon.

City, County, State, and Federal Offices are closed today for observance of the President's Day holiday. Banks are also closed and mail will not be delivered. Normal services resume on Tuesday.

Despite producing more than 98,000 fewer barrels of oil in 2023 than 2022, White County oil producers still pumped more crude than the next three counties combined. That's according to details released through the Illinois Petroleum Resources Board Annual Report. White County came in with more than 1.9 million barrels produced in 2023, down almost 100,000 from 2,038,796 barrels in 2022. Marion, Crawford, and Wabash Counties combined produced just over 1.75 million barrels. Wabash County led the way in gains producing 44,000 more barrels year over year with Hamilton right behind with an increase of more than 43,000 barrels.

Find the full report and details courtesy of the IPRB at [2023-IPRB-Illinois-Crude-Oil-Production-Report.pdf](#)

Scammers pretending to be from the IRS are using tax season to con people.

Samantha Alfonso with the Illinois Comptroller's Constituent Affairs Office warns that callers who pretend to be from the Internal Revenue Service threaten people with deportation and jail if they don't make immediate payments using gift cards or wire transfers.

"The IRS will not call you, email you, or text you. If you do owe money, they won't ask you to pay through a gift card or wire transfer. You will get a bill in the mail," Alfonso said.

A new scam that the comptroller's office is seeing this year is a letter on fake IRS stationery that promises "an unclaimed tax refund." The letter comes in a cardboard envelope.

"Bad grammar, poor wording and fonts that don't match the rest of the letter are signs that the letter is from a scammer," Alfonso said.

The letters are attempts to trick people into turning over social security card numbers, driver's license numbers and other personal information.

To track a state tax refund, use the Illinois State Comptroller website myrefund.illinoiscomptroller.gov, Alfonso said.

Be on the lookout for criminals who attempt to file fake unemployment claims using your identity, Alfonso said.

"One way to determine if your personal information is being used to make a fake claim is to check the mail for a 1099-G form, an unemployment claim, that has been made under your name," she said.

People who have not applied for unemployment benefits but receive a 1099-G form should contact the Illinois Department of Employment Services online at ides.illinois.gov to report the fraud, Alfonso said.

Con artists phishing for personal information may send you an email or text that appears to be from the IRS. Don't click on the text link or open the email, Alfonso warned. It may contain a malware virus.

College students and faculty members are being targeted by a new email scam. An address that uses the suffix .edu delivers a form designed to get people to fill out their personal information. It is a phishing scam.

Report unsolicited texts, emails or letters from IRS impersonators to the IRS at phishing@irs.gov.

Citizens National Bank of Albion is reporting that there is a text scam involving their bank that is going around. Bank officials say that the bank is not sending out the message that is being sent.

According to bank officials, the scam says:

Citizens National Bank of Albion>

*We've noticed a new device attempt to sign-in to your account outside U.S. If this wasn't you,
Please secure your account by visiting [\(link\)](#)*

Bank officials say not to click on the link. If you have any questions, you can call your local CNB Albion Branch.

The last day Illinois residents can register to vote in the general primary election is today. The general primary is scheduled for March 19th. Registered voters who have changed their address must register to vote at any library or local city clerk's office.

A bill under consideration in Springfield would help farmers stay on their land by raising the estate tax threshold for farms. Right now, the estate tax is set to kick in at four million dollars and the new bill would set the tax at six million. Analysts say the proposal would help heirs to the land keep the property so they don't have to sell it to pay their taxes.

Illinois Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias has announced his support of a bill pending in the state General Assembly that would require greater transparency among lobbyists. Giannoulias says the bills especially important following the sentencing of a former aide to State Representative Mike Madigan. Currently, he says his office has no enforcement mechanism for lobbyists who do not comply with reporting requirements. The proposed law would allow his office to investigate reports of non-compliance and either suspend or revoke a lobbyist's license.

Gas prices in Illinois have jumped this past week. According to a survey in Peoria by GasBuddy, the average price of a gallon of gas increased by 17 cents this past week to three-dollars-43 cents. The current price is 34 cents higher than a month ago but is still 12 cents lower than last year at this time. Statewide, the average price of a gallon of gas is three-48 a gallon.

An Indiana University Innovation and Commercialization Office announcement recently detailed a novel tap water wound irrigation device developed by Dr. Brian Sloan, an associate professor emeritus of clinical emergency medicine at the Indiana University School of Medicine and Hamilton Memorial Hospital Family Clinic physician. This device was recently awarded U.S. Patent No. 11,654,229 from the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

Every year, approximately 12 million traumatic open wounds are presented at U.S. emergency departments, and it is critical to thoroughly clean these wounds in order to prevent infection. Currently, saline irrigation devices are used to treat these wounds, but these devices are expensive and don't pose a significant statistical difference in reduction of methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) in wounds compared to Sloan's novel tap water irrigation device, according to the IU Innovation and Commercialization Office announcement.

"The idea of a convenient, inexpensive and efficacious wound irrigation device that uses tap water instead of sterile saline will revolutionize the wound care industry," Dr. Sloan said. "This device has been shown to effectively irrigate traumatic wounds with potable water, which decreases cost and provides clinicians with a professional, easy to use and readily available product. Clinicians have long understood the benefits of using tap water for wound irrigation, and now there is a device that can deliver tap water to open traumatic wounds in the emergency department, at urgent care, in developing countries and at home."

Additionally, the tap water irrigation device has a potential cost saving of over \$65 million per year, as these devices are not affected by saline shortages and therefore are more convenient and effective.

"Innovation, like Dr. Sloan's tap water irrigation device, is invaluable to rural and desolate healthcare settings across the globe because they provide practical, cost-effective solutions in a time when acquiring medical supplies is difficult and uncertain. Dr. Sloan understood these challenges from not only his life's work in emergency practice, but his deep connection to rural health. His tireless work toward this solution is admirable and a valuable tool to clinicians far and wide," said Victoria Woodrow, Hamilton Memorial Chief Executive Officer.

Dr. Sloan is a graduate of McLeansboro High School and graduate of both the IU School of Medicine and the IU Emergency Medicine residency program. The former McLeansboro High School 1984 Class A IHSA basketball champion and member of the Indiana University 1987 NCAA champion Hoosiers recently retired from a 20-year tenure in IU's emergency medicine department and returned home to Hamilton County, Illinois to practice at Hamilton Memorial Hospital and Family Clinics.

The patent was filed by IU's Innovation and Commercialization Office, which aims to drive innovation to the market for the benefit of the public, the university, and innovators for state, national and global commerce.

A McLeansboro couple were arrested, Rachal and Everett Martin both received Unlawful Possession of Methamphetamine charges, with Rachal receiving an additional charge of Use of Property, a Class 2 felony. Their first appearances are set for March 6 at 9:00 am. The Hamilton County Sheriff Department and the McLeansboro Police Department handled the case.

The McLeansboro Police made two more arrests. Mathew Roberts was arrested for two separate charges of Unlawful Possession of Methamphetamine, with his first appearance being on March 6 at 9:00 am. Heather White received one charge of Unlawful Possession of Methamphetamine, and her first appearance is set for April 3 at 9:00 am.

The board members agreed to pay the balance of a local family's water bill, who had lost their home recently to a fire.

The residents of Mill Shoals will see an increase in their trash rate by one dollar starting April 1st.

There was a discussion held pertaining to the status of the old town hall and whether there was a valid reason to continue heating the building. The Village Water Operator Wayne Carter stated that to shut off the heat, he would need to get the water shut off to the building and to do that he would have to replace a severely aged valve off the main water line that provided water to several residents. The board agreed that Carter would need to replace the valve in the main water line at his availability.

Carter provided the Water Department report, which stated that four water main leaks have been repaired recently and that he would be taking gravel around to all the fixed water leaks to level them up better for traffic to cross.

Morgan Doggett with Drew Lane Consulting confirmed the Emergency Community Water Assistance Grant is waiting only on an insurance letter denying a water loss claim. After that, the USDA RD should require nothing further to start processing the funding. Doggett also took the time to update the members regarding the Lead Line information that was sent to all residents, the Service Contract with DLC was updated and ready for review by the board members, and the Walmart grant will be ready to apply for in March to help offset the costs with the police car.

Village Clerk Tullis asked the board if they would like to continue the Golf Cart and Side-by-Side recreational vehicle registration process. Clerk Tullis explained that the program started off well but only six stickers were sold. The board tabled the issue for further discussion.

Trustee West reported that the police car was fixed and that it needed to be stored at the Village's garage. Carter stated that the doors to the garage were very difficult to open and that a few posts have rotted at ground level. Trustee Young made the motion to repair the doors to the garage. The board approved to seek out estimates and report the cost back at next month's meeting.

The Village Board agreed that the next move to getting approved by the Illinois Training and Standards Board was to have the Village's Attorney create an acceptable ordinance and resolution.

Finally, Clerk Tullis stated the Key Control Box was in and he would get it up on the wall.

The next Mill Shoals board meeting will be on March 5th at 7:00pm.

Governor J.B. Pritzker is expected to address what analysts think may be a tight fiscal year in his State of the State speech tonight. Forecasters have predicted the state is on course for a 900-million dollar deficit unless some corrective action is taken. But analysts have also predicted the state will wind up with a surplus of one-point-four billion dollars. They say the deficit could result from some challenges the state is facing, including the added burden of newly arrived migrants in Chicago and increased costs in group insurance programs. Pritzker is also expected to ask for 75-million dollars for the Early Childhood Block Grant to enable another five-thousand children to attend preschool.

Illinois State Police say they seized almost 18-thousand pounds of illegal drugs last year. State Police say they also arrested more than 19-hundred people last year on charges ranging from drugs and guns violations to human trafficking. State Police say Metropolitan Enforcement Groups and Drug Task Forces in jurisdictions across the state seized more than 17-thousand-800 pounds of illegal drugs and more than 700 firearms. Investigations of human trafficking operations began last year in the state.

During the morning before heading to work on Tuesday, gas was \$3.35 per gallon at most filling stations. Just before 9, many stations raised gas prices to \$3.69 per gallon, a 34 cent per gallon jump.

In recent weeks, the BP refinery has been reportedly down in Northwestern Indiana, affecting the gasoline supply in this region of the county. In Southern Illinois, the two major oil refineries are in Robinson and Roxana.

According to a report from Reuters, the refinery has been closed since the early part of the month and is forecast to return back to normal operations within the next few days.

The Fairfield Park District is now accepting applications for Lifeguards for the summer. Lifeguards must be 15 years of age by the date of certification classes in May. Certification or recertification classes will be provided by the Park District. Lifeguards' job description

includes Guarding the pool, teaching several weeks of public swim lessons, cleaning and maintaining pool area and bathhouses, and communicating with the public. Applications may be picked up at the Park Maintenance Building at 416 E. Johnson Street or at Fyie & Rice Law Office at 115 N.E. Third Street in Fairfield. The application deadline is April 10, 2024.

Fairfield Memorial Hospital and FMH Home Health have earned The Joint Commission's Gold Seal of Approval Accreditation by demonstrating continuous compliance with its performance standards. The Gold Seal is a symbol of quality that reflects a healthcare organization's commitment to providing safe and quality patient care.

Fairfield Memorial Hospital underwent a rigorous, unannounced onsite review in the fall of 2023. During the visit, a team of Joint Commission reviewers evaluated compliance with the hospital's standards spanning several areas including emergency management, the environment of care, infection prevention and control, leadership, medication management, and rights and responsibilities of the individual.

The Joint Commission's standards are developed in consultation with healthcare experts and providers, measurement experts, and patients. They are informed by scientific literature and expert consensus to help healthcare organizations measure, assess and improve performance. The surveyors also conducted onsite observations and interviews.

"As a healthcare accreditor, The Joint Commission works with healthcare organizations across care settings to inspire a safer and higher quality of care that is more equitable and compassionate," says Ken Grubbs, DNP, MBA, RN, executive vice president of Accreditation and Certification Operations and chief nursing officer, The Joint Commission. "Through collaborating on innovative solutions and evidence-based resources and tools, The Joint Commission helps drive improvement while maintaining accountability through our leading survey methods and standards. We commend Fairfield Memorial Hospital for its commitment to advanced safety, quality, equity, and compassion for all patients."

The Joint Commission Accreditation is a testament to the dedication and hard work the staff at Fairfield Memorial Hospital put forth to make continuous quality improvement efforts toward patient safety and quality of care.

For more information, please visit <https://www.jointcommission.org/>.

The Clay County Sheriff's Department has announced a new feature that is a part of their mobile app.

Department officials say that you can now request extra patrols with the press of the Extra Patrol Button in the app. The app will allow residents to request extra patrols at any residence, business, or property in Clay County. Once the request is sent from the user, sheriff's department officials get the request through their emails.

The Edwards County School Board was set to meet tomorrow evening, but the meeting has been moved to February 27th. The change is due to the Edwards County Lady Lions playing in the Sectional Championship for Girls Basketball. The meeting will be on the 27th at 7 PM in the science room at the West Salem Grade School.

A bill that would ban certain types of food additives is advancing in the Illinois Senate. The bill would prohibit certain additives that are often used in candies, soda and other highly processed foods. Researchers say those additives can cause health problems. The state Senate Public Health Committee passed the bill yesterday.

The McLeansboro Police Department has introduced their newly hired School Resource Officer Patrolman Anthony Amato to the community. Amato will cover the school facilities within McLeansboro, which includes the Hamilton County Jr./Sr. High, the East Side Grade School, and the Hamilton County Pre-school.

SRO Amato comes to McLeansboro with years of training and experience. After his service in the United States Navy, Amato started his career in 2006 as an Auxiliary Officer and then as a sworn Officer in Buckner, IL in 2008. Amato later transitioned into a role as a patrolman in the village of Ina. Along with his law enforcement training, Amato has three separate associate's degrees including an Associates in Criminal Justice, an Associates in IT Systems Cyber Security, an Associates in IT systems Specialist, and a number of other occupational certificates. He is also a part of a current assignment to a IL Attorney General's Office Task Force where he specializes in computer forensics.

The Village of Wayne City has scheduled the Spring Town-wide rummage sales for Friday & Saturday, May 3rd & 4th. To be put on the sales list, you need to call Wayne City Village Hall by Tuesday, April 30th at 618-895-2241. These will be available at the Village Hall & at local businesses on Wed May 1st.

Town-wide Clean-up will be the following Wed., May 8th. A list of items that can and cannot be picked up is available at the Village Hall. All items must be curbside. If you have any questions feel free to call the Village Hall.

Illinois lawmakers are considering the legalization of psilocybin [[sai-luh-SAI-bn]]mushrooms for medicinal use in the state. State Senator Rachel Ventura introduced the bill, pointing to research showing the effects of psilocybin mushrooms in treating patients suffering from PTSD, anxiety and depression. It would also help generate money for the state through a 15 percent tax. The bill is scheduled to be heard in the executive committee within the next couple of weeks.

Sparklight, a leading broadband communications provider, invites schools and organizations serving K-12 students to enter its 6th annual "Dream Bigger" contest for the opportunity to win \$2,500 for their science, technology, engineering or math (STEM) project or club.

K-12 schools and organizations in communities throughout the 21 states Sparklight serves are eligible to participate. Entries can be made at sparklight.com/contest by sending a photo and written summary outlining how the funds will be used for a technology project or group and how it will benefit students. Six winners will each receive a \$2,500 donation.

"STEM education helps students develop the critical thinking and problem-solving skills needed for academic and career success," said Trish Niemann, Vice President of Communications Strategy. "Through Sparklight's annual Dream Bigger contest, we are proud to help fund STEM-based initiatives that encourage students to develop these skills and find their passion within this rapidly growing career field."

Entries will be accepted from February 22 through March 12, 2024, at sparklight.com/contest. Twelve finalists will be selected by Sparklight, and the six winners will be determined by public online voting from March 14 through March 21 at the same site. The finalists and winning schools and organizations will be highlighted on Sparklight's [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [X](#) (formerly Twitter) pages.

For more information or to enter, visit sparklight.com/contest.

West Salem Grade School parents are urged to pre-register children who will be attending kindergarten during the 2024-2025 school year. This is for children who will be 5 years of age prior to, or on, September 1, 2024. Pre-registration will be held on Thursday, March 7 and Friday, March 8 at West Salem Grade School. To make an appointment, you will need to call the school office at 618-456-8881.

Citizens National Bank of Albion is reporting that a 2nd round of fraudulent Internet banking text messages has just been reported. According to CNB Albion, the fraudulent message says, Citizens National Bank of Albion> We've noticed a new device attempt to sign-in to your account outside U.S. If this wasn't you, Please secure your account by visiting a web link. Bank officials say if you receive this or a similar text message on your phone to not click on the link. These messages are not from Citizens National Bank of Albion. If you have any questions, you can contact your local CNB of Albion Branch.

National Weather Service Officials are calling for a warmup with potential record highs Tuesday and Wednesday next week. Looking at the temperature readings for those days, weather service officials are calling for temperatures to be in the upper 60s to lower 70s. While that may be nice in some respects, NWS Forecast Officials are sounding the alarm on a potential for Severe Weather Tuesday into Wednesday. Officials say that locally heavy rain and gusty winds are also possible. Keep tuned to WFIW and WOKZ for the latest in Severe Weather Information.

Wayne County Republicans gathered last night at Willow Creek for their Lincoln Day Dinner. Attendees enjoyed a dinner, catered by Bare Bones BBQ (Matt Kinney). Candidates at the national, state and local level provided remarks. They included US Congressional candidates Mike Bost and Darren Bailey, Illinois Senate candidate Terri Bryant, Illinois House candidates Dave Severin and Angela Evans, and Wayne County Circuit Clerk candidates Ellen Sitzes and Georgiana Fletcher. Other local Republican office holders who are unopposed or not up for election were also recognized. They included States Attorney Kevin Kakac, County Clerk Lizann Woodrow, County Treasurer Yvette Anderson, County Coroner Carrie Dagg, and County Sheriff Chris Otey. Several Wayne County Board members were also in attendance at the event. A crowd estimated at well over 200 attended the event.

Police in White County investigated a couple of incidents Friday. According to information from our sister information WRUL, 27 year old Matthew Webb-Cramer was cited for criminal trespass to real property at the Carmi Hucks, and was also jailed on charges of possession of methamphetamine, possession of drug paraphernalia, and unlawful use of property to violate the Meth Control Act after a call for service to Huck's for a trespassing complaint was made.

Also in White County, Carmi police responded to a report of a stolen orange and silver 2024 Polaris vehicle from the Car Corral from their lot. After an investigation lasting several days, police received information to obtain a search warrant for the property and residence of Robert McGehee in Enfield. With help from Norris City police and the White County Sheriff's Department, the stolen Polaris was found, along with illegal drug items. McGehee faces several drug charges, as well as possession of a stolen vehicle. The investigation is continuing.

Illinois lawmakers are considering a bill to drop Native American mascot names from K-through-12 schools. Researchers have said studies show that mascot names such as Warriors and Indians harm Native American children. State Representative Laura Faver Dias says Native American mascots dehumanize an entire group of people and have no place in schools. If the bill passes, schools would be able to wait until they change sports uniforms or renovate their athletic facilities to comply with the law.

Initial filings for unemployment claims in Illinois fell last week. The Labor Department reports new jobless claims fell to just under eight-thousand last week — down from more than 93-hundred the previous week. Nationwide, the number of unemployment claims — typically viewed as a reflection of the overall labor market — fell to 201-thousand last week — a drop of 12-thousand from the previous week.

Governor Pritzker's recent announcement that he wants to repeal the state grocery tax isn't sitting well with cities around Illinois. Pritzker has said the statewide one-percent grocery tax should be repealed so the money can be put back in people's pockets. The issue is the money raised by the tax goes directly to cities across Illinois. That revenue loss would be huge according to leaders in Decatur and Peoria, to name several cities unhappy with the plan. They say certain services in cities around the state could go away without the money raised by the grocery tax.

Just before 4 this morning, Wayne County Sheriff's Officials received a call about a burglary in progress at New World Chinese Restaurant in Fairfield. Upon arrival Wayne County Deputies observed the outer main door had been forced open. Deputies entered the building and began clearing it for suspects. During the search they observed a male attempting to flee out of the rear door of the restaurant. Deputies took the subject John E. Luther 51 of Fairfield into custody.

The following Items were located on John's person and/or at the scene according to sheriff's officials:

One Coast G20 Flashlight (In John's hand)

One Flathead Screwdriver (In John's coat pocket)

One Hyper Tough Pry Bar (laying on the floor in front of the open cash register) One Clown Mask (laying near the rear exit)

One Backpack containing One Hammer (along the North side of the restaurant) One Bicycle (along the North side of the restaurant)

1 .

One Fortune Cookie (in John's coat Pocket)

Preliminary Charges

-720 ILCS 5/19-1 (Burglary)

-720 ILCS 5/19-2 (Possession of burglary tools)

There are several things to be aware of weather wise today.

With the unseasonably warm weather today, National Weather Service officials at Paducah are sounding the alarm on the potential for severe weather. A wind advisory is in affect as winds are expected to gust as high as 40 miles per hour.

Later this evening, weather officials will be turning to a strong cold front that will be bringing showers and thunderstorms to the area. The entire WFIW listening area is under a slight risk of severe weather. Damaging winds and large hail are the main threats, but isolated tornadoes according to weather service officials can't be ruled out. Officials at the NWS Paducah office say that the greatest risk for storms will be between 9 PM tonight and 5 AM tomorrow.

Keep tuned to WFIW and WOKZ for the latest in severe weather information.

Grayville leaders spent 30 minutes in executive session Monday night with no action concerning that half hour closed door discussion. Prior to that, the treasurer's report revealed the municipality has more than \$3 million in assets including \$200,000+ in cash available for operation.

Following executive session, council skipped over the first two old business items with no new developments on the vacated Pulaski Street easement and New Resident Attraction Program.

Attorney Jay Walden advised against the city making a donation to the White County Ambulance Service for the purchase of a drone stating statute.

Attorney Walden also advised against allowing the Grayville Athletic Association to utilize a street for a bucket brigade with a similar stance.

Council passed a second reading of an amendment to an ordinance which would potentially allow for profit businesses to obtain a special events liquor license.

There was some confusion over when bids were due for the seasonal mowing contracts. Instead of awarding those agreements, council instead decided to table it until the March 11th meeting and to post that the city was taking bids on the City of Grayville facebook page.

Finally in Old Business, the city heard from Sherry Garcia with a request to block off downtown for the solar eclipse. Commissioner Don Baldwin says he thinks the city is vastly underprepared for what's coming.

In new business, council tabled a beautification request for funding that would be used for signage and landscaping at the depot. Commissioners say they'll figure it out, but they may not be able to use money out of the tourism portion of the budget for the improvements. Council agreed to allow the Grayville Moose Lodge to utilize the park, shelter house, and restrooms for an Easter Egg Hunt scheduled for March 30th. Finally, council agreed to up the fees at the campground moving daily rates from \$15 to \$20 and weekly rates from \$80 to \$100.

The City of Fairfield has announced that this Friday will be a large item pickup. Officials recommended residents have their items curbside for pickup Thursday night. Below is a list of what city officials say is allowed for large item pickup.

- 1 large piece of furniture. Some examples are a regular couch, a loveseat, a recliner, a mattress/box spring, a dining room table, a dresser or an entertainment center.
 - Smaller furniture items will need to be no larger than a 4'x4' pile. Some examples are kitchen chairs, office chair, lamp or end tables.
 - 2 types of major appliances are accepted: a dishwasher or a hot water heater.
- All boxes need to be broken down and put in your tote provided for weekly pickup! This is not included in Large Item Day pickup.
-

Ray Tate appeared via zoom in Wayne County Court on Tuesday in front of judge Denton Aud. Tate is currently representing himself after his dismissed his public defender, Heidi Hoffee last year. Tate is trying to vacate his current sentence and get a new trial.

Assistant Attorney General Michael Falagario and Wayne County States Attorney Kevin Kakac both were in opposition to Tate and his request for an extension based on his access to the law library at the prison due to his housing situation. Both Falagario and Kakac made mention of Judge Molt's comments about standby council, but there was no transcript available for Judge Aud to review.

Due to the inability to review the transcript, the case was continued to March 26th at 1 PM. By that time, it expected that a transcript will be available from the July 2023 court appearance.

Several sentences were handed down in Wayne County Court on Tuesday.

47-year-old Sara Bailey of Mount Vernon pled guilty to a charge of possession of drug paraphernalia. As a part of the plea, a possession of meth charge was dropped. Bailey will serve a year of probation and pay court costs of \$3015.

40-year-old Jessica Melton of Fairfield pled guilty to driving on a cancelled, suspended, or revoked vehicle registration. Melton will serve 12 months of probation on the plea and pay court costs of \$1635.

Christopher Smith of Fairfield pled guilty in Wayne County Court to violating an order of protection. Smith will serve a year of probation and pay court costs of up to \$1864.

53-year-old Dana Perry of Fairfield was resentenced in Wayne County Court on Tuesday following a guilty plea of possession of meth and burglary. In Court, Judge Aud gave a stern lecture to Perry and mentioned that the plea agreement would not have been accepted if notes were not previously left by Judge Molt mentioning that Perry was "doing well". As part of the agreement, Perry will serve 2 years of probation and pay court costs of \$1362. Perry as a condition of her probation will also have no contact with the victim of the burglary.

36-year-old Tiffany Whitley of Crossville came to terms with a plea agreement in Wayne County Court. Whitley will serve a 6 month sentence and then serve 12 months of probation on a charge of possession of meth. Whitley is scheduled to report to jail at 6PM on Sunday, March 3rd. Whitley will still be responsible for court costs of \$650.

Given the possibility of severe weather approaching, the Fairfield Police Department would like to remind the citizens of our tornado siren procedures. Fairfield Police Department Telecommunicators will activate the tornado sirens in Fairfield and Wayne City when:

1. The national weather service issues a tornado WARNING.
2. Law Enforcement or trained spotters confirm a tornado.
3. Multiple citizen reports of a tornado.

The area in which the sirens will be activated is a rectangle from the WEST (Harmony-Marlow Road in Jefferson County) EAST to Klines Corner (CO RD 2400 E Wayne County) South (Blairsville Road- Hamilton County) to NORTH (CTY HWY 16 – Extension 161).

In the event the sirens sound, please go to a safe area. We encourage you tune to 104.9 FM WFIW or follow along with the WFIW Facebook Page for more information.

In the event of an EMERGENCY call 911.

At the Wayne County Courthouse, election officials have reported 80 votes have been cast in person and 136 mail in ballots have been received at the Election Clerk's Office. The official Election Day is Tuesday, March 19th.

Voting in person at the Wayne County Courthouse is available from 8 am until 4:30 PM Monday thru Friday. There will also be 2 Saturdays of early voting coming up in March.

Tuesday has been a windy day in the tristate region. According to information at the National Weather Service Office in Paducah, the strongest winds so far have been measured to the south and west of the WFIW listening area.

According to information from the NWS office at Paducah, the highest gust of wind reported in the Fairfield area was reported at 28 miles per hour 2:35 PM.

The highest winds in the NWS Paducah Service Area were measured in Carbondale at 46 miles per hour and Poplar Bluff, MO at 44 miles per hour.

In our area, Carmi saw a wind gust of 35 miles per hour while Harrisburg saw a gust at 33 miles per hour. Mount Vernon saw a 31 mile per hour wind gust.

The Fairfield City Council met Tuesday evening for their second February meeting.

Shannon Woodard with the engineering firm of Conner & Conner, addressed the council to summarize the findings of a recently completed Water Rate Study. He explained that revenues from water & sewer were \$3.2 million, while expenses for water & sewer were \$3.3 million, leaving a gap of \$100,000.00. He further explained that the sewer portion was especially concerning. He presented a detailed written report for the council members, along with some recommendations for corrective action. Mayor Moore stated that the Water Committee and Finance Committee would have a combined meeting to digest the report and make recommendations to the council.

The council unanimously passed the ordinance amending the code concerning cemetery fees. They include an increase to \$600 to open a grave, no Sunday burials, and no services after 12 noon on Saturday. These changes were discussed at length during the first February Council Meeting.

Libby Lingafelter made a presentation to the council concerning all the local festivities for the upcoming Eclipse. They include the launch of a new website Solareclipsefairfield2024.com. Numerous events are being planned including:

Friday, April 5 – Concert featuring Little Texas at the Fairgrounds, food trucks.

Saturday, April 6 – Family Day in the downtown area with food trucks, inflatables, etc. on the city parking lot east of the Post Office

Sunday, April 7 – Family Fun Day at the park featuring a church service, games, inflatables, etc.

Monday, April 8 – Eclipse Day – no formal festivities planned due to crowd and traffic concerns

Mayor Moore addressed the council and attendees regarding Gov. Pritzker's proposed elimination of the 1% tax on groceries. Moore stated that he certainly opposes the plan and that the proposal would cut \$325 million from municipalities across the state at a time when funding is critical. The mayor said that the Illinois Municipal League was lobbying against the proposal and urged all municipal government agencies to voice their disapproval of the plan.

Alderman Eugene McGill was absent from the meeting.

In other things at the IECC Board of Trustees meeting on Tuesday, affiliation agreements were approved with Master's Hands, Inc. NFP, Renewal Rehab, LLC, Trilogy Rehab Services, LLC dba Synchrony, Edwards County Farm Bureau, and Empower Me.

The Board approved the Illinois Consortium for International Studies and Programs (ICISP) Cost Recovery Fee for students interested in study abroad opportunities.

The Board waived the second reading and approved changes to Policy 300.15, Revolving Fund and Utility Fund. The change allows IECC to better manage payment of bills and meet its obligations under 110 ILCS 805/3-27.3.

The Board approved the sale of approximately five acres in Crawford County, IL. The land was formerly the location of the Lincoln Trail College "South Campus" (Harry L. Crisp Building). After the destruction of the building, the Board determined that it no longer needed the land for community college purposes.

Bid committee recommendations were approved for acceptance of the bid received from Eagleson Automotive, Olney, IL for the purchase of one passenger van in the amount of \$45,911.06 and acceptance of the bid received from OneRoom, Inc, Springfield, IL in the amount of \$866,384.22 for Synchronous Learning Classrooms project. This project is principally funded through a USDA grant.

The following personnel were employed: Jesus Gonzales, Head Men's & Women's Soccer Coach at Lincoln Trail College; Rachel Greenwood, International Student Liaison at Lincoln Trail College and Olney Central College; Juliet Graham, Student Service Specialist at Wabash Valley College; and Melissa Hardiman, Custodian at Wabash Valley College effective March 4, 2024. Changes in employment status were approved for Rodney Ranes from Interim Program Director of Adult Education to Program Director of Adult Education effective September 1, 2024 and Christy Morley from TRIO Upward Bound Counselor to TRIO Upward Bound Coordinator at Wabash Valley College effective March 4, 2024. Approval of proposed non-college employment was approved for Dustin Wiggins at CenterPoint Energy in Evansville, IN. Retirement ratification was approved for Laurel Cutright as Math Instructor at Olney Central College effective May 10, 2024.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Trustees will be Tuesday, March 19, 2024 at 6:15 p.m. at Lincoln Trail College, Robinson, IL.

A pair of projects that the IECC is in the process of has hit some snags according to IECC Officials.

According to the report at the IECC Board, work on a parking lot at Frontier Community College in Fairfield has hit a snag. Officials say the snag is based on an issue with the concrete that the new surface for the parking lot will be constructed on. Officials are working with engineers to come up with a solution.

Another project that has hit a snag is the project involving the Broadband Telecom Program project at Lincoln Trail College. The Broadband Telecom Program is operating out of a temporarily location as their previous location was destroyed by a Tornado on March 31st of last year. The roadblock involves the price of materials for the construction of the building. Officials say that inflation of 20-30% is causing the board to look into reconfiguring the construction plans on the new home of the program.

More updates will be provided in the March meeting.

During the IECC Board of Trustees meeting in Fairfield on Tuesday, IECC Chancellor Dr. Ryan Gower reported a drop in enrollment by 3% district wise. Gower feels the drop is because it is getting harder and harder to find college students. While discussion took place on the tuition rate hike, it was mentioned that in his previous employment at the University of Illinois, U of I would see only around a third of students who were accepted attend a class on campus. At IECC, the percentage of applicants who attend a class at an IECC Campus is 97%. Gower feels that the figure is based on the fact that when students choose an IECC school, they are set on the idea of attending a class.

The IECC Board of Trustees during their February session approved work on the synchronous lecture halls at the IECC campus locations. A total of 4 classrooms at an overall cost of \$866,344.22. The IECC recently received grants to help cover nearly \$740,000 of the cost of the technology from the USDA. The technology will be used to allow professors to communicate with students on any

campus that the IECC has. The IECC operates Frontier Community College in Fairfield, Olney Central College in Olney, Wabash Valley College in Mount Carmel, and Lincoln Trail College in Robinson.

The IECC Board of Trustees during their February Meeting Tuesday approved a rate increase for tuition. The increase is around 22.7 percent and is the first tuition hike in the IECC since 2021. The measure passed 5-1 with Trustee John Brooks voting against the measure. Brooks made mention of the amounts of reserves in the bank while Chancellor Gower made mention of facilities updates that are needed as well as pay increases needed for their faculty and staff. The new rate will be \$135 per credit hour, up \$25 from the previous rate of \$110 per credit hour.

An Illinois judge has removed former President Trump from the state's ballot. The reason for the removal was the 14th Amendment's so-called "insurrectionist ban." A stay was issued by the judge on the order, giving Trump's legal team time to appeal by the deadline, which is tomorrow.

The West Salem Village Board met Monday Evening at West Salem Village Hall for their February session.

The Village has been approved for a grant from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. The grant is for improvements to Mill Pond Park (201 Charles Street). Plans include refurbishing the East tennis court, converting the West tennis court into pickle ball and volleyball courts, installing new lighting and fencing, along with adding a new ADA parking area. Donations will be sought to help with the matching fund requirement of the grant.

Officer Hunter Michl has resigned his part-time position with the Village to accept a full-time position in Crawford County. Police Chief Weber will be working some additional hours until the position is filled.

A Liquor License application for a local restaurant was discussed. Illinois State Statutes are less restrictive than the Village's Liquor Ordinance. The Village's Liquor Ordinance states that, "no license shall be issued for the sale at retail of any alcoholic liquor that would be located within one hundred (100) feet of any church or school. The distance shall be measured from the property boundary of the licensed premises to the property boundary of the school or church." The restaurant property line is within 100 feet of a church's property line. The Board may consider easing the Village's restrictions to better align with the Illinois State Statutes at a future meeting.

Village Trustees are looking at revising the existing Animal Ordinance. There is no Animal Control officer for Edwards County. The Village Board is working on finding another solution to residents' concerns about the number of stray cats, and dogs running loose within the Village limits.

Village Hall is now accepting credit card payments. Credit card payments may be made in person during normal business hours. Online credit card payments are not currently accepted, but will be accepted when the Village has a website.

In action items at the meeting, the Board approved a revised Garbage Ordinance. The Ordinance states that trash receptacles should not be left at the curb for more than 48 hours. Residents should store their trash receptacles adjacent to their residents or other structure on the premises.

The Board approved a revised Nuisances (Weeds) Ordinance. The Ordinance provides more clarity on defining 'overgrowth' and that vegetation should not obstruct sidewalks, public walkways, or streets.

The Board approved an Agreement with Charleston Engineering to conduct Lead Service Line Inventory for the Village. West Salem was recently awarded a \$30,000 grant from the State of Illinois to complete this inventory.

The Board approved proceeding with an application for the 2024 Illinois Public Water Supply Loan Program. Funds would be used to replace 2" water supply lines with 6" water supply lines.

The Board approved the proposal from Hit1 Marketing to develop a website for the Village. The website will increase government transparency, making information about the Village more accessible to residents. It will also enable residents to make online payments to the Village. It is anticipated that the website will take four to six months to launch.

The Board approved the purchase of two new computers, router, and phone system for Village Hall, as well as two police body cameras.

The Board approved the purchase of the concrete for the new bleachers being installed at Centennial Park (400 Boundary Street). The West Salem Athletic Association is purchasing the bleachers, and supplying the labor to install the bleachers.

Judge Valentine in Wayne County Court handed down a pair of sentences on Thursday.

37-year-old Amanda M. Scott of Fairfield pled guilty on a charge of unlawful possession of meth. As a part of the plea, 3 counts of possession of a controlled substance, 2 counts of possession of meth, a count of possession of drug paraphernalia, driving on a cancelled, revoked, or suspended registration were dropped. Scott will serve 2 years of probation and pay court costs of \$5259.

30-year-old Lacey R. Thomason of Fairfield pled guilty to a count of possession of meth. As a part of the agreement, Thomason will be under court supervision for 24 months and pay court costs \$4525. A count of meth delivery was dismissed.

With the primary Election Day 19 days away, those who have turned in their ballots already may have cast a ballot that essentially tossed away a vote.

On Wednesday, a judge on appeal removed Donald Trump from the ballot in the state of Illinois. The reason for the challenge to his ability to run was based on the 14th Amendment's insurrectionist ban. A stay has been given on the current ruling as the Trump team has until tomorrow to file an appeal.

Liz Ann Woodrow, County Election Clerk and Recorder in Wayne County states that the county will follow what they are required to. Woodrow says that she will keep residents in Wayne County Updated on the situation with the ballot.

Edwards County Election Officials are stating as well that Donald Trump is remaining on their ballot until otherwise given a directive from the state. The case will be heard by the US Supreme Court in the near future.

The Edwards County 4-H Program recently received an Illinois 4-H Food Advocacy Grant. Hayley Perry, Unit 25 2023-2024 4-H Ambassador for Edwards County, applied for the grant on behalf of the program.

The grant allowed the program to purchase food to supplement the Edwards County Backpack Program. Food purchased included applesauce, pudding, fruit cups, and mini ravioli.

Members of the Edwards County 4-H delivered the items to program officials.

Clay County Sheriff's Office responded to Casey's in Clay City to investigate a possible theft. Casey's personnel advised that they had located a credit card skimmer on one of the gas pumps. Skimmers are devices that are placed on fuel pumps, ATM's, and other machines that accept credit/debit cards in order to steal your account information. The sheriff's office is hoping with assistance from Casey's personnel to be able to narrow down the timeframe as to when the device was placed on the pump as the investigation continues. If anyone believes that their debit/credit card has been compromised please notify the bank or credit card company. If you have suffered a loss as a result if this, please contact the sheriff's office at 618-665-3316. Any further details will be released as they become available.

Two fires were reported in Marion County on Saturday. A fire in rural luka Saturday afternoon resulted in the burning of 20 acres of CRP land, according to reports from Marion County.

Firemen were called just after 12:45 Saturday afternoon to property in the 6600 block of Oak Road in rural luka. The cause of the fire was believed to have been a four-wheeler driving through the south end of the property, catching some grass on fire. The fire was brought under control before causing damage to a home, oil well and a tank battery. Firemen from the luka, Kell and Mt. Vernon departments assisted with the fire. Firemen were at the scene for about 90 minutes.

Another fire was reported Saturday when two garages were found fully involved in flames in Wamac. The Centralia Fire Protection District responded just after 6:30 Saturday morning. Fire officials said five people were living in the two structures at 1400 South Cherry, three in one of the structures and two in the other. All were able to escape safely, however one person was treated for a minor facial injury. The names of the occupants were not immediately released. The State Fire Marshal's Office was called in to investigate the cause of the fire.

The region has experienced dry conditions in recent days, with Wayne County and surrounding counties in Abnormally Dry conditions, according to the latest U.S. Drought Monitor. Hamilton County issued a Burn Ban this past Monday until further notice due to the dry conditions. The current weather forecast indicates some rain chances in the area starting Monday night and Tuesday, with smaller chances later this week.

Although no severe weather is expected this week in the area, this is Severe Weather Preparedness Week in Illinois. Residents are encouraged to join the National Weather Service and the Illinois Emergency Management Agency as they take time each day to highlight various aspects of being prepared for severe weather. The statewide Tornado Drill is set for Wednesday morning at 11 a.m. The daily focus will be on Receiving Weather Information on Monday, Lightning Safety on Tuesday, Tornado Safety on Wednesday, Hail and Wind Safety on Thursday and Flood Safety on Friday. For more information about Severe Weather Preparedness Week residents can go online to weather.gov or iema.illinois.gov

The Illinois Secretary of States Office Mobile DMV Unit will be in Edwards County on Wednesday from 10 AM until 2 PM at the Edwards County Courthouse. At the mobile DMV unit, those who need services can renew or receive new ID cards, renew driver's licenses, purchase stickers, or upgrade to Real ID.

The Illinois SOS Mobile BMV is in Edwards County on the first Wednesday of every other month.

A Bluford woman was arrested by Wayne County Authorities in Wayne City. On Saturday at 11:30pm, Wayne County Deputies on patrol in Wayne City observed subjects walking down the railroad tracks. The Deputy stopped the subjects for walking down the railroad tracks. During this encounter the Deputy observed one of the subjects to be Kaci D. Bruce 37 of Bluford, IL. The Deputy had prior knowledge Bruce had an active warrant for theft out of Wayne County. Bruce was taken into custody and a search incident to arrest found her to be in possession of methamphetamine. Bruce was transported to the Wayne County Jail and is being held pending a detention hearing.

Bruce faces charges of possession of meth and was wanted on a warrant for theft out of Wayne County.

The CDC has announced the streamlining of COVID-19 guidance for isolation to be in line with all respiratory viruses.

The following are the new guidelines for those with COVID-19:

- If you are sick, please stay home.
 - Seek testing and treatment (particularly if at high-risk for severe disease).
 - Return to normal activities when symptoms have been improving overall for 24 hours. If fever was present, the individual must be fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.
 - Once you resume normal activities, take precaution for the next five days to curb disease spread, such as: taking more steps for cleaner air, enhancing hygiene practices, wearing a well-fitting mask, and/or keeping a distance from others.
-

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has announced that agricultural producers can now make election changes to their **Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC)** programs for the 2024 crop year. The deadline to complete election changes and sign contracts is March 15th. We have links to the programs in the link in the story.

The FCHS Board of Education met Monday evening in special session.

In personnel matters, Peyton Bates was hired as a Social Science Instructor for the 2024-2025 school year. Bates is from Sesser, IL and will graduate from Greenville College.

The FCHS board also Graduation was set for Saturday, May 11 at 5:00 pm. The ceremony is scheduled to be held on the football field, but in the event of bad weather, the ceremony will be moved to Center Street Grade School.

Earlier on the agenda, there was a report that a Principal would be discussed on being hired at this meeting, but officials say they are holding off until the regular meeting for that announcement

The Albion City Council met in a regular session Monday night.

The council under visitors on business heard from Nick Patel from Carmi. Patel owns a packaged liquor store in Carmi and would like to establish a store in Albion. The council agreed to a liquor store commission meeting next Monday at 7 p.m. to discuss a license category for the packaged liquor store.

Burl Pettigrew told the council that he and his wife have volunteered several hours cleaning up the Albion cemetery and wanted to bring to the council's attention that a considerable amount of pruning of limbs and vines still needs to be done in the cemetery.

Pam Barbre with the IECC and Southern 14 training board offered a worker at no charge to the city to help with projects around town. The council agreed to the proposal and also OSHA training through IECC.

Mike Speir told the council that the repairs to the roof over the city hall and ambulance station would be around \$5000.

The council decided to not purchase a banner for the stage area for the eclipse on the bricks. The council thought that they were supporting the chamber through other avenues including port-a-potties, extra city workers, and extra police hours. West Salem. Mayor Jeff Braham plus another member of the West Salem Village

Board requested that the city of Albion contract animal control duties with West Salem. This would be for emergencies only. However, the council voted against the proposal from the group.

The council did approve the cost of between 37 and \$38,000 for curb and gutter work and some new sidewalks in the resurfacing project discussed last month through Albion from the deep cut bridge north to Pine Street. This is at a considerable savings since some of the government money is involved in this funding project.

The council agreed to pay \$3,978 for some fire hose replacement and replacement of some fire pagers. Albion fire chief, Danny Iverson made that request. The cost is being split between the rural fire department and the city of Albion Fire Department.

The sale of 80 acres of land that the city owns is closer. The council agreed to have the land appraised.

The council agreed to let out for

bids the mowing of the Albion Cemetery including debris removal and agreed to donate the city sound system to the Albion Chamber of Commerce.

A Fairfield man is behind bars in the White County Jail after Carmi Police arrested him Monday morning on the corner of Oak and 6th. According to authorities, 40 year old Edward Riley was taken into custody following a retail theft from Tractor Supply in Carmi. It happened Sunday and after obtaining video footage, a Carmi officer recognized Riley as the suspect. When law enforcement tracked Riley down, they say he attempted to swallow a plastic bag filled with meth and fentanyl during transport. Some of the stolen TSC merchandise was recovered in Riley's possession. He's facing felony charges of Possession of Meth, Possession of a Controlled Substance, Unlawful Use of Property, and Obstructing Justice. In addition, Riley faces a count each of misdemeanor Retail Theft and

Possession of Drug Paraphernalia. Riley had steered clear of trouble in White County since 2002. He was arrested in Wayne County for Theft in December and is due in court there Thursday.

Wayne County Emergency Management is reporting an earthquake took place in Southern Illinois on Tuesday. The quake happened at 10:34 AM with the epicenter 3.7 miles east of Pinkneyville in Perry County. The preliminary magnitude of the quake was 2.5 on the Richter Scale. So far, no damage has been reported.

New Hope Water customers in the area of county road 1800 East from County Highway 8 to 200 North and West of 1800 East under a boil order until further notice. The order is due to a water line that had been hit. Students at New Hope School are being requested to bring plenty of bottled water to school due to the boil order. Water officials are awaiting test results from the state, which may take 2 to 3 days.

The Fairfield Rural Fire Department has established The Logan Kreiter Memorial Scholarship available to all FCHS seniors this spring. Logan joined the Fairfield Rural Fire Department when he was in High school and was a valued member of our department until his tragic passing in July 2023. Those that knew Logan know his work ethics was second to none and was always lending out a helping hand. Logan always wanted to serve his community in anyway he could and did this proudly serving as a member of our department. In Logan's memory our department will issue one \$1,000 scholarship to a FCHS senior that presents a hard work ethic and community volunteer involvement. The scholarship applications are due by April 1st and the winner will be announced at FCHS awards day, Below is a link to the scholarships and the link will also be available at the FCHS guidance office

The Wayne County Chamber of Commerce has announced a grand opening and ribbon cutting ceremony for the new Fairfield Community Health Center. The event will take place on Friday, March 15th at 1 PM at the clinic's location at 1007 West Main Street in Fairfield. Christopher Rural Health will operate the clinic.

Fairfield Memorial Hospital's 3D Mobile Mammography Unit will be out in service at Fairfield Memorial Hospital on Saturday, March 16th from 8 AM until noon. Officials say that no physician order is needed if you are over the age of 40. Official say that It must be at least one year since your last mammogram. Officials ask that you bring your insurance card, photo ID & Doctor's contact information. To schedule your appointment, contact Fairfield Memorial Hospital at 618-847-8249.

New Hope Water Customers that were under a boil order are no longer under a boil order. That word came down during the day on Thursday.

Multiple Car Thefts lead to the arrest of a man in the Mount Erie Area on Thursday. Early in the morning Thursday, Wayne County Sheriff's Officials took a report of a theft of a white 2022 Toyota Tacoma in Wayne City. The vehicle was seen by deputies, but later eluded police. Later in the day, a 2007 Blue Chevy Colorado was reported stolen from George Street in Fairfield. Deputies later located the suspect and arrested him Thursday Afternoon. 34-year-old Michael R. Smith was taken into custody by authorities and booked into the Wayne County Jail.

A Mt. Vernon, IL man has been charged with reckless homicide after police say he hit a man with his pickup truck this past Tuesday following a dispute in a Mt. Vernon alley. The incident led to the death of the man from his injuries.

Reports said Robert A. Lewis was ordered detained in the Jefferson County Jail after the court found he was a likely threat to the community. He's accused of hitting 62 year old Thomas Taylor with his pickup truck, resulting in Taylor's death from injuries in the incident. Friday afternoon, Assistant State's Attorney Julie Kozuszek submitted evidence to the court of Lewis' anger issues and drug use. He was formally charged Thursday in Jefferson County Court with Class 3 felony counts of reckless homicide and Class 4 felony leaving the scene of an accident involving death or injury.

Lewis was remanded into custody of the Jefferson County Jail, with a status hearing set for this coming Wednesday, March 13th.

Police in Williamson County, IL issued warrants for 28 people earlier this week after deputies checked on nearly 200 sex offenders across the county.

The Sheriff's Office said they had conducted a sex offender compliance operation for all 186 registered sex offenders in the county.

As of Friday, 17 people had been arrested and 11 others are wanted, all served with arrest warrants and charged with violating the Sex Offender Registration Act, which is a Class 3 felony, according to the Sheriff's Office.

Nearly 24 deputies visited homes and workplaces to verify accurate registration of the offenders over a ten day period.

A boil order has been issued for residents in Fairfield on the south side of York Drive, Shoreway Drive, Lakeview Drive west of Florence, or anyone without water in that area for any period on Friday morning. Residents should boil any water to be used for human consumption until further notice.

A standoff that began up in Effingham County has ended with the death of a truck driver from out of state from self-inflicted gunshot wounds. Media reports and police information said the standoff began Thursday at the TA Truck Stop in Effingham.

Effingham Police Chief Jason McFarland said in the report his department was contacted just before noon Friday by police in Michigan saying a bank robbery suspect was believed headed toward Shelbyville, Illinois. Police began looking at local truck stops and the suspect's truck was found at the Effingham truck stop.

An officer was able to disarm the man's semi by pulling the air brake loose to prevent him from leaving the scene. Attempts to tase the suspect were unsuccessful, and the suspect and police began several hours of a standoff before police eventually were able to enter the suspect's vehicle and found him dead inside. His identity was not immediately released, pending notification of family. No other injuries were reported. The death was reported Friday night.

Less than half of Illinois hospitals are fully transparent regarding their pricing, according to a new report. Parents-Rights-Advocate-dot-org says only about 34 percent of hospitals in the state comply with a law requiring prices be posted online. Many facilities have incomplete lists, or none at all. The same procedures at one hospital could be many times higher than at a different one, the report notes. The full list can be found at Hospital-Pricing-Files-dot-org.

A group of Republican lawmakers in Springfield is introducing a package of bills to fight human trafficking in the state. One bill lets a juvenile petition the court to seal or expunge their record if the crime was committed while they were a victim of human trafficking. Another bill takes away the statute of limitations for prosecutions of involuntary servitude. A related bill would add the term "patronize" to the charge of involuntary sexual servitude of a minor. This bill would hold someone accountable as a sex trafficking offender if they're charged with soliciting a child.

A state lawmaker is trying to legalize magic mushrooms for medical purposes. Democratic Senator Rachel Ventura introduced a bill so psilocybin can be used to treat Illinoisans suffering from PTSD, depression or substance use. A Chicago therapist who was at a news conference last week to announce the bill said his daughter would be alive today if she was prescribed magic mushrooms. The therapist says she suffered from mental illness and took her own life five years ago.

A bill that would require social media sites to pay for news content from other media sites is stirring debate in Springfield. The state Senate bill would create a structure for online news outlets to negotiate with social media platforms for compensation whenever news from their site is shared on another site. The proposal comes from a state task force on local journalism that is studying ways to address the economic decline of local news outlets.

Payrolls in Illinois rose last month while the jobless rate in the state held steady. The Illinois Department of Employment Security reports the unemployment rate remains at four-point-seven percent. The national jobless rate was one percentage point lower at three-point-seven percent. Non-farm payrolls increased by more than 17-hundred last month. Deputy Governor Andy Manar calls the latest figures an encouraging start to the new year.

The Norris City Village Board met last week for their monthly meeting.

Kim Winter and Becky McCormick of Coins for Cancer, which offers financial assistance to residents with cancer in White County, spoke to the board. Winter noted that they weren't there to solicit donations, just to introduce themselves to the area, and talk about what they do. They are planning a free cancer survivor dinner in the future. Mayor Skip Land said the group's information will be made available to the public in the city hall lobby.

The board approved a donation of \$250 to the Norris City Athletic Association, \$340 for a four-person team for the NCOE Golf Scramble to be held on April 20th, and their usual \$500 donation to NCOE High School for their Drug and Alcohol-Free all night graduation party on May 17th.

Mayor Land noted that there have been several high school students doing drag racing down Main Street. Police have been working part time to patrol the area.

The Dale Water District is run by Norris City. The water tower needs repair and there are some fire hydrants available to them that can be installed. The issue was tabled until they can determine exactly what to do.

The village filed a \$25,000 insurance claim on the basement of the sewer plant, which was flooded with raw sewage. The board voted to purchase a flow meter for cleanup at a cost of \$2,700.

The Lion's Club is donating \$5,260 to the village, and the board voted to put the money in the Parks and Recreation Fund.

A lead and copper water line report is being conducted. There have been no problems with lead in the water and they're now looking at copper.

Cleanup of tree branches on Cherry, Orchard, and Carroll Streets was tabled until the village can determine how to pay for the cleanup and how much it will cost.

There were no rate changes in the secondary village insurance with Morgan White, so Mayor Land signed off on its renewal.

The board agreed to purchase a generator for the Senior Center so it can be used as a heating or cooling center. The cost is \$11,000, with half the amount to be paid by the Township, and TIF money can be used.

In the Police Report for February there were five reports written with nine traffic stops and warnings, and 17 dispatch calls.

The next meeting of the Norris City Village Board will be Monday, April 1st.

Fairfield Police and Wayne County Sheriff's Deputies on Saturday arrested an Evansville Woman following a traffic stop in the area of Casey's General Store on South 1st Street. At 4:11 PM, authorities halted a vehicle operated by 39-year-old Melissa K. Wiltshire. Officials say the stop was initially based on a motorist complaint of reckless driving. A further search turned up that Wiltshire was wanted on a Vanderburgh County, Indiana warrant for a petition to revoke probation. Wiltshire was booked into the Wayne County Jail and is awaiting extradition to Vanderburgh County.

A bill that targets cold cases is under consideration by state lawmakers in Springfield. Yesterday, lawmakers in the House held a hearing into a proposed bill that would let survivors ask police to reopen a cold case if nothing has happened in three years. The hearing chair — Democratic State Representative Kam Buckner — says his bill would help survivors cut through the frustration left behind when a case grows cold.

Illinois lawmakers are debating a bill that would pay student teachers as they're learning to teach students. Under the bill, student teachers would be paid about ten-thousand dollars per semester that they teach. The proposal would cost the state between 50- and 54-million dollars. It's aimed at recruiting more teachers to enter the profession.

Hamilton Memorial Hospital is encouraging Hamilton County residents to take a step toward better health with Walk with a Doc, a health program that brings doctors and patients together to walk.

Join Hamilton Memorial Hospital on March 23rd at the Hamilton County High School Track, located at #1 Fox Lane, McLeansboro, Illinois, beginning at 9:00 am. In the event of inclement weather, the walk will be held at the Old McLeansboro High School Gym located on N. Pearl Street, McLeansboro, Illinois.

Walk with a Doc is an international non-profit organization whose mission is to inspire communities through movement and conversation. "This program has had tremendous participation and success in hundreds of cities around the world," said, Dr. Brian Sloan. "I'm very pleased to bring this exciting and simple program to Hamilton County as it has shown such improved health results for countless people around the world."

The Walk is open to the community. Participation is free and pre-registration is not required. Walkers will enjoy a refreshing and rejuvenating walk with Dr. Sloan and other healthcare professionals, who will provide support to participants and answer questions during the Walk. Hamilton County chapter of Walk with a Doc will offer walking events throughout the year.

"Walk with a Doc is honored to team up with Hamilton Memorial Hospital District. By incorporating this program into the practice, Hamilton Memorial Hospital is demonstrating an exceptional level of care and commitment to their community," said Dr. David Sabgir, founder of Walk with a Doc.

According to the American Heart Association, walking as little as 30 minutes a day can provide the following benefits:

- Improve blood pressure and blood sugar levels
- Help maintain a healthy body weight and lower the risk of obesity
- Enhance mental well-being
- Reduce the risk of osteoporosis

Hamilton County joins a growing list of communities worldwide that have started local Walk with a Doc (WWAD) programs. WWAD was started by Dr. David Sabgir, a cardiologist in Columbus, OH. He has walked with patients and community members nearly every weekend since 2005.

For more information, call 618.643.2361 ext. 1000. Learn more about Walk with a Doc at www.walkwithadoc.org

Cisne FFA Members Allison Shannon, Ava Lewis, and Makayla Morse (back row) Aidyn Dickey, Kenzie Alvis, Claire Matthews and Mikkie Hearle finished as the 2nd place team at the District V Conduct of Chapter Meetings Leadership Development Event held March 7, 2024, at SIU Carbondale. Overall Individual Results: Kenzie Alvis-2nd place Chair, Mikkie Hearle- 5th place Floor Member, Aidyn Dickey – 9th place Floor Member and Makayla Morse – 13th place Floor Member. The team now advances to state competition to be held in May at Illinois Central College in Peoria.

JW Simms-Reisner was selected as the District FFA Proficiency Winner in Sheep Production. He is a member of the Edwards County FFA Chapter of the Illinois Association FFA. Illinois FFA recognizes students in forty-eight different areas based on their work-based learning, also known as Supervised Agricultural Experiences or SAE. FFA members who demonstrate outstanding agricultural skills and competencies through record keeping, leadership, and scholastic achievement may be considered for this award. SAEs allow students to learn by doing by either owning and operating an agricultural business, working or serving an internship at an agriculture-based business or conducting an agriculture-based scientific experiment and reporting results.

Simms-Reisner was selected as the District 5 Winner by a committee of agriculture industry representatives and teachers knowledgeable in this work-based area. JW Simms-Reisner is the son of Amanda Simms of Ellery and the grandson of David and Beverly Simms of Albion.

Receiving this honor now makes him eligible to compete in the State FFA Awards Selection process in Mount Zion, IL, on Saturday, March 23, 2024. JW was previously chosen as the Chapter and Section awardee in this area. Steven Clodfelter and Michelle Wiseman are the agriculture teachers and FFA Advisors at Edwards County High School.

Also honored at the event was Easton Keener, who was second place in the area of Ag Processing. Keener and JW Simms-Reisner will receive a plaque for their accomplishments. These plaques are made possible by gifts by individuals, businesses, corporations and organizations through the Illinois Foundation FFA.

K9 Tiko was involved with a pair of arrests on Thursday.

At 11:08pm, Wayne County Deputies conducted a traffic stop in Fairfield. During the traffic stop the Wayne County Sheriff's Office K9 Tiko was requested to the scene. After K9 Tiko alerted on the vehicle for the odor of illegal drugs a search was conducted. During the search Deputies located approximately 81 grams of methamphetamine and digital scales. The Driver Joshua A. Zoph (44) of Eldorado was taken into custody. Zoph is being held at the Wayne County Jail.

Preliminary Charge

-Possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute

At 11:43pm, Wayne County Deputies conducted a traffic stop near Boyelston. During the traffic stop Wayne County Sheriff's Office K9 Tiko was requested to the scene. After K9 Tiko alerted on the vehicle for the odor of illegal drugs a search was conducted. During the search Deputies located a glass methamphetamine pipe in the vehicle and the Driver Jevon L. Sork (47) of Fairfield, IL was found to be in possession of a small bag of methamphetamine on her person. Sork was transported to the Wayne County Jail where she is being held.

Preliminary Charge

-Possession of methamphetamine

The Fairfield City Council met Tuesday evening for their first March meeting.

Aldermen approved an expenditure of \$318,000 to paint the west water tower. The successful bidder was Tricoat LLC from Pacific, MO. The tower was constructed in 1993 and has not had any exterior work completed since then. The contractor has 300 calendar days to complete the project.

In the only other agenda item, Mayor Gary Moore read a proclamation proclaiming March as National Athletic Trainer Month. Sarah Turner, LAT, ATC Director of Athletic Training Services & Athletic Performance at Wabash General Hospital, was present to accept the proclamation.

A Fairfield Man was sentenced in Wayne County Court on Tuesday after being found guilty of fleeing or attempting to flee a peace office. The incident took place back in May of 2020.

Carroll A. Sanders was found guilty in January for the incident. He was sentenced to 210 days in Wayne County Jail as well as 12 months of probation. According to the record, Sanders during the sentencing hearing became disrespectful and disruptive with verbal outbursts. Sanders was found to be in contempt of Judge Jerry Crisel. Judge Crisel added an additional 30 days to Sanders's sentence to be served consecutively. During the session, Sanders's post trial motion was denied.

Sanders had to pay a total of \$1515 in court costs in the case.

Sanders in the past voiced his displeasure in public settings involving the case against him. It was noted in a Fairfield City Council Meeting in July of 2023 about the fact his case had not been heard in Wayne County Court. According to the WFIW News File, the public comments came following the July 11, 2023 Fairfield City Council meeting. Sanders was removed by public officials at that meeting.

According to the case files in Judici, Sanders had changes in council multiple times and also was reportedly disruptive and removed from court for his actions. Sanders also requested a different judge in the case in 2022. Judge Kimbra Harrell was appointed to the case in July of 2022. A request for a speedy trial was made on September 26, 2022 by Sanders. In December, a motion for a mental examination was taken up and granted. The defense according to court documents made the request, but attempted to withdraw it from the court. That motion was denied. In March of 2023, Dr. Boyd on the record told the court that the exam was conducted, but the report was not back. According to information in court documents, the report was not completed by Dr. Boyd because he had not received independent documents for the exam. On May 31, it was determined Sanders could stand trial. In July of 2023, Judge Kimbra Harrell requested resident Judge Molt to find another judge for the case. In August of 2023, Judge Jerry Crisel was appointed to the case. Sanders's Council withdrew from the case in August as well. In November, a final continuance in the case was granted, setting the new jury trial date for January 2, 2024. After a 2 and a half day trial, the court found Sanders guilty after 20 minutes of deliberation of fleeing or attempting to elude a police officer, disobeying a traffic control device, and driving the wrong way on a one way street.

The latest survey from the Illinois Education Association shows significant support for Illinois teachers. The results of the association's State of Education survey show 74 percent of Illinoisans surveyed believe teachers should receive their full pension because they do

not receive social security payments. Researchers say the figure rose by six percentage points over last year's survey. They say those who believe pensions for teachers should be cut totaled less than fifteen percent.

The chancellor of SIU-Carbondale and four other finalists for the next president of New Mexico State are no longer being considered. They've all been dropped from the search. Last month, Austin Lane was announced as one of five finalists for the job. Yesterday, the chair of the New Mexico State University Board of Regents announced none of them fully meet the needs of the campus right now and a nationwide search will reopen. An interim president will be named in the meantime.

The latest financial report for the city of Fairfield showed progress in trying to get into the black, but overall, the budget remains red.

In the report, the city showed a profit of \$224,849.33. The Airport, Waste Water, Gas, and Electric lines were the main profit areas outside of administration.

For the year, the city shows a shortfall of \$101,001.

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For the year, the city shows a shortfall of \$101,001.

Republican lawmakers in the Illinois House in Springfield say the state is failing its healthcare providers with delays in the licensing process. They claim many doctors and nurses have to wait up to a year before their licenses are renewed or approved. The lawmakers say they want the state to begin accepting online payments for professional licenses. A bill in the House would allow the state to issue licenses to healthcare professionals on an expedited basis.

During the IECC Board of Trustees meeting in February, tuition rates were raised throughout the IECC District. During the discussion of the rate hike, Chancellor Ryan Gower mentioned that other community colleges throughout the region will also be raising rate. Earlier this week, the Board of Trustees at Lake Land College in Mattoon is approving a tuition increase of three-dollars per credit hour. This means the new rate will be 113-and-a-half dollars. It's the first tuition hike at the college in four years. Last year, the college rolled back tuition and fees to 2021 and 2022 rates.

Law enforcement agencies across Illinois are using a nasal spray to counter the effects of fentanyl overdoses. This began after the FDA approved the spray last May. Illinois is one of 19 states where it's available through standing orders. That allows teachers and first responders to use the nasal spray if a student is experiencing an overdose. East Moline Police say they've seen instances where a patient is completely unresponsive before the spray is administered.

A bill under consideration in the Illinois Senate would provide breakfast and lunch to all K-through-12 students across the state. The proposal would require the state Board of Education to reimburse schools for the cost of the free meals. It's estimated to cost 209-million dollars a year. A related bill would create a grant program to give schools 75-hundred dollars each for free meal programs in case the first bill fails to pass.

A state Senate panel has passed a proposal that's a major initiative of Governor J.B. Pritzker — the creation of a state Department of Early Childhood. The measure would streamline the administration of early childhood education in Illinois and pull together several state agencies into one department. The hope is that the single agency would make it easier for parents and providers to navigate early childhood education in the state.

The Fairfield Public School District #112 along with Jasper, New Hope, and Geff School Districts are conducting Child Find/Preschool Screenings for 3 to 5-year-old children. The screenings will be held at North Side School on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, April 17, 18, and 19, 2024.

The screening checks each child's progress in hearing, vision, speech, language, and coordination skills. This will give parents a better idea of how their child is progressing at this very young age before he/ she begins school.

This screening program is free and parents will receive immediate feedback on how their child is developing. Head Start and Family Enrichment personnel may also be present to explain their program and services.

The free screening procedure takes about 45 minutes, and appointments must be made, Parents should call 842-6501 to make an appointment or to get more information.

Kindergarten Pre-Registration will be held at North Side School Thursday, April 18, and Friday, April 19, from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm. This registration is to complete paperwork for children who will attend kindergarten at North Side School this fall. Appointments are not necessary.

School officials say that if your child is already a Pre-K Student at North Side School, you do not need to attend as a packet will be sent home with current North Side School Pre-K Students.

Your child must be five years of age by September 1, 2024. A certified birth certificate, immunization record including lead screen, and verification of residence must be presented at the time of registration. If your child has had a physical exam on August 15, 2023 or later, please bring it in for copy also. The school nurse will be available to help with questions regarding requirements for immunizations and medical, dental and eye examinations. Health, Dental, and Vision forms are available at the school and at local providers' offices. The physical examination must be completed prior to the beginning of school in August.

In order to properly prepare for ordering supplies and materials, please make plans to register your Kindergarten-eligible child on April 18 or April 19.

32-year old Tiffany A. Perusky of Carmi, Illinois, was sentenced on March 5, 2024 to a total of 4-years in the Illinois Department of Corrections followed by a term of 1-year of Mandatory Supervised Release (formerly known as "parole") for Residential Burglary in Edwards County. Perusky is also required to pay restitution of \$1956.77 in the case.

23-year old Tanner J.R. Buckman of Grayville, Illinois, was sentenced on January 30, 2024 to a total of 4-years in the Illinois Department of Corrections followed by a term of 6-months of Mandatory Supervised Release (formerly known as "parole") for Unlawful Possession of Methamphetamine in Edwards County and for Burglary to a Motor Vehicle.

In both cases, Edwards County State's Attorney Eric A. St Ledger prosecuted the case on behalf of the People of the State of Illinois while the defendants were represented by Public Defender, Brian Shinkle.

Thursday was a busy day of Severe Weather throughout Southern Illinois as severe thunderstorms brought numerous warnings for damaging winds, potential large hail, and isolated tornadoes.

The first watch was a Severe Thunderstorm Watch that was for our area was issued just before 5 AM and was thru 12-noon. A tornado watch was issued just before 2 PM and in some areas went thru 9 PM and in other areas was originally issued until midnight, but was dropped between 10 PM and 11 PM.

In the 6 PM hour, warnings were just being issued to the west of the WFIW Listening area with the first warnings issued by National Weather Service officials at Lincoln. Nearly every county in the area was under a Severe Thunderstorm Warning at some point while Clay, Marion, Richland, Jefferson, Wabash, and Wayne Counties were at some point under a Tornado Warning. Storms cleared the area just before 10 PM.

Jefferson County saw the most power outages in the area with a combined total of over 3900 without power on both Ameren and Tri-County Electric. There were reports of tree limbs and power poles damaged in that area according to Jefferson County Dispatch

There were reports just south of Wayne City on the Hamilton County side of the line of a couple of roofs damaged from a grain bin as well as a machine shed. Hamilton County officials say a more extensive assessment will take place on Friday.

In Wabash County, it was reported by the National Weather Service at Indianapolis of a confirmed tornado by radar. National Weather Service officials at Paducah have not confirmed that report. In NWS chat reports, there was a 44 mile per hour wind gust measured at Wabash Valley College and just South of Patton on Illinois Route 1, several trees were damaged according to reports.

Multiple calls were made to Clay and Marion Counties to check in on storm damage. Officials say that nothing was reported during our check-ins.

The Wayne County Board met Thursday evening for their regular monthly session.

Claire Vaughan and Ashley Rutherford from Raylen James Marketing addressed the board, providing an update on a new website for the Wayne County Government. The project has been in the works for some time and should be rolled out for testing very soon.

Board approved appointments:

Roger Solomon reappointed to a 3 year Trustee term on the Wayne Fire Protection District #1.

Steven Deitz to a 3 year term on the Orchardville Fire Protection District as a Trustee.

Wayne County 911 Authority reappointed Scott Clark, Vern Hutson, Chris Otey, and David Vaughan to 4 year terms.

Office Reports:

States Attorney Kevin Kakac announced that Fairfield native Kyle Ellis has been hired as Assistant States Attorney. He will begin his duties on April 1.

Circuit Clerk Pam Southerd announced that her office had received a Technology Grant totaling \$62,000. The money will be used to purchase new computer equipment, digitalize records, and erect a digital sign on the southwest corner of courthouse property. The sign will be 4' x 8' and will be used by county agencies to provide public information.

Sheriff Chris Otey announced that they had received a \$25,000 grant from Grainger Corp. The grant will be used to purchase and replace maintenance equipment at the jail. He also updated the board on a future grant enabling them to purchase an Iris Scanner, which is the latest in identification technology. The Sheriff also updated the board on several items recently received from Government Surplus, including night vision equipment, a large RV Mobile Command Center, and an MRAP armored vehicle. The MRAP can be used for officer protection on high risk arrests as well as high water rescues. The total of all the equipment received is over \$700,000, with no cost to the taxpayers. He also stated that his current jail population is 20.

County Clerk Lizann Woodrow updated the board on this Tuesday's Primary Election. She indicated that early voting and mail in voting has been brisk. She also announced that the courthouse will be closed for the eclipse on April 8.

Jeff Jake with the Wayne County Health Department announced that an electronic waste disposal day will take place on April 13 at the former Recycling Center at SW Park. The building currently houses the Wayne County Coroners offices.

An ARPA request for \$53,000 was approved for remodeling of the dispatch center at the Police Department. A second dispatcher has been added, so some reconfiguration of the room has to be done to accommodate the extra work station. The board unanimously passed a resolution, saluting agriculture and its positive impact on our area. The resolution was drafted by the Wayne County Farm Bureau..

There were three lengthy discussions during the Enfield Village Board meeting earlier this week.

There was about a half hour discussion concerning water rates. The board eventually decided to raise water rates by two dollars a month due to the village needing the revenue just to make a profit there. They will also revisit the rates every quarter to possibly raise them again. In a related matter, the EPA loan agreement for \$167,000 to install new water meters was officially signed as the paperwork took some time to be completed.

Representatives from Mill Shoals and Springerton were at the meeting to discuss a possible agreement with Enfield for policing help. It was noted that dispatch fees might be a problem with putting something like that together. After about a half hour or so it was decided that they will try to put together a meeting with the White County Sheriff's Office, White County and everyone's attorneys and see if something could be worked out. After that, the board approved the hiring of Justin Titzer as a part-time Deputy starting March 18th. He will work evenings 16 hours a week at \$20 an hour, and he has his own uniform and equipment.

There was a discussion that lasted about 45 minutes on hiring someone for the utilities department requiring them to be on call in case of a gas leak. Keep in mind it was just at last month's meeting that they gave their two employees in that department raises. After much back and forth between board members, it was decided and the board agreed, that an ordinance be passed that would require that new employees live within 15 minutes of village limits and paid based on their experience. The 15 minute requirement is because they would have to respond quickly if there is a gas leak due to the urgency involved.

In other business:

The board waived a liquor license fee to both the Enfield One Stop and Billy Bob and Nina's Hickory Creek Hideaway. The license fee will be waved until the end of the year.

Clean up day will be on Saturday, April 13th.

Work on the street lights is going on now.

They are still waiting for acceptance of the small business grant.

The Animal Control Department now has a chip reader.

And two donations were approved. One for NCOE for their all night drug and alcohol free graduation party and the other for the annual Easter egg hunt. Both amounts are the same as last year.

Surplus equipment sales and budget talks dominated the Grayville City Council Meeting on Monday.

David Hall of Grayville is the new owner of a 2006 Ford truck designated as excess equipment by the City. He outbid Kyle Pollard and John and Paula Krankel. There was a single bid for a bush hog/mower. Council decided to reject the \$675 bid from Chris Ellerman. Six companies competed for the seasonal mowing contract. K&K Small Jobs won out with a low bid of \$7,000 over 28 weeks. K&K also did the mowing last year for the city. Other bids received were from Tri Cuts Lawncare at \$12,600, USA mowing for \$14,700, Jordan Mowing and Landscaping at \$16,800, On Point Lawncare at \$17,500, and H&S Tree Service at \$19,180.

Council recessed into executive session at 7:05pm and returned at 7:31 with no action following. Other news out of the Monday night meeting include the council rejecting Sherry Garcia's request on behalf of the Downtown Merchants to block off downtown for the solar eclipse on April 8th. Council then approved the Friends of Grayville's request for street closure and parking lot use for their annual Hog Roast scheduled for June 22nd.

Council also presented the annual budget with total budgeted revenues expected to be \$4,053,695 while expenses are projected to be at \$4,549,663.79 leaving a near half million loss. Capital expenses will push the budget into positive territory however to the tune of \$11,040.21. A public hearing date has been set for the public to address council regarding the budget on April 8th at 6:45 before the regularly scheduled meeting.

Finally, Grayville leaders granted Sharon Walden authority to move forward with plans to interview and hire a city pool manager and lifeguards. They also voted to pay for the certification or re-certification for any returning employees.

A bill in the state Senate would require porn sites to verify their users' ages. SB-2590 would make companies that own the websites to adopt age verification technology to prevent anyone under 18 from accessing content. If the bill becomes law, alleged violations could be prosecuted by the state Attorney General's office with daily fines of up to five-thousand-dollars. Money from the penalties would go into a fund to pay for investigations that involve exploited children.

Illinois lawmakers are looking at two bills that would provide students free school breakfast and lunches. One would make sure all K-12 schools could get the free meals and be reimbursed by the state for costs. The other bill would give schools up to 75-hundred

dollars to create “breakfast after the bell” programs. It would also eliminate student co-payments for reduced-price breakfast and lunch recipients.

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity has launched the Innovation Voucher Program that could help stimulate economic growth. State leaders hope the three-million-dollars in funding will encourage private companies to partner with public universities. Key industries the program will target include agriculture technology, energy, IT, health care, manufacturing, and transportation and logistics. Each recipient can receive up to 75-thousand-dollars. Officials say online applications will be accepted until funds are exhausted.

State lawmakers are considering a bill that would legalize assisted suicide in Illinois. Under the bill, people who are diagnosed with a terminal illness and given six months to live would be allowed to take medication to end their lives. More than one doctor who agrees with the diagnosis would be required and the person seeking assisted suicide would have to have the mental capacity to make their own decision. The bill has not yet come up in committee yet.

In the Severe Storms from Thursday, South Central Transit has suspended operations in the area effective immediately. That is due to major damage to their bus barn on the north side of Mount Vernon.

No injuries have been reported with the storm damage.

The National Weather Service at Paducah has released data on a confirmed tornado touchdown in Eastern Wayne County.

According to the weather service, the tornado touched down at 8:11 PM and was on the ground for roughly 4 minutes between Golden Gate and Mount Erie. The tornado was rated at N EF-1 with maximum winds estimated at 90 MPH. The tornado path was 2.8 miles long.

No injuries or fatalities were reported with the tornado. In the damage report from the National Weather Service, several pine trees were snapped along the tornado track. One home had roof damaged. An anchored mobile home was lifted up and leaned over, but not completely overturned. That mobile home however did sustain major damage. That mobile home is currently inhabitable. Another home in that area also sustained major damage. Reports also state an old television tower was toppled over.

Analysts say voter turnout so far for tomorrow's primary in Illinois is significantly low, especially for a general election year. Typically, voter turnout is low in a primary year but not in a year when the presidential election is held. One Northwestern University analyst — Political Communications Professor Erik Nisbet — says turnout numbers are the lowest he has seen in more than a decade. Experts say “get out the vote” efforts will be more crucial than ever this year.

Starting next year, high school juniors across Illinois will likely be taking the federally-mandated state college entrance exam — the ACT. Illinois students have been taking the SAT college entrance exam for the past eight years after 15 years when the other major national exam — the ACT — was used. The state board has begun the process of awarding a three-year, 53-million dollar contract to ACT. The ACT would be administered beginning with the 2024-2025 school year but students could still take the SAT if they pay for it.

Voters across Illinois head to the polls today in the state's primary election. The top of the ballot is the presidential primary, though President Biden and former President Trump have already secured their party's respective nominations. Chief Justice Anne Burke of the Illinois Supreme Court has announced her retirement, so voters will be deciding nominees for that vacancy. No Republican has filed for the job. First District Appellate Justice Joy Cunningham was named by the court to succeed Burke in the interim. She'll be running against Illinois Appellate Court Justice Jesse Reyes. Ballots will also be cast in competitive congressional races around the state as well as local primaries.

Polls are open from 6 AM until 7 PM this evening. We will provide the final information on area elections this evening on our website at WFIWRadio.com

Governor J.B. Pritzker has announced five-million dollars in state funding for the Home Illinois Workforce Pilot Program. The program is designed to support people experiencing homelessness by improving employment opportunities and their ability to afford a home. It's a key part of the Illinois Job Training and Economic Development Program.

The FBI reports internet crime across Illinois has risen and residents are losing millions of dollars to online scams. The bureau reports some 16-thousand Illinoisans lost more than 338-million dollars to internet crime in 2023. That's a 20 percent increase in the amount of dollars lost over 2022. The crimes include internet scams, extortion and investment fraud.

Clay County residents that routinely use residential sharps (such as needles, syringes, or lancets) are encouraged to stop by the Health Department during operating hours. Those hours are 8a-5p Monday thru Friday. At the department, residents who routinely use sharps may pick up a quart-sized sharps collection container to keep at home. Once full, household containers can be returned to the Clay County Health Department during operating hours and properly disposed of in the Residential Sharps Drop-Box. Loose sharps will not be accepted. Sharps other than needles, syringes, or lancets will also not be accepted. If you have any questions, you may call (618) 662-4406 and ask for Environmental Health for assistance with any sharps or waste disposal-related questions.

The Edwards County School Board met in regular session Monday night. The board enjoyed the Albion grade school science fair projects as presented by the students enrolled in science class.

In old business, the board heard that the district attorney is still working on the agreement with Arrow Solar. The agreement should be ready by next month. The current school calendar was amended the last day of school for the school Children barring any unforeseen complications will be May 17th. This year, four camps were approved for the summer including a pickle ball fundraiser sponsored by the Echs girls basketball team. The EC Junior Football League camp will be held in June this year.

The district agreed to donate 20 old chromebooks to the country roads FFA school. The board also approved a donation from the Albion grade school music boosters for new sound equipment. The cost is to be split between the dinner theater program and the AGS music boosters. That program, a total of \$4622.59. This is for half of the equipment.

Two trips were approved West Salem grade school, eighth grade trip to French Lick, Indiana, April 29th and the ECHS FFA trip to Joliet Livestock judging on April 6th, the board approved spending \$7869 for aluminum bleachers at the West Salem ballpark and bids are to be let soon for the outdoor classroom restrooms at the K-12. The agreement with the Albion Baseball Association was also approved.

Superintendent Cowger told the board that the cafeteria report is better but still has a lot of red ink. Superintendent Cowger told the board that a reminder that graduation is coming up in the first part of May. May 11th is West Salem grade school at 10 a.m. ECHS Baccalaureate at 12 noon, Edwards County High School at 2 p.m., and Albion Grade School at 4 PM.

After executive session, the board voted to rehire all tenured certified personnel, all non-tenured, certified personnel and non-certified personnel. Also, they voted to employ two new bus drivers for the 24-25 school year that being Seaton Snidle and Eric Goldsmith. The board also hired grade school softball head coach Chris Shelton and the assistant Haley Kinard. The board also approved on a 7-0 vote, the Edwards County Teachers Association contract with the district through the 2027 school year. That contract calls for a 3.5 % raise on top of the steps. Also, the board voted 7-0 to give the salaries for administrators a boost to 4% each year.

The Edwards County School District is conducting a preschool round-up for children age Birth to 5 years not yet enrolled in public schools and who will not be Kindergarten eligible in the fall.

The screening will take approximately 45 minutes and will evaluate each child's progress in hearing, vision, speech, language, and coordination skills. Appointments are required. This will give parents a better idea of how their child is progressing at this very young age before he/she begins school. This screening program is free and parents will receive immediate feedback.

All classes for the District will be held at the Albion Grade School.

For students who live in the Albion attendance area, the screening will be held on Tuesday, April 2nd*, from 8:30 am to 2:30 pm at the First Christian Church in Albion. Please call 618-445-2325 to set up an appointment.

For students who live in the West Salem attendance area, the screening will be held Wednesday, April 3rd, from 8:30 am to 2:30 pm at the Moravian Church in West Salem. Please call 618-456-8881 to set up an appointment.

The U.S. Postal Service is proposing a new structure for its post offices in Illinois that could lead to delays in mail delivery. The plan will turn 58 processing and distribution centers in smaller Illinois communities into local mail processing centers. The plan would redirect packages and unprocessed mail in Springfield and other central Illinois communities to the nearest distribution center in St. Louis. Illinois lawmakers — including Congresswomen Nikki Budzinski and Mary Miller — have written Postmaster Louis DeJoy about their opposition to the plan unless they're shown it will improve delivery.

Governor J.B. Pritzker has signed an executive order to provide equity in access to gene and cell therapy in Illinois. It would apply to therapies such as the recently approved therapy for Sickle Cell Disease. It directs the state's Department of Healthcare and Family Services to set up payment models and financial structures for sickle cell disease treatments and other high cost treatments in the state's Medicaid program. Program recommendations will be submitted by the end of the year.

There were a few contested races in Hamilton County on Tuesday as it was election day in the state of Illinois.

In the full-term for county board, John F. Mead was the top vote getter for a 4-year term at 1069 votes compared to 778 votes for John Carrell and Geln E. Gelfius's 482 votes. Mead and Carrell both won to square off against Mary Ann Hopfinger in November.

In the 2-year term for county board on the republican side, Landon Vaughan defeated Ronald Winterheimer 1062 to 366.. Vaughan will face a battle with democrat Vuel York in November.

For Coroner, Robert R. Miller defeated Jason D. Young for the on the republican side 783-693.

Turnout in Hamilton County was 34.4% in Tuesday's Primary Election.

There were 3 contested races in the Wayne County Primary on Tuesday. In those races, voter turnout was 34.48%.

For the Circuit Clerk, Georgiana Fletcher defeated Ellen Sitzes 1699-1612. Fletcher will be replacing Pam Southard who did not seek re-election.

In a pair of County Board Races, Greg Keyser defeated leads Andrew Glover and Debra Wilkinson 336-90-42 for County Board District 2. In District 4, Steven Manning leads BJ Thomason 285-184.

While these are unofficial numbers, the numbers will be official following canvassing of the ballots in early April.

The Clay County Clerk's Office has released their election numbers for the primary election. Overall, there was a 31.74% turnout in Clay County for today's election. The coroner's race as the only locally contested race. In that race, Bryce C. Henry defeated Lori Feldhake 1725-875.

While there were a few county races on the map, there were some other key races for state office, congress, and for US President.

In state office races, for State Rep in district 116, Dave Severin defeated Angela Evans. For State Rep in district 110, Blaine Wilhour defeated Matthew T. Hall. For State Senate, Jason Plummer was running unopposed in State Senate District 55. In State Senate District 58, Terri Bryant defeated Wesley Kash.

In Congressional Races, US House District 12's Republican Primary, As of 6 AM Wednesday, Mike Bost defeated Darren Bailey by 2590 votes. While Politico does not have the Lawrence County data, the information was obtained just after 6 AM this morning from Lawrence County Clerk Will Gibson. On the Democratic race for District 12, Brian Roberts defeated Preston Nelson.

For the US President Races, Joe Biden won the Democratic Primary while Donald Trump won the Republican Primary.

Even though it was Primary Election Day, it was a slow turnout throughout much of the area.

Many counties in our area were in the lower 30% area when it came to voter turnout. Of those voters, the vast majority in the area were voting on the republican ballot.

Edwards County didn't have any contested county-wide races on the ballot for the primary and will not have any on the General Election Ballot. The county however had a turnout of 33.36 percent.

Many other area counties also reported slow voter turnout. Wayne County had a turnout of 34.48 percent while Hamilton County had a turnout of 34.44 percent. Clay County reported turnout of 31.74 percent. Turnout in Jefferson County was 23.58 percent, 21.79 percent in Marion County, and 27.37 percent in Franklin County. In Gallatin County, turnout was 32.2 percent. White County saw a turnout of 23.98%. Richland County reported 22.12% voter turnout.

An Albion Firefighter who recently retired was honored by department personnel during a meeting at the Albion Fire Department Tuesday.

Don Mosson served as a fireman in Albion for 55 years. He started his service in 1968 and retired from the department in 2023. He was joined by son Dana and grandson Eli as department officials presented a plaque to Don Mosson. Both Dana and Eli are involved with the Albion Fire Department.

New Hope School has announced its Kindergarten Registration. The registration will take place on Thursday, April 11th from 8:30 AM until 3:00 PM at New Hope School. Parents who will be enrolling a child in Kindergarten will need to bring a copy of the child's birth certificate, immunization records and lead screening results, proof of residency, and the registration fee of \$20. Students entering Kindergarten must be 5 years of age on or before September 1, 2024, as well as current on immunizations, have an eye exam for the child by the middle of October, and Dental Exams during the school year prior to entering 1st grade.

If you have any questions, contact New Hope School at 618-842-3296.

Wayne County Crimestoppers is offering a reward for arrest of the person or persons who entered a locked storage building rented by Jaymie Garrett. Officials say the person who entered the storage building removed a shelf. If you have any information on the incident, you are asked to call or text crimestoppers at 618-842-9777

Sean Henry and Rod Martin of Klinger & Associates spoke to the board about various projects including the sanitary sewer project and the lead service line inventory. They will have a budget for work to be done with a detailed inventory at next month's meeting.

Jaime Brock and Janelle Brown, who had helped raise about \$30,000 for a new dog shelter last year, wondered what had happened to that money and why it hadn't been built. Mayor Chad May said a new one would cost around \$150,000 and there were other major

priorities for the city that needed to be looked into, so it didn't get the attention some might have liked. Later on in the meeting, the board decided not to take any specific action on the matter, but will see if they can get volunteers to possibly help make repairs and alterations.

The Kiwanis Club asked about new playground equipment at the park. They have most of the money needed and they would like the city to think about helping out.

They received five bids for mowing for the 2024 mowing season. The board decided to approve Triple G Lawn Care's bid of \$1,330 per week.

The board agreed to sell the property located at 133 South Jackson Street to Steve Becker for \$30,000 by a 4 to 2 vote.

It was decided not to purchase a vehicle for the police department K9 unit at a cost of \$65,000 and get more use out of the old one. Also, to make any associated transfers needed.

Second reading of an ordinance amending Utilities, Water System, General Regulations, and Resale of Water was held. The ordinance was approving correcting the language.

First reading of an Ordinance regarding the FY25 Appropriations took place. Budget numbers should be ready by next week and then a finance committee meeting will be held.

The Consent Agenda was approved, which includes making opening day at the city swimming pool to be on Monday May 27th, but they don't have lifeguards yet, so if they can't get enough, they might not be able to open it. City Wide Cleanup will be May 6th to the 9th, tChere will be a Crappie Tournament at Lake McLeansboro on Saturday May 4th and a Catfish Tournament at Lake McLeansboro on Saturday, May 18th, and a FY 24 Appropriations Amendment concerning the gas fund was approved, as was the FY 24 budget amendment.

Updating the fire department's software was tabled. The Mayor hasn't been able to look into it yet.

The Board of Trustees of the Illinois Eastern Community College District No. 529 met Tuesday night, March 19th at Lincoln Trail College, Robinson, Illinois.

The Board recognized Student Trustee Guadalupe Amicone for her service to the Board of Trustees and the IECC district. Ms. Amicone is a student at Lincoln Trail College who ran on the platform of improving student housing and access to healthy meal options on campus. Progress was made on both fronts this year, and Chancellor Gower and the Trustees pledged to continue work on those matters in the upcoming academic year. The next student trustee, Jorri VanDyke, is a student at Olney Central College and will be seated during the April 2024 Board of Trustees meeting at Olney Central College.

Brandon Weger, Program Director of Institutional Assessment & Effectiveness presented the 2024 IECC Fact Book to the Board. Among the highlights discussed were:

- IECC had a 4.1% increase in headcount serving 17,497 students, 2,276 of these were degree or certificate seeking students.
- Retention of students from Fall 2022 to Fall 2023 saw marked improvements with an average retention rate of 68% for full-time students and 61% for part-time students. Both numbers are well above the national average.
- 942 students completed degrees or certificates at one of IECC's four campuses. A total of 1,356 credentials were awarded.

The IECC Fact Book has been developed to provide stakeholders of Illinois Eastern Community Colleges information about the students in our District, enrollment history, the degrees and certificates granted, the financial aid received and distributed, and the District's budgets and operations.

The Board approved the minutes of the Board of Trustees meeting held on February 27, 2024.

Board approval was given for revisions to the following policies:

- Minor updates were made to Policy 300.20 (Operating Cash Reserve), Policy 300.21 (Procurement Standards for Federal Grant Awards), Policy 400.1 Selection and Employment, Policy 400.4 (Holiday, Leave, and Benefit Policy – 2 Non-Bargaining Unit Employees), and Policy 400.31 (Personal and Workspace Appearance – Non-Bargaining Unit).

- Deletion of Policy 500.23 (Nursing Student Progression/Remediation Policy) as the testing referenced in the policy will no longer be used as a measure of achievement effective May 31, 2024.

The Board approved the 2025-2027 Academic Calendar and AY23 IECC Fact Book.

Affiliation agreements were approved with Clay County Hospital and Medical Clinics; Fairfield Memorial Hospital; Joyner Therapy Services; R&T Physical Therapy LLC; Wabash General Hospital; and Health Pro Heritage, LLC.

The Board waived the second reading and approved Policy 200.8 Campus Closures and Interruptions that ensures clarity in decision-making responsibilities, establishing communication

channels, and setting clear expectations for students and employees.

Calendar Year 2023 Report for the IECC 403(b) Plan was accepted by the Board provided by Marsh & McLennan Agency.

The Board approved a lease agreement with Wabash Telephone Cooperative for the Lincoln Trail College Campus commencing March 20, 2024 with an initial term expiring June 30, 2024.

A three-year proposal received from Martin Hood, PLLC for audit services was approved.

Bid committee recommendations were approved for acceptance of the bid received from Kay Bee Electric for a total of \$1,472,990 for a solar array project at Olney Central College. Once installed, the solar array will generate approximately 23% of the power necessary to operate Wattleworth Hall.

With state and federal incentives, the array is expected to pay for itself in a nine year period. The Board also approved a bid received from WorldStrides Travel for a total of \$104,400 for the TRIO Upward Bound Education Trip 2024.

Personnel matters included the approval of the employment of Abbygail Gangloff as College Admission Representative at Lincoln Trail College effective April 22, 2024.

Changes in employment status were approved for Heather Watts from Office Assistant to Administrative Assistant to the Dean at Lincoln Trail College and Jackie Shamhart from Administrative Assistant to the Dean & President to Administrative Assistant to the President at Lincoln Trail College March 25, 2024.

Approval of proposed non-college employment was approved for Joe Brown at KTDA

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Trucking in Mt. Erie, Illinois and JB Express Transportation in Cisne, Illinois.

Resignation ratification was approved for Alexis McGrail as TRIO Upward Bound Counselor effective March 29, 2024.

Retirement ratification was approved for Linda Horn as Allied Health Advisor at Olney Central College effective July 1, 2024.

The next regular meeting of the Board of Trustees will be Tuesday, April 16, 2024 at 6:15 p.m. at Olney Central College, Olney, IL.

Illinois election officials say they saw a significant use of vote-by-mail for voters casting ballots in Tuesday's primary, with many people voting early. They report almost 430-thousand Illinoisans voted early and 250-thousand voted by mail. Only 183-thousand voters cast their ballots in-person before yesterday.

Meanwhile, elections across the state were under the scrutiny of state investigators Tuesday to ensure against fraud. Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul assigned more than 190 attorneys general and investigators across the state yesterday to monitor primary elections. Raoul urged anyone who witnessed anything suspicious to report it to local law enforcement.

The Illinois Commerce Commission is once again reviewing spending proposals from the state's two major electric utility companies. The panel rejected multiyear plans from Commonwealth Edison and Ameren Illinois last year that propose billions of dollars to be spent to support the state's new climate goals. The Climate and Equitable Jobs Act will phase out greenhouse emissions from energy and transportation industries over the next 20 years. The utility companies' new proposals would reportedly decrease costs for spending and infrastructure.

Thanks to an executive order from the Illinois Department of Public Health, schools in Illinois are now able to carry inhalers for all students. The order allows all trained school workers to treat any student suffering an asthma attack or any emergency respiratory illness with inhalers or other medications. Before, schools needed standing orders from a doctor. The new order streamlines the process for trained school workers.

Although an Auditor General's report on the COVID-19 outbreak that killed 36 patients at the LaSalle Veterans Home was released two years ago, lawmakers had a chance to question state officials yesterday. The audit had found the state failed to respond to the seriousness of the outbreak. One Republican lawmaker said state public health officials did not visit the facility until a week and a half after the outbreak began. State veterans affairs officials told the Legislative Audit Committee yesterday, every veterans home in Illinois is now properly equipped to deal with such outbreaks.

Easter is just around the corner and the City of Fairfield is preparing for their annual Easter Egg Hunt. The hunt is scheduled to take place on Saturday, March 30th at Leo French Park. Libby Lingafelter is with both the City and the Wayne County Chamber of Commerce. Lingafelter says donations are being accepted for prizes for kids of all age groups 0-11+. If you would like to make a donation, please have them dropped off at the Chamber Office by Wednesday, March 27. Prizes do not need to fit in the eggs as they will have the prizes listed on paper along with the sponsor to fill the egg and winners can pick up prizes at the conclusion of the egg hunt.

The FCHS Board met Thursday evening for their regular monthly meeting. Personnel and building issues dominated the agenda. In personnel matters:

Tiffany Lyons was unanimously hired as the districts new Principal. Lyons replaces Bob Wells, who will assume the Superintendent position next school year.

The board accepted the resignation of Coleman Fitch as a Social Science Instructor and hired Hayden McDuffee as his replacement. Tenure was granted to the following instructors:

Cody Bailey

Brianna Bridgeman
Collen McDuffee
Rehired as non-tenured:
Jonathon Lafikas
Chastity Suddarth
Carly Taylor
Nate Neal
Megan Pearce
Shelby Benskin
Billy Rogers

A \$379,000 base bid was unanimously approved from Shores Builders LLC for construction work on the gym remodel. An additional bid of \$58,700 to totally replace the upper bleachers was approved with No votes coming from Matt Rush, Eddie Barbre, and Derek Smothers.

The board approved the monthly bills with No votes coming from Matt Rush and Eddie Barbre. They both had an issue with paying an employee mileage when the district had vehicles available for use.

The board approved a 3 year contract with New Hope Grade School for transportation. The agreement is for \$92,000, up from the current \$80,000.

The board also purchased a pole vault pit for \$20,535. The pit purchased is used for the State Track Meet for boys and girls.

The board approved an upgraded door access system at a cost of \$7,461.

IHSA membership was unanimously approved and a brief discussion was held concerning Girls Flag Football.

Principal Bob Wells reminded the board of important upcoming dates:

4/6- FFA Banquet
4/13- Prom
4/15- Scholastic Banquet
4/17-4/19 Underclass State Testing
4/18-4/23 Senior Class Trip to Washington DC
4/26- Awards Day
4/28 CEO Trade Show

Principal Wells also advised the board that the FCCHS Pep Band played at the IHSA State Basketball Tournament and were a big hit.

The FCCHS Drama Departments production of Into the Woods was excellent.

The FCCHS administration will be conducting Senior Exit Interviews to assist in decision making on several district topics.

Principal Wells also expressed his appreciation to the Fairfield/Wayne County Chamber of Commerce for Eclipse shirts and glasses provided to each student.

An Illinois House committee has approved Governor Pritzker's massive health insurance reform proposal. Among other features, the proposal would make Illinois the first state in the country to ban prior authorization for in-patient adult and children's mental healthcare. Supporters say it would also prohibit step therapy — in which insurance companies push patients to accept less effective drug treatments before moving on to options their doctors originally recommended. The Pritzker administration plans to offer an amendment to the bill after further negotiations with the insurance industry.

Lawmakers in Springfield are discussing two proposals that would provide parents with tax credits for child care. One proposal would give parents a state tax credit equaling 25 percent of the federal child care tax credit for every child under 13. Another bill would give parents who have children between the ages of three and five tax credits for preschool. The bill would give parents up to 15-hundred dollars per child.

A bill under consideration in Springfield would require social media companies to notify parents if they find their child is being threatened or is in some sort of danger. The bill passed unanimously out of the House Consumer Protection Committee. The bill would also give Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul the power to pursue social media companies that don't comply. Raoul has already said he supports the bill.

A Thursday night fire has destroyed a barn and welding shop near Belle Rive.

Media reports say the first fire call came in a little after 5 p.m. Thursday. The owner of the L-shaped barn said he was in the barn when he heard a loud bang and then noticed the back of the barn on fire. He was able to escape without injury. A cause of the fire was not immediately determined. It was not believed any animals were hurt in the fire.

The Wayne City Fire Department was called to the scene for mutual aid, along with firemen from the Bluford, McLeansboro, Kell and Mt. Vernon city fire departments. Firemen were on scene for over three hours, the report said.

An altercation Thursday landed a man in the White County Jail. Reports out of Carmi say two men, Kevin Page and Douglas Hast, were involved in a verbal argument prior to an altercation and, according to police, the 22-year-old Page lunged towards Douglas and hit him several times in the face before leaving the scene. The scene took place at a residence in Enfield.

Page was later arrested and lodged in the White County Jail at Carmi on a domestic battery charge. Police and EMS responded to the call on Thursday.

Members of the Cisne FFA participated in the 2024 State Awards Day held Saturday, at Mt. Zion High School near Decatur. Alex Paul, Chloe Owens, and Brock Allen were participants for Cisne. Paul received State Runner Up in Environmental Science and Natural Resources Management. His project involves implementing conservation practices and completing land improvements on a 110 acres. Owens was named State Runner Up in Small Animal Production and Care. Her Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) tracks the production of pedigree rabbits in FLF Rabbitry for show, meat, and pet purposes. Allen earned State Runner Up in Agricultural Mechanics Repair and Maintenance Entrepreneurship. He maintains records of the labor and money invested in the restoration of a 1948 Allis-Chalmers G tractor. Students advanced through section and district proficiency award judging to qualify for state interview competition which is limited to the top five FFA members in Illinois for each of the forty-eight proficiency award areas.

Illinois is the least tax friendly state in the country. MoneyGeek conducted the study that revealed the dubious distinction. The personal finance site calculated the tax burden on the average citizen. Illinois also ranked 50th with the average annual property tax set at about nine thousand dollars. The state that's considered the most tax friendly is Nevada.

Unemployment claims fell last week in Illinois by more than 500 over the previous week. Last week, new jobless claims fell to a little more than 75-hundred, compared with more than 81-hundred the previous week. Nationally, claims for unemployment fell to 210-thousand, down two-thousand from the week before.

Illinois community college enrollment increased by a little more than five percent for the Spring semester this year. It's the third largest increase in student enrollment in the past 15 years. Officials say it outpaces the national average growth for community colleges, which saw a growth of more than two-and-a-half percent between Spring of 2022 and the following spring. Officials attribute the increase to more aggressive recruitment and retention of students as well as expanding access to new ways of learning.

Petersen Health Care — based in Peoria — has filed for Chapter Eleven bankruptcy. In its filing, Petersen Health Care estimates it owes between 100-million and 500-million dollars to as many as ten-thousand creditors. Its biggest single debt is listed at 12-million dollars. As a result, some local nursing and long-term care facilities are at risk of closing. These facilities are currently under the care of a court-appointed receiver.

In our area, Peterson Health Care operates Enfield Rehab and Rehab, McLeansboro Health and Rehab, Flora Rehabilitation and Health Care, and Flora Gardens Care Center. No word has been announced on what will happen locally.

Fairfield Fire responded to a couple of suspicious fire calls over the weekend.

On Friday, crews received a report of a camper on fire at 1111 SW 3rd Street at 1:22am. The first crew arrived 3 minutes later to find a fully involved camper on fire away from exposures. The fire was knocked down in less than 10 minutes. The camper was a total loss and there were no injuries reported. At the time of the fire the camper did not have any utilities hooked to it. All fire units cleared off the scene at 2:31 am. The fire is under investigation by the Fairfield FD and Fairfield PD. Fairfield FD was assisted on this call by Fairfield PD, Wayne County SO and Wayne County 911.

On Sunday, the Fairfield FD was alerted to a structure fire at 704 SW 6th Street at 9:21 am. Upon arrival three minutes later, heavy smoke and flames were visible from the outside of the residential structure. Fire suppression efforts began and the fire was brought under control in about 30 minutes. There were no utilities at the residence and it is considered a total loss. The Illinois State Fire Marshall Office was contacted and assisted FD and FPD. The Fairfield FD was assisted at the scene by Fairfield Rural FPD, Wayne County Ambulance, Fairfield PD, Wayne County 911, City of Fairfield Gas Department and Illinois State Fire Marshall Office. There was a report of one injury to firefighter. The Fairfield FD cleared the scene at 3:35pm.

Due to an unexpected and unavoidable conflict, the graduation date and times have changed for Grayville schools. The ceremonies at Grayville will now be held on Saturday, May 11th at 11:30 A.M. & 1:00 P.M. respectively for 8th grade and high school. School officials say they apologize for any inconvenience this may cause. School officials say that since graduates may have already ordered their announcements through the school's announcements provider, the school district will incur any costs associated with this change for reprinting the announcements.

The Mill Shoals board met for their March meeting with their first topic pertaining to the new rates of the Community Center. Several rates were proposed along with how many hours rental would occur. Unfortunately no agreement was made, with President Gray asking everyone to think on the issue and tabled the item until their April meeting.

Attorney Turpin had relayed to the board that he was given an Ordinance and Resolution to hire a police officer to the Illinois Training and Standards Board, of which the ITSB did not accept. Turpin stated that he was waiting on the ITSB to send him an example of what would be acceptable.

New trash rates will go up \$1 starting April 1st. Also on April 1st, the 2024-2025 Recreational Stickers will be available.

Next on the agenda, the members received one bid to repair the garage doors, but will be waiting for others. During the inspection, it was discovered that a post was rotted off at ground level and would need repaired prior to the actual doors being replaced. The board agreed, and Trustee West and village resident Bill Doggett offered to help the Village with repairing the post.

Morgan Doggett with Drew Lane Consultants prepared a contract proposal last month and was awaiting the board's approval at the meeting. It was unanimously agreed that the board will continue to use DLC as the consultant firm.

Trustee West informed the Village Water Superintendent Wayne Carter that there may be another water leak on Cherry Street, as water was running down the road. Carter was in attendance and made a note of that, while also telling the board that he had taken gravel around to all the fixed water leaks to level them up for traffic to cross.

Lastly, Clerk Tullis relayed that he would like to put a new drop box in the current town hall rather than the old one.

The next Village of Mill Shoals board meeting will be on April 4th at 7:00pm.

The Volunteers for a Progressive Fairfield have announced a Pre-Eclipse Duck Race Fundraiser for the eclipse weekend. The duck race will take place at Leo French Park on Sunday, April 7th at 5 PM. Ducks are available at Carnaby Square as well as the Wayne County Chamber of Commerce Office for \$1. The winning duck gets \$250 with 2nd getting \$100. The final duck across also wins \$250.

A Few Fairfield FFA members competed at the State FFA Awards Day on Saturday in Mt. Zion. Lainie Clark placed 3rd in Agriscience Integrated Systems with her multi-year projects in agriscience research, Jacob Combs placed 3rd in Wildlife Management with his quail and chucker enterprise and Ryan Vaughan placed 3rd in Service Learning with his projects working with Trail Life. Students advanced to state awards day by winning at the section and district proficiency awards to qualify for state which is limited to the top five FFA members in Illinois.

The Wayne County Farm Bureau has announced the award of 14 Wayne County 4-Hers who have earned a 2024 4-H Project Grant. The total of grants for this cycle are \$1,614.73.

4-Hers receiving a 2024 Project Grant include:

- Aubrynn Barnfield (Nature)
- Chase Barton (Rabbits)
- Harper Buchanan (Beef)
- Robbie Crisp (Wood Working)
- Brielle Curd (Goats)
- John Ellis (Poultry)
- Braxton Kirk (Visual Arts)
- Ronen Tannahill (Poultry)
- Amelia Vaughan (Photography)
- Kamden Vaughan (Swine)
- Kate Vaughan (Goats)
- Kiersten Vaughan (Bee Keeping)
- Veronika Vinson (Photography)
- Kyra Wheeler (Beef)

The 4-H Project Grant program is designed to encourage young 4-Hers to begin new projects by eliminating potential cost burdens they may have; as well as encourage new individuals to become active in the Wayne County 4-H program.

Each 4-Her is required to submit receipts of their project purchases before they receive their grant money.

The Fairfield City Council met Tuesday evening for their second March session, working through an 8 item agenda in 30 minutes. The council unanimously voted to purchase the current Midwest Food Bank building and property near Southwest Park for \$200,000. Midwest Food Bank will continue to use the facility 2 days per month. The city also owns the properties surrounding the purchased property.

Aldermen voted to spend \$25,359 with Hayes Plumbing & Heating for a new HVAC system for the Chamber of Commerce building. The purchase did not require bidding since the vote was over the 2/3 majority needed for approval. Alderman Terry Stahl voted no on the purchase.

Councilmen approved a TIF agreement with the New Wayne County Agricultural Fair for electrical work to the grandstand. The amount approved was \$7,000.

An ordinance was unanimously passed changing property zoning status from I Zone to R-3. The property is the Bobcat Crossing Student Housing near the Frontier campus. A Public Hearing was conducted prior to the council meeting, with no objections.

The council Unanimously voted to approve a \$15,000 expenditure for this year's Fireworks Celebration. The celebration has been tentatively set for July 5.

In miscellaneous comments, Mayor Moore announced that he has declared April as Inoperable Vehicle Month, with Fairfield Police instructed to ticket inoperable vehicles. He also requested alderman to contact authorities with any inoperable vehicles in their respective wards.

The mayor also announced that City Hall and city departments will be open on April 8, Eclipse Day.

Work on resurfacing Main St. is expected to continue after the Eclipse.

The latest census figures show Illinois is outpacing Neighboring states in population decline. From 2022 until last year, Illinois was the only state to see its residential population fall. The president of the Great River Economic Development Foundation — Kyle Moore — says he thinks the census is undercounting Illinois. He points to the 2020 census when the census left out 47-thousand residents. Governor J.B. Pritzker called on the census board to correct its figures as a result.

The FAA is warning of potential delays for commercial flights during next month's total solar eclipse. The rare astronomical event will happen April 8th with the path of totality across a dozen states, including Illinois. Passengers can expect delays between April 7th and April 10th as people flock to the best areas to witness the eclipse.

New state troopers who graduate from the Illinois State Police Academy are in line to receive a starting salary of 90-thousand dollars. State Police Director Brendan Kelly says the starting salary reflects the competition for new recruits and the need to make service in the state police force more of a career for new police. Kelly says the state's financial condition and series of balanced budgets have made the higher salaries possible.

Grayville leaders spent an hour in executive session Monday night. Council was only in open session for a total of 23 minutes with no major news coming out of the gathering. Mayor Travis Thompson says the reason for the lengthy closed door discussion was primarily collective negotiations with the union.

The municipality is sitting on about \$3.2 million in assets between restricted accounts, investments, and cash available for operations. Council heard updates from both Scott Irvine, the Grayville Utility Manager and Engineer Rex Gower of Milano & Grunloh. He discussed the Phase 2 Water Main replacement, the Albion/Grayville Water Treatment Plant, the unsuccessful OSLAD application, among other topics.

Street Commissioner Chris James made a motion to approve the 2024 Motor Fuel Tax Program. It includes \$71,700. \$52,704 for oil and chipping, \$5,860 for blacktop, \$5,280 for salt, and \$1,360 for concrete. It was approved unanimously.

The next scheduled Grayville City Council meeting is set for April 8th at 7. A public hearing for the annual budget is scheduled to precede that meeting at 6:45pm.

Illinois State Police are ramping up efforts to recruit more women for the force. They've announced their goal is to have 30 percent of state police cadets be women by the year 2030. They say recruitment for law enforcement is down everywhere and the force has launched a social media campaign to inform potential recruits of the opportunities with the state police.

The Illinois New Harmony River Bridge Authority in Carmi with assistance from the Greater Wabash Regional Planning Commission in Albion announced on Wednesday that a federal Delta Regional Authority strategic planning grant of \$150,000 has been awarded to the Illinois Authority to continue in a bi-partisan effort with the Indiana Bridge Authority to continue the engineering design for the restoration of the historic Harmony Way Bridge connecting White County Illinois to Posey County, Indiana. The one-half mile steel truss structure was built in the 1930s of the finest American-made Carnegie steel and is registered as an historic structure by the Federal, Illinois, and Indiana Historic Registries. The bridge closed in 2012 amid efforts to repair and maintain it into the future. The bridge connected Illinois and the Lincoln Heritage Trail to Indiana and the Evansville metropolitan area with jobs, medical, educational, and tourism opportunities in both states.

In 2017 and 2018, in a bi-partisan effort the Illinois and Indiana legislatures and the United States Congress proposed and passed legislation to create two joint, five-member Bridge Authorities (the Illinois New Harmony River Bridge Authority and the Indiana New Harmony and Wabash River Bridge Authority) to explore restoration engineering studies to determine the viability of the bridge reconstruction. This DRA grant will be used to continue the engineering studies needed to restore and reopen the Harmony Way Bridge.

Since their appointments, the Illinois and Indiana Bridge Authorities have taken legal ownership of the bridge and worked with the Illinois Department of Transportation to procure engineering design services to make innovative repairs to the bridge. The engineers inspected the bridge in 2020 followed by an underwater inspection of the bridge in 2021. Remote monitoring of the bridge structure in 2022 was also conducted to test the effects of a composite deck design on the existing structure. The engineers concluded the bridge was in fair condition and could be restored safely. They also said, with a new deck and if properly maintained, the bridge life could be extended for another 40 to 50 years. Beginning in 2020, the two Authorities have worked closely together and have applied for numerous state and federal grants to secure funding for the very viable reconstruction project.

The Village of West Salem's Board met on Monday. At the meeting, Mayor Jeffrey Bradham reported on the damage caused by the storm that passed through the area the evening of March 14, 2024. A building on the Main Street in West Salem was severely damaged, and was demolished the following morning due to safety concerns. There were a few limbs down, but no injuries or other major damage was reported due to the storm. The Mayor thanked the building's owner Kelli Clodfetter, the Edwards County Sheriff's Department, West Salem Police Chief Mark Weber, West Salem Utility Worker Mike Clark, Steve Thompson, and Guisewite Excavating for their quick responses, cooperation, and action to resolve this situation in a timely manner.

Jeff Vaughn of the Greater Wabash Regional Planning Association (GWRPC) shared that the Village's Sewer Lagoon Project was near completion. The project is being funded by a \$300,000.00 grant from the State of Illinois. Mr. Vaughn invited trustees and the public to the next GWRPC Hazard Mitigation Plan meeting which is scheduled for May 8, 2024 in Albion.

New bleachers have been installed at Centennial Park (400 Boundary St). The bleachers were purchased and installed by the West Salem Athletic Association. A second set of bleachers, which is being purchased by the school district, will be installed in a few weeks by the Association.

Work on the Village's new website is progressing. The domain name (westsalemil.com) and hosting package have been secured, preliminary content has been submitted, and logo concepts, tagline, and website layout are in progress.

In action items, the Board approved proceeding with an application for the 2024 Illinois Public Water Supply Loan Program. If approved and accepted, funds will be used to replace 2" water supply lines with 6" water supply lines.

The Board approved an estimated \$21,000.00 in road repairs using the Motor Fuel Tax (MFT) funds for the Village.

The Board approved equipment purchases for the West Salem Fire Department, and the West Salem Utilities Department. A MSA Air Pack and two new pagers will be purchased for the Fire Department. A new leaf blower will be purchased for the Utility Department.

The Board approved the proposal from Wright Housekeeping to provide janitorial services for Village Hall; and the proposal from Kemper CPA Group to conduct the annual audit for the Village.

The Board approved the hiring of Tom Smith to fill a temporary/seasonal position at the West Salem Utilities Department.

The Board approved two proposals from Guisewite, Inc to demolish two (2) abandoned properties for a total of \$17,100.00. The properties are located at 108 Albion and 306 Cooper.

The Board approved the purchase of property at 105 S. Main and 107 S. Main in West Salem.

The next West Salem Village Board Meeting will be on Monday, April 22nd.

City Officials in Fairfield are working on getting the last things in place for Easter Weekend. Saturday will be the annual Easter Egg Hunt at Leo French Park. The hunt for kids begins at 1 PM. Officials say if you have any interest in helping put out Easter Eggs, you can meet with city officials at Leo French Park beginning at 11 AM.

That is not the only Easter Egg Hunt going on this weekend. The village of Sims will also be holding their Easter Egg Hunt at 1 PM at the Sims Community Center. Community officials say that there will be over 6,000 eggs filled with candy and prizes. The Easter Bunny will also be making an appearance.

Wayne County Sheriff's Deputies responded to an apartment in Fairfield early this morning in an attempt to locate Gage Devers. After consent was given to enter the residence Deputies located Devers hiding inside a closet. Devers was taken into custody without further incident. During the search of Devers incident to his arrest Deputies discovered he was in possession of methamphetamine. Devers also had numerous active warrants for his arrest and was transported and booked into the Wayne County Jail pending a detention hearing.

Charges

- Possession of methamphetamine
 - Wayne County Warrants for Failing to appear on Possession of methamphetamine and Driving on suspended/ revoked license
 - Edgar County Warrant for Battery and Possession of Weapon by a Felon
 - Cumberland County Warrant for Driving on Suspended/ Revoked License
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Lawmakers in Springfield have begun debating the latest plan to pay some people in Illinois a guaranteed income. Legislation would create a one thousand-dollar per-month guaranteed income program. The money would go to anyone, even those people who are in Illinois illegally. Advocates say the money is necessary because of inflation. Critics say guaranteed income programs in the past have helped people buy new things, but have never helped anyone out of poverty.

This week's collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore could have an impact on Illinois farmers. A container ship slammed into the bridge early Tuesday, causing the bridge's collapse. The Port of Baltimore is the main port for the import and export of vehicles and farm equipment. It's also the main port for importing sugar, which could help farmers as companies switch to corn syrup and sweeteners.

A new report says most Illinois school districts are facing a serious teacher shortage. The report comes from the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools. The report shows 93 percent of schools that were surveyed are facing a shortage of substitute teachers. It also says 88 percent of the schools surveyed receive five or fewer applications for a position and more than 70 percent say half of the applicants for jobs don't have the proper credentials to teach.

State public health officials say levels of the respiratory virus remain flat across Illinois. Meanwhile, cases of COVID-19 continue to fall. Health officials say the flu season can last through May, so residents are reminded to take precautions against catching the flu. The state public health department is also endorsing the CDC recommendation for adults 65 and older to take a booster shot for COVID.

A group of Illinois lawmakers from both sides of the aisle wants to make a program that helps farmers and small food producers a permanent program. The Local Food Infrastructure Grant Program is awarding almost two-million dollars in grants to 19 recipients across Illinois. There were 247 applicants who sought 23-and-a-half million dollars from the program. One producer in Southern Illinois who received a 150-thousand dollar grant says he'll use his money to expand his operation and help his neighbors as well.

The National Weather Service is highlighting the potential for Severe Weather throughout our area early next week.

According to information released by the National Weather Service at Paducah, the entire WFIW listening area is under a slight risk for severe weather Sunday Evening into Monday as a warm front is expected to stall somewhere in the vicinity of Southern Illinois and Southwestern Indiana. National Weather Service officials say hail may be the biggest threat, especially Sunday Night into the middle of the day on Monday.

Monday into Tuesday, an approaching cold front will bring an even greater risk for storms. Severe thunderstorms are possible with that as well.

The Great Solar Eclipse is 8 days away and weather forecast officials are starting to look at what the weather conditions may be taking place weather wise on that day. Currently, Weather.com shows the forecast for the eclipse to be considerably cloudy in the Fairfield area with a temperature around 72. Weather forecasts for eclipse day will be more accurate the closer to eclipse day.

Saturday, April 13th will be a busy day for cleaning up in the city of Fairfield. City officials have announced a city wide cleanup day for that day. The clean up will take place from 8 AM until 12-noon at 908 E. King Street.

An E-Waste day is also taking place that same day from 8 AM until noon at the former Wayne County Recycling Center at 501 SW 10th Street. Items accepted at the E-Waste day include computers, monitors, computer speakers, phones, stereos, keyboards, mice, servers, copiers and printers, scanners, televisions, cameras, fax machines, miscellaneous wiring, mp3 players, items with electronic boards, dvd players, vcrs, Zip drives, cable or satellite receivers, video game consoles, and more. The E-Waste day is for Wayne County residents only.

The saying goes that March goes in like a lamb and out like a lion. National Weather Service officials at Paducah are paying attention to a pair of fronts that will be coming through the area over the next few days.

Today, the Easter forecast calls for increasing clouds today with highs in the upper 70s. Weather service officials believe that the highs today will lead to the development of potential thunderstorms later this evening and through the overnight hours. Currently, our area is under a marginal risk of severe weather tonight.

For Monday, our area is under an enhanced risk for severe weather. The main potential severe storm event will begin over southeast Missouri and southern Illinois late Monday afternoon and then spread/develop eastward through the night. Damaging winds and tornadoes will be the primary concerns, large hail is also possible. According to weather service officials, they forecast a 10 percent chance of an EF-2 or larger tornado.

Keep tuned to 104.9 WFIW for the latest in Severe Weather Information.