

GOVERNMENT

Issue: Government

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Normal discussing use of sales tax revenue

Date: 10-2-2015

Time: 9 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

NORMAL - The Town of Normal of City of Bloomington have both approved a one percent sales tax increase, now it's a question of how to use the new revenue.

The Normal Town Council plans to take up that issue Monday night.

Twenty-five percent of the revenue is already earmarked for mental health care needs in McLean County. Normal Finance Director Andrew Huhn said staff is recommending Connect Transit and business development each receive \$390,000.

"The biggest one is certainly concrete street repair and replacement," said Huhn. "Right now, the council action recommends about \$1 million more a year be spent on that."

Other possibilities are \$500,000 for One Normal Plaza redevelopment and another \$500,000 for increased debt payments.

"There's some different capital projects with the parks department, assuming the council wants to do that kind of thing," Huhn said.

The town could also use \$95,000 for police body cameras.

The sales tax increase will not become active until January.

Issue: Government

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Brady wants review of tax credit program

Date: 10-5-2015

Time: 10 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

BLOOMINGTON - State Sen. Bill Brady (R-Bloomington) said a state tax credit program needs to undergo a thorough review, on the heels of a report that shows a majority of businesses that received help through Economic Development for a Growing Economy or EDGE either cut jobs or closed.

"We need to uncover the detail in this and make sure we purify the system," Brad said. "It's a very valuable too. It's something we talk to a lot of employers about."

The Chicago Tribune reports the program, which dates back to the Gov. George Ryan administration in 1999, gave out millions in tax breaks, including \$5.2 million to Mitsubishi Motors.

Brady indicated EDGE was instrumental in helping ConAgra's recent decision to move its headquarters to Chicago, but he said it's failed in too many other cases.

He said the governor will have to look at those contracts to determine if the state can get back money from those companies that didn't fulfill their end of the bargain.

GOVERNMENT

Issue: Government

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Normal approves park plan

Date: 11-2-2015

Time: 9:30 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

NORMAL - Normal's Parks and Recreation Master Plan was approved Monday night by the Town Council.

It includes the construction of a new sports complex for the Twin Cities, which a portion of the recent sales tax increase revenue was intended to partially fund. However, that might change because Bloomington is using its portion of the increase in different areas.

"The question is, do we move forward with a sports complex? Is there something we can do that's a little less expensive that the town can absorb? Do we find other funding partners that could assist in getting that complex completed?" City Manager Mark Peterson said.

Peterson added he believes there is still support on the council for the complex.

"I think they'd like to do something, but we've just got to figure out a way to fit that project into our budget parameters," he said.

Peterson explained there are many other projects the plan suggests.

Issue: Government

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Bloomington votes on enterprise zone

Date: 11-6-2015

Time: 11 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

BLOOMINGTON - The Bloomington City Council will vote on a new enterprise zone proposal at Monday night's meeting.

The original enterprise zone was created in 1984 as a way to help bring the Mitsubishi Plant to Normal. It expires in July 2016.

Economic Development Coordinator Austin Grammer said there are a variety of tax breaks, like a sales tax abatement or a natural gas tax waiver, included in an enterprise zone to stimulate economic growth.

"When you're looking to highlight areas to be included in an enterprise zone, you want to put development sites that would be key attractive sites for large industrial users or employers or also sites that you would like to see reinvestment," Grammer said.

Properties like the Mitsubishi plant, the GE facility, the former Wildwoods manufacturing plant and the Electrolux building are included in the proposal, as well as a developing property near Colfax and the ethanol plant in Gibson City.

GOVERNMENT

Issue: Government

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Budget impasse causing issues

Date: 12-7-2015

Time: 10:30 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

BLOOMINGTON - State Sen. Bill Brady (R-Bloomington) said the budget impasse has carried on for so long, it's possible Illinois might never get a spending plan for the budget year that started nearly six months ago.

"If what some people are saying is accurate, nothing will happen until after the March primaries, then what's the point?," Brady asked. "We are looking at a budget for next year anyway at that point. John Tillman, CEO of the conservative think-tank Illinois Policy Institute, told WJBC's Scott Laughlin he expects the Democratic leadership will insist on a budget before the spring elections.

"I think (House) Speaker (Mike) Madigan is going to be very focused on those elections and he's going to want to send his (party candidates) to go campaign because he feels very vulnerable," Tillman said. The state has been funding some services in a piecemeal approach, including local governments, Illinois Lottery winnings and energy assistance grants. The Illinois Senate is expected to pass the measure on Monday and send it to Gov. Bruce Rauner.

Brady added the stalemate is choking off oxygen to other programs that need to be addressed.

"We've got pension problems," Brady said. "We need a capitol bill we need roads, we need ins and the budget is putting all of this on the backburner."

Issue: Government

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Bloomington looking into new tax increment

Date: 12-11-2015

Time: 11:30 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

BLOOMINGTON - The Bloomington City Council is taking a look Monday night at a possible new tax increment finance district along Empire Street on the city's west side.

The TIF would run along much of the north side of Empire from about Towanda Avenue to Veterans Parkway. It would also include the land Bloomington High School and Bloomington Jr. High sit on. Economic Development Coordinator Austin Grammer explained the city used a consultant to determine if the area is fitting for a TIF.

"The TIF consultant that they qualifying factors for TIF are widespread throughout the area," he said. Grammer noted 41 percent of the taxable buildings in the area are vacant.

"It's a very high vacancy rate," said Grammer. "Vacancy is very troubling not only for the property owner, but also for the community, for the taxing bodies, because it leads to a decrease in assessed value."

BUSINESS

Issue: Business

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Individuals to help save soup kitchen

Date: 10-16-2015

Time: 9 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

BLOOMINGTON - Local Catholics are stepping in to save the Loaves and Fishes Soup Kitchen. Father Tony Lee, pastor of Holy Trinity Catholic Church is spearheading the effort to keep the soup kitchen.

"One of the things that our Holy Father, Pope Francis, has been saying to us time and time again is inviting everyone to care for the poor and hungry," Lee said. "There are some people in this community that really count on Loaves and Fishes for a couple of their meals during the week."

Tina Sipula of the Clare House announced she was retiring and closing the Clare House after 37 years along with the soup kitchen earlier this month.

Lee said he hopes the Holy Trinity food pantry will be able to fill the void left by the Clare House. He also thanked the volunteers for helping keep the Loaves and Fishes soup kitchen open.

Issue: Business

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Redevelopment firm approaches City

Date: 10-19-2015

Time: 10 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

BLOOMINGTON - Bloomington alderman will get the details on two proposals to redevelop downtown on Monday night. 50

Both call for the addition of a boutique hotel and other attractions linking U.S. Cellular Coliseum and the Route 66 Visitors Center. Mayor Tari Renner told WJBC's Scott Laughlin the city has an appetite for downtown development as long as it doesn't involve city funding. He said tax breaks for properties that aren't generating any tax dollars now are fine.

"If we are rebating things like that, that should probably be a no-brainer," Renner said. "If they want us to actually cough up some money out of the city's general revenue fund, that's a whole different story."

Renner said construction of the Marriott Hotel and Conference Center was a gamechanger for Uptown Normal. The council won't take any action tonight during a Committee of the Whole meeting. 4

Renner added he's glad just to see developers interest in downtown.

"I couldn't hardly get anybody to talk to me when I got elected in terms of serious investment," Renner joked. "We definitely have some momentum. It's clear Bloomington is on the move, but we need to go to the next step." 50
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Fourth Quarter Report 2015

BUSINESS

WJBC - AM

BUSINESS

Issue: Business

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Mitsubishi focuses on Central Illinois

Date: 11-5-2015

Time: 9:30 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

NORMAL - Mitsubishi Motors of North America is going to focus its charitable efforts more on central Illinois.

The car maker, through its charity foundation, gave out \$52,500 for 15 scholarships a year to Heartland Community College Thursday.

"This will help us guide our resources to make sure we are helping out in the community and making sure we are delivering the money to those with the most needs," Mitsubishi Motors USA Foundation co-chairman Don Swearingen said.

Swearingen said Thursday's donation is the first of several donations to the community. He didn't address the departure of the Mitsubishi Plant in Normal when asked if the closure was a reason for the increased charitable efforts.

He did say Ryan Gremore of O'Brien Mitsubishi has always had a focus on giving back to the community and Mitsubishi wants to help.

Issue: Business

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Enterprise zone approved

Date: 11-9-2015

Time: 11 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

BLOOMINGTON - Bloomington's city council has approved an application for a new enterprise zone. The current zone expires at the end of the year. If approved, the new one would take effect at the start of 2017.

Economic Development Coordinator Austin Grammer said it's possible the closure of the Mitsubishi plant in Normal could help the area's application get approved.

"I would hope that staff at DCEO (Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity) and the ultimate board that looks at the application sees that having a zone in place would be beneficial to help us find a new user for that facility," he said.

Alderman Kevin Lower voted for the proposal, but did have some concerns.

"We do have a struggling business community and many of those folks don't reside within this area," said Lower. "We're kind of developing an unfair advantage at times for other competitors."

The zone application also needs approval from the Normal Town Council, Gibson City Councils, McLean County Board and Ford County Board.

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Fourth Quarter Report 2015

BUSINESS

WJBC - AM

BUSINESS

Issue: Business

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Salvation Army reaching goal

Date: 12-2-2015

Time: 10:30 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

BLOOMINGTON - The Salvation Army in Bloomington is marching towards its fundraising goal for its annual Red Kettles campaign.

Director of Development Angie Fulton said as of Wednesday morning about \$70,000 has been donated.

"We think that's kind of on target. It is always hard to tell. We always start a little slow and then gain momentum as we approach Christmas," said Fulton. "Certainly, the wet weather and, kind of, weather that hasn't been so great definitely affects our totals."

The hope is to raise \$230,000 by Christmas Eve.

Fulton explained the kettles are just one part of the overall Christmas fundraiser.

"Anything that we get donated during the holiday season, whether it's through the mail or online, will all count towards our total goal of our Christmas campaign," said Fulton. "Our overall goal is \$480,000."

Donations can be made online at basalvation.org. Mail-in donations can be sent to the Salvation Army's office at 611 W. Washington St., Bloomington.

Issue: Business

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Holiday Inn changing to Radisson

Date: 12-3-2015

Time: 11:30 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

NORMAL - The Normal Town Council has approved the redevelopment agreement for the former Holiday Inn at the north part of town.

Swift Hospitalities, the property owners, plans to flip the site into a Radisson. Mayor Chris Koos explained the group has been working hard to get financing for the roughly \$18.5 million project.

"Hotels are not easy to finance in today's financial market, so it's been a struggle for them, but we're glad to see that property coming back online," he said.

Koos added Normal is not providing any upfront money for the work.

"It is a single building TIF district, so the only funds that are available to that will be generated by the property itself," said Koos. "They'll be rebates from the TIF increment that comes to that property."

Councilwoman Cheryl Gaines was pleased to see the project moving forward.

"It's right at the entrance of our community and when it just looks crummy, and awful, and dilapidated, that doesn't bode well for us," Gaines said.

If Swift Hospitalities is able to officially secure its funding later this month, the hope is to begin work in January.

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Fourth Quarter Report 2015

CRIME

WJBC - AM

CRIME

Issue: Crime

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Dunn guilty of DUI death

Date: 10-1-2015

Time: 9 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

BLOOMINGTON - The driver in the accident which killed an Illinois State University student in January has been found guilty of aggravated DUI causing death.

Joshua Dunn had previously been found guilty of misdemeanor DUI and various traffic offenses relating to the death of Benjamin Allison. He pleaded guilty earlier this year to leaving the scene of an accident involving death.

Prosecutor Jeff Horve said there are no winners in this case.

"The Allison's lost their only son, and for them this will never be over. Jordan and Joey lost their best friend, and this will never be over for them," said Horve. "For the defendant in this case, it'll end someday when the sentence is over. But for them it'll never end and this is not a good day for anyone."

Horve explained Dunn had marijuana in his system at the time of the accident.

"The law is if you have that in your system, along with any bad driving or proximate cause, that's enough to meet the burden," Horve said.

Dunn will remain out on bond until he is sentenced on Nov. 20. He faces up to 29 years in prison.

Issue: Crime

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: ISU police expect additional arrests

Date: 10-6-2015

Time: 10 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

NORMAL - Illinois State University Police say there could be additional arrests stemming from the more than 20 theft and burglary reports made throughout campus and north Normal.

Moshe Sharrieff, 18, and a 16-year old boy, both from Normal, are accused of multiple thefts, including stealing golf carts from the Weibring golf club and taking them for rides. The two were found to have about 45 stolen items in their possession, according to police.

Sharrieff faces charges of felony theft and possession of burglary tools. He is being held in the McLean County on \$25,000 bond. The 16-year-old was placed in juvenile custody.

ISU Police Chief Aaron Woodruff said officers had been conducting additional patrols because of the increase in theft and burglary reports in recent weeks.

"Theft and burglary are the two highest reported crimes on our campus. Our campus is safer, thanks to the hard work of our officers, detectives, and the assistance of Normal Police," Woodruff said.

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Fourth Quarter Report 2015

CRIME

WJBC – AM

CRIME

Issue: Crime

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Zimmerman's bond reduced

Date: 11-9-2015

Time: 9:30 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

BLOOMINGTON - Accused murderer Kirk Zimmerman's bond has been reduced. Zimmerman is charged with first degree murder for the death of his ex-wife, Pamela Zimmerman, who was found shot to death in her office in November 2014. Kirk was arrested July. During a hearing in McLean County Court Monday, Kirk's attorney John Rogers argued the \$5 million bond originally set by the state was too high. Rogers asked for bond to be reduced to \$1 million. Judge Drazewski agreed bond was too high, but only reduced the amount to \$2 dollars. Kirk's three children spoke in court Monday, saying they all wish to have him home. If bond is posted, Kirk would only be allowed to leave his home for medical and legal purposes.

Issue: Crime

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Juveniles arrested in drive-by shooting

Date: 11-9-2015

Time: 11 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

Bloomington Police say they have arrested three juveniles in connection with a drive-by shooting. Police were called to the area of Oak and Monroe streets west of downtown on Sunday afternoon after a report of gunfire. Police recovered a shell casing from the scene. A witness reported seeing a white vehicle fleeing the area at the time of the shooting. No injuries were reported. Police took three juvenile males into custody yesterday. Police say their investigation is ongoing and ask anyone with information to call B-P-D at 434-2359 or McLean County Crime Stoppers at (309) 828-1111.

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Fourth Quarter Report 2015

CRIME

WJBC – AM

CRIME

Issue: Crime

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Identity theft charges face two Cuban nationals

Date: 12-3-2015

Time: 10:30 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

BLOOMINGTON - Two men who police say were involved in a multi-state credit card scam are being brought up on identity theft and other charges in McLean County court while a third suspect has not been captured.

The two Cuban nationals, Yoan Pequeno, 31, of Miami, and Santiago Peralta, 23, of Jacksonville, allegedly worked with a third defendant Lisbany Cardenas, 30, of Miami, on a scam in which they obtained 'cloned' credit cards to try to buy prepaid Visa cards at Sam's Club stores in Normal, Champaign and Joliet and convert them to cash in October.

Pequeno and Peralta are being held in the McLean County Jail on bond of \$500,000 each. Cardenas posted bond in Champaign County last month and there's a warrant out for his arrest in McLean County.

Issue: Crime

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Ameren customers falling to phone scam

Date: 12-17-2015

Time: 11:30 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

BLOOMINGTON - Ameren customers across the state are falling victim to a phone scam that threatens disconnection of utility services unless a payment is made immediately.

At least 10 Bloomington-Normal small businesses have been targeted by the scam. Ameren Illinois spokesperson Brian Bretsch explained how the callers are scamming local businesses and residents. "They're going a step further and telling you to purchase a prepaid credit card," Bretsch said. "They tell you to put a certain amount of money on the card and call back a bogus 1-800 number. That's how customers are being duped out of their money."

Bretsch outlined what to do if you feel you've been called by a scammer.

"Take down a name of the individual who's calling you, and then take down the number that they're requesting you to call back," said Bretsch. "Tell them that you will get back to them as soon as you can. Instead, pick up the phone and call our customer service hotline at 1-800-755-5000."

Representatives with Ameren will then give you the correct status of your account. Bretsch also had a reminder for all Ameren customers.

"We would never come to your door or call you to demand an immediate payment," Bretsch said. "We would never come to your house and demand a credit card number, debit card number or social security number. Anything that has to do with your private information, we won't ask for that over the phone."

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Fourth Quarter Report 2015

SCHOOLS

WJBC - AM

SCHOOLS

Issue: Schools

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Heartland ready for emergency situations

Date: 10-2-2015

Time: 9 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

NORMAL - Heartland Community College has plans in place to handle emergency situations in the event of something similar to Thursday's campus shooting in Oregon.

Executive Director of Facilities Jim Hubbard said in the event of an active shooter the number one priority is to notify everyone on campus.

"They have to be the ones that make a determination; do they evacuate the building to safety? Or do they shelter themselves in place?" Hubbard said.

The college has an emergency notification system which can be used to send a mass message to students and staff.

Hubbard explained the college also has training for staff, and even conducts drills to test their plans.

"Two years ago we had a drill here at Heartland College where we simulated having a shooter event," said Hubbard. "We sent out a notice to everyone through our emergency notification system and everybody took shelter."

Hubbard added Heartland, similar to most other colleges and universities, has a threat assessment team which is constantly observing the behavior of everyone on campus and looking out for any suspicious behavior.

Issue: Schools

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: IWU's Wilson reflects on presidency

Date: 10-5-2015

Time: 10 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

BLOOMINGTON - Illinois Wesleyan's outgoing president is looking back on his legacy.

Dick Wilson says it's less about bricks and mortar and more on dollars and cents. Wilson told WJBC Scott Laughlin, aside from all the physical changes on campus, he points to the Transforming Lives fundraising campaign, which he said had an uncertain start because of the economic downtown.

"There was an issue, should we go, should we not go, and I said 'We've prepared everyone and I think our alums are going to be loyal and we are going make it, maybe not on the schedule we have in mind, but we'll get there,' " Wilson said. "I remember distinctly one of the trustees looked at me and said 'Well, Dick, it's your neck.'"

The campaign which wrapped up last year raised \$141 million, \$16 million more than the goal.

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Fourth Quarter Report 2015

SCHOOLS

WJBC - AM

SCHOOLS

Issue: Schools

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Unit 5 looks to increase property tax

Date: 11-10-2015

Time: 9:30 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

NORMAL - Unit 5 is looking to increase its portion of the property tax levy by 4 percent, but much the same with Bloomington and Normal, it's not expected to result in a higher tax bill.

That's because of the expected increase in the area's equalized assessed valuation. Finance director Marty Hickman said the amount homeowners pay per 100 dollars of estimated home value should be about the same.

"Last year ours was about \$5.03," said Hickman. "We believe the actual this year will be about \$5.03."

Hickman explained property taxes are the single largest funding source for public schools, which makes the funding stream extremely important.

"If you add on top of that, the second biggest resource, or revenue, that we have as a school district comes from the state level," said Hickman. "As we've talked about in many meetings, that resource, or that revenue, has been very unpredictable."

The school board will vote on approving the levy in December.

Issue: Schools

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: ISU graduation rate hits 73.4 percent

Date: 11-12-2015

Time: 11 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

NORMAL - Illinois State University's graduation rate has reached 73.4 percent, the highest in recent history.

That's well above the national average of 56 percent for public universities. The mark also put ISU in the top 10 percent of colleges and universities across the nation.

"Also, a measure of success that we talk a lot about that in some ways doesn't sound that exciting, but it really is when it comes down to finances is a very low student loan default rate of 2.8 percent,"

Spokesman Eric Jome said.

Jome added the high quality of ISU's students is just one factor which helps increase the graduation rate.

"Students bring a lot to the table," said Jome. "Also, we have very high quality education programs here at Illinois State, very dedicated faculty, who have a huge commitment to student success."

Jome said having a high rate of graduation can also be a useful tool when recruiting students.

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Fourth Quarter Report 2015

SCHOOLS

WJBC – AM

SCHOOLS

Issue: Schools

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Heartland approves property tax increase

Date: 12-8-2015

Time: 10:30 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

NORMAL - Heartland Community College has approved an 8.96 percent increase in its property tax levy. The school's Board of Trustees approved the measure Tuesday night by a unanimous vote.

President Rob Widmer added state budgetary issues are just one reason for the increase.

"The historical patterns at the state level, and our historical patterns to shift costs to the students, has been fairly dramatic over the last several years," Widmer said.

Heartland has implemented tuition increases over the past several years.

"We're among the highest tuitions in the state among community colleges," said Widmer. "We've got some very difficult decisions to make in that regard as we approach the new fiscal year."

The new levy means the owner of a \$165,000 home will pay \$15.86 more on next year's tax bill.

Issue: Schools

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: PARCC exam causes concerns

Date: 12-15-2015

Time: 11:30 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

BLOOMINGTON - The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) exam drew concern from both students and educators in the Twin Cities during 2015.

It was the first year for the PARCC exam. A vocal group of students in Bloomington-Normal certainly weren't fans of it. Some students went as far as having a rally in Uptown Normal to express their distaste.

Normal Community High School senior Lambert Lee said the ten hour plus test takes students out of classroom when they could be learning.

"It's supposed to measure college and career readiness, but there's no evidence to prove that," said Lee.

"It's just a waste of money and a waste of time."

Bloomington High School sophomore Alexandra Cordale said the PARCC exam also creates an additional financial burden.

"It's a mainly online test and it's difficult for impoverished schools to get the funding for all this equipment that's needed to take this test," said Cordale. "Of course, there are written tests, but they're not the same as the electronic test."

Several students went as far as not taking the exam. Cordale was one of them.

"My teacher was pretty understanding when I said I'm not going to take the test, but then again, she was also kind of irked that we weren't going to take this seriously, I guess," Cordale said.