

GOVERNMENT

Issue: Government
 How Issue Was Treated: News story
 Title: Normal Council reviews new bus routes
 Date: 4-4-2016
 Time: 9 a.m.
 Duration: Story runs 12 hours
 Description:

NORMAL - The Normal Town Council got a look Monday night at the new possible route structure Connect Transit could soon implement. General Manager Andrew Johnson said the new system is more efficient, but there will be some inconveniences. "We're working as hard as we can to mitigate those as best we can, but in some cases there will be inconveniences," said Johnson. "That is the reason that we've had so many listening sessions and so much outreach, because we want to be able to make the most reasoned decisions that we can." Some members of the public have expressed concern over the fact the new routes do not reach some of the residential areas on the outer areas of the Twin Cities. Johnson explained they're working on a solution for this, but for right now it's more efficient to not send a regular bus to some of those areas. Despite some of those concerns, Councilman Kevin McCarthy liked what he saw. The Connect Transit Board of Trustees will vote on the new routes next month. If approved, Johnson said they would take effect in August.

Issue: Government
 How Issue Was Treated: News story
 Title: Bloomington council increases liquor tax
 Date: 4-25-2016
 Time: 11 a.m.
 Duration: Story runs 12 hours
 Description:

BLOOMINGTON - The Bloomington City Council voted 5-4 Monday to increase the city's liquor license fees, while tabling a proposal to create a video gambling machine fee. The liquor fees will increase by 20 percent next year, and then by 15 percent every other year until 2021 for a total of three increases. The original proposal called for increase fees every year for three straight years. Alderman Amelia Buragas said the increase is about finding a fair compromise. "I think at the end of the day it is a fair proposal that helps the city begin to recapture some of those costs without putting an undue burden on the businesses that are involved," she said. Aldermen Kevin Lower, David Sage, Karen Schmidt, and Jim Fruin opposed the measure. Several local bar owners spoke in opposition of the increase, including Joe's Pub owner Joe Wargone. The council will consider the proposed video gaming fees at a yet-to-be determined date.

Issue: Government
How Issue Was Treated: News story
Title: Brady says Trump has lot of work to do
Date: 5-9-2016
Time: 11 a.m.
Duration: Story runs 12 hours
Description:

BLOOMINGTON - Now that Donald Trump has all but secured the Republican nomination for president, a party strategist said Trump still has a lot of work ahead to win the support of the party's base. Brady told WJBC's Scott Laughlin, on the flip side some Bernie Sanders supporters could end up voting for Trump because they share similar views on trade and foreign policy. Brady said that would help other Republicans on the ballot in Illinois.
"(Some pundits) see for Republicans in Illinois an upside to having Donald Trump bring on the ballot down ticket some of the Democrats who just don't like the Clintons are going to come over and vote Republican, which could do a lot to help Illinois Republicans in the downstate seats.
Trump essentially wrapped up the GOP nomination on with a win in the Indiana primary, followed by Sen. Ted Cruz suspending his campaign.

Issue: Government
How Issue Was Treated: News story
Title: County Board votes against raises
Date: 5-17-2016
Time: 11 a.m.
Duration: Story runs 12 hours
Description:

BLOOMINGTON - McLean County Board members have voted to approve two-percent annual pay increases for auditor, circuit clerk and coroner but voted against raising the pay of future county board members.
Board member Carlo Robustelli recommend the pay freeze, instead of the two-percent hike staff recommended; citing state budget uncertainty.
"I think this is the least we can do to say, at this time it's just not wise to move forward with a pay raise, increase," Robustelli said. "We are operating in a very irrational and uncertain world."
Member Paul Segobiano said don't bring the state into this discussion.
"It's unfair that we compare the County Board to what's going on in Springfield or Washington D.C.," Segobiano said. "This is a very solvent county and its based on the fact that this board is a conservative board."
The pay freeze passed in a 12-6 vote. Board members will receive \$4,805 in pay in 2017 and are due a base salary of \$4,900 in 2018-2020. Members of the board's Executive Committee get \$5,640 annually. The County Board Chairman's salary is \$19,139.
In approving pay raises for auditor, coroner and circuit clerk, the County Board rejected a call to set the raises at 1.5 percent to mirror those that county workers get. Board member David Selzer said that's not a fair comparison.
County Administrator Bill Wasson confirmed step and merit increases push that average raise for union and non-union county workers beyond 2 percent.

Issue: Government

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Normal councilman wants cities to share sales tax money

Date: 6-6-2016

Time: 11 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

A Normal town councilman says combining sales tax revenues from the Twin Cities into a single pool will foster cooperation in attracting new business.

R.C. McBride says he first came up with the idea after seeing tension between the Twin Cities when a car dealer moved from Bloomington to Normal, and after seeing sales tax incentives provided to a grocery store's move between communities.

"I just got to thinking that maybe we to somehow set this aside so that's not a concern," McBride told WJBC's Scott Laughlin. "We want our businesses to succeed and we want to attract new businesses to our community and we want those to succeed regardless of which side of Division Street they're on." McBride says he's heard of successful sales tax combination elsewhere. He adds that many logistics would need to be worked out.

"Representatives from both councils and both staffs need to be in one room and hammer this out so that both sides are whole at the beginning," said McBride. "We're close, but it's vitally important that everybody enters into something like this, should it happen, feeling good about it."

McBride says Bloomington and Normal should work together to attract and keep businesses, and combining sales tax receipts would mean that if one community adds business, both communities benefit.

"That's a big picture economic development issue," said McBride, "because if we don't start thinking that way I can guarantee you other places in Illinois, other places in the Midwest, certainly other places in the country are thinking that way and they're succeeding because of it."

Issue: Government

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Bloomington not interested in sharing tax revenue

Date: 6-13-2016

Time: 11 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

NORMAL - The idea of Bloomington and Normal splitting sales tax revenue got a "not interested" vote from Bloomington aldermen Monday night.

Some aldermen, including Alderman David Sage, thought it was a solution to a problem that doesn't exist.

"We've got plenty of other real problems I think that we need to work on - major priorities that we've already identified," said Sage. "For me, I don't see this as a priority at this time."

Alderman Karen Schmidt agreed. She didn't see what problem the idea would address.

"Quite frankly I've not heard a single person, not just in Ward 6, but across the community, say 'What a great idea for Bloomington to do this,'" Schmidt said.

PM

Second Quarter Report 2016

BUSINESS

WJBC - AM

Issue: Business

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Bar owners oppose liquor license increase

Date: 4-18-16

Time: 2 p.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

BLOOMINGTON - Opposition is brewing for Bloomington's proposed increase in liquor license fees. Tony Wargo, co-owner of Joe's Pub in Bloomington, told WJBC's Scott Laughlin, bar and restaurant owners take huge financial risks and often have slim profit margins.

"We're not sitting here living in these huge mansions we take the money that is made, whether it be from the food we sell or the video gaming we do and we invest it back in the community," Wargo said. Bloomington's liquor commission is expected to vote next week on fee increases of over 50 percent over three years.

Art Donaldson of Times Past Inn says the city's declared need to cover police and fire pensions costs is just a 'smoke screen.'

"The city has zero expenses when it comes to video gaming, so if they have zero expenses then why are they charging us for it," Donaldson said. "That goes back to selective taxation."

Wargo said the city's liquor fees weren't changed in three decades because they were so high when they were implemented. He said the city must explain why it needs that much of an increase.

The bar owners say the city's fees are misleading because there's a separate fee for Sunday liquor sales which pushed the \$1,760 annual fee to \$2,210 per year.

Issue: Business

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Bloomington home sales increase

Date: 4-19-16

Time: 2 p.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

BLOOMINGTON - Home buying continues to go up in Bloomington-Normal as the numbers from the first three months of 2016.

The local housing market saw a 2.6 percent increase in homes bought in early 2016 compared to last year. Bloomington-Normal Association of Realtors President Karen Stailey-Lander said people have been itching to get into new homes for a while.

"I think the overall economy has certainly improved and to that's helpful," Stailey-Lander said. "Whenever we go through a period like we did, I think there's a lot of pent-up desire to have a new home. If they've put off buying a new home for the last few years, they are really ready."

New construction saw an increase in prices, but a slight decrease in units since last year. Stailey-Lander said now is still a good time to buy with several loan and grant programs out there for both new and existing homebuyers.

Pending sales rose 10 percent over last year. Stailey-Lander said one thing that could stifle the gains in the housing market would be an increase in interest rates, but there is no timeline on when that could happen.

Issue: Business
How Issue Was Treated: News story
Title: Mitsubishi plant sold
Date: 5-2-2016
Time: 2 p.m.
Description:

NORMAL - Normal's Mitsubishi Motors plant has been sold to Maynards Industries, an auction firm from Michigan, and that's something Normal Town Councilman Jeff Fritzen thought is good news. Fritzen said it's the first news of any kind about the plant they've had in awhile and for that reason, any news is good news. He added it was clear Mitsubishi wanted to get out of the real estate business. "They've sold it to a company that's in the real estate business," said Fritzen. "I think that's all good. They have a lot of connections in the manufacturing sector and in the automobile sector in particular." Fritzen said they're not yet sure what Maynards' plans for the plant are. "Long term, if they don't get it sold they're not going to hold that property forever. It could go another direction," said Fritzen. "They could dismantle the thing eventually. Who knows?" The Mitsubishi plant closed in late November 2015 and has had a skeleton staff since then, which has been fully winding down the operations.

Issue: Business
How Issue Was Treated: News story
Title: IBCA Hall of Fame coming to Pontiac
Date: 5-6-2016
Time: 2 p.m.
Description:

Plans for the Illinois Basketball Coaches Association Hall of Fame and Museum in Pontiac are shifting into a higher gear. The museum is planned for the former K-Mart building on Pontiac's west side. The museum's new director of development Mark Myre says the project is being designed. "We're looking at 30,000 square feet but it could change to 16,000 or 20,000 depending on the architects," said Myre. "We have a design group we'll meet with again out of Chicago that did the Caterpillar visitors center and has worked with the Chicago Bears and the University of California. They are the best in the country and we can't wait." Myre says the facility will celebrate Illinois hoops heritage with an eye on the future. "This is about kids because our future means everything," said Myre. "It will be interactive, computerized and the future of Illinois high school basketball. I don't want to set up any dates yet, but we're official and we've just got to go to work." Myre says fundraising will get into full swing later this summer with a large golf outing featuring PGA Tour professionals in August as the first major fundraising event.

Issue: Business
How Issue Was Treated: News story
Title: Home Sweet Home Ministries hits goal
Date: 6-1-2016
Time: 2 p.m.
Description:

BLOOMINGTON - Home Sweet Home Ministries is celebrating the successful completion of its May Community Challenge. The group reached its goal of raising \$125,000 through community and private donations. "That really puts us in a good position for the summer that's ahead of us," said CEO Mary Ann Pullin. "It's going to be a busy summer. The kids are out of school and a lot's going on here at Home Sweet Home." Pullin explained the funds will help the daily operations of Home Sweet Home. "We have, typically, about 50 adults and about 25 children staying here," said Pullin. "So each one of those family units receives case management services, so obviously we have the case management salaries. We're putting food on the table three times a day." Pullin said they're thankful to the community for making the campaign successful once again.

Issue: Business
How Issue Was Treated: News story
Title: Raddison hotel coming to Normal
Date: 6-13-2016
Time: 2 p.m.
Description:

NORMAL - The vacant hotel building on North Main Street in Normal will soon be holding a new name. The hotel was originally a Sheraton, before becoming a Holiday Inn. After the Holiday Inn closed, the property remained vacant for a number of years. The Swift Hospitality Group, the owners of the property, announced that construction will begin to turn the building into a Radisson hotel. "They've been frustrated in their ability to secure financing up until now," said Normal City Manager Mark Peterson. "I know they've worked very hard and they're excited about the project. They think it's a great property. They've had opportunities to sell it along the way and they elected not to. They want to see this through." A groundbreaking has been scheduled for June 21 at 11 A.M. The construction is expected to begin soon after that. "There's a lot of work to be done. On the outside it looks rough, but on the inside it's a gut job. It's almost stripped down to the bare concrete, there's nothing there," said Peterson. "So there's some exterior work and a lot of interior there." The renovations are expected to take six to nine months.

PM

Second Quarter Report 2016

CRIME

WJBC - AM

Issue: Crime

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Washington sentenced to prison time

Date: 4-1-16

Time: 9 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

BLOOMINGTON - The last of the three men convicted in the beating death of a homeless veteran in O'Neil Park in June 2014 has been sentenced.

Tory Washington, 21, of Bloomington was sentenced by a McLean County Judge Friday to 32 years in prison. Washington and one co-defendant, Willie Chambers, had pleaded guilty to murdering Ronald Smith. The third man, Anthony Davis Dickson, took the case to trial was found guilty of murder. Chambers was sentenced in October 2015 to 42 years in prison. Davis-Dickson received a 35 year sentence in November 2015.

The prosecution argued Washington should be given 35 years in prison, citing his ill behavior during his time in McLean County Jail. Washington said he's remorseful for the crime, and adds he should have removed himself from the situation on the night Smith was attacked.

Issue: Crime

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Police warn public of phone scam

Date: 4-25-16

Time: 9 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

BLOOMINGTON - The McLean County Sheriff's Department is warning the public of a phone scam in the area.

Sergeant Bill Tate said several residents have contacted the department regarding calls they've received from a person claiming to be from the sheriff's office and that the person has a warrant for missing a federal grand jury subpoena.

"They're trying to get people to wire money to them through Western Union," said Tate. "We never call people on the phone and tell them they have warrants and ask for them to send us money - we don't operate that way."

Tate added the office has had this type of scam pop up several times over the past year. He said as far as they know, no one has fallen victim to the scam.

Tate explained if you receive this call to hang up and not give out any personal information.

Issue: Crime
How Issue Was Treated: News story
Title: Lucero-Molina gets 36 years
Date: 5-4-2016
Time: 9 a.m.
Duration: Story runs 12 hours
Description:

A man who repeatedly assaulted a young girl was sentenced in McLean County court yesterday to 36 years in prison.
Judge Paul Lawrence handed down the sentence for 35-year-old Nelson Lucero-Molina. He pleaded guilty in March to three counts of sexual assault. Prosecutors say he knew the victim.
The prosecution had asked for a 36-year sentence for Lucero-Molina who is in the U.S. illegally. Prosecutors say the man will be deported to Guatemala when he gets out of prison.

Issue: Crime
How Issue Was Treated: News story
Title: Police searching for suspect in shooting
Date: 5-9-2016
Time: 9 a.m.
Duration: Story runs 12 hours
Description:

MAHOMET - Illinois State Police and authorities in Champaign County are searching for a suspect in a police officer shooting. Police say the man is 'armed and dangerous.'
Police say the unnamed officer was involved in a shooting with Dracy "Clint" Pendleton, 35 at 10:45 p.m. The two exchanged gunfire and Pendleton fled the scene. A Champaign County judge issued an arrest warrant for Pendleton on Sunday accusing him of aggravated battery with a firearm.
The officer, whose name has not been released, was shot in the arm and it is believed Pendleton might have been shot during the confrontation. Pendleton may seek treatment for his injuries at a medical facility. He is believed to be armed with an AK-47.
"This is the moment dreaded by every law enforcement officer, their family and friends - when an offender pulls a gun and begins firing," said Illinois FOP State Lodge President Chris Southwood. "This time, due to the grace of God and the quick reaction of his fellow officers, the Mahomet officer did not sustain life-threatening injuries."
Pendleton has possibly stolen a 2007 white GMC pick-up truck bearing Illinois registration number 165533B.

Issue: Crime
How Issue Was Treated: News story
Title: Two teens arrested in string of burglaries
Date: 6-2-16
Time: 9 a.m.
Duration: Story runs 12 hours
Description:

BLOOMINGTON - Police arrested two Bloomington teens for a string of early morning car burglaries overnight. Bloomington Police said Connor Thomas, 18, and a 17-year-old boy were caught with some stolen property which was taken from the vehicles and they were taken into custody shortly after 2 a.m. Police said they stole items from at least 10 vehicles in the northwest part of the city. Police say there was no property damage, the cars they entered were all unlocked. They remind people to lock their car doors.

Issue: Crime
How Issue Was Treated: News story
Title: Police investigating four separate shootings
Date: 6-14-2016
Time: 9 a.m.
Duration: Story runs 12 hours
Description:

BLOOMINGTON - The Bloomington Police is investigating four separate shootings over the last few weeks and only one of those incidents has led to an arrest. Police Chief Brendan Heffner tells WJBC's Susan Saunders there's not a gang problem here. "These are ongoing investigations, but I will tell you at this time they are not related," Heffner declared. The most recent incident happened early Monday morning, a 26-year-old man was shot in the chest by an unknown assailant. Only one of the incidents led to an arrest, the large fight on Rainbow Avenue on Memorial Day. Two people were taken into custody. A house on West Washington Street was hit by a bullet on June 3 and shots were reportedly fired at the Econo Lodge on May 28. Heffner said those incidents were late at night so there were few witnesses but he acknowledged witnesses are something reluctant to come forward for fear of retaliation. Heffner points out McLean County Crimestoppers takes tips anonymously at (309) 828-1111. "I can not tell you why (these happened)," Heffner said. "If we knew that it would help us out a lot."

PM

Second Quarter Report 2016

SCHOOL

WJBC - AM

Issue: School

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: ISU students voice polling place concerns

Date: 4-6-16

Time: 3 p.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

BLOOMINGTON - Illinois State University students have taken their concerns with the Bone Student Center's polling place last month to the McLean County Board Finance Committee. Speaking to the committee on Wednesday, student Joe Gorski said students faced confusing circumstances.

"Some were not given I.D. cards by election judges after register, which led election judges to need to send them back in line to register again," said Gorski. "It's important to remember that many students are first time voters. They're not familiar with the electoral process. They're not familiar with the political process."

Gorski was worried the long lines and confusion students experienced will become the norm.

"Some seem to have stated that this is simply how things will be in the future, and maybe there is merit to that, but while the circumstances of the 15th were extraordinary, I don't think that we need to accept this as the new normal," Gorski said.

Another student, Andrew Dolgin, said many student's their first impressions of voting were not good.

"Should these same issues arise in November then I really don't see it could be any surprise to see low student enthusiasm to go vote," Dolgin said.

McLean County Clerk Kathy Michael said the same day voter registration law added to the lines as many ISU voters were not registered yet. Committee Chairman Ben Owens said everyone is frustrated and the county is working on creating a smoother process for November.

Issue: School

How Issue Was Treated: News story

Title: Unit 5 looks to purchase buses

Date: 4-13-16

Time: 11 a.m.

Duration: Story runs 12 hours

Description:

NORMAL - Unit 5 is looking at buying \$3.5 million worth of school buses, but that doesn't mean the district is looking to expand its bus fleet.

Superintendent Mark Daniel explained the district plans to buy 49 new buses and also reduce the number of buses it's renting.

"By purchasing we can run those buses, hopefully, we're targeting eight years, but hopefully extending 10 to 12 years," said Daniel. "That is a significant saving over renting."

The district Board of Education approved the purchases during its meeting Wednesday night.

The buses will be bought using bond sales, which the district is also in the process of approving. Daniel said Unit 5's fleet of buses will actually be reduced overall.

Issue: School
How Issue Was Treated: News story
Title: Unit 5 authorizes bond sales
Date: 5-25-16
Time: 11 a.m.
Duration: Story runs 12 hours
Description:

NORMAL - The Unit 5 Board of Education has authorized the sale of up to \$3.5 million in bonds for the purchase of new school buses.
The district is buying 100 buses in the next two years along with renting less in order to save money in the long run. Finance Director Marty Hickman explained they won't actually be selling these bonds until around December.
"From a cash flow perspective, we will be OK until about that time period," said Hickman. "If we don't issue until then that means we're saving interest."
Hickman said the district will use these bonds to buy the first 51 buses this year, then issue another \$3.5 million in bonds to buy a second round of buses.
Hickman added the payback period on both sets of bonds is expected to be five years.

Issue: School
How Issue Was Treated: News story
Title: Background checks for college applicants
Date: 5-31-16
Time: 11 a.m.
Duration: Story runs 12 hours
Description:

A bill to prohibit criminal backgrounds on college applications concerns Illinois State University Police Chief Aaron Woodruff.
The chief tells WJBC's Terry James that he agrees with the bill's intent to give second chances, but colleges and universities need to be able to check who is being admitted.
"We don't automatically exclude anybody from attending the university," said Woodruff. "We want to review the facts from each individual case and make that decision. The problem with this bill is we can't do that."
Woodruff says of 21,000 applications last year, 350 included admissions of criminal history and very few of those were denied admission for that reason. Still, Woodruff says the university must be able to identify regular offenders.
"One of the things we're looking at is how recent did it happen and is there a pattern of behavior," said Woodruff. "We take a look at all of those things, but a simple battery in and of itself isn't something that prohibits someone from coming to Illinois State."

Issue: School
How Issue Was Treated: News story
Title: Plant closing adds to Clinton school funding future
Date: 6-2-16
Time: 11 a.m.
Duration: Story runs 12 hours
Description:

The announcement of plans to close the Clinton nuclear power plant adds to the uncertainty of state funding of Clinton schools.

Without the Exelon plant in the district's tax base, general state aid is supposed to increase, but Clinton school superintendent Curt Nettles says state government is in disarray.

"I myself and a lot of people have absolutely no confidence in what's going on down in Springfield," said Nettles. "We're going to try to plan accordingly to what it should be, and try to be optimistic that the state's going to get its act together to get us a state budget so we know what we have starting the next school year.

Nettles tells WJBC's Terry James that Clinton's school tax rate has been low, and he and the school board will educate the community on how the plant's closure could affect tax bills. Nettles says it may take a while to see the effects of the planned closure of the Clinton nuclear power plant.

"Our enrollment probably will go down," said Nettles, "but we may also see an increase in low-income students because of it."

Nettles says the Exelon plant represents about half of the Clinton school district property tax base. Clinton school officials are crunching numbers to educate the district's residents about the effects of the planned closure of the Clinton nuclear power plant, including how it might affect tax bills.

"What it boils down to is this is the tax rate we've had," said Nettles about the information that will be developed for taxpayers. "If you want to keep all of the programs currently in place, this is the type of tax rate it would take."

Nettles says the school board will have to decide on any tax rate increase after community input.

Issue: School
How Issue Was Treated: News story
Title: Budget stalemate leaves schools in limbo
Date: 6-9-16
Time: 11 a.m.
Duration: Story runs 12 hours
Description:

BLOOMINGTON - The budget stalemate in Springfield continues and Regional Schools Superintendent Mark Jontry said the most cash strapped districts can't go much longer without knowing what their funding from the state will be.

"They've really got to know, I think, by Aug. 1 at the latest," said Jontry. "That might be cutting it too close anyway."

Jontry told WJBC's Dan Swaney the lack of a budget for other areas of the state affects schools as well.

"Schools do have a lot of partnerships with social service agencies and others. Some of those services have been diminished, if not eliminated, in certain parts of the state," he said.