



WJBC-AM Bloomington/Normal, Illinois
Quarterly Issues
First Quarter 2019



Quarterly Issues/Programs List

Issue: Special Olympics of Illinois - Polar Plunge

How Issue Was Treated: PSA's & Day of Mentions

Title:

Date:

Time:

Description:



Quarterly Issues/Programs List

Issue: St. Jude Children's Research Hospital - Wild Game Banquet

How Issue Was Treated: Generic PSA

Title:

Date:

Time:

Description:



Quarterly Issues/Programs List

Issue: McLean Co. Sportsmen - Wild Game Banquet

How Issue Was Treated: PSA's

Title:

Date:

Time:

Description:



Quarterly Issues/Programs List

Issue: American Heart Association - Go Red Day

How Issue Was Treated: PSA's

Title:

Date:

Time:

Description:



Quarterly Issues/Programs List

Issue: Pet Central Helps - Puppy Bowl

How Issue Was Treated: PSA's

Title:

Date:

Time:

Description:



Quarterly Issues/Programs List

Issue: Miller Park Zoo - Zoo Stampede

How Issue Was Treated: PSA's & Live Interview

Title:

Date:

Time:

Description:



Quarterly Issues/Programs List

Issue: PATH Crisis Center - Chefs for PATH

How Issue Was Treated: Live PSA's & Live Interview

Title:

Date:

Time:

Description:



Quarterly Issues/Programs List

Issue: VFW Bloomington - St. Patrick's Day 5k

How Issue Was Treated: PSA's

Title:

Date:

Time:

Description:



Quarterly Issues/Programs List

Issue: American Red Cross - Evening of Stars

How Issue Was Treated: PSA's

Title:

Date:

Time:

Description:



Quarterly Issues/Programs List

Issue: Tee It Up for the GFPD

How Issue Was Treated: PSA's

Title:

Date:

Time:

Description:



Quarterly Issues/Programs List

Issue: Wishbone Canine Rescue - Wine & Wishes

How Issue Was Treated: PSA's

Title:

Date:

Time:

Description:



NEWS

ISSUE: Police

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Woman dies in head-on crash near on icy road near Minonk

Date: 1/2/2019

Time: 5 am

Duration: 12 Hours

WOODFORD COUNTY - Icy roads may have been a factor in a Wednesday morning head-on crash in Woodford County that killed one of the drivers.

The two-vehicle accident happened about seven a.m. on County Road Two, just west of Minonk.

Woodford County authorities said the woman, 45, was taken to a Twin-Cities hospital where she died.

McLean County Coroner Kathy Davis has yet to release the victim's name. Davis said there will be an autopsy to determine what caused the woman's death.

The driver of the other vehicle was injured and taken to an area hospital. Her condition is not available.

The coroner and Woodford County Sheriff's Police are investigating the accident.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Expungement motion expected for ex-pastor acquitted of child abuse

Date: 1/3/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON The attorney for former Twin-Cities pastor Matthew Everly said in the coming days he'll file a motion to have child abuse allegations erased from Everly's criminal record.

The anticipated motion for expungement follows a McLean County Judge's decision Monday finding Everly, 26, not guilty on all 11 charges, including aggravated battery to a child.

Prosecutors believed circumstantial evidence was sufficient enough to convict Everly of breaking his infant daughter's legs and an elbow, apparently while changing the baby's diaper.

Judge Casey Costigan said he could only guess how the child suffered her injuries, and he wasn't convinced it happened during a diaper change.

Costigan said emotion didn't factor into his verdict, although many of Everly's supporters, who packed the courtroom, broke into tears after the acquittal.

An innocent man's life was torn apart, a newly-married couple with their new baby," said a woman who attended the trial.

Another of Everly's supporters acknowledged it will be hard for him to undo the damage done to his reputation. Doubters, she said, should have listened to trial testimony.

"How can you take the doubt out of some people's minds?"

"Sitting in that courtroom and listening to the whole thing, it's obvious to me that he's not guilty," she said.

"We know beyond a shadow of a doubt that his character was sterling, and this was not something he could have ever done," said another of Everly's supporters.

Defense Attorney Scott Kording, who's scheduled to be sworn-in as an associate judge January 18, said he hopes Everly can return to some form of the ministry.

Everly was a pastor at Eastview Christian Church in Normal before his arrest.

McLean County State's Attorney Don Knapp declined comment after the trial.

ISSUE: Governement/Politics

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED:

TITLE: Stave-Murray has big plans

Date: 1/3/2019

Time: 3pm

Duration: 12 Hours

SPRINGFIELD- Before she was sworn in for her freshman term as a State Representative, newly-elected Anne Stava-Murray (D-

Naperville) already announced plans to run for Senator Dick Durbin's seat in 2020.

While Durbin hasn't officially announced his intent to run for re-election, he recently joked on NBC's Meet the Press that he is raising money and trying to lose weight, usually good indicators that you're up for re-election.

Democratic party insiders have privately criticized Stava-Murray's announcement, calling it brash, foolhardy, and naive, according to news partner WCIA TV.

Stava-Murray claims as reasons for seeking higher office as a possible inability to work with Speaker Michael Madigan (D-Chicago) after, she claims, preferential treatment for longer-serving House members, and phone calls she received from her colleagues that were meant to intimidate.

Durbin won his first election in 1996 and sits on the Judiciary, Appropriations, and Rules and Administration Committees.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Man armed with a knife robs south side Walgreens

Date: 1/3/2019

Time: 8pm

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - A cashier at a Bloomington Walgreens was reportedly robbed at knifepoint Thursday night. No one was hurt in the latest hold-up to plague the Twin-Cities.

Bloomington Police said a black man armed with a knife robbed the cashier in the front of the store about 8 p.m. at 909 S. Main St., near Wood Street, on the city's south side.

Police said the robber is about 5'6" to 5'8" tall, and wearing black clothes. He made off with an undisclosed amount of cash, and was last seen running west.

Anyone with information is asked to call Bloomington Police at 309-820-8888, or McLean County Crime Stoppers at 309-828-1111.

Thursday night's hold-up is the eighth to a local business in less than three weeks. Police have cleared one of those robberies with a pair of arrests.

BPD is also trying to solve a series of recent "smash and grab" car burglaries outside fitness and day care centers.

Officers continue to look for burglary suspect Floyd Brown, who allegedly led authorities on a high-speed chase on December 23 and ran off after causing a multi-vehicle crash on Veterans Parkway and G.E. Road.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Normal does not want mural standing in the way of Uptown construction

Date: 1/4/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

Normal - Leaders in the town of normal do not want a controversy over an artists' mural to delay construction of a major uptown

development. so, they've come up with a potentially costly plan in case a court orders that the mural should be saved, instead of facing the wrecking ball to make way for the Trail East project.

City Manager Pamela Reece believes the town government is on solid legal ground that it's not necessary to preserve the mural on the northeast portion of uptown circle.

However, a staff report to the town council said some of the mural's painters, commissioned by a former uptown business known as the pod, want to assert their rights under the Visual Artists Rights act, which is part of federal copyright law.

Monday night, the council will be presented with a plan from the farnsworth group, an engineering firm intending to move its offices into the five-story building. farnsworth suggested the mural can be spared from demolition and moved somewhere at a price range of \$56,200 to \$81,560.

Reece said the town would attempt to receive reimbursement from people connected with the pod, who are responsible for the mural.

The town council has made a substantial investment in trail east, agreeing to rebate up to \$8 million dollars from tax increment financing to the developer over an 18 year period to build the five story building.

Construction is expected to start this spring. reece said letters of intent have been signed to fill up 70 percent of the available office space. a food hall is planned for the first floor, with residential space on the top level.

ISSUE: Crime/Judicial

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Crabtree Lawsuit Pending

Date: 1/7/2019

Time: 8 am

Duration: 12 Hours

A lawsuit has been filed against an Iowa trucking firm and the estate of a truck driver who caused a head on collision in December that killed a man.

Charlie's Crabtree was killed December fifth while he was riding on a Unit 5 school bus that was carrying the Normal West girls' freshman basketball team and now his wife, Kathleen, is asking for more than fifty-thousand dollars.

Jason Farrell and his Clinton, Iowa trucking company, Jason Farrell Trucking employed the driver Ryan Hute who was also killed in the head-on collision.

The lawsuit accuses the driver of failure to reduce speed to avoid a collision and failure to realize he was driving the wrong way on the interstate.

Bloomington lawyer James Ginzkey is representing Kathleen Crabtree and the Pantagraph says McLean Arnold will handle the case for Hute's estate.

Bus driver Mark Kuhn and assistant coach Steve Price were seriously injured in the crash. The eight players were treated and released the night of the accident from area hospitals.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Meth Bust in Children's Park

Date: 1/7/2019

Time: 10 am

Duration: 12 Hours

Late last week Clinton Police found a portable meth lab at a local children's park.

Police say two bags were discovered at Kiwanis Park Friday afternoon that contained the remains of what is commonly referred to as a "one pot" or "shake and bake" portable meth lab.

The bags were turned over to the Illinois State Police Meth Response Team and Task Force 6 for further investigation.

Clinton Police Chief Ben Lowers says portable meth labs have increased in popularity and can produce smaller amounts of methamphetamine compared to traditional meth labs. Common materials found in the production of methamphetamine include plastic drink bottles, cold and allergy pills, common household cleaners, ammonia and acetone chemicals.

The investigation is ongoing and no other information is available.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Normal council awards more tax breaks for Trail East building

Date: 1/8/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

NORMAL - Normal Town Council members are unanimously behind providing additional tax incentives to aid an Iowa developer's plan to start construction later this year on a five-story building in Uptown Normal.

Speakers at Monday night's council meeting may have previewed the campaign that has yet to come before the April 2nd municipal elections.

Council challenger Karyn Smith warned the developer will come back asking for more tax breaks if there are more cost overruns. Another candidate, Stan Nord, said it's insane to spend more tax money when other Uptown space is unfilled.

"When I talk with your constituents, and they learn about what Uptown has cost them and the lack of need it can not even fill, their blood begins to boil. I am representing the view of many of your constituents," said Nord.

Incumbent R.C. McBride, running for a second term, said he doesn't appreciate having to defend his sanity and integrity. Kathleen Lorenz, also running for a second term, received assurances from Davenport developer Bush Construction to hire local labor.

The council agreed last year to provide to the developer \$8 million in tax increment financing funds earned from rising land values over the life of the TIF district, expiring in 2039. Latest council action adds another \$400,000 in TIF money over the remaining 20 years because the developer acquired a third property earmarked for demolition, which is Windy City Wieners at 106 E. Beaufort. Building material costs are also going up.

The council also agreed to rebate up to \$250,000 over five-years in sales, food-and-beverage taxes for the food hall, that would include the hot dog stand and other restaurants on the first floor of the Trail East complex, located on the northeast portion of Uptown Circle.

In addition to raising three properties, the council favors either demolishing or moving a popular, but deteriorating mural to make way for new construction. Retiring council member Jeff Fritzen said historic doesn't necessarily mean old.

"I think what's happened in Uptown Normal in the last two decades is historic," Fritzen said.

Mayor Chris Koos said people who work at Trail East will boost the local economy by shopping, eating, and taking advantage of entertainment in the Uptown area.

"Hundreds of workers that are going to be there every day will be eating, and shopping, and entertaining themselves in our Uptown area, and will actually build economic prosperity for the community going forward, said the mayor's who's not up for re-election this year and has yet to announce if he'll seek another term in 2021. Former and future mayoral candidate Marc Tiritilli spoke out against the project at Monday night's meeting.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Key details kept under wraps in Dover murder case

Date: 1/8/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

The McLean County State's Attorney filed formal charges, including four counts of first-degree murder, against two Decatur men for allegedly killing a Bloomington man last month. However, many unanswered questions remain about Egerton Dover's shooting death.

The factual basis for holding Anthony Grampsas, 18, and Tyjuan Bruce, 20, was presented in private to the judge when authorities obtained search warrants for the suspects.

The formal charges don't indicate who police believe fired the fatal shots that killed Dover, 20, at his home December 5 at 816 W. Jefferson St.

The charges do allege Grampsas and Bruce caused Dover's death while committing a home invasion, residential burglary and armed robbery at the Jefferson Street residence.

Police said Dover suffered multiple gunshot wounds. The suspects are each held on \$5 million bond, meaning they have to post 10 percent of that, or \$500,000, to be released from jail. The judge scheduled a January 25 court appearance for the pair.

ISSUE: Business

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Lumber Company Merges to Save Business

Date: 1/9/2019

Time: 3pm

Duration: 12 hours

A lumber company in Bloomington will be merging its lumberyard to LeRoy, claiming local economic and market factors are causing the change.

Alexander Lumber Company announced Wednesday its Bloomington location in the 17-hundred block of East Hamilton Road will merge into its LeRoy business on Demma Drive. A source says the Bloomington lumberyard will close in March, and 9 out of the 12 employees at the Hamilton Road site will lose jobs.

Alexander Lumber says the closures come after extensive market research which shows the company should focus resources on lumberyards located in major metro and mid-sized markets.

The company is also shifting operations in Gilman to its locations in Fairbury and Watseka to serve Livingston and Iroquois Counties and the Kankakee area.

The lumber company also announced closings in Lincoln, Canton, Monmouth, Rushville and Taylorville.

ISSUE: Education/Business

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: District 87 investment portfolio takes hit from December stock market decline

Date: 1/9/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - The stock market's worst December performance since the Great Depression was felt locally. District 87 School Board members found out Wednesday night that district investments of some funds that don't come from taxes took a financial hit at year's end.

The district invests money in stocks and bonds to help pay for programs including scholarships, summer school, teacher training, and employee medical benefits.

Commerce Trust Company portfolio manager Chris Haag said during an annual report to the board that modest annual returns of a 0.5 percent to 2.2 percent turned negative in December because of the stock market slide.

Haag said the market is doing better so far this year.

"Since January started, we've come back quite a bit," said Haag.

"We've actually made back almost half of what we lost," he added.

Despite moderating economic growth, Haag sees many positives including a strong jobs market, hopes for a U.S. and China trade agreement, and a pause in the Federal Reserve's plan to raise interest rates.

"We're pretty neutral across the board. We're still for using more on domestic than international stocks, and we're still looking at growth stocks as well," said Haag.

Commerce sees a recession in about four years, based on a variety of indicators. Haag would recommend immediately reducing stock market holdings if a recession seemed to be a more imminent possibility.

Still there are some warning signs, like a widening of credit spreads.

"Credit spreads are the difference between what corporate bonds pay and the Treasury, which is risk free," Haag said.

"When those widen, it's a sign that there's additional pressure on companies' financial conditions. It hasn't gotten to extreme levels yet, but it still bears watching," he said.

Haag also noted a flattening of the yield curve in which there's less of a difference between rates of return on shorter- and longer-term U.S. Treasuries. Haag does not see an yield curve inversion, in which rates of return for shorter-term Treasuries exceed rates of return for longer-term Treasuries. An inverted yield curve is considered a prelude to a recession.

ISSUE: Business

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Locally-made Beer Nuts store to close in Normal, company aims for online sales boost

Date: 1/10/2019

Time: 3pm

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - The Bloomington-based maker of Beer Nuts is closing its store at the Shoppes of College Hills later this month so the company can focus on boosting online sales.

BEER NUTS Brand Snacks announced Thursday evening that the final day of business at the location in Normal will be Monday, January 28.

The company's news release does not indicate how many jobs might be lost by the closure.

Beer Nuts will continue to be sold at the company's home office and factory, located at 103 N. Robinson St., at the intersection of Robinson and Washington Streets in Bloomington.

In a statement, Beer Nuts President Andy Shirk said the company tries to capitalize on sales and distribution channels with the most significant growth potential. E-commerce is where the growth is happening, according to Shirk.

"The store closing will allow us to allocate greater resources and focus to support our accelerating online growth. We will still provide a local option at our original Company Store located inside our home office," Shirk said in a prepared statement.

"Our dedication to producing our famous snacks in the Bloomington-Normal community will continue, with hopes you'll continue snacking with us for many more years to come," Shirk also said.

BEER NUTS Brand Snacks is in its 66th year of business in the Twin-Cities.

ISSUE:Charity

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: YMCA-Easterseals east side community center moves closer to \$16 million fundraising goal

Date: 1/11/2019

Time: 3pm

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - Donors have given the Bloomington-Normal YMCA and Easterseals Central Illinois a huge boost on their way to raising \$16 million for an east side community center, the organizations announced Friday.

The YMCA and Easterseals reported more than 100 donors have met a \$4 million matching challenge from an anonymous McLean County family, which in turn will donate another four million dollars. That lifts the total raised so far to \$13.4 million for the center, to be built along East Washington Street, on the OSF St. Joseph Medical Center campus.

The family's gift was the largest in Bloomington-Normal YMCA history, according to the news release.

YMCA President and CEO BJ Wilken said local health care providers, led by Doctors Jerry and Laura Randolph-Oakey, raised \$400,000 dollars.

"Our physicians, dentists, and health care providers really see the benefit of this YMCA/Easterseal facility," said Wilken in a prepared statement.

Community Center plans call for an indoor competitive swimming pool and warm water therapy pool, a full-size gymnasium, health and

wellness center, teen and senior program center, and consultation and therapy space for Easterseals clients and their families.

ISSUE:Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: "Blue-Ribbon" panel to help pick next McLean County Administrator

Date: 1/11/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - Some of the area's most prominent leaders will serve on a committee to help the county board pick the next county administrator.

Bill Wasson is leaving the job in June, and two of his predecessors -- John Zeunik and Terry Lindberg -- will serve on the seven member "Blue-Ribbon Stakeholder Advisory Panel" to recommend and evaluate candidates. Zeunik will lead the group.

Democratic County Board member Laurie Wollrab, representing District 6 in Normal, lobbied for a professional consultant to aid in the nationwide search, but Wollrab said she's on board with the panel, formed by Republican County Board Chairman John McIntyre.

Serving with Zeunik and Lindberg are Unit 5 School Superintendent Mark Daniel, retired Illinois State University President Al Bowman, retired 11th Circuit Chief Judge Elizabeth Robb, State Farm Vice President of Operations Kevin Callis, and retired County Financial Executive Vice President of Communications and Resources Deanna Frautschi.

Bowman is also a former executive director of the Illinois Board of Higher Education. Judge Robb is currently chairman of the Board of the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED:News Story

TITLE: Rauner reduces sentence in 1995 Logan County double murder

Date: 1/12/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

SPRINGFIELD - Gov. Bruce Rauner, during his final days in office, shortened the prison sentence in the case of a man who murdered his grandparents in Lincoln almost a quarter-century ago.

Rauner reduced Jon Morgan's sentence from 75 years to 58 years for the shooting deaths of his grandparents, Keith and Lila Cearlock, in April 1995.

Morgan was 14 at the time of the killings, but tried as an adult.

The governor decided the two sentences for first- and second-degree murder should run at the same time instead of one after the other.

A jury found Morgan guilty of first degree murder for his grandmother's death, but convicted him on the lesser charge for killing Keith Cearlock after the teenager claimed physical and emotional abuse during the time he lived with his grandparents.

Morgan is now 38. The Illinois Department of Corrections website indicated Morgan was eligible to be released on parole in September

2032. After the governor's commutation, it's not clear when Morgan might be eligible for parole.

The Department of Corrections said Morgan is being held in the Shawnee Correctional Center, a medium security prison in southern Illinois.

Rauner granted four commutations and 30 clemency requests as he prepared to leave office, but denied requests in 268 other cases, according to a news release issued late Friday.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Rosati's Robbery Suspect Still on the Loose

Date: 1/14/2019

Time: 8am

Duration: 12 hours

The suspect in an armed robbery Sunday evening at Rosati's is being sought by Bloomington Police.

In a release sent this morning Bloomington Police say the suspect entered the store and demanded money from an employee while wielding a knife.

The suspect then took off on foot with an undisclosed amount of cash.

Described as a black male, approximately five foot eight inches tall, the suspect was wearing dark winter clothing, gloves, a mask, and glasses.

There were no injuries in the incident and the investigation is ongoing.

Anyone with information is asked to call the Bloomington Police Department or McLean County Crime Stoppers.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Renner sees project wish list as necessary to boost local economy

Date: 1/14/2019

Time: 5 am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - Bloomington Mayor Tari Renner believes the city government's financial situation is "fairly stable" after the city council last year eliminated regular bulky waste pick-up, which saved a little more than a million dollars.

Renner, during his yearly state-of-the city address, said the focus now and in future years should be capital investments, which he said have been neglected by many generations of city leaders. Renner said infrastructure repairs on sewers, streets, and sidewalks are needed. He wants the city to buy strategic downtown properties to generate development there, create a state-of-the-art library, help the struggling Eastland Mall, and build a new O'Neill Park swimming pool.

Renner said City Manager Tim Gleason has some great creative financing ideas for various projects. Economic success, said the mayor, cannot be achieved by cutting spending or raising taxes.

"We're always looking for efficiencies, but you're not going to cut and gut your way to prosperity," said Renner.

"And, you're not going to tax your way to prosperity. The way that we can help improve for the future generations is by expanding the local economy," the mayor said.

Over the years, Renner said the city has eliminated 200 government jobs. Frequent mayoral critic Scott Steimling said that's not enough. He said the city should not be hiring a deputy city manager, who will make an annual salary of \$152,500.

Steimling exclaimed, "Tim Gleason does not need a deputy city manager!"

Renner said it's "absolutely essential" to have a deputy city manager.

Renner noted Bloomington has one of the lowest crime rates among Illinois' metro areas despite an unusually high 11 homicides in the city last year. He hopes that's just a temporary spike in the murder rate.

ISSUE: Education

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: ISU's Dietz: Expect governing board overhaul as Pritzker assumes power

Date: 1/15/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

NORMAL - Illinois State University President Larry Dietz is telling faculty there might be a major overhaul of ISU's governing board.

In a letter to faculty at the start of the spring semester, Dietz noted newly-installed Governor J.B. Pritzker appoints public university trustees. The terms of Chairman Rocky Donahue, Secretary Mary

Ann Louderback and Bob Churney are set to expire at the end of January.

Dietz said the tenure of four other trustees are up in the air because they've never been confirmed by the Senate. They are Bob Dobski, Sharon Rossmark, Julie Jones, and John Rauschenberger.

Dietz said he met with Pritzker as part of the new governor's higher education transition team. Dietz urged the legislature to approve an equitable funding formula for higher education.

In the letter to faculty, Dietz also revealed applications for the next school year are up 27 percent from the same time last year, while admissions are up 17 percent. He said the university is also attracting more minority students. Dietz said applications for African-Americans are up 34 percent, Latino and Latina applications have risen 40 percent, and applications from Asian students are up by 40 percent from year ago, levels.

Dietz said the "Redbirds Rising" fundraising campaign has surpassed \$135 million, moving closer to the \$150 million goal. Among the 46,000 donors, there are almost 18-thousand new contributors, according to Dietz.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Gov. Pritzker pleases unions, faces GOP critics on state workers pay

Date: 1/14/2019

Time: 8am

Duration: 12 Hours

SPRINGFIELD - On his first full day in office, Gov. J.B. Pritzker got off on the right "step," as far as state workers and unions which represent them are concerned. The step increases, automatic raises, had stopped in 2015.

"We're going to implement them Day One and then be involved in negotiations and discussions with the state workers to make sure we're living up to the promises the state has made," Pritzker said in a bill-signing ceremony Tuesday in his office at the Capitol. "It's going forward." The Pritzker administration says this does not address the back pay.

What's more, "as long as I'm governor, state agencies will engage in project labor agreements."

Also, the governor says state agencies will be prohibited from asking salary history of applicants. Pritzker says this is a first step toward a \$15/hour minimum wage.

AFSCME Council 31 issued a statement from its executive director, Roberta Lynch:

"Governor Pritzker's announcement represents important progress toward ending Bruce Rauner's illegal four-year freeze on step progression for state employees. The process of placing employees on the appropriate step should be completed without delay. It's critical that the state also move quickly to make employees whole for the wages they have been wrongfully denied since 2015."

The Illinois Republican Party issued a statement from its executive director, Tim Schneider:

"Governor Pritzker has barely been in office for 24 hours, and he's already signed an executive order spending an undefined amount of taxpayer dollars on state employee pay increases. Yesterday, we heard promises from Pritzker that he would work with Democrats and Republicans to balance the budget. Yet today, Pritzker unilaterally made reckless spending promises without specifying the costs,

creating more budget uncertainty. It's clear - the Pritzker agenda is the same agenda that has dragged our state down for decades - borrow, tax, spend, repeat."

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Tuesday night county board meetings are not yet the hottest ticket in town

Date: 1/15/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

NORMAL - The McLean County Board met for the first time at night since Republican Chairman John McIntyre extended an olive branch to newly elected Democrats.

The new board members ran on a platform to hold the monthly meetings at a time more convenient for constituents who work during the day.

Tuesday evening's session did not attract any more people, but that may have been influenced by the weather and lack of controversial issues on the agenda for a meeting that lasted only 12 minutes.

However, Jim Rogal, a father of five and local laborer from Normal, said he'll make it a habit to attend board meetings.

"It's just easier to make it in the evening. I work and I'm on the road a lot, so it's tough to be here in town on Tuesday morning to make it to a county board meeting."

The desire to be more informed about county business led Rogal to vote for board member Logan Smith, who's 19 and elected in November.

Smith acknowledged most of board's work is done in the various committees, which meet during the day.

"We barely get any public attention at those (committee meetings)," said Smith.

"Something I pushed was live-streaming committee meetings. It's not about whether they're actually here, but that people have information that's accessible to them," Smith added.

The county board meets in regular session at 5:30 p.m. on the third Tuesday of every month.

ISSUE: Education

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News story

TITLE: Unit 5 board set to act on substitute teachers pay raise

Date: 1/15/2019

Time: 8am

Duration: 12 hours

NORMAL - This is the day Unit 5 substitute teachers have been waiting for. At Wednesday night's school board meeting, the board is expected to vote on a proposal to give substitutes their first raise in 18 years.

Details of the proposal have not been released. Substitute teachers currently make \$80 a day.

Business manager Marty Hickman said he was developing a salary schedule providing teachers with financial incentives for working more days. Subs would get higher pay for working more than 15 days and receive another raise for working more than 30 days.

Like other districts, Unit 5 struggles to find enough substitute teachers.

Subs decided last summer to wage a public battle for more money when four of the teachers appealed to the school board.

The district earlier agreed to pay them twice a month like full-time teachers instead of monthly. They're also receiving district email accounts and daily notices so they're more attuned with what's going on at Unit 5.

ISSUE: Education

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Unit 5 substitute teachers get first raise in 18 years, plus incentives to work more days

Date: 1/17/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

NORMAL - The Unit 5 School Board is giving the district's substitute teachers their first pay raise since 2001.

The amount of the pay raise depends how many days they're able to work. Like other districts, Unit 5 struggles to find enough substitutes.

Regular substitutes will make \$85 a day, up from \$80, for the first 15 days, and \$100 if they work more than 60 days. Retired Unit 5 teachers who stay on as subs will make up to \$120.

Board member Amy Roser said the pay increases are a "great start," and another board member, Meta Mickens-Baker said, "We really appreciate our subs."

Mickens-Baker hopes the higher pay will make it more attractive for substitutes to do the work.

Substitute teacher Dawn Leman noted pay is the same as in District 87, but below other surrounding districts.

Wednesday night's school board action caps a five-month effort in which substitutes publicly appealed to the board for more pay and better working conditions.

"The needle has shifted slightly," said Leman.

"Once you start talking and having a conversation, some things get done," she added.

Annual cost to taxpayers is estimated at almost \$126,000, taking into account pay raises for long-term substitutes. Long-term subs spend weeks sitting in for teachers on family leave or other reasons.

The district is now paying substitutes twice a month, like full-time teachers. Subs previously received monthly pay checks.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Area 'Bomb Squad' gang member faces up to life in prison for various gang crimes

Date: 1/17/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

PEORIA - A reputed member of the Bomb Squad street gang from Peoria told a federal judge Thursday he's been tied to gang activity since he was 13.

Known as "Lil Man," and now 23, Terry Moss faces a possible life in prison sentence for his guilty plea to various crimes, including attempted murder.

Moss admitted shooting at rival gang members to protect Bomb Squad territory, wounding one of them in the foot.

Moss told the judge he sold and helped others sell crack cocaine and other narcotics. Moss also admitted he had guns, holding some firearms for others, and loaning them to gang members.

He was one of 15 men charged last June in the federal racketeering conspiracy. The co-defendants are scheduled to stand trial June 10. Moss is due in court again August 8 for sentencing.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: NPD: Gunman who robbed Freedom Oil is probably not BPD's "Business Bandit"

Date: 1/17/2019

Time: 3pm

Duration: 12 Hours

NORMAL - There was another armed robbery in the Twin-Cities Thursday night, the 10th since early December, but authorities don't think the gunman in the latest robbery is the so-called 'Business Bandit.'

Normal Police Lt. Nick Thacker said no one was hurt when a black man armed with a handgun ran off with an undisclosed amount of cash from the Freedom Oil Station at 601 S. Main St. in Normal, across from fire department headquarters, about 9:05 p.m. Among the evidence is a video from Freedom Oil's video surveillance camera.

"We've collected evidence. There's some evidence I can't disclose just because of the nature and the investigation, but there doesn't appear to be a link between the so-called 'Bloomington Business Bandit' and our suspect in this case," said Lt. Thacker.

Bloomington Police announced only a day earlier that the man they dubbed as the "Business Bandit" is the robber who held up at least seven of the nine previous robberies in Bloomington-Normal since December 8.

Anyone with information about the robbery in Normal is asked to contact NPD at 309-454-9525 or McLean County Crime Stoppers at 309-828-1111.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Rezoning eyed for future northeast Normal fire station despite opposition

Date: 1/21/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

NORMAL - The Normal Town Council will soon decide whether to take a big step toward relocating the town's northeast side fire station to a residential area east of Veterans Parkway despite neighborhood opposition.

On Tuesday night's agenda is a recommendation from staff to rezone from residential to public use 1.74 acres of the Blackstone Trails subdivision in the 1400 block of North Hershey Road, at the Shepard Road intersection.

The council in November authorized the city manager negotiate an agreement to buy the property from the subdivision's developer at a cost not to exceed \$450,000.

Developer iDEV, LLC in turn is making subdivision changes to attract buyers, and also to calm neighbors concerns by scaling back plans to build many more small houses, aiming for a variety in lot sizes instead.

Neighbors signed petitions claiming a higher density development and new fire station would increase traffic, make more noise, and reduce property values. However, town staffers found no evidence that fire stations diminish nearby home values.

The staff said residents living near fire stations have not complained about noise in the past, and Fire Chief Mick Humer said on night runs, the department tries to minimize use of lights and sirens.

"Town staff does not believe that the rezoning will generate a significant negative impact or hardship on nearby properties," staffers said in a report to the council.

"Although no designs exist for the proposed future fire station, it would be expected that the aesthetics of the building, the property maintenance, and use of the facility would take into account nearby residences," the report said.

Humer said a new station next to Blackstone Trails would handle about a quarter of all calls in Normal.

Town staffers noted public gain from a new northeast side fire station would be "quite high" because thousands of residences, a high school, large church, and a nursing home would be in its service area.

ISSUE: Business

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Greyhound eyes Normal to Chicago bus route from Uptown Station

Date: 1/21/2019

Time: 3pm

Duration: 12 Hours

NORMAL- Greyhound wants to become the third bus company offering routes from Uptown Station in Normal, joining Peoria Charter and Burlington Trailways.

The service is expected to begin Wednesday, only a week after Greyhound notified town leaders about its intention to offer a new option for travelers wanting to take a bus to Chicago.

The Town Council will be asked on the eve of the new service to grant the city manager permission to negotiate a licensing agreement with Greyhound like deals the town government made with the competing bus firms.

Fees paid annually to the town could run from \$3,240 to \$7,740, according to the staff's report.

The town said the new route to begin Wednesday runs from Danville to Chicago, with stops in Champaign, Normal, Oglesby, Rochelle, Rockford, and Elgin.

Greyhound's website said fares start at \$29. Wednesday's departure time from Uptown Station is 1:30 p.m., arriving in Chicago at 7:05 p.m.

A Chicago-to-Normal bus departs the Windy City at 6:45 a.m., arriving at Uptown Station at 11:25 a.m, according to Greyhound's website.

ISSUE: Business

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Renner: Slow going for State Farm building, arena sale

Date: 1/22/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - Two of Downtown Bloomington's largest landmarks are a long way from being sold, according to the city's mayor.

State Farm vacated its original headquarters last year, and Mayor Tari Renner said city government can't do very much to speed up the sale of the nearly 90-year old building at 112 E. Washington St.

"At this point, we don't own the building. State Farm owns the building. If they can sell it to somebody, then we can work with them, or if they're willing to work with the city more directly, we're willing to do anything that's necessary," Renner said during a recent interview with WJBC.

Renner is confident State Farm is doing what it can to sell the property because the insurance firm has made significant investments in maintaining the building over the years.

The downtown tower, with 200,000 square feet of office space, was State Farm's headquarters until 1974.

Renner said State Farm executives have kept in contact with him, City Manager Tim Gleason, and the city's economic development coordinator, Austin Grammer.

The mayor wants the city to acquire what he described as "strategic" buildings downtown to stimulate development. He said City Manager Tim Gleason has creative financing ideas to help the downtown.

"That's one of the difficulties of trying to revitalize downtowns is you have large numbers of buildings that are right next to each other, right on top of each other that are owned by different people," said Renner.

"What happens in one building has a ripple effect for sometimes the entire downtown, or at least the entire block."

Meantime, Renner said he's "cautiously optimistic" the city will eventually sell the government-owned Grossinger Motors Arena, but a sale is not imminent. Renner said private investors and venue operators have approached the city, but a buyer will need "deep pockets."

The mayor said major selling points to a private buyer is that the arena is in very good shape, the money owed for the arena is only a fraction of the initial cost, and a new owner would benefit from the city's efforts to revitalize the entire downtown.

ISSUE: Business

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: State Farm: Illinois recieved most frozen pipe claims in 2018

Date: 1/23/2019

Time: 3pm

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - With snow and cold temperatures throughout central Illinois, the risk of frozen pipes will be an issue according to a local insurer.

State Farm Insurance says more claims were paid in Illinois for winter water losses than any other state in the country. With 1,546 claims, the total payout for Illinois in 2018 reached nearly \$28,000,000, with the average cost per claim just under \$18,000.

The next closest state was New York at 1,364 claims and an average payout of \$27,000 per claim. Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Texas rounded out the top five states with the most water peril claim counts in 2018.

State Farm offers several tips with the colder temperatures to prevent frozen pipes.

Some of those include opening cabinet doors to allow heat to get to un-insulated pipes under sinks and appliances, and if traveling not setting the thermostat below 55°F.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Normal council approves fire station plan despite neighbors complaints

Date: 1/23/2019

Time: 3pm

Duration: 12 Hours

NORMAL - Despite vocal opposition, the Normal Town Council moved ahead Tuesday night with a developer's plans for a redesigned subdivision, including selling part of the property to the town government for a northeast side fire station.

The council voted 4-2 in favor of the plan for smaller homes in a portion of the 10-year old Blackstone Trails Subdivision.

Council members Kathleen Lorenz and Scott Preston voted no, and earlier pushed unsuccessfully for a two week delay so town staff could evaluate whether the government could buy other property at Hershey and Shepard Road, which wouldn't be so close to people's homes.

Four subdivision residents, council candidate Stan Nord and mayoral hopeful Marc Tiritilli, voiced their opposition.

Troy Tevis, Debbie Schroder, and the other neighbors worry about declining property values and noise, even though staffers said they've found no such complaints from people who live near other fire stations in town.

"To me, smaller lots, smaller homes, smaller price brings down our property values," said Tevis.

"I don't care what anybody does, but just don't get into my wallet," Tevis added.

"The residents of Blackstone Trails will not go away," said Schroder.

"Their voices will be heard today, tomorrow, and especially at the ballot box," she said.

Council member R.C. McBride noted other subdivision residents favor the project, and Councilman Jeff Fritzen said it's a priority to improve fire department response times east of Veterans Parkway.

"As elected officials, we do have to represent the community first, not individuals," said Fritzen.

The council voted unanimously to change the zoning of nearly two acres for public use. Staffers and the council pledged to seek neighbors' input when fire station design plans are drawn up in a couple of years.

The council has approved spending up to \$450,000 to buy nearly two acres for a future fire station.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Bloomington budget process starts with a surplus

Date: 1/23/2019

Time: 3pm

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - A budget deficit has turned into a surplus for Bloomington's city government.

City Manager Tim Gleason told the council at a committee-of-the-whole meeting Tuesday night there's a \$500,000 budget surplus, from a \$2 million general fund deficit the same time a year ago.

Gleason said the city can use the surplus to fund smaller "one and done" projects.

"This is an opportunity to potentially undo a trend where we've been forced in the past, recession and post-recession, where we're borrowing for some of our equipment purchases such as vehicles. Much better practice is to pay as you go, if we can," said Gleason.

In a cost-saving move, the council a year ago was forced to reduce free bulky waste pick-up to just twice a year, and city departments made \$160,000 in other cuts, according to city staff.

Gleason said there's an additional \$500,000 surplus in the capital projects fund, as the city plans street, sewer, and sidewalk repairs and other improvements in the coming fiscal year.

City Finance Director Scott Rathbun said the government is reaping the benefits of increased property and income tax revenues, about a \$200,000 increase from the previous year from internet sales taxes.

Higher interest rates have netted the city another \$200,000, according to Rathbun.

The proposed budget will be presented to the council February 25. The city has scheduled a March 11 public hearing before the council takes final action April 8.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Rep. Brady: Opportunity for Pritzker to support fair map legislation

Date: 1/23/2019

Time: 5pm

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - A local lawmaker in the Illinois House is co-sponsoring a constitutional amendment to remove politicians from the legislative map drawing process.

State Rep. Dan Brady (R-Bloomington) and all 44 GOP House members signed on to sponsor the constitutional amendment. It would create the Independent Redistricting Commission that would file a redistricting plan for Legislative and Representative Districts.

Brady told WJBC's Scott Laughlin he's optimistic because Gov. JB Pritzker has claimed he wants to institute fair maps.

"He did during the campaign say this was something he was supportive of," said Brady. "This may be the first test to see how things are going to change, so we'll see how the Governor reacts."

The amendment is led by Minority Leader Jim Durkin.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Passenger confronts Rep. Davis for flying first class during shutdown

Date: 1/23/2019

Time: 5pm

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - A video has gone viral showing Central Illinois Rep. Rodney Davis ignoring a fellow airline passenger's complaint that he should not be flying in first class during the partial government shutdown.

The video released by HuffPost, formerly known as Huffington Post, shows the Republican from Taylorville collecting items from his seat when the passenger confronted him about flying in first class while 57,000 Transportation Security Administration employees are working without pay.

“Congressman, do you think it’s appropriate to fly first class while 57 (thousand) TSA agents aren’t being paid?” the person said to Davis.

Davis did not answer, prompting the passenger to say, “Taking that as a yes.”

“Taxpayers paid for this flight? Fair enough,” the passenger added.

Later, Davis spokeswoman Ashley Phelps released a statement to political website and newspaper, The Hill, claiming the lawmaker's office bought a coach ticket for a flight on Tuesday from Chicago to Washington, and that Davis was able to upgrade his seat to first class at no additional cost because of his frequent flyer status.

The statement said Davis has never flown first class at taxpayer expense, and he has voted numerous times to ensure TSA agents are paid.

Phelps said Davis continues to call on Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to negotiate a deal with President Trump to reopen the government.

ISSUE: Education

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Local school chiefs mull holding classes during a big freeze

Date: 1/24/2019

Time: 5am

Duration:12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - If the forecast for brutally cold wind chills comes to pass, District 87 Superintendent Barry Reilly and the heads of other area school districts will decide early Friday whether it's safe for kids to come to class.

Reilly told the school board Wednesday night he expects he'll have to make decision whether there will be school on Friday.

District 87 is smaller in size, and unlike rural school systems, there are plenty of buildings in the city to block some of the harsh wind gusts.

Reilly also knows some low income families have a hard time finding day care on short notice.

"When the schedule is changed at a moment's notice, that's difficult for families, " said Reilly.

"I know that kids are going to be well taken care of, and fed, and have a warm place when they're here. So if at all possible, I'm gonig to have school in session, but at the same time, you don't want to put kids at risk," Reilly said.

Reilly and other area superintendents, including Unit 5's Mark Daniel, are part of a 3:30 a.m. conference call on bad weather days.

"Sometimes it means that I have to get in my vehicle and go drive around. You have to monitor weather charts to look for not only the temperature, but wind chills and wind gusts, think about the conditions of bus stops, streets, where kids might be walking or waiting."

Reilly said he also consults with Bloomington Public Works Director Jim Karch before making a final decision about 5 a.m.

ISSUE: Health

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE:Lead Poisoning in the lead in Illinois

Date: 1/24/2019

Time: 3pm

Duration: 12 Hours

SPRINGFIELD- Illinois has one of the highest levels of childhood lead poisoning in the country. To combat the problem, the state is lowering the level of lead in the blood that requires public health intervention.

New rules from the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) cut those levels in half, which is in line with U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines. Deanna Durica with the Cook County Health Department's Lead Poisoning Prevention and Healthy Homes Unit praised the changes.

The rules allow public health interventions for children with blood lead levels from 10 to 5 micrograms per deciliter, which is also the standards set by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Durica says the rules also recommend that physicians screen children younger than 6.

A public health nurse will visit the homes of children who test at or above the new intervention limits.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Tory

TITLE: Central Illinois militia members plead guilty to Minnesota mosque bombing

Date: 1/24/2019

Time: 3pm

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON, MINNESOTA - Two Ford County men entered a federal courtroom in Minnesota Thursday to plead guilty to a crime spree, including the August 2017 bombing of an Minnesota Islamic center. Their motive, according to prosecutors, was to scare Muslims into leaving the country.

Michael McWhorter, 29, and Joe Morris, 23, both from Clarence, are admitted members of the "White Rabbits" militia group founded by bombing co-defendant, Michael Hari, 47. He too is from Clarence, and is said to be an ex-Ford County Sheriff's deputy and once ran for sheriff as a Libertarian candidate.

McWhorter and Morris also confessed to trying in November 2017 to set on fire a Champaign woman's health clinic that performs abortions, in addition to committing armed robberies at Mount Vernon and Watseka Walmarts, and an Indiana home invasion in December of that year.

McWhorter and Morris said the Dar al-Farooq Islamic Center in Bloomington, Minnesota was targeted because it was far enough away so they wouldn't be suspected of the crime.

Morris said he broke a window to the Imam's office and McWhorter lit the fuse of the pipe bomb, made from a mixture of gasoline and diesel fuel, before throwing it into the building. Congregants were in the mosque at the time for morning prayers. There were no injuries.

“The defendants engaged in a violent multi-state crime spree that terrorized communities, including members of the Dar al-Farooq Islamic Center in Minnesota. The defendants’ criminal acts are reprehensible and antithetical to our values as a nation. Every individual has the fundamental right to live life free from the threat of violence and discrimination, no matter who they are, what they believe, or where they worship,” said United States Attorney Erica H. MacDonald.

“The dedication and collaboration of our law enforcement partners across several jurisdictions to bring these defendants to justice is a powerful example of our unwavering devotion to seek justice for all victims, and to prosecute to the fullest extent of the law any individual or group that seeks to threaten another’s civil rights through the commission of such vile hate crimes,” said MacDonald in a prepared statement.

"All people are entitled to live free from violence and fear, regardless of their religion or place of worship," said Assistant Attorney General Eric Dreiband of the Civil Rights Division.

"The Justice Department is committed to holding hate crimes perpetrators accountable under the law for their dangerous and criminal actions against innocent community members. This crime was not only an attack on the intended target, it was meant to threaten and intimidate an entire community. Because of that wide-ranging impact, investigating this crime and others like it are high priority for the FBI," said Jill Sanborn, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI Minneapolis Division.

“The FBI is charged with protecting civil rights and our agents in both the Minneapolis and Springfield field offices in conjunction with the Joint Terrorism Task Force swiftly investigated this case side by side with the ATF, the Bloomington (Minnesota) Police Department and other law enforcement partners with one singular goal – to bring the bombers to justice and most importantly to help the Dar al-Farooq community begin to feel safe and secure once again.”

The incendiary device they placed at Women's Health Practice in Champaign did not go off, according to authorities.

A sentencing date has been scheduled yet for McWhorter and Morris.

ISSUE: Education

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: District 87 follows Unit 5 in boosting substitute teachers pay

Date: 1/25/2019

Time:5am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - District 87 is responding to neighboring Unit 5's pay raise for substitute teachers by raising pay for its substitutes.

The District 87 School Board quietly approved the raise Wednesday night, a week after Unit 5's board, with much more fanfare, decided to give substitutes their first pay hike since 2001.

It had been at least 15 years since District 87 subs received a raise, according to Superintendent Barry Reilly. Unlike Unit 5, District 87 took action without public discussion.

Some Unit 5 substitutes complained publicly to the board last summer about their pay and other working conditions. A committee was formed to make recommendations.

District 87 is boosting substitutes' daily rate to 95 dollars, from 80 dollars. Unit 5 subs now make 85 dollars a day for the first 15 days, 90 dollars if they work more than 30 days, and 100 dollars if they work more than 60 days. There are no financial incentives to work more days in District 87.

Retired District 87 teachers and administrators will make 115 dollars, up from 100 dollars, if they come back to work as substitutes.

District 87 substitutes get paid twice a month, just like regular teachers. Unit 5 subs successfully lobbied for twice-a-month pay checks instead of monthly pay.

Reilly said District 87's director of human resources, Assistant Superintendent Herschel Hannah, has for several years worked to make substitutes feel valued in the school system.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Shots Fired –Police seek Suspect

Date: 1/25/2019

Time: 5pm

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - Bloomington Police are reporting multiple shots fired early Friday morning.

Police responded around 2:12 a.m. to the area around McLean and Walnut Street.

Police said they found multiple bullet strikes and bullets that entered multiple apartments within a house in the 400 block of East Walnut.

No injuries occurred during the shooting.

Anyone with information is asked to contact Det. Jared Bierbaum at 309-434-2807 or McLean County Crime Stoppers at 309-828-1111.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: MLK keynoter: Obama failed to lead on race

Date: 1/25/2019

Time: 7am

Duration: 12 Hours

NORMAL - A prominent liberal voice did not hide his contempt for President Donald Trump during an appearance at Illinois State University on Friday, but he also said the nation's first African-American president failed to lead on race relations.

African-American scholar and author Michael Eric Dyson, the keynote speaker at ISU's annual Martin Luther King Junior Cultural Dinner, said Barack Obama wasn't forceful enough on race even as he and First Lady Michelle Obama were repeatedly subjected to racial slurs.

"They're still looking at your wife as a chimpanzee, a simian of some sort, saying she belongs more in National Geographic along with Serena Williams than on Elle Magazine or Vogue. Obama had to deny what was before his face in deference to what he thought was an optimistic outlook," said Dyson.

"Imagine having Michael Jordan in the White House, but he won't talk about basketball," Dyson also said.

"This is a guy (Obama) who knew a lot about race, who had tremendous insight about it and yet he felt compelled to be silent or be racially reticent and not speak out. I think that damaged not just the interests of black people, but American society," Dyson added.

Still, Dyson considers Obama one of the nation's top 10 presidents.

Now, Dyson said there's a white supremacist ideology in the White House, but he warns not to underestimate President Trump's ability to win re-election.

"Donald Trump's problem though is that he is attracted to those things which will fuel and foster such horrible deadly consequences for the sake of political thrill, or winning, or the narcissism that is white supremacy," Dyson said.

He commended newly-installed Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi for standing up to Trump.

Dyson is a sociology professor at Georgetown University. He met with students, faculty, and the news media before addressing more than 600 people who attended Friday night's cultural dinner at Redbird Arena.

"It's wonderful to be back in a place called Normal -- wish we could do so in our politics," Dyson lamented.

ISSUE: Government,Community

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Council set to adopt Bloomington parks master plan

Date: 1/28/2019

Time: 7am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - A master plan almost two years in the making for Bloomington parks will be presented to the city council Monday night for a final vote. However, the blueprint to aid city planning for park space over the next 15 years does not commit the council to spend public money for potential park projects.

The plan itself did cost taxpayer money, about \$115,000 paid to parks consultant GreenPlay. The firm assessed the city's existing recreational facilities and also conducted public meetings in the summer of 2017 for residents to provide input.

"I've always believed that parks are kind of a gathering place," said Alderman Mboka Mwilambwe.

"It's almost like a living room of a neighborhood or community where everybody kind of comes together," Mwilambwe added.

The plan emphasizes quality over quantity, suggesting the council consider re-purposing some parks, adding walking trails with mile markers and fitness stations, integrating nature into the parks, installing new types of playground equipment, and creating gathering areas for farmers' markets, movies, and festivals.

Alderman Amelia Buragas noted the plan reveals Bloomington ranks below average in acres of parkland per person.

"That surprised me because I think that's contrary to many residents' perceptions of our city, and also our aspirations for what the city is," Buragas said.

Buragas appreciated the consultants took a more pragmatic approach by not recommending the city add new parks.

"Instead of expansion, just adhere to the notion what you do have is going to have to work harder, and it's going to have to work smarter," Buragas said.

The park plan also recommends working more closely with Normal and local school districts to share recreational facilities.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: BPD probing hold up at local loan agency

Date: 1/28/2019

Time: 3pm

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - Bloomington Police are investigating an armed robbery on the city's east side.

Police responded around 11:30 a.m. Monday to the Check Into Cash loan agency at 2303 East Washington Street, just east of Veteran Parkway.

The suspect had a small handgun and fled the scene with an undisclosed amount of cash. Nobody was injured and the suspect is being described as a black male, 5'8" and was last seen running southbound.

Police say its to early too determine if this incident is related to about 11 other armed robberies in McLean County since early December.

Anyone with information is asked to contact BPD dispatch at 309-820-8888.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED:News Story

TITLE: McLean County Law and Justice Center closed due to water main break

Date: 1/28/2019

Time: 7am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - The McLean County Law and Justice Center was closed Monday due to a water main break.

Sources said no water damage is being reported inside the building, but walkways around the building are icy.

"We're told water from the main break was seen bubbling between the Lincoln parking deck and the Law and Justice Center," said

WJBC's Howard Packowitz "Crews shut down the building because water pressure was so low people couldn't use the bathroom."

The Sheriff's office said anyone that was scheduled to be in court Monday afternoon will be notified by mail of a new court date.

One of those cases called off Monday is a decades old Bloomington murder case. Donlad Whalen wants a new trial after being convicted of killing his father Bill Whalen in 1991 at the former Twenty Grand Tap in downtown Bloomington.

The hearing is scheduled to resume Tuesday.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED:News Story

TITLE: BPD called to two east side armed robberies on Monday

Date: 1/29/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - Bloomington Police were investigating two armed robberies on Monday, both on the city's east side.

The latest hold-up happened about 9:30 p.m. in an apartment building. The other happened in broad daylight at a local business.

Police said a black man armed with a handgun robbed two people in an apartment in the 1700 block of Clearwater Avenue. Police are not disclosing what was taken. No one was hurt. The suspect was last seen running for the scene.

The other stick-up happened about 11:30 Monday morning at Check Into Cash at 2303 E. Washington St., just east of Veterans Parkway.

Police in that case are looking for a black man with a handgun, about 5', 8" tall, who took an undisclosed amount cash. He was last seen running southbound. There were no injuries.

Anyone with information is asked to contact Bloomington Police Detective Jared Roth at 309-434-2379. He can also be reached via email at Jroth@cityblm.org. The incident number #201901203.

Anonymous tips are being accepted by McLean County Crime Stoppers at 309-828-1111.

ISSUE: Police,Fire

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED:News Story

TITLE: Woman and dog escape house fire in Bloomington

Date: 1/29/2019

Time: 3pm

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - An apartment house caught fire Tuesday afternoon just east of downtown Bloomington.

Bloomington Fire crews responded around 12:45 p.m. to 101 South McLean Street. Flames were seen blowing out of a second story window.

Firefighters said a woman and dog escaped unharmed. The fire was contained to one apartment unit on the second level.

Public Information Officer Stuart Blade said the extremely cold temperatures presented some different challenges handling the flames.

"One firefighter was assigned to salting around the area because as water is flowing and possibly leaking around the house those spots are becoming ice instantly," said Blade.

The cause and dollar estimate of damage are not available as the investigation is ongoing.

ISSUE: Community

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Local restaurants offer warm welcome for homeless to escape the cold

Date: 1/30/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - A couple of east side restaurants are offering the homeless a place to stay out of the cold.

Scott Allen, general manager of Applebee's at Veterans Parkway and Eastland Drive, said people he's talked to are worried there are not enough warming centers in the Twin-Cities to protect the homeless and others in need.

"There are not enough places doing it," said Allen.

"More people need to be involved with trying to make sure no one's left out in the cold," he added.

The Bloomington Police Department posted a statement on its Facebook page Tuesday night that the only confirmed 24 hour warming center is The Salvation Army at 208 N. Oak St.

Allen said the homeless are welcome at Applebee's during regular store hours from 11 a.m. until midnight. However, he's willing to stay open all night if he has to.

"If it saves one life, then it's worth every minute because this is something I am passionate about, taking care of our community," Allen said.

Allen is serving up soup, hot chocolate, and coffee. Someone also dropped off a couple of boxes of scarves.

The general manager at IHOP on East Empire, Jenni Jennings, is serving coffee, hot chocolate, and a pancake to those seeking protection from the cold.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Ward 2 council hopefuls set for February 10 debate

Date: 2/1/2019

Time: 7am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - Voters will soon be hearing more from candidates running in the April 2nd local elections, including a face-to-face meeting a week from Sunday between the two people vying for alderman to represent Bloomington's southwest side.

Donna Boelen and Georgene Chissell are running for the Ward 2 alderman, a seat now held by David Sage, who's not running for re-election.

The League of Women Voters debate is scheduled for February 10 at 6 p.m. at the Luther Oaks retirement community at 601 Lutz Rd.

Prior to that event, all city candidates have been invited to a forum scheduled Saturday morning organized by the McLean County Republican Party, to be held at the Double Tree Hotel and Conference Center at 10 Brickyard Dr.

City elections are nonpartisan, but local GOP leaders have invited the candidates to share their platforms and answer questions. The event is scheduled to start at 9:30 a.m., and the cost for brunch is \$12.

Bloomington voters in April will choose aldermen in Wards 2, 4, 6, and 8. At least three wards will have new aldermen because incumbents decided they're not seeking re-election.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Abraham Lincoln letter returns to McLean County

Date: 2/1/2019

Time: 3pm

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - A letter written by the 16th president has found its way back to Bloomington.

The McLean County Museum of History has acquired a letter written by Abraham Lincoln to Kersey Fell, the brother of Jesse Fell.

The letter was purchased by the Merwin Foundation on behalf of the museum. The purchase price was undisclosed.

The 24-word letter pertained to a legal case and Lincoln writes he's unsure when he'll be back in Bloomington. It was sent to Fell's office located at 106 W. Washington Street and is dated November 1, 1859.

Museum executive director Adam Lovell explained the significance of Kersey's office located directly across the street from the old courthouse.

"At that office Jesse Fell was able to convince Lincoln to write an autobiography about himself and publish it in the east to really make a name for himself and become a viable candidate for the presidency in the 1860s," said Lovell.

"Other than living in Springfield, Lincoln spent a lot of his time in McLean County," said local author and Lincoln historian Guy Fraker. "It's a thrilling event for me personally to receive this letter but more importantly for the residents of this County."

The letter is one of the documents formally associated with the Law Practice of Abraham Lincoln Project.

It will be unveiled to the public February 18.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Sen. Durbin praises McLean County Democrats for party's statewide success, eyes his own re-election plans

Date: 2/1/2019

Time: 3pm

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - Illinois' senior U.S. Senator is crediting McLean County Democrats for providing new faces and new energy into the party that helped lead to the election of a Democratic governor.

Sen. Dick Durbin (D-IL) on Friday evening visited the new local Democratic Party headquarters in Downtown Bloomington.

Democrats won the governor's race, unseated three McLean County Board Republicans, and lifted Congressional candidate Betsy Dirksen Londrigan to a near upset of Republican incumbent Rodney Davis.

"That is what was the key to our victory November 6 was just so many new people, determined people, came forward and made a big, big difference, and elected a new governor for our state," said Durbin.

Durbin spoke glowingly of Gov. J.B. Pritzker's first weeks in office, saying he met with Pritzker the night before.

"I told him, 'your transition has been beautiful, the team that you've put together is a great team. You've got your hands full in terms of challenges with what they call Rauner's wreckage,' but he's up to it."

"The good news is I've talked to Republican leaders, I won't name names, who've said, 'We've been waiting for somebody to sit down and work with,'" Durbin said.

As for Durbin's own political future, he said no incumbent likes a primary, but welcomes a challenge from the left after newly-elected State Representative Anne Stava-Murray of Naperville indicated she will challenge him for the Democratic nomination next year.

"It's a free country," said Durbin.

"Most people don't like elections when they're in office, but I welcome it. It really is an opportunity to work the state," Durbin also said.

Durbin has not officially announced he's running for a fifth, six-year term. He was first elected to the Senate in 1996.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Davis visits CIRA employees impacted by shutdown

Date: 2/4/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - Illinois Congressman Rodney Davis continued to visit locations around Central Illinois impacted by the latest partial government shutdown.

U.S. Rep. Davis (R-IL) stopped Monday at the Central Illinois Regional Airport to talk with TSA agents and air traffic controllers who have been affected. Davis credited employees at the airport who have done their job even while the five-week shutdown took place.

"They're going to do what they signed up to do as TSA agents and the same for the air traffic controllers here, but that doesn't negate the fact that they should be getting paid while they do it," said Davis.

"They shouldn't have to rely upon the generosity of communities coming together to get basic things like food. Republicans and Democrats in Washington ought to be able to come together to make sure that doesn't happen."

"A federal government shouldn't be the only level of government to walk away from the table and shutdown. Imagine if your local city council decided to just not agree and let the police and fire stations shut down without any budget agreement, it doesn't happen in any other governmental level and it shouldn't happen here either," Davis added.

Unless an agreement is reached by February 15th, parts of the government will again be shut down.

ISSUE: Education

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Two local teachers finalists in statewide award

Date: 2/4/2019

Time: 3pm

Duration: 12 Hours

NORMAL - Two Bloomington-Normal high school teachers are finalists for the 2019 Golden Apple Awards for Excellence in Teaching, honoring teachers who impact school communities.

Normal West social studies teacher John Bierbaum and U-High social studies teacher Robert Fitzgerald are two of the 32 finalists for the award.

The statewide contest received 550 nominations from 71 counties. This was the first year the award was expanded to the entire state.

All Golden Apple Award finalists will be honored February 23 at the Golden Apple Celebration of Excellence at the Tinley Park Convention Center.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: NPD investigating child's death

Date: 2/4/2019

Time: 3pm

Duration: 12 Hours

NORMAL - Normal Police confirmed Monday night the department is investigating the death last month of an eight year old girl.

The child was a third-grader at Prairieland Elementary School in Normal, according to an email sent to Prairieland families.

Police are not identifying the child or circumstances about her death. The girl was initially taken to a Twin-Cities hospital the night of January 25th, and was pronounced dead the next morning after she was transported to Peoria's OSF St. Francis Medical Center.

Normal Police Chief Rick Bleichner said Monday the McLean and Peoria County coroners and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services are aiding the investigation.

"We had quite a bit of cooperation from all the agencies we're working with. It's a very complex investigation. It's still open, we're in the middle of it, and there's not a whole lot else that I can share at this point," said Bleichner.

The chief did not indicate when the investigation might be complete.

"We don't want to make any judgments until we have all the information," said Bleichner.

"It wouldn't be fair to the young little girl or any of her family," the chief said.

ISSUE: Government, Education

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Election year politics weigh heavily on Uptown demolition

Date: 2/5/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

NORMAL - Opponents of an office plaza in Uptown Normal have until Friday to save three buildings that would be demolished to make way for the five-story Trail East development.

Almost a month ago, the town's historic preservation commission refused to grant demolition permits for the buildings on Beaufort Street, along with a colorful mural adorning the exterior of one of the buildings.

Mayor Chris Koos said the town council appears ready to allow a 30 day window to expire, rejecting pleas to pursue landmark status for the structures on the northeast portion of Uptown Circle.

Council candidate Stan Nord has taken to social media pleading for the public to contact council members.

"A huge constituent base, and your own commission are asking to save a bit of history," Nord said in a Facebook posting.

Koos believes Nord's objections are politically motivated.

"I've heard this from 2001 from people that have run for office. They're taking a position of being against something so they can stand out in an election cycle. I've been down this road before four or five times already. That's what's going on here," said Koos.

Nord said the town is wasting taxpayer money by providing financial incentives for a project that isn't creating new businesses and jobs.

"Economic incentives should be used to bring new businesses, new revenue, and new permanent jobs to our community. The businesses

you say are moving into this building are already located in our community," said Nord.

"No new jobs, no new homes, no new customers to shop or eat in our community. We are just shuffling around what is already here at a huge expense to Normal residents, our history, and Unit 5," Nord also said.

Koos said existing businesses moving into Trail East are adding to their workforce, and Council member Kevin McCarthy claimed the planned food hall will act as an incubator so local food entrepreneurs can start up their own businesses.

"So we have a new business that's in the business of helping other people start businesses," said McCarthy, whose seat is not up for re-election this year.

McCarthy added the developer is planning on bringing in another business incubator to set up shop at Trail East.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Renner: Uptown project won't damage Bloomington-Normal partnership

Date: 2/5/2019

Time: 8am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - Bloomington Mayor Tari Renner said the city and Town of Normal are "joined at the hip" on many issues, so the planned Trail East development in Uptown Normal is not going to stand in the way of cooperation between the Twin-Cities.

Normal Town Council candidate Stan Nord claims in Facebook postings that Normal is using tax incentives to "poach" existing Bloomington businesses to move into the five-story building planned for the northeast side of Uptown Circle.

Renner said Nord has talked to him about the project, but the mayor wants more information about the developer's plans at Trail East.

According to Renner, "poaching" is probably too strong of a word to describe Normal's efforts in Uptown.

Occasionally, Renner said there's friction between the two, but that won't stop the local governments from working together.

"The Metro Zone, the possibility of a shared sales tax, many things that have strained Bloomington-Normal's relationship in the past half-decade or so, these things will happen from time to time," said Renner.

The thing that all citizens can be sure of is that Bloomington and Normal, neither of us are going anywhere," said Renner.

"We're going to work together no matter what the situation might be, and we're certainly going to work together on police, fire, 911, critical services that citizens depend on every day. We have to," the mayor said.

Renner acknowledged the communities are stronger when they work together on economic development.

"We're joined at the hip, and that's okay," said Renner.

"We're two separate jurisdictions, but we are one community," he added.

ISSUE: usiness

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Connect Transit seeks public input on fare hike plan

Date: 2/7/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - Bloomington-Normal's public transit system is preparing bus riders for fare increases that would start this summer, in addition to some other changes including eliminating of one of its routes.

Connect Transit held the first of eight so-called "community engagement" sessions Wednesday evening, and plan seven more during the next month.

Connect Transit General Manager Isaac Thorne is proposing the first fare hike in 12 years for one-way rides. Increases are planned for monthly passes and Connect Mobility rides that provide curb-to-curb service for passengers with disabilities.

Thorne said the system needs revenue for increased service, including Sunday buses that started running three-years ago.

Thorne said it's wrong to conclude that more revenue is needed because people don't ride the bus. Ridership continues to grow, according to Thorne, after a one percent increase last year and 2.3 million rides.

"Ridership is up 8 1/2 percent this year. We're also going to see another increase in January," said Thorne.

"I think we've had seven or eight straight months of increased ridership. Some of those months have been 10, 12 percent," Thorne added.

Pending trustees' approval, one-way fares will increase 25 cents to \$1.25 beginning July first and rise to \$1.50 in July of 2022. Monthly

passes would increase from 32 dollars to 36 dollars this summer, and climb to 40 dollars in 2022. Riders can opt for pay-as-you-go plan for the monthly passes.

"A lot of people with low income or on fixed income can not afford a \$32 pass or a \$36 pass. It allows them the option to pay as they go up to that \$36 mark, which we are proposing to have unlimited rides," said Thorne.

Connect Transit also wants to add express service at peak times on the Lime and Red routes to help offset the planned elimination of the Olive route. The Olive route currently takes riders from Main and Orlando in Normal to near Fort Jesse and Hershey Roads, east of Veterans Parkway.

Trustees plan to vote on the fare hikes and route changes after a March 11 public hearing at Normal's Uptown Station.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Illinois Senate passes bill to raise minimum wage

Date: 2/7/2019

Time: 3pm

Duration: 12 Hours

SPRINGFIELD- The State Senate is voting to raise the minimum wage in Illinois.

The bill phases in the increase starting at \$9.25 an hour next year and topping out at \$15 an hour in 2025.

Republican Senator Jason Barickman opposes the raise and thinks this would impact many groups.

"Not just the for-profit entities, this will hit units of local government, our univeristy community, non-profits and social service providers who are struggling locally and all around the state," said Barickman.

Local business owner David Marquardt from Denny's Doughnuts and Bakery told WJBC's Scott Laughlin this increase would be problematic.

"It would make things incredibly difficult and we'd have to make the decision to either raise prices on everything or just close it up," said Marquardt.

Supporters point out there is a small business tax credit to help offset the increase.

The legislation now heads to the House for consideration.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: High court reinstates civil suit against NPD in Beaman murder case

Date: 2/8/2019

Time: Midnight

Duration: 12 Hours

SPRINGFIELD - The Illinois Supreme Court on Thursday gave Alan Beaman of Rockford another chance to pursue his civil lawsuit accusing the Town of Normal and three retired police detectives of maliciously prosecuting him for murdering his ex-girlfriend.

Beaman has been out of jail for almost a decade after the High Court threw out his conviction in criminal court for the 1993 stabbing and

strangulation death of Illinois State University student Jennifer Lockmiller, who was from Decatur.

Thursday, the Supreme Court ruled in the civil case, reversing an appeals court decision in the town government's favor. Justices found the lower court failed to consider whether the conduct of now-retired detectives Tim Freesmeyer, Dave Warner, and Frank Zayas caused prosecutors to proceed with the criminal case. Justices on Thursday sent the case back to the appellate court.

Just before he left office four years ago, then-Gov. Pat Quinn pardoned Beaman "based upon innocence as if no conviction."

ISSUE: Police,Fire

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Mobile home fire ignited by owner trying to unfreeze pipes

Date: 2/8/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - Investigators believe a fire that destroyed a mobile home Friday on Bloomington's southeast side happened when the homeowner was using a portable propane torch to thaw frozen pipes.

The owner was not injured, but firefighters have not been able to account for two cats who lived with her at 10 Violet Lane in Prairieland Estates.

Bloomington firefighters found the home engulfed in flames when they arrived about 11 a.m. Normal firefighters were also called to help put out the fire in bitter cold conditions.

Relatives and the American Red Cross are helping the woman who lost her home in the blaze.

ISSUE: Business

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: City, Kroger revive plans for northeast side grocery store

Date: 2/11/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - Plans for Kroger to move its grocery store at Landmark Plaza in Normal to a nearby location on Bloomington's northeast side are apparently not dead.

Bloomington City Manager Tim Gleason said Kroger still wants to make infrastructure improvements at the site, between College Avenue and Jumer Drive.

Still, Gleason said he does not want to create false hope, so he's claiming it's unlikely the new Kroger will become a reality.

Gleason is recommending the city council Monday night give Kroger another year to meet its performance bond requirements.

The original deal required Kroger to add an eastbound right-turn lane on College, install public storm sewers, build public sidewalks on Hershey Road, and upgrade bus shelters on College and Hershey.

"The main concern (during) the time I've been here is that we get the things that were pledged under the performance bond, and letting Kroger know that there is a willingness that if something changes, let's get these incentives back on the table and make this thing

happen for the community," said Gleason, who became Bloomington's city manager last summer.

The city government offered rebating to Kroger a third of the local sales tax generated from the store to cover about ten percent of the \$25 million cost. That incentive has expired, but Gleason said city staffers would "gladly" reopen negotiations, and informal conversations with city council members indicate they too are in favor of talking with Kroger again about incentives.

"When we have had some discussion on this, I believe there is definitely a willingness, no different than there was when it was originally negotiated, if Kroger would decide to construct (a) new building," Gleason also said.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Judge to rule Wednesday on new trial request in 1991 Bloomington murder

Date: 2/12/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - A man convicted of killing his father in Downtown Bloomington almost 28 years ago will soon find out if he'll receive a new trial. The judge in the case said he'll announce his decision at hearing Wednesday morning.

The battle over a new trial for Donald Whalen, convicted of stabbing and beating his father William Whalen with knives and a pool cue at the Twenty Grand Tap in 1991, won't come to an end regardless of Judge Scott Drazewski's ruling. Whalen and the McLean County State's Attorney's office can appeal the decision.

Whalen is serving a 60 year sentence, but is eligible for parole in two years.

His father's real killer is a former bar employee and patron, allegedly enraged for being kicked out of the tavern that night, according to attorney Elliot Slosar of the University of Chicago's Exoneration Project.

Robert McElvaney took the stand two weeks ago, but exercised his Fifth Amendment right to remain silent. Bloomington Police never meaningfully investigated McElvaney, said Slosar.

The defense team argued crime scene technicians failed to perform proper scientific testing of a partial palm print on a supposedly bloody pool cue, which was a key piece of evidence at trial.

BPD crime scene tech Randy McKinley, later the city's police chief, testified at trial using a script prepared by prosecutors and he exaggerated his credentials to examine latent prints, according to Slosar.

Donald Whalen's DNA was not at the crime scene, but Assistant State's Attorney David Rossi said the Exoneration Project glosses over other evidence at trial. According to Rossi, Whalen benefited from his father's murder because he had access to family finances to support his drug habit.

The evidence, said Rossi, was more than adequate to convict Whalen.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Renner: New Illinois leadership seems promising

Date: 2/13/2019

Time: 3pm

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - A local leader is weighing in on the new administration in Springfield.

Bloomington Mayor Tari Renner is optimistic about Governor JB Pritzker and thinks early progress is happening.

"We're only a few weeks in but at this point things seem to be happening and there is some promise," said Renner.

Renner told WJBC's Scott Laughlin there are rumors of a capital bill which would be beneficial for the state and Bloomington.

"In our particular community it would allow us to move with paving streets, fixing sidewalks, our sewer system and possibly the Hamilton Road extension which we've been talking about for years," said Renner.

Renner added he's supportive of a \$15 minimum wage bill which passed the state Senate last week.

"We have some seasonal employees, I don't mean lifeguards at a pool, who work nine to ten months for us who are trying to support a family and don't earn a living wage," the mayor said.

"I think that anybody who spends the bulk of their life delivering public services to the city of Bloomington they ought to be able to afford to live in the city of Bloomington. I do support that effort, it's a gradual one over time and we can afford it and we will afford it," said Renner.

The measure passed in a House committee Wednesday and could go to the floor Thursday.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: One Voice group eyes federal help for transfer center, other projects

Date: 2/14/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - Community leaders visiting the nation's capitol next month have picked their priorities when they lobby with a unified voice to receive federal funding for local projects.

The One Voice Task Force, led by the Bloomington-Normal Economic Development Council, has placed a Connect Transit Transfer Center at the top of its priority list.

A proposal to build the transfer center along with a new Bloomington Public Library to replace the aging Market Street parking garage failed to win Bloomington City Council support last year. However, Connect Transit secured \$3 million in federal funding last year, and local leaders plan to meet with Department of Transportation staffers to obtain more funding during the D.C. trip.

The task force is also seeking funds for a railroad underpass between Uptown Circle and Uptown Station in Normal, a small business community incubator in a partnership with Illinois State University, and exploring with the National Park Service ways to promote Route 66 ahead of the Centennial celebration in 2026.

The One Voice Task Force has been making the trip to Washington since 2007, and since then, the EDC said various McLean County projects have received more than \$33.5 million. Last year's trip produced \$7.6 million for a pair of projects, according to the EDC.

This year's trip happens March 5-7.

ISSUE: Charity, Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Night In A Car raises \$90,000

Date: 2/14/2019

Time: 3pm

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - Home Sweet Home Ministries has released the results from its third annual Night In A Car event.

This years Night In A Car had over 150 participants and raised \$90,000.

Night In A Car is a homeless simulation in which participants live out of their cars during the overnight hours. The event was held February 1 at Trinity Lutheran Church in Bloomington.

"We are thrilled with the level of participation and support from our community," said Mary Ann Pullin, CEO of Home Sweet Home Ministries in a statement. "Hundreds of local residents are more aware of the realities of homelessness in our community and have raised funds to help meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness."

Home Sweet Home Ministries said Night In A Car has grown each year and they are preparing for an even larger turnout in 2020.

ISSUE: Government, Business

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Seeking social justice, OSF HealthCare hikes its minimum wage for workers

Date: 2/15/2019

Time: 7pm

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - OSF HealthCare is raising its minimum wage for workers to \$12 an hour, starting February 24, effecting employees in Bloomington, Pontiac, and Peoria.

It's part of OSF's commitment to social justice and positively impact the experience and livelihood of its current and future workforce, the health care provider said in a statement.

About 1,142 so-called Mission Partners, or about five percent of OSF's workforce of 21,000 people, will benefit from the \$2 per hour wage hike.

The majority of employees receiving the raise work in food service, housekeeping, gift shops, or OSF's guest services team.

OSF said the total cost to the Ministry for the pay hikes is about \$1.5 million.

Sister Judith Ann Duvall, Chairperson of the OSF HealthCare Board, said in a statement, "We raised our minimum wage to \$10 an hour in 2015 and are raising it again because it's the right thing to do. Our Sisters deeply value our Mission Partners and the wonderful service they bring to our Sacred Ministry."

In a statement, Bob Sehring, CEO, OSF HealthCare, said, "At OSF HealthCare, we believe our Mission Partners are called here, and we want to ensure that they are well cared for. Additionally, by increasing the minimum wage, we will be able to attract and retain new Mission

Partners in support of our Mission to serve with the greatest care and love.”

OSF runs OSF St. Joseph Medical Center in Bloomington, OSF St. James - John W. Albrecht Medical Center in Pontiac, and OSF St. Francis Medical Center in Peoria.

OSF made the announcement on the same day the Illinois House voted to raise the state's minimum wage \$1 to \$9.25 cents on January 1, increasing to \$15 by 2025. Governor J.B. Pritzker intends to sign the bill into law.

ISSUE: Charity

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Radio Bloomington-St. Jude Radiothon surpasses \$100,000 to help kids with cancer

Date: 2/15/2019

Time: 7pm

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - The 11th annual St. Jude Radiothon to help children with cancer and their families raised more money than last year, but one of the organizers of the two-day event on WJBC, and two of our sister stations at Radio Bloomington, said the goal was not to surpass last year's total, but to find cancer cures.

The radiothon, which ended Friday evening, raised \$103,480, better than the \$96,347 raised at last year's radiothon.

St. Jude Development Specialist Jill Libert said although McLean County has its economic challenges, she knew the community would come through for St. Jude.

"The McLean County-Bloomington area, Central Illinois, they really give," said Libert.

"They know the need, and it's not about themselves."

Libert said the organization has effectively demonstrated to the community there's a need to help young cancer patients.

"It is word of mouth, so we keep talking, and the airwaves are a fast, important tool to get our message out there," Libert said.

"We have three amazing stations, WJBC being one of them, and working to tell the listeners, explain what St. Jude Childrens Research is doing and what they're dollar counts for."

Dollars raised from the radiothon not only pays for treatment and research, but also travel, housing, and food for families of young patients at St. Jude Childrens Research Hospital, based in Memphis. The families' focus, said Libert, should be on their childrens' recovery.

ISSUE: Business, Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Koos: Amazon's investment shows Rivian is "real deal"

Date: 2/18/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

NORMAL - Normal Mayor Chris Koos is not saying, "I told you so," but Koos said he's known for quite some time that electric vehicle maker Rivian is the real deal.

Friday's announcement that Amazon is investing \$700 million in the fledgling company is an indication that Rivian decision-makers know what they're doing.

"With a significant investment like this, it really boosts their ability to deliver that product, but they've still got a long way to go. Getting a car to market is very, very difficult and very capital intensive, but I have faith that they will get it done," said Koos.

Rivian, based in Plymouth Michigan, plans to build the R1T pick-up truck and the R1S SUV at its plant, which used to be the Mitsubishi Motors factor in west Normal.

Koos attended the Hollywood-style unveiling of both vehicles just after Thanksgiving at the Los Angeles Auto Show, costing the town government \$2,326 for the three day trip, according to City Manager Pamela Reece. She said the mayor's annual travel budget is about \$8,000.

Local taxing bodies agreed to rebate all of Rivian's property taxes for five years, part of an incentive package requiring the company to meet investment and employment benchmarks. Rivian pledges to hire 1,000 people to work at the local plant.

"Rivian has always delivered more jobs than were required by their agreement with the county, and the town, and the taxing bodies in terms of rebates," said Koos.

"They've always been ahead of schedule, so I just think this will continue that," the mayor said.

ISSUE: Government, Education

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Dietz: Minimum wage bill mixed blessing

Date: 2/18/2019

Time: 3pm

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - Illinois State University President Larry Dietz is weighing in on the minimum wage bill that is headed to Governor JB Pritzker's desk.

The bill, SB 1, raises the minimum wage gradually over the next six years until it hits \$15 an hour in 2025. Dietz explained to WJBC's Scott Miller the impact of the bill on ISU.

"The financial impact over the phase in during the first year we anticipate it being around \$600,000," said Dietz. "When the bill is fully implemented it will be around \$7.5 million."

Dietz said a raise in pay is ultimately a mixed blessing.

"The positive part is the impact on students as we have somewhere around 5,000 student workers on campus and most work not because it's a hobby, they do because they need the money," Dietz said. "Students will have more money to pay bills and for school, but the downside to that is those bills will probably go up."

Dietz added that the pay hike could reduce the number of student jobs on campus, but it's too early to predict.

Gov. Pritzker is expected to sign the bill possibly sometime this week.

ISSUE: Government, Business

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Alderman eye continuing video gaming freeze

Date: 2/19/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - Bloomington alderman appear to extend the one-year moratorium on allowing businesses to install new video gaming machines.

At the same time, city leaders are considering imposing a fee on existing gaming machines to help raise funds for projects like a new O'Neill Park swimming pool.

Alderman Joni Painter, who pushed for the moratorium a year ago, said Monday night that gaming terminals aren't a cash cow for local governments, but actually a drain on revenue.

The city received \$800,000 in tax revenue from video gaming last year.

"Eight-hundred thousand barely covers the cost of regulating these machines and the social costs they incur," said Painter.

She added that gaming machines are taking money away from casinos, which are supposed to help schools.

"As video gambling has proliferated, it has cut into the profits of casinos, thus starving our schools of much needed funding," Painter also said.

The council plans to vote on the extended moratorium next Monday night. After that, the council will consider other options.

Alderman Amelia Buragas suggested the council should look at more restrictive zoning rules, capping the number of terminals in the city, and levying fees.

"I'm not sure what's most effective, but I'm curious to find out because I would like to know more about what is the scope of the issue we're looking at so we can make sure whatever action we take

accomplishes what we would like to see accomplished," Buragas also said.

City Manager Tim Gleason said charging businesses \$500 for each existing video gaming terminal would generate about \$125,000.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Area lawmakers differ from Pritzker on marijuana, tax plans, pensions

Date:2/20/2019

Time:5am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - The Republican leader in the Illinois Senate, Bill Brady of Bloomington, said on Wednesday he's opposed to the idea forwarded by Democratic Gov. J.B. Pritzker to legalize marijuana.

In his first budget address to the General Assembly, Pritzker on Wednesday proposed legalizing pot to help plug budget holes. Sen. Brady acknowledged some members of his party, including Bloomington State Senator Jason Barickman, are willing to consider the idea.

"I've got members of my caucus who are open to it, much because they want to be at the table and see that it's done right, but there are many in my caucus, like myself, who feel fundamentally that what we hear from law enforcement and what we hear from the medical community is (that marijuana is) harmful to our environment," Sen. Brady said.

In the Illinois House, Republican State Rep. Dan Brady of Bloomington is pleased with the governor's planned five percent across-the-board budget increases for higher education. For Illinois State University, Rep. Brady said that means an extra \$3.4 million.

Rep. Brady is opposed to a constitutional amendment to allow for a graduated income tax, which would increase the tax burden on people with higher income.

Rep. Brady is also not satisfied with Pritzker's pension fix.

"It's almost like trying to take your debt to your mortgage of your home, pay it off, and start another mortgage at a higher rate," Rep. Brady said.

State Rep. Keith Sommer, a Republican from Morton, said Pritzker's tax plan fell flat.

"I was somewhat surprised that even members of his side of the aisle did not applaud on a number of his tax proposals," said Sommer.

Representatives Brady and Sommer gave Pritzker high marks for style. Sommer said he appreciated Pritzker's positive tone and desire for civility in the General Assembly.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Earlier release date set for man convicted of 1995 Lincoln double murder

Date:2/21/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

LINCOLN - A man convicted of killing his grandparents in Lincoln almost 24 years ago is likely to be released from prison eight years sooner after Gov. Bruce Rauner, during his final days in office, altered the killer's sentence.

Jon Morgan was originally sentenced to 75 years in prison for shooting-to-death Keith and Lila Cearlock in April of 1995.

Morgan was 14 at the time, but he was tried as an adult.

Rauner decided the two sentences for first- and second-degree murder should run at the same time instead of one after the other, which reduces the sentence to 58 years.

The Illinois Department of Corrections, on its website, said Morgan is now eligible for parole March 22, 2024. Prior to the governor's decision, Morgan was eligible to be released in September 2032.

Morgan has served 21 years in prison, but he's eligible for good time credit. Morgan, now 38, is in the Shawnee Correctional Center, a medium-security prison in southern Illinois.

ISSUE: Business,Charity

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Normal's Destihl Brewery unveils Inclusion stout in Special Olympics fundraiser

Date:2/21/2019

Time: 3pm

Duration: 12 Hours

NORMAL - Destihl Brewery is introducing its newest beer on Saturday, an Irish-style stout, to help raise money for Special Olympics and the Illinois Law Enforcement Torch Run.

The official unveiling of the "Inclusion" beer happens Saturday from 11 a.m. to 10:30 p.m at the brewery at 1200 Greenbriar Dr. in Normal.

Inclusion is said to be medium-bodied with a dry finish, featuring aromas and flavors from roasted malts, with hints of caramel, chocolate, and coffee.

Inclusion is being sold on draft and in six-packs to go.

A portion of Saturday proceeds from Inclusion sales will benefit police charities and people with intellectual disabilities who participate in Special Olympics.

Destihl first opened for business in Normal in 2007. Illinois Special Olympics headquarters are also located in Normal.

Inclusion will be distributed exclusively in Central Illinois and sold at all Destihl locations.

Meantime, Destihl announced earlier this week it's signed a lease agreement to build a stand-alone site at the Carle at the Fields development in southwest Champaign, replacing Destihl's current Downtown Champaign location.

The opening is set for the summer of 2020.

ISSUE: Government, Business

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Mayor wants answers how economic development group spends taxpayer dollars

Date:2/22/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - The organization heading up local economic development efforts is again having to defend itself against criticism that taxpayers aren't getting their money's worth.

Bloomington Mayor Tari Renner is questioning whether the city should continue providing a \$100,000 annual subsidy for the Bloomington-Normal Economic Development Council.

"What do we get? What are the metrics that we get from the EDC for our \$100,000?"

"We do need more answers and hard information," the mayor said.

"I think the entire (city) council would agree on that, and I think the Town of Normal would agree on that," Renner also said.

Normal pays the same amount, and the town council expressed similar concerns last year.

EDC Vice President Zach Dietmeier said the organization is hiding nothing, but pledged to improve communication with local governments.

"We never, ever want anyone to think that we are hiding something, or not sharing information with, especially some of our largest investors at the EDC," said Dietmeier.

"We're happy to have those conversations, but at some point, there is only as much information as we can share."

Dietmeier said the subsidies are a "direct investment" in the community's future. He said the EDC's work was critical to Rivian Automotive's decision to build electric vehicles in the Twin-Cities.

"They said without the work that the EDC put in, they would not be in their Normal facility. I think that highlights in and of itself just how critical the work that we can and do here at the EDC," Dietmeier added.

Mayor Renner acknowledged the EDC has been in a transition period in which it's been led by an interim CEO since last May.

Renner added EDC provides an essential service, organizing the One Voice effort to lobby in Washington for federal dollars on a variety of local projects.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Truckers charged in McLean County's third largest cocaine bust

Date:2/22/2019

Time:

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - What's believed to be McLean County's third largest seizure of cocaine has two California men behind bars facing long prison sentences if they're convicted.

Illinois State Police were conducting a motor carrier safety inspection Thursday morning on a truck traveling northbound on Interstate 55 near Towanda. Assistant McLean County State's Attorney Jeff Horve said troopers became suspicious because the semi was off course from the intended California to Minnesota route.

Instead, Horve said police found out the truck was heading to Chicago to deliver what was allegedly inside the vehicle, 110 pounds of cocaine, stacked like bricks, vacuum-sealed, and ready for distribution.

A conservative estimate of the drug's street value is five-million dollars, said Horve.

The semi driver, Brandon Weise, 35, and passenger Miguel Martinez, 36, are each charged with controlled substance trafficking and possession of controlled substances with intent to deliver. They face prison sentences of 30 to 120 years if they're found guilty on the most serious charge.

A judge ordered the pair held on a \$500,000 cash bond.

ISSUE: Education

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: District 87: School crisis plan meets new state mandates

Date:2/23/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - A retired Bloomington Police officer, who's in charge of school security in District 87, believes the school system is well on its way to meeting new state guidelines in planning for crisis situations.

Brian Evans, District 87's Director of Safety and Security, says lockdown drills with law enforcement have to be finished within the first 90 days of the school year at all schools, and the state is requiring students participate in those drills.

"At the start of the next year, we will fall well within that 90 days, and for the last few years, especially down through the elementary level and junior high level, we've been doing it with staff and students for years," said Evans.

"Now, the new mandate states it must be done with students," Evans also said.

According to Evans, lesson plans are available to help teachers explain to younger kids that the lockdown drills are necessary to keep them safe.

"For the last three years, our staff had that access to lesson plans in order to help teach their kids what we're doing and why we are doing lockdown law enforcement drills," he added.

Evans updated District 87 school board members earlier this month about the district's crisis plan.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: City leaders save EDC from budget axe, prepare for vote on gas tax hike

Date:2/25/2019

Time: 3pm

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - Bloomington city leaders are apparently willing to save the Bloomington-Normal Economic Development Council from a reduction in the subsidy the city pays to fund the organization.

Instead, the proposed budget for the next fiscal year did not spare two other economic development organizations from the chopping

block, and the city plans to use that money to build its own local economic development team.

City Manager Tim Gleason said the city's EDC contribution will remain at \$100,000, equal to contributions from Normal and McLean County as EDC looks for a permanent CEO to replace Kyle Ham, who left last spring.

"This is one where we felt it would be detrimental if the City of Bloomington reduced its funding, as you got an entity that's beginning stages of recruitment and trying to attract that new executive director, that permanent executive director," said Gleason.

The proposed budget slashes its subsidy to the Bloomington-Normal Area Convention and Visitors Bureau by \$125,000 to \$350,000, and reduces its payment to BN Advantage by \$75,000 to \$50,000.

The city council in the coming weeks will decide in the coming weeks whether to double the local gasoline tax to eight cents per gallon to fund repairs to crumbling infrastructure. The motor fuel tax hike would generate an extra \$2.3 million in revenue, specifically to fund road repairs.

Alderman Mboka Mwilambwe asked staffers to provide a history of city spending on roads, showing previous councils neglected infrastructure work.

"In the past, we had years prior to me being on the council, we only spent about \$500,000 on road resurfacing," Mwilambwe said.

"One year, zero," Mayor Tari Renner chimed in.

Renner supports the four cent per gallon increase in the local motor fuel tax.

The council will also decide whether to impose a \$500 fee for each video gaming terminal in the city to help pay for scaled-back plans to build a new O'Neil Park swimming pool.

City Manager Gleason would like to scrap plans for an aquatic center, and focus mainly on a new swimming pool for the west side park.

The fee on gaming machines would raise about \$125,000.

ISSUE: Crime, Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Transgender prisoner at Pontiac files lawsuit to be moved to women's prison

Date:2/27/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

PONTIAC - A transgender prisoner is suing the state government to force the Illinois Department of Corrections to move the inmate from the Pontiac men's prison to a woman's facility to protect her from being raped.

Janiah Monroe, identified on the corrections department website as Andre Patterson, filed the federal lawsuit two months after another transgender prisoner, Strawberry Hampton, won a year-long legal battle and was moved to the woman's prison at the Logan County Correctional Center in Lincoln.

Like Hampton, Monroe claimed she's been sexually assaulted. Monroe said prisoners have also threatened her, and correctional officers subjected her to "invasive and inappropriate" pat-downs in which officers groped her.

"I have been sexually assaulted at every men's prison that IDOC put me into, including by IDOC staff. It's time for IDOC to recognize my gender and take responsibility for keeping me safe. As long as I'm in

a men's prison, IDOC can never protect me from sexual assault,” Monroe said in a prepared statement.

The corrections department denied her transfer request two years ago, according to a news release from her attorneys.

Monroe said she's tried to kill herself several times. Monroe is 29 and has been in prison for the past decade.

“Guards using coercion and unnecessary force is, sadly, widespread in Illinois prisons. But trans women in men’s prisons suffer this abuse more frequently, and at times with deadly consequences. Gendered bigotry shouldn’t be tolerated anywhere, but least of all in our prisons, which are supposed to be places of law,” said Alan Mills of Uptown People’s Law Center, co-counsel on the case.

“The IDOC’s policies and practices almost guarantee that trans women will experience sexual violence inside of Illinois’ prisons, and the IDOC has continually violated Janiah’s most basic rights to be free from violence and discrimination,” said Sheila Bedi of the MacArthur Justice Center, co-counsel on the case.

“This lawsuit seeks to hold the IDOC accountable for the harm and trauma it has imposed upon Janiah. And we hope that her struggle will finally force the IDOC to implement the systemic change needed to protect all trans women in Illinois prisons,” Bedi also said.

The corrections department website said Monroe is in prison for a long list of crimes, including second-degree murder, attempted murder, aggravated battery, and attempted aggravated arson.

Her projected release date isn't for another 35 years in 2054.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Three Pontiac prison guards charged with inmate's beating

Date:2/27/2019

Time: 3pm

Duration: 12 Hours

PONTIAC - Three Pontiac prison guards face criminal charges for allegedly injuring an inmate at the maximum security lock-up.

A felony charge of official misconduct and a misdemeanor charge of battery were Lt. James Fike, 31, of Bloomington, Sgt. Jason Cremer of Odell, and correctional officer Giovanni Rodriguez, 21, of Normal.

The charges, filed in Livingston County, accuse Rodriguez of striking inmate Asante Brown's head on the ground, while Cremer and Fike allegedly beat Brown February 3.

Records from the Illinois Department of Corrections indicate Brown²³, is serving a two-year sentence for a Champaign County criminal sexual abuse conviction.

Details about Brown's injuries are not available. The charges follow an investigation by the corrections department and the Illinois State Police Division of Internal Investigation.

A judge set Cremer and Fike's bail at \$5,000, requiring them to post \$500 to be released from jail. Bond for Rodriguez is at \$3,000, requiring him to post \$300 to be released.

All three guards have court appearances next month.

ISSUE: Education

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Police officers to work at all Unit 5 junior highs

Date:2/27/2019

Time: 10pm

Duration: 12 Hours

NORMAL - Unit 5 and Normal Police are teaming up to beef up security at the district's four junior high schools.

The school board Wednesday night adopted a memorandum of understanding in which the police department agrees to assign two more school resource officers to work at the junior highs.

That means there will be a full-time resource officer at Evans, Chiddix, Kingsley, and Parkside Junior Highs.

In turn, the school district will pay between 50 percent and 75 percent of the officers' salaries and fringe benefits.

Until now, there were officers who floated from one school to another. Superintendent Mark Daniel said those officers weren't able to build the same relationships with students, compared with the officer who worked all the time at Evans Junior High.

"We are excited about this opportunity and thank the Town of Normal for working with us," said Daniel.

Unit 5 and NPD have full-time officers assigned at the two high schools, Normal Community and Normal West.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Aldermen hear pleas for action to curb deadly violence

Date:2/28/2019

Time: 10 pm

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - A Bloomington property owner and her husband appealed to the city council Monday night to take quick action against escalating violence on the near west side.

Karen Kinsella said she spoke out not to criticize city leaders, but to help them come up with solutions for a neighborhood that had almost no violent crime last summer and is now considered a high crime area because of a rash of shootings. Gunfire on October 31 in the 1300 block of North Oak Street killed Trevonte Kirkwood, 27, of Bloomington.

Kinsella said, "Safety is the number one priority of every government, and when citizens don't feel safe, where do you go?"

"My tenants are concerned for their safety, so I have to field calls from them. My husband and I are concerned with our safety," Kinsella also said.

Mayor Tari Renner praised Kinsella for taking her concerns to the council.

"I think we need immediate action as soon as possible, like tonight, tomorrow, the next day," said Renner.

"When it comes to something like this, cutting a deal on a multi-million dollar building is a hard, difficult thing to do, but patrolling and having cops walk a beat and going to into an area can be done within minutes," Renner said.

Police Chief Clay Wheeler said the department has already placed extra patrols in the area.

"Generally, vehicular patrols, but we've also asked the officers to go up there and do what we refer to as 'knock and talk,' to go into the

area and make contact with the residents and talk to them about what they've seen in the neighborhood, heard in the neighborhood, what their feeling is of how the neighborhood has changed," Chief Wheeler said.

The chief is likely to brief the council on the problem at an upcoming committee-of-the-whole meeting.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Normal's Koos probed for alleged Open Meetings Act violations

Date:3/1/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

NORMAL - The Illinois Attorney General's office is investigating whether Normal Mayor Chris Koos violated the state's Open Meetings Act when he decided a town council candidate should not have been allowed to speak at a recent council meeting.

Karyn Smith asked to speak during the public comment portion of the February 4 council meeting. Smith sought to preserve three buildings set for demolition to make way for the Trail East complex on the northeast portion of Uptown Circle.

Smith was told she could not address the council on a topic that was not on that night's agenda. However, its exclusion as an agenda item meant the council was choosing not to designate the Beaufort Street buildings as historic landmarks before a deadline passed later that week.

"I don't control the agenda, so how can you use this as a circular argument for keeping me from speaking on something that you are keeping off the agenda? So I filed an appeal under the Open Meetings Act," said Smith.

"They knew that by not bringing it up (on the agenda), it would die a quiet death by that Friday," Smith also said.

A lawyer in the Attorney General's Public Access Bureau determined "further action is warranted" on Smith's complaint. Koos is being asked to provide a "detailed written response" explaining why he didn't allow Smith to speak.

The Mayor declined comment.

This isn't the first time the Attorney General's office is investigating alleged Open Meetings Act violations in Normal. Back in 2016, the AG's office requested the town government remove a rule limiting people from speaking to the council more than once during a 45 day period.

Attorney General spokeswoman Annie Thompson said there are no fines or other penalties if the office finds violations. However, Thompson said local leaders would be briefed on what's required and how to comply with the Open Meetings Act.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Bloomington shows off its hub promoting world's most famous road

Date:3/4/2019

Time: 5 am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - It's more than a sign that was unveiled in bitter cold temperatures in downtown Bloomington.

The Route 66 Experience Hub at the northeast corner of Main and Jefferson Streets is intended to boost tourism.

The hub lights up at night, and at the press of the button, visitors can also hear the late Bobby Troup's hit song about the Chicago-to-California roadway. They'll learn about various attractions and the historic significance of Route 66,

Mayor Tari Renner believes the Experience Hub is an economic shot-in-the-arm for downtown, even though he acknowledges there's a lot of work to do to revitalize the area.

"Any guide to Route 66 is going to have us on it, in addition to our visitors center, and this sign," said Renner.

"We're very, very proud of this. Of course, it's consistent with the historic character of our downtown, and it's art deco," Renner added.

The executive director of the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway, Bill Kelly, believes what was unveiled downtown is more than just a sign.

"There are people who are going to want to get their picture taken with it. One of the things about 66 travelers, they're always looking for their own personal experience on the most famous road in the world," Kelly said.

The Experience Hub cost \$30,000. The city government's share of the cost \$7,500. The rest is paid for by the state government and the Federal Highway Administration.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Normal council approves water rate hike

Date:3/4/2019

Time: 3pm

Duration: 12 Hours

NORMAL - Water rates are on the rise in Normal starting April first despite objections from two town council members.

Council member Scott Preston said the fund used to pay for water projects has sufficient reserves this coming year, so he doesn't think the two percent increase is necessary while a comprehensive rate study is finished in the next year or two.

"When I look at our five-year projections, it doesn't look like in the first year that this two percent increase is needed," said Preston.

Council member Kathleen Lorenz wanted to spare property owners sticker shock from fee increases for other government services.

"I would still advocate for a pause on this annual bump in light of some of the other fee increases that we've had to put in play for rate restructures on sewer and garbage, as well, since that all hits the same bill," Lorenz said.

One of the four council members who voted for the increase, Kevin McCarthy, said it's important to maintain solid reserves and levy incremental rate hikes instead of much larger ones.

"I'd like to say on a relatively minor, pretty minor, increase to make sure that we don't fall behind and have to really sock it to the Normal taxpayers at one time," said McCarthy.

Council member Jeff Fritzen also emphasized the need to keep enough reserves on hand to repair major water system breakdowns, should they occur.

"Especially since we've positioned ourselves the way we have since the last study, it's prudent to continue that course until another more in-depth study can be completed," Fritzen said.

Town staffers say the average household consuming five-thousand gallons of water will pay 77 cents more per month, or an extra \$9.24 for the year.

The increase will generate an estimated \$186,000 for the water fund.

Also voting for the higher rates were R.C. McBride and Chemberly Cummings. Mayor Chris Koos did not attend Monday night's meeting.

ISSUE: Crime, Religion

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Court sides with Central Illinois Catholics in legal battle over Archbishop Sheen's remains

Date:3/5/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

PEORIA - The remains of the famed Archbishop Fulton Sheen of El Paso appear to be a step closer to being moved to Central Illinois from Sheen's current resting place in New York.

An appeals court in New York voted unanimously to side with Sheen's niece, Joan Sheen Cunningham, who wants her uncle's remains moved to a shrine at Peoria's St. Mary's Cathedral.

Sheen is buried now at New York's St. Patrick's Cathedral, and the New York Archdiocese has challenged two previous court rulings allowing for the transfer.

In a news release, the Diocese of Peoria pleaded with the New York Catholic Church to end the "legal tug-of-war."

"It is our hope that the Archdiocese of New York will acknowledge that it is time to move on and begin to assist in advancing the Cause of Archbishop Fulton Sheen, the Peoria Diocese said in a news release.

The Peoria Diocese, which covers McLean County, believes moving Sheen's remains closer to home will speed-up the process to elevate him to sainthood.

"We look forward to working with the Archdiocese of New York to carry out the Court's decision allowing Joan Sheen Cunningham to transfer the earthly remains of Archbishop Fulton Sheen. But even more we look forward to celebrating with people from all across our country and the entire world in celebrating the Beatification of Archbishop Fulton Sheen, including our many friends from the Archdiocese of New York. It does not go without notice that today's ruling comes in this 100th year anniversary of Sheen's ordination to the priesthood at St. Mary's Cathedral in Peoria, the very place that Joan hopes to transfer him," the Peoria Diocese also said.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Council hopefuls weigh in on gas tax hike

Date:3/5/2019

Time: 3pm

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - A proposed jump in the local gasoline tax to fund street repairs appears to be a tough sell among candidates running for Bloomington City Council seats.

None of the candidates who attended a Tuesday night forum, hosted by the Bloomington-Normal Association of Realtors, expressed support for the idea.

Aldermen will soon consider whether to double the local motor fuel tax to eight cents per gallon, raising an estimated two-point-three million dollars a year for road improvements.

Ward 6 incumbent Alderman Karen Schmidt said she's talked to only one resident who favored a higher gas tax, and Schmidt is worried the local tax would come at the same time state lawmakers raise the gas tax for infrastructure work.

"So far for me, I need to be satisfied that I know what our current money is going for in terms of roads, and I'm still really cautious about what our state might do in terms of an infrastructure package," Schmidt said.

Schmidt is being challenged for her seat by local activist Jenn Carrillo, who did not attend the forum.

Ward 2 council candidate Donna Boelen said a higher gas tax is not business friendly, and hurts the working poor. She thinks enough money can be found in the general fund for road work.

Ward 4 council hopeful Don "Chip" Frank said he's against raising taxes and fees.

"We could do it without raising taxes," said Frank.

"It's going to be hard, but that's what it's all about."

Frank's opponent in Ward 4 is Julie Imig. Boelen faces Georgene Chissell in the April 2nd city elections.

Imig and Boelen did not address the topic when an audience member posed the question for all the candidates.

Jeff Crabill, who's unopposed in Ward 8, said raising the gas tax should not be the council's first option.

"If we can say this is what we can pull out of the budget for infrastructure, then if we've done all we can, maybe we raise the fuel tax," Crabill said.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Dwight mayor defends proposed ICE Detention Center

Date:3/6/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

DWIGHT - The mayor of Dwight says he's disgusted with "false or negative" narratives created by opponents of a proposed 45-million dollar immigrant detention center in the Livingston County community.

Mayor Jared Anderson is responding to the criticism in a lengthy Facebook posting. He said the non-criminal detainees housed at Dwight would be treated with more compassion because they would no longer be held in small jail cells.

Anderson said there would be 64 people staying in a dorm-like setting, each having a bunk bed and can watch television in a common area.

He said there will be an indoor recreation center, and outdoor athletic facilities, free use of musical instruments in a chapel, and they would have access to iPads and immigration law books.

The mayor said the facility would provide 360 jobs when fully staffed, with detention officers and registered nurses making up to \$81,000. Shipping clerks would make almost \$52,000 a year.

Anderson said there would also be as many as 400 construction jobs for the year or longer that the center is being built, and those workers would be spending money during that time at area gas stations and restaurants.

The Dwight Village Board is expected to vote Monday on annexing the property near Interstate 55 and Illinois Route 17. The group No ICE Dwight is calling on detention center opponents to attend that meeting.

ISSUE: Police, Fire

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Endangered Livingston County runaway found at Twin-Cities hotel

Date:3/6/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - Livingston County Sheriff's detectives said they found an endangered runaway girl on Wednesday at a Bloomington hotel after she had been missing for five days.

A man who was with the girl faces possible criminal charges, according to Sheriff Tony Childress.

The girl had been missing from the Emington area, northeast of Pontiac, since last Friday.

Childress said the numerous tips the department received on social media were vital in helping find the girl at Bloomington's Red Roof Inn.

Childress said his department was assisted by Bloomington and Normal Police, and the Livingston County State's Attorney's office.

ISSUE: Business

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: City ready to help new owner fill State Farm building

Date:3/7/2019

Time:5 am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - Bloomington city leaders stand ready to work with the prospective buyer of State Farm's former headquarters in Downtown Bloomington.

However, City Manager Tim Gleason is not sure how the government would help the new owner find tenants to fill 200-thousand square feet of office space in the nearly 90-year old building located at 112 E. Washington St.

State Farm announced Wednesday it entered into purchase agreement with an unidentified buyer. Gleason said the company lived up to its reputation as a "good neighbor," and he believes the announcement is creating a buzz helping the rest of the downtown.

"The Downtown was very appealing, I'm sure, for any potential buyer. State Farm put a great marketing team on this as well," said Gleason.

"I think what the City of Bloomington and other partners can do is just stand ready to be part of the discussion if need be."

According to Gleason, there were no "meaningful discussions" about the city government buying the building, which was State Farm's corporate headquarters until 1974.

There was cautious optimism State Farm would find a buyer, said Gleason.

"I'm very impressed with State Farm's desire to fill that void, knew what the potential impacts were, and I'm not surprised, first of all, but very happy that this is coming together," Gleason also said.

Both parties expect to close on the sale sometime this summer.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Suspect in officer's murder has been wanted here since Christmas for Bloomington home break-ins, high-speed chase

Date:3/7/2019

Time: 3pm

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - Suspected cop killer Floyd Brown, who's now in police custody, was no stranger to local authorities. Bloomington Police have been looking for Brown, 39, of Springfield, since just before Christmas when he led officers on a high-speed chase that ended in a multi-car crash on Veterans Parkway.

Police said at the time they were investigating a series of burglaries on the city's east and southeast side, and Brown had been linked to a December 23rd home break-in in the 3200 block of Dorset Court.

Police said they started chasing Brown in the 900 block of Arcadia Drive where Brown allegedly drove off in a black Dodge Charger.

Police lost contact with Brown because he was driving without headlights.

Brown reportedly turned on Veterans Parkway off East Oakland Avenue and crashed into several cars at Veterans and G.E. Road.

No one suffered life-threatening injuries, but Brown ran from the scene.

Only about three weeks ago, Bloomington Police put out a statement asking the public for tips to help find Brown, who's charged in a McLean County warrant for reckless driving and three counts of residential burglary.

Bloomington and Normal PD, along with McLean County Sheriff's deputies assisted State Police troopers in trying to arrest Brown for fatally shooting McHenry County Sheriff's Deputy Jacob Keltner, who served on a U.S. Marshal's task force trying to capture Brown Thursday morning at a Rockford hotel.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Mayor Renner won't veto extended video gaming ban

Date:3/11/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - Bloomington Mayor Tari Renner will not veto recent city council action extending the freeze on new video gaming machines in the city to give aldermen more time to examine video gaming's impact on the community.

Renner said he considered a veto because he didn't want to leave in limbo businesses requesting additional gaming terminals. The mayor said some real estate deals are also on hold awaiting council action.

"I'm not a gambler, but I know that it has economic development implications for the sale of property, and for businesses, and for jobs in our community. That's why I was opposed to the extension," said Renner.

The council two weeks ago voted 5-4 on lengthening the one-year ban to September 1 instead of April 9. Alderman Kimberly Bray wants city staffers to study the impact of video gaming, especially if state lawmakers approve sports betting and recreational use of marijuana.

Renner is fine with giving staffers a few months to come up with possible video gaming regulations.

"I've got assurances from the council, as well as from the city manager that we can get our work done on this temporary extension of the moratorium through late June or early July. That would have been my goal. My goal would have been to try to not keep as many businesses in limbo as we move forward," the mayor also said.

The city council Monday night will decide whether to allow fraternal groups to receive video gaming licenses while the temporary ban is in place. City leaders say the Knights of Columbus wants video gaming, but the organization's plans have been on hold during the moratorium.

ISSUE: Community

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Healthcare workers the heartbeat of new legislation

Date:3/11/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

SPRINGFIELD- Here's another push for some of the hands-on health care workers to get a raise.

State Rep. Jaime Andrade has sponsored this bill before.

"This is so important that our seniors get to live where they most feel comfortable. That's why it's a moral obligation. Our agencies that provide this service are basically are going to shut down very, very, very soon if we do not pass this legislation," Andrade told reporters at the Capitol.

Advocates say people who provide health care in patients' homes soon find they can make more money working at McDonald's.

"When am I gonna retire?" said home care worker Diana Inman.

She's 69.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Parked car struck by gunfire

Date:3/11/2019

Time: 3pm

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - A parked car with no one inside was hit by gunfire Monday evening on Bloomington's near east side.

Police said the car was struck while parked near the intersection of Oak and Mill Streets, and investigators found at least six shell casings at the scene.

Police have not made any arrests for the shooting, which was reported about 6:30 p.m.

Anyone with information is asked to call Bloomington Police at 309-820-8888 or McLean County Crime Stoppers at 309-828-1111.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: City forms its own economic development team

Date:3/12/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - A retiring Bloomington alderman isn't happy with the outside agencies performing economic development work for the city.

Alderman Diana Hauman, who's not running for re-election in Ward 8, is pleased the city government is building its own economic development team.

"Over the 4 1/2-years I've been here, I've not been satisfied with the work of the outside entities on our behalf or the progress we've made internally. That's not a knock on our city. It's just I haven't seen it as a priority," said Hauman, whose ward covers southeast Bloomington.

The council voted unanimously Monday to establish an economic development department by reallocating existing dollars and reassigning existing city staff. The department will be led by Melissa Hon who's leaving her post as assistant to the city manager.

De Urban, owner of Alley Kats Arts and Antiques at 401 S. Center St., said she's overjoyed by the change. What's needed, according to Urban, is for city staffers to hear from small business owners about what's needed to help them succeed.

"I think it's important to hear the voices of those of us that are in small business, to be able to have a place to go and communicate that with the people that are the powers-that-be," said Urban said.

If the council approves the budget, the new department will receive \$200,000 in seed money from reductions the city has made in subsidies paid to the Bloomington-Normal Area Convention and Visitors Bureau and B-N Advantage.

ISSUE: Community

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Trailblazing girls form first all-female Boy Scouts troop in Twin-Cities

Date:3/13/2019

Time:5am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - Some girls in the Twin-Cities are blazing a trail for others in an organization that's thought of as just for boys.

The W.D. Boyce Council, overseeing Scouts BSA, or Boy Scouts of America, for most of central Illinois, including Bloomington-Normal, has formed the area's first all-girls troop.

The five girls, ages 12 to 14, are members of Troop 9903.

W.D. Boyce Council executive director Lee Shaw Jr. said the Boy Scouts aren't competing with Girl Scouts. He said it's good for girls to have options, and to involve entire families in scouting.

"Whether it's the Girl Scouts, whether it is the Boys and Girls Club, whether it's the Y, whether it's 4H, I believe there is room for all of us because at the end of the day, we will all be much better if we know our young people are participating in any or all of those programs," said Shaw.

All the troop members have brothers in Boy Scouts, including Karen Espinosa, 12, an Evans Jr. High 7th grader.

"I saw the cool things he did in camps, and the activities he did. So I decided to be in this troop so I could make new friends and learn stuff about nature and learn how to use pocket knives and different things, and have new skills," she said.

"I get to go fishing, first aid, a lot of stuff that I'm looking forward to, rock climbing that I've known with Boy Scouts because of my brother," said Lauren Husted, 13, of Clinton.

Scoutmaster Jo Litwiller said the girls troops will be separate from the boys.

"We know that boys and girls do mature at a different rate. Some of the differences are obvious at this age, but they're also still going through the stage of forming the truth and patrol, and getting to know

one another. A lot of things are going to be just the same. It's just they're girls, instead of boys," said Litwiller.

The W.D. Boyce Council has formed a second all-girls troop based in Canton.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: City shows off Hamilton Road extension plans

Date:3/15/2019

Time:5am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - It's only three-thousand feet of new roadway. However, south Bloomington residents and city leaders hope the planned extension of Hamilton Road, from Commerce Parkway to Bunn Street, will divert traffic from busy Veterans Parkway and boost prospects for new businesses in the area.

The city hosted an informational meeting Thursday night at Prairie Vista Golf Course for the public to provide feedback, which is a requirement for the city to receive \$8 million in federal funds.

The remaining \$4.5 million will come from the city's share of state motor fuel taxes, but the project won't happen until there's an agreement with Norfolk Southern Railway for installation of an at-grade crossing.

Martin Weigman, who lives in nearby Wittenberg Woods, said he's been waiting for the road extension since 2005.

"We've been waiting for this road, so it's easy access to get to the eastern part of the city, and hopefully maybe some more growth will come out here, like some shopping and maybe a grocery store, something besides nothing out here," Weigman said.

Public Works Director Jim Karch said the project is scheduled for completion in mid-2022 as negotiations with the railroad have broken off in the past.

"Even though it's now March of 2019, as many phases, as much work as this will take, we still anticipate for this to be completed within a three-year period," said Karch.

"That's the type of length of time it takes for railroad negotiations to get a project of this size, a \$12.5 million job done," Karch added.

According to Karch, motorists won't need to use the Rhodes Lane-Morrissey Drive intersection, which is considered one of the city's most dangerous intersections.

The project, when its finished, will include traffic signals at Bunn and Commerce, and a connection to Constitution Trail.

ISSUE: Education,Business

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Heartland trustees to vote on Brandt tax break, four new college sports

Date:3/16/2019

Time:5am

Duration: 12 Hours

NORMAL - One of the taxing bodies granting financial incentives to Canadian agricultural equipment manufacturer Brandt Industries is being asked to go ahead with the initial tax abatement.

Heartland Community College administrators are telling the Board of Trustees that Brandt is exceeding terms of the "performance-based" Project Development Agreement after the first year. In February, Brandt hired 77 full-time workers, exceeding the minimum performance threshold of 50 full-time employees at its plant off Interstate 39, just north of Normal.

Also, Heartland staffers and Brandt executives are discussing options for the company's in kind contribution to the district. Brandt has also pledged an in kind contribution to Unit 5.

Heartland trustees at their meeting in Lincoln Tuesday night will consider adding four sports to the college's athletics program. The addition of women's volleyball, women's and men's cross country, and men's golf would cost \$98,000 a year, funded by student activity fees.

The new sports would start in the fall of 2020, 14 years after Heartland launched an athletics program with men's and women's soccer, baseball, and softball.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: City manager counting council votes on doubling gas tax

Date:3/19/2019

Time:5am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - Bloomington City Manager Tim Gleason is providing some intrigue to the release in a few days of the next city council agenda.

At Monday night's committee-of-the-whole meeting, Gleason said he'll place on the agenda a proposed gas tax hike only if he believes a majority of council members are in favor of the idea.

The council is considering whether to double the local motor fuel tax to eight cents per gallon. The increase would generate an estimated \$2.3 million a year to repair crumbling streets, which city leaders acknowledge have been neglected over the years.

Ward 6 Alderman Karen Schmidt, who's up for re-election April 2, said constituents have been making a lot of suggestions, including levying a temporary gas tax hike.

"I've heard suggestions that we have a very specific sunset around this, that we try it for a year or two years, let the public see what we're capable of doing, and then move it forward," said Schmidt.

Mayor Tari Renner favors raising the gas tax.

"Streets don't pave themselves," said Renner.

"If it's not a four cent a gallon gas tax, or whatever it is, if it's a reallocation of money, then what is it? We need answers to these questions," the mayor said.

Ward 3 Alderman Mboka Mwilambwe worries the city might not be able to manage the public's expectations for filling potholes and making other repairs.

Gleason said there would be a link to the city's website showing the work that's being done during construction season.

"It's going to have tons of pictures. 'This is what it looked like in June. This is what it looked like in July,' and have signage saying that this is your local motor fuel tax dollars at work," said Gleason.

The council meets again next Monday night at 6 p.m.

ISSUE: Education

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Heartland trustees add four new sports, approve Brandt incentives

Date:3/19/2019

Time:5am

Duration: 12 Hours

LINCOLN - A women's volleyball team will take the court in the fall of 2020 for Heartland Community College, one of four new sports approved Tuesday night by the college's Board of Trustees.

The board also unanimously agreed to field teams in women's and men's cross country and men's golf. The annual cost for the new programs is \$98,000, to be funded by student activity fees.

The National Junior College Athletic Association approved Heartland's request to add new sports last fall. Heartland will use existing athletic facilities.

Trustees, meeting in Lincoln, were unanimous in deciding to keep their part of the bargain in the development agreement local taxing bodies reached with Brandt Industries.

Heartland will go ahead with the first year of a series of property tax abatements after the Canadian agricultural equipment maker has

hired more than the required 50 full-time workers for its factory just north of Normal. A staff report indicated Brandt had 77 full-timers working there last month.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: BPD captures Kappa stabbing suspect

Date:3/19/2019

Time:3pm

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - Bloomington Police aided Woodford County Sheriff's deputies in the arrest of a suspect in a Tuesday morning stabbing in Kappa.

Meantime, police are asking for the public's help to find a man from Normal who's considered a person of interest and wanted for questioning in the attack.

Authorities received a report about 8:25 a.m Tuesday that two men forced their way into a home on Jones Street in Kappa, and there was a man bleeding inside the house.

Police said they found a male victim suffering from apparent stab wounds to the stomach. He was taken to Advocate BroMenn Medical Center for treatment of non-life threatening injuries.

About 40 minutes after the stabbing, police said they found the suspect's abandoned vehicle in Bloomington. A short-time later, they arrested Scott Duckworth, 43, on an aggravated battery charge.

Police were looking for Jose Lemous, 40, of Normal. Anyone with information about his whereabouts is asked to call the Woodford County Sheriff's Office or local police.

Police said they questioned a juvenile boy, but released him.

Investigators said they have not determined a motive for the stabbing.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Safety worries prompt push for reduced city speed limit

Date:3/20/2019

Time:5am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - A commission created by the Bloomington City Council about two years ago is devising a way for residents to decide if they want motorists to drive slower in their neighborhoods.

The city's transportation commission is expected to vote next month on a proposal in which residents can sign petitions and eventually cast ballots whether to reduce the speed limit.

Drivers can't go faster than 30 miles-per-hour in neighborhoods that don't have speed limit signs. People who live there can vote to have the speed limit lowered to 25 miles-per-hour.

"I'm hoping that this will make it possible for people to be heard and responded to," said Commissioner Kate Browne.

"Remember, we're doing this because people are already feeling unsafe in their neighborhoods," Browne also said.

Safety a major concern in neighborhoods where there are many walkers, particularly around Illinois Wesleyan University, according to Commission Chairman Michael Gorman.

"There are plenty of neighborhoods in the community where people want their street to feel more like a safe, comfortable neighborhood street. What that means to people is generally that people are driving slower, that it feels more pedestrian friendly," said Gorman.

Once 60 percent of the city is designated as a "Reduced Speed Limit Area," city staffers would prepare an ordinance establishing a city-wide reduction to 30 miles-per-hour.

The commission's recommendations would be sent to the city council for final approval.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Former local priests among the accused in law firm's sexual abuse report

Date:3/20/2019

Time:3pm

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - A Chicago area law firm is naming a half-dozen priests accused of sexual abuse who served in Bloomington-Normal.

The law firm Jeff Anderson and Associates represents alleged victims, and on Wednesday it released a report identifying the names of every Catholic priest and lay person in Illinois who has been accused of sexual misconduct.

The report says a man came forward in 2004 claiming Thomas Miller sexually abused him at Bloomington's Holy Trinity Church in 1979, then other survivors made similar allegations. Miller was assigned to Holy Trinity from 1980 to 1983.

William Harbert was at Holy Trinity from 1963 to 1966. He's accused of sexually abusing at least five children in Pekin, Rock Island, Moline, and Walnut.

Thomas Maloney allegedly molested at least five children. He worked at Epiphany Catholic Church in Normal from 1974 to 1976, and again from 1996 to 2002. Maloney was also assigned to Chenoa's St. Joseph Catholic Church from 1977 to 1995.

Duane Leclercq was accused of sexually abusing a minor in the 1980's. He was assigned to Holy Trinity from 1965 to 1968.

Louis Condon, assigned to Holy Trinity from 1979 to 1980, allegedly molested a girl and a boy in Lincoln, and a boy in Delavan.

Michael Van Acker was accused of child sexual abuse in the 1980's. He worked at Holy Trinity in 1982 and Central Catholic High School from 1983 to 1986.

The law firm does not know the whereabouts of Miller, Leclercq, and Van Acker. Harbert, Maloney, and Condon have died.

In all, the law firm named 29 priests who served with the Catholic Diocese of Peoria, which covers McLean County. In a statement, the diocese said all but three of the cases had previously been made public.

The Peoria diocese said it is committed to maintaining a safe environment to all children.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Familiar face leads search for next local economic development chief

Date:3/21/2019

Time:5am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - A consultant who's very familiar with the community is coordinating the search for the next President and Chief Executive Officer of the Bloomington-Normal Economic Development Council.

Applicants are being asked to send their resumes, cover letters, and references to former Normal City Manager Mark Peterson, who is now Vice President of Northbrook-based Gov H-R U-S-A.

Peterson retired last year after 20 years as city manager. He's now working for the company that conducted job searches leading to the hiring of Peterson's replacement, current Normal City Manager Pamela Reece, and Bloomington City Manager Tim Gleason.

In his new job, Peterson is acting as a recruiter to fill the job which has been held on an interim basis by Mike O'Grady. Former CEO Kyle Ham took a job in the private sector last year.

The job posting lists a starting annual salary range of \$180,000 to \$200,000 with what's described as an "outstanding fringe benefit package."

The job notice said the ideal candidate needs to have a healthy mix of private and public sector experience and be well-versed in all areas of community economic development.

The next EDC head must be a transformational leader with exceptional public speaking and interpersonal skills, have shown a proven ability to build community consensus, have an entrepreneurial spirit, tends to reject the status quo, and looks for creative ways to "push the envelope."

The EDC's Board of Directors will conduct interview with finalists and choose the next CEO.

The application deadline is April 19th.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Judge seeks to silence key players in Zimmerman murder trial

Date: 3/21/2019

Time: 3 pm

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - The McLean County judge presiding over the Kirk Zimmerman murder case is laying down the law about what trial participants can say to news reporters during the proceedings.

Judge Scott Drazewski issued a two-page gag Thursday saying prosecutors, defense attorneys, their staff, agents, and experts risk a contempt of court finding if they grant interviews to the news media.

The order also covers court and law enforcement employees, and anyone expecting to testify or receiving subpoenas in the case.

Drazewski is forbidding trial participants from identifying jurors or witnesses. Also, they're banned from offering opinions or comments

outside the courtroom about the weight, value, or effect of witness testimony and exhibits.

They can talk publicly about only the most basic information like Zimmerman's age, residence, job, family status, the charges against him, scheduling of court proceedings, trial results, and direct quotations from public records.

Zimmerman is accused of killing his former wife, Pamela Zimmerman, who died of multiple gunshot wounds at her office on Bloomington's east side in November 2014.

Kirk Zimmerman is free on bond ahead of a trial expected to last all of next month, or perhaps even longer than that.

ISSUE: Education

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: ISU's Dietz lobbies for funding boost

Date: 3/21/2019

Time: 5pm

Duration: 12 Hours

SPRINGFIELD - The long road back from the years without a budget continues for Illinois' public universities, as Illinois State University's president presented his case for a ten percent funding increase.

ISU President Larry Dietz shared the positive news as well as a request for more money with lawmakers in Springfield Thursday.

“A full-year Monetary Award Program funding and two percent operating increase over FY 2018 signaled a return to stability and reinvestment in public higher education. Confidence in Illinois State University remains high, and in the 2018-19 academic year, the

university enrolled its second-largest and most diverse freshman class in over twenty years," Dietz told a House appropriations committee.

Dietz is seeking a 10 percent increase in state funding -- to \$73 million. When State Rep. Dan Brady (R-Bloomington) asked what ISU would do with it, Dietz replied, "The first part of that would be in student support, student retention programs. After that, academic programs, and probably the third would be in some deferred maintenance."

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Gleason: Council majority backs gas tax hike, video gaming fee

Date: 3/22/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - Bloomington aldermen will vote Monday night whether to raise the local gas tax to pay for street repairs, meaning city leaders believe a majority of council members will vote for the increase.

The city would also levy an annual \$500 licensing fee for each video gaming terminal.

City Manager Tim Gleason said he would not have placed the items on the agenda without majority council support.

"When it comes time to vote, things can change, but we're not going to allow things to play out on the floor of the council chambers that

might be unnecessary to even bring it up because there isn't support," said Gleason.

If approved, the local motor fuel tax would double to eight cents per gallon starting May first, raising an estimated \$2.3 million to be placed in a fund to fix deteriorating streets and sidewalks.

"The council is very conscientious. I would say, and I've said this before, they are good stewards of the taxpayer dollar," said Gleason.

"They push back internally and want us to look internally first before they're placing the burden on the taxpayers' shoulders," Gleason also said.

The video gaming fee would generate about \$125,000 a year. Currently, 54 Bloomington businesses have a total of 249 terminals.

The city does not have a licensing fee right now. Normal charges \$200 per terminal. Decatur and Peoria each charge \$500.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Local activists rally for stricter gun laws to curb deadly violence

Date: 3/22/2019

Time: 8am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - Backers of tougher gun laws gathered Friday evening in Downtown Bloomington to take part in a March For Our Lives.

A murder victim's mother, a high school teacher, and Bloomington's mayor were among the speakers at the second annual event, organized by Bloomington-Normal Youth Activists.

"Regardless if you're Caucasian, regardless if you're African-American, we're going to keep marching, we're going to keep talking. We're going to be heard," said Dameca Kirkwood.

Her son, Trevonte, 27, was shot to death last October in the 1300 block of North Oak Street, on Bloomington's near west side.

Bloomington Police are still looking for his killer. Dameca Kirkwood urged parents to go back to the basics with their children.

"Where are the morals? Where are the Sunday dinners? Let's keep talking. Let's come together," Kirkwood said.

Bloomington High School Teacher Brandon Thornton said he was hesitant to speak at the rally because teachers are accused of brain washing students on the gun issue.

Thornton said educators don't look forward to summertime because they're afraid they'll read about getting caught up in the violence.

"This is only my eighth year of teaching, and I already have two students who have been featured. One's dead, and one is a shooter," Thornton said.

Mayor Tari Renner said the National Rifle Association is dividing the country with a phony argument that the government wants to take away guns from law-abiding people.

"As long as you're a responsible gun owner, nobody is going to touch your gun," said Renner.

"The NRA is lying, and that's one of the most absurd things that's dividing our country."

"We have fights over something that the rest of the world does not fight over. We fight over guns, gays, and global warming, and nobody else does," Renner told the group of about 70 people who gathered on the steps of the McLean County Museum of History.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Murder victim's mom wants to see what "true evil looks like" when police arrest son's killer

Date: 3/25/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - The mother of Bloomington murder victim Trevonte Kirkwood is urging police to keep looking for her son's killer.

"I need to see what true evil looks like, and the person who took my son, that's what it is," Dameca Kirkwood said.

"I want to look true evil in the eye."

Mrs. Kirkwood said the unthinkable happened October 30 when her son, who was 27, was shot to death in the 1300 block of North Oak Street, on Bloomington's near west side.

Mrs. Kirkwood said her son was not a drug dealer or gang member, but was a very good father.

Mrs. Kirkwood has surprised herself how strong she's been since losing her father to cancer October 2 and her son 28 days later.

"People ask me, 'how do you get up every day and go on?' I try to be the best mom that I could, and now that he's not here, I still can't stop still being a mom," Mrs. Kirkwood said.

"I'm a little bit more paranoid about life, but with that, it made me stronger," she added.

Trevonte Kirkwood was one of nine people shot to death in Bloomington last year, and it's the only unsolved case.

Mrs. Kirkwood said she believes Bloomington Police are diligently working to find out who killed her son.

"It's harder for me as a mom to start my healing process knowing that individual who has done this is still out here on the streets, because there's no explanation why my son was murdered," Mrs. Kirkwood said.

She made her comments Friday evening after speaking in Downtown Bloomington at a March For Our Lives rally against gun violence.

Kirkwood called on families to return to the basics by talking, eating meals together, and teaching kids morals.

ISSUE: Business

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Retail, restaurant, office space planned for downtown State Farm building

Date: 3/25/2019

Time: 10am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - A broker says she has multiple interested parties to lease space in the historic State Farm building in downtown Bloomington.

"Multiple tours have been conducted within the building with interested parties, and more tours are planned over the next few weeks," said Jill Guth with Guth & Associates.

The company is representing the yet to be announced buyer who is expected to close on the property this summer.

The first floor will include retail and restaurant space consisting of 16,000 square feet and is priced at \$14 per square foot.

"Actually already have had a couple restaurants through the building and have had some positive feedback, we should have some interested proposals for that space," said Guth.

Floors two through seven are nearly identical office space. Each floor consists of approximately 14,000 square feet being sold at \$8 per square foot.

Floors eight through 10 feature private offices marketed at \$10 per square foot.

Lease rates have not been determined for floors 11, 12 and 13.

Lease rate discounts are being provided for multiple floors leased by the same tenant.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Aldermen OK video gambling fee, business owner calls it "government greed"

Date: 3/26/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - A Bloomington business owner said charging city establishments a fee for each video gaming terminal is "government greed at its worst."

Art Donaldson, long-time owner of Times Past Inn on Towanda Avenue, addressed the council before aldermen voted five-to-three to assess an annual \$500 fee for each terminal.

"Some will have you believe that the revenue that my business receives on video gaming goes right into my pocket. I wish that were true," said Donaldson.

"That money goes into my business to help me pay my 30 employees and my day-to-day expenses. It's also taxed," he added.

"If you pass this ordinance for this tax, that will be government greed at its worst," Donaldson also said.

Aldermen David Sage, Karen Schmidt, and Jamie Mathy voted against the measure, which is expected to add \$125,000 a year for the general fund.

Alderman Diana Hauman recommended the new revenue help fund a new O'Neil Park swimming pool, or offset costs of auditing liquor license holders.

Peoria and Decatur each charge \$500 license fees for each gaming terminal. Normal charges a \$200 fee, according to a staff reported presented to Bloomington aldermen.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Connect Transit delays fare hike amid emotional appeals

Date: 3/26/2019

Time: 3pm

Duration: 12 Hours

NORMAL - Bloomington-Normal's public transit system has not raised fares for one-way rides in a dozen years, and it will wait a little longer to implement a series of fare increases.

Connect Transit trustees voted 5-1 Tuesday evening to push back for three months the start time for higher fares until October 1, giving the transportation service time to look for other funding sources.

Connect Transit trustees said they were moved by many of the two dozen people who spoke at a public hearing, many of them describing the plight of low-income and disabled riders who might not be able to afford the increase.

"We are just pushing back the date because if we can't find other resources, we have to implement new ways to pay for this service. I know that's hard on you. It pulls on the heartstrings," said board member Ryan Whitehouse, who proposed the delay.

Heidi Zimmerman, who works with the developmentally disabled, made an emotional appeal for Connect Transit to seek more funding from local governments like Normal, Bloomington, and the townships.

"Help us advocate for people with low incomes and disabilities by making a real effort to demand local tax dollars before you go taking from the pockets of the most vulnerable citizens in our community," said Zimmerman, who was in tears when she addressed the board.

"Every single time a person with a disability does not go and attend a community meeting, or go to a restaurant, or go to a movie, or meet with a friend, or do anything in our community, it is our community that is diminished," said Laurie Bell.

Over some objections, the board agreed on a 5-1 vote to eliminate the Olive bus, which is said to be a low-ridership route taking riders from Main and Orlando in Normal to near Fort Jesse and Hershey Roads, east of Veterans Parkway.

Board Chairman Mike McCurdy said the change takes effect July 1.

"I believe it's an irresponsible use of resources to put service on the street that's not well utilized," said McCurdy.

Elimination of the Olive route will save the system \$156,000 a year, according to Connect Transit's General Manager Isaac Thorne.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Renner: Raising gas tax was least objectionable option

Date: 3/27/2019

Time: 8am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - Bloomington Mayor Tari Renner thinks doubling the local gas tax to eight cents a gallon was the city's best option.

"At the end of the day the majority of the council decided this was the least objectionable of all of the bad options in front of us," Renner told WJBC's Scott Laughlin. "None of the council had any interest in increasing real estate or sales taxes or raising other fees."

"One of the options was to do nothing, and I don't think anyone wanted to do nothing because unfortunately streets don't pave themselves," Renner added.

The gas tax hike goes into effect May 1 and is expected to raise \$2.3 million a year to fix roads and sidewalks.

ISSUE: Government

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: City's new economic development office seen to emphasize downtown, improve ties with Normal

Date: 3/28/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - The four staffers on Bloomington government's new economic development office claim to have quite a few irons in the fire just about 2 1/2 weeks after the city council created the department.

Economic Development Director Melissa Hon hosted an open house at city hall Wednesday night.

Right now, we have over 10 prospective development projects throughout the community that are in discussion, that are in the works," said Hon.

"We have seven new businesses opening downtown in the first quarter of 2019. So, for those individuals that say, 'What's going on downtown?' There's a lot going on downtown," Hon also said.

Existing staffers like Hon were reassigned to work in economic development, using \$200,000 in seed money saved from reducing

subsidies to the Bloomington-Normal Area Convention and Visitors Bureau and BN Advantage.

"This puts us in a position where there is more of an emphasis on economic development, more of an emphasis on downtown, more of an emphasis on communication and relationships with our different regional partners. This is not us going our own way, said City Manager Tim Gleason.

Downtown property owner, business owner and resident Vicki Tilton thinks a city-run economic development office is a great idea.

"Especially if it's going to become a more cooperative relationship with Normal," said Tilton.

"I believe we are a community as a whole, not two separate cities," she added.

Tilton also noted the downtown area is in need of more volunteers to help with various tasks like promotions, Saturday morning farmers markets, picking up garbage, and planting flowers.

ISSUE: Crime

HOW ISSUE WAS TREATED: News Story

TITLE: Triple murder suspect hires lawyer as trial nears

Date: 3/29/2019

Time: 5am

Duration: 12 Hours

BLOOMINGTON - Bloomington triple murder suspect Sydney Mays has decided he does not want to be his own attorney after all.

Mays has hired Chicago lawyer Michael Jarardto represent him at a trial that's scheduled to begin May 13. It's unclear whether Jarard will ask for more time to prepare his case.

Mays is charged with shooting to death Juan Carlos Perez-Mercedo, Corey Jackson, and Nathaniel Pena, and badly wounding Pena's young son June 18 in an apartment at 311 Riley Dr.

Until now, Mays indicated he planned to represent himself at the trial, although Judge Casey Costigan appointed the public defender to provide Mays with legal advise if he needed it.

Late last year, Mays also asked for the judge to decide his fate instead of a jury. It's not known whether his lawyer agrees with that choice.

The trial is expected to last about two weeks.