

## **Press Clippings 05/06/20**

### **---The Courier-News---05/06/2020**

#### **‘This really is for them’**

U-46 school board honors from afar ‘heroes in our society’

**By: Rafael Guerrero**

School District U-46 school board president Sue Kerr acknowledged Monday their annual proclamation to teachers during Teacher Appreciation Week “means something different” this year because the coronavirus pandemic closed school buildings and learning moved online.

“I think the past few weeks have made all of us appreciate the time and the effort the teachers put into their work and the many challenges they face on their jobs,” Kerr said.

School District U-46 board members began Monday’s school board meeting recognizing the approximately 2,700 teachers of the Elgin-based district as part of Teacher Appreciation Week. The board also recognized the district’s school nurses, as National Nurses Day and the start of International Nurses Week falls on Wednesday.

Unlike past years, the two professions could not be celebrated in person at the U-46 board chambers. Elgin Teachers Association President Barbara Bettis and U-46 Supervisor of Health Services Jeff Judge received their respective proclamations on behalf of their colleagues via Zoom.

“Our district and our teachers rose to deliver instruction in a way we never could have imagined,” said Bettis. “I have to say that the collaboration between the district and teachers has been remarkable. it’s helped our teachers, it’s helped our students, and it’s helped our community.”

Added Kerr: “I don’t think any of our teachers never imagined they would teach a class of students where not only were the kids not in their room or building but might not even be in their town or county. (Teachers) may be doing this teaching while also working with their own children.”

Judge was emotional when he spoke to the school board about the U-46 nurses. He noted some of the school nurses have returned to hospital settings to “fight the COVID battle” even as they continue working for their schools.

“They are literally working seven days a week. This really is for them,” he said.

U-46 employs 87 nurses — 65 registered nurses and 22 certified school nurses, according to a news release the district issued Monday.

“I could not be more proud of our entire Health Services team,” Judge said in the release. “They have been determined and creative to help keep everyone safe and they are dedicated to supporting our students, their families, and our community, anyway they can.”

Kerr called the nurses and other healthcare workers “heroes in our society.” The district’s proclamation for its nurses encouraged the public to show “appreciation to our school nurses for their dedication and devotion to their work.”

# **Elgin High School band will stream end-of-year event**

**By: Rafael Guerrero**

The Elgin High School band department's end-of-year festivities are going virtual Thursday evening, and the public is invited to watch.

A prerecorded event of performances, presentations and more will stream on Facebook and YouTube at 7 p.m. Thursday; the streams can be accessed on [elginbandconcert.info](http://elginbandconcert.info).

Elgin's director of bands, Robert Sanchez, said it is a concert for "honoring our seniors." Typically, this event is held in person but the shutdown of schools and the stay-at-home order prevented it this spring.

"I felt that the students needed something to keep them grounded," Sanchez said of continuing the end-of-year event in a virtual format. The band had approximately 130 members this school year, 24 of them set to graduate.

Sanchez said the concert/event will include highlights of band performances this past school year and beyond, presentations, senior recognition, and a performance from Sanchez himself.

Like in past years, Sanchez will also hand out awards to students. Because everything is prerecorded, Sanchez recorded Zoom calls with the students and their families to get their reactions to receiving the awards.

The band director has been working on this event while juggling e-learning with his classes, virtual band sessions, and helping his son with his own remote learning. His wife, a healthcare worker in a suburban hospital, has also had brushes with coronavirus exposure, he said.

When asked what he hopes viewers get out of the concert, Sanchez said, "I would say the message is twofold. One: We are a community and we still are a community. The second is (students) are preparing to be leaders of this community. This situation is going to be the watershed moment of your life ... we have an opportunity here to take advantage of the moment for our betterment."

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"IF I WERE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN A GOVERNMENT WITHOUT A NEWSPAPER OR A NEWSPAPER WITHOUT A GOVERNMENT, I WOULD NOT HESITATE TO CHOOSE THE LATTER." THOMAS JEFFERSON

50 cents  
May 6, 2020



Update provided  
on new fire stations  
See ..... Page 5

Residents may take  
virtual hunt event  
See ..... Page 6

## Virtual graduations to be used for U-46 seniors

By Seth Hancock

Though the rescheduled graduation ceremonies for high school seniors in School District U-46 are over two months away on July 11, Superintendent Tony Sanders has decided to cancel them opting for a virtual graduation over the continued COVID-19 concerns.

Additionally, the Board of Education approved of an update to its policies to lower graduation requirements for this year's graduating class at its Monday, May 4 meeting. The vote was 6-0, board member Veronica Noland was absent at the meeting which was held virtually due to the virus.

The change to the graduation requirements state that U-46 will continue to obey Gov. J.B. Pritzker's executive orders "already issued or an Order that will be issued by the Illinois Governor subsequent to this amendment suspending or modifying certain graduation requirements found in the Illinois School Code for the duration of those Orders."

Miguel Rodriguez, chief legal officer, said "our policy is very flexible" and Lela Majstorovic, assistant superintendent of secondary schools, said the update "reduced the graduation requirements essentially by one semester" effectively reducing the required credits from 40 to 33 for the current senior class only.

The current semester has mostly been conducted via virtual classrooms.

In a memo responding to questions from Sue Kerr, the board's president, Sanders stated that if a senior were failing a course this semester but had collected seven of a required eight credits in the subject or if a senior were passing a course this semester but failed a previous semester in the subject, they would still meet the graduation requirements under the change.

Although freshmen through juniors are also affected with the state shutdown, Sanders stated these changes only affect current seniors. He wrote: "We have asked about allowing additional flexibility within the graduation requirements for current 9th, 10th, and 11th grade students, but the current ISBE (Illinois State Board of Education) guidance only pertains to the current 12th grade cohort."

Regarding the graduation ceremonies, the rescheduled July 11 event was planned to take place at Hoffman Estates' Sears Centre. The extended state edicts have continue with no current standards suggesting when the orders will be lifted, and several lawsuits have been filed against Pritzker stating he has no authority to continue the lockdowns with a downstate appellate court already ruling against Pritzker.

The ISBE claimed authority to ban all in-person graduation ceremonies indefinitely last week prompting Sanders to issue a statement on Wednesday, April 29 stating the July 11 ceremonies were cancelled. This decision was made by Sanders, and the ISBE has later clarified that superintendent's and education boards can exert local control.

Sanders wrote that "new guidance" from the ISBE and the "uncertain status of the COVID-19 pandemic and the possibility of future social distancing guidelines, has led me to cancel our graduation ceremonies." He added that "we must listen to our state healthcare and government experts and do all we can to mitigate the spread of this disease."

A joint statement from the ISBE and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) issued on Saturday, May 2 states that "graduation ceremonies will remain at the discretion of local school boards and superintendents. Districts and schools may choose

to postpone graduation ceremonies, although it is not known when large-scale in-person events will be able to be safely held."

The statement later states "virtual events are strongly encouraged" and added that drive-in, drive-through and individualized in-person ceremonies are allowed.

U-46's virtual graduation is now scheduled for June 13 at 3 p.m. with Sanders stating "details will be forthcoming."

Beyond the decision to cancel in-person graduation, Sanders reported via social media that as of Friday, May 1, the district has handed out 781,011 meals (breakfasts, lunches, dinners) and 260,337 snacks since the shutdown began.

The IDPH's existing viral pandemic plan states: "No person may be ordered to be quarantined or isolated and no place may be ordered to be closed and made off limits to the public, however, except with the consent of the person or the owner of the place or upon the order of a court of compe-

tent jurisdiction."

The IDPH states that any "restriction of movement" or shutdown should be "determined on a case by case basis" and not on a widespread basis.

Furthermore, accuracy of numbers is admittedly flawed including by Ngozi Ezike, director of the IDPH, who admitted at an April 19 press conference that the death numbers are being padded through a "simplistic" definition of COVID-19 deaths.

"It means technically, even if you died of clear alternate cause but you had COVID at the same time, it's still listed as a COVID death," Ezike said. "Everyone who is listed as a COVID death doesn't mean that was the cause of the death, but they had COVID at the time of death."

At the national level, numbers vary widely including within an individual organization, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The CDC's coronavirus page reports currently 67,456 COVID-19 deaths while the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics reports 38,576.

## Proclamations announced at village board meeting

By Frank Muisenga Jr.

At the Village Board meeting on Monday, May 4, held electronically, Village President Steve Ward introduced three proclamations.

Ward read from the first proclamation: "Building Safety Month, sponsored by the International Code Council, seeks to remind the public about the critical role local code officials play in public safety by preventing fires, accidents, and ensuring structures are safe."

According to Ward, May is dedicated to the topic since a variety of job functions contribute to safe building practices and precautions in the village.

"Building safety and fire prevention officials, architects, engineers, builders and others in the construction industry work year-round with village staff and consultants to ensure the safe construction of buildings," Ward said.

The second proclamation states that Municipal Clerks Week will be from May 3 to 9, according to Ward. Since 1969, the International Institute of

Municipal Clerks has recognized the first week of May to local government's oldest, public servant's office.

"The office of the municipal clerk serves as the information center of the community, providing a professional link to citizens and local government agencies," Ward said.

Ward added: "South Elgin's Clerk, Margo Gray, is an active member of Northwestern Municipal Clerks Association, Municipal Clerks of Illinois and International Institute of Municipal Clerks."

Finally, in announcing the third proclamation, Ward said the week of May 10 to 16 and, specifically May 15, are intended to celebrate police officers.

"National Police Week recognizes the men and women of law enforcement for their courage in upholding the laws of our society," Ward said. "Each year, Congress and the president designate May 15 as Peace Officers Memorial Day, honoring the memory of those officers who have fallen in the line of duty."



### Special recognition

A lawn sign recognizes the home of a local hero in the village. Signs such as this were being used to acknowledge police, firefighters and health professionals during the coronavirus pandemic.

(Examiner photo by Bruce Leighty)



# Pet of the Week



## Bonded pair seek new location

Two cats, one heart. Ollie and Otis are a bonded pair of beauties looking for a forever family. Ollie is a robust, curvy gal and Otis her svelte, panther like brother. Exceptionally sweet, this duo has 10 years of snuggling experience and they are ready to bring their expert level lap warming skills to a new home. Due to social distancing recommendations from the CDC all adoption hours at DuPage County Animal Services have been suspended. To adopt please complete an application at: <https://www.dupageco.org/AnimalServices/AvailableAnimals.aspx> and a staff member will reach out to schedule a meet and greet appointment.

(Photo courtesy of County Animal Control)

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YEARS IN BARTLETT

# Latest financial report provided to village board

By Seth Hancock

The Village of Bartlett expects to see revenue from the state slow down in the coming months as part of the impact of the COVID-19 shutdowns.

Todd Dowden, finance director, updated the Board of Trustee’s on finances during his treasurer’s report for the month of February along with the sales tax report for December and motor fuel tax (MFT) report for January at the board meeting on Tuesday, April 21 which was held electronically due to the shutdown.

Dowden said the village is watching cash balances.

“It looks like March, April cash flows should be normal,” Dowden said. “We should start to see property taxes, sales tax, income taxes be delayed starting with May.”

Additionally, Dowden said MFT revenue will be slowing as fewer motorists travel and gas prices have fallen dramatically due to the lack of demand.

“MFT taxes have already started dropping off, and we’ll continue to track those as we move forward,” Dowden said.

The treasurer’s report showed that revenue came in at 96.5 percent, \$69.7 million of a budgeted \$72.2 million, and expenditures at 72 percent, \$54.9 million of \$76.3 million budgeted. The previous budget came in at 34 percent of budgeted revenues and 63.9 percent of expenditures.

The largest category, the general fund, showed \$20.1 million in revenues (85.9 percent of \$23.4 million budgeted) and \$19.2 million in expenditures (80.6 percent of \$23.8 million budgeted).

The largest major revenue categories in

the report were water charges with \$9.7 million (81.1 percent of a budgeted \$12 million), property taxes with \$9.3 million (83.5 percent of a budgeted \$11.2 million), sewer charges with \$5 million (83 percent of a budgeted \$6.1 million), income taxes with \$3.8 million (90.4 percent of a budgeted \$4.2 million), sales tax with \$2.1 million (86.4 percent of a budgeted \$2.5 million), home rule sales tax with \$1.3 million (83.3 percent of a budgeted \$1.6 million) and MFT with \$1.2 million (114.4 percent of a budgeted \$1.1 million). The remaining four revenue categories ranged from \$526,862 from telecommunication tax to \$734,096 from the real estate transfer tax, or exit tax.

The golf fund came in with a net loss of \$31,968 (\$1.9 million in revenues, \$1.9 million in expenditures) while the village budgeted a net income of \$37,456 for the fiscal year.

On the sales tax report, Dowden said the village received \$186,495 in sales tax during the December holiday season which was below last year’s numbers.

“That was down \$10,000 from the prior year, but sales tax did pick up the next two months,” Dowden said. “We were actually about \$20,000 higher than the prior year, \$20,000 each month. So, it did pick up towards the last months of the (fiscal) year.”

The MFT showed \$128,180 in revenue in January compared to \$89,403 the previous year, same month. Dowden said the village received \$71,795 under the old MFT calculation, the remainder coming from the new calculation

Over the summer, the state doubled the gas tax which changed the MFT calculation.

# Dist. U-46 Board approves new PE curriculum plan

By Seth Hancock

The Board of Education in School District U-46 unanimously approved, a physical education (PE) curriculum as well as its annual membership in the Illinois High School Association (IHSA) at its meeting on Monday, April 20 which was held electronically due to the COVID-19 shutdown.

The PE proposal includes assessments, frameworks, resources and rubrics for new curriculum as well as revisions to existing curriculum for secondary health and PE. It has a total estimated cost of \$442,548 split between cardio equipment (\$299,778), resources (\$116,424) and professional development (\$26,345).

Courses include middle school PE and health, high school health, two

modules of team sports coaching and officiating, two modules of walking for wellness, two modules of functional fitness and two modules of strength and performance.

PE will be a year-long course for seventh grade under the change while eighth grade would have one semester of PE and one for health. For 10th through 12th grade, students will take one module each semester of their selected PE course.

“With student wellness, health education is making a shift that we need to have a greater focus on the development of skills as well as including content,” said Tracey Jakaitis, student wellness coordinator.

The IHSA governs high school athletics. Membership comes with no cost.

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# Multiple expense items reviewed by U-46 board

By Seth Hancock

The Board of Education in School District U-46 is set to vote on \$2 million in expenditure proposals along with a curriculum item with an estimated cost of \$1.7 million at its upcoming meeting on Monday, May 11.

The items were presented at the Monday, May 4 meeting which was held electronically due to the COVID-19 shutdown. Board member Veronica Noland was absent.

The curriculum proposal is for secondary arts resources regarding an curriculum update that was approved last year. Jaimie Giraldo, coordinator

of fine arts, said the majority of the resources are “tools and materials needed to create art.”

The largest portion of the \$1.7 million estimate is \$815,236 for technology while there is an estimated \$500,000 for capital improvements including classroom remodels. Annual costs are \$120,000 for consumable items.

Board member Melissa Owens asked if the resources were included in this year’s budget to which Superintendent Tony Sanders said they’ll be in next year’s budget. Sanders said “we may have to hold off” on some purchases as there is state funding uncertainty due to the COVID-19 response.

From Midwest Transit Equipment, the board will be asked to approve \$1.4 million, from the transportation fund if approved, to purchase 20 used large buses as replacements. The used buses will come from Round Lake School District 116.

“All buses will have less than 20,000 miles and would have a 3 year warranty on the engine and a 5 year warranty on the transmission,” the proposal states. “Purchasing 20 pre-owned school buses versus new buses will save the district approximately \$500,000 on this single purchase. These 20 school buses will replace 20 large school buses as identified in the Age and Obsolescence plan for school bus replacement.”

The district is seeking \$170,400 (operations and maintenance fund) to purchase four sets of portable bleachers from Bleachers International. The proposal states that Bartlett and South Elgin high schools have consistently been renting portable bleachers in recent years with rental costs as high as \$10,000 for a single event.

Sheila Downs, director of plant operations, said all high schools will have access to the bleachers when asked by Sue Kerr, the board’s president, and added that four sets are being requested so multiple schools request usage at the same time when asked by board member Eva Porter. Downs did not

have the lifespan information on the bleachers when asked by board member Melissa Owens but said she would get that data before the vote.

The district is asking to purchase reading comprehension cross cat resources from Crossland Literacy-Okapi Educational Publishing costing \$135,344 to be paid for by the nation’s taxpayers through grant funds.

With SolarWinds, the district is seeking a three-year contract renewal costing \$86,421 (education fund).

“This 3-year agreement propagates global changes to all of our network devices such as configuration changes, security deployments, network structure and standards,” the proposal states. “SolarWinds applied a cost increase of \$7,716.00 from the last 3-year agreement.”

For Catalogic Software maintenance and backups, the district is asking for \$83,991 (education fund) for a three-year contract renewal “to support the protection of the district’s data,” the proposal states. The annual cost of \$27,997 is up from \$25,711 a year over the last two years.

The district is asking for \$35,584 (education fund), up from \$33,938, with Frontline Education for software renewal which the proposal states “interfaces with our Human Resources Information System (HRIS), MUNIS, for substitute assignments and absence management.”

## Wayne Board approves building code changes

By Joe Hyland

For the last couple of months, the Wayne Village Board has been considering amendments to the village’s building code. The amendments address how the village classifies vacant or abandoned housing.

The issue first came up at the board’s March 4 meeting.

“I’d like to present this to the board for discussion,” said Director of Building and Zoning Mike Gricus at that meeting. “I don’t think we have an enormous amount, but the ones we do have are a problem. I’ve kind of crafted the ordinance to apply to the ones we do have.”

Gricus’s proposal created a form that would provide the address, type of structure, owners name, emergency contact information and the reason for

the vacancy. There would be a \$200 registration fee payable by the owner or owners. The registration would need to be renewed and the fee paid annually. Gricus said the documentation would be shared with first responders. He noted that, especially in the case of firefighters, knowing a building is unoccupied could have a major effect on the tactics employed.

At the time, there was some discussion as to what constituted the difference between a vacant property as opposed to an abandoned one. Trustees Rob Reed and Pete Connolly wanted the language of the ordinance crafted so that properties belonging to snowbirds were not inadvertently classified as abandoned. Trustee Mike Anastasio expressed some concerns about the ordinance’s appeals process, and how that aligned with both the current village building code and the Illinois Municipal Code.

“I think they should all be the same,” Anastasio said at the March 4 meeting.

The consensus of the board at the time was to hold the matter over until the board’s April 7 meeting so that village’s attorney could modify the language to meet the concerns. At that time, it the legal review resulted in satisfaction with the modifications.

Anastasio, however, said he still didn’t feel the language was consistent with the building code and the Illinois Municipal Code. It was agreed to table the matter for another round of tightening up.

The third time however, at the board’s Tuesday, April 21 meeting, proved to be the charm as the ordinance was unanimously approved.

“It provides an appeals method to the [Zoning Board of Appeals] and unifies and solidifies the building code.”

## Varied expenses, bills approved by Dist. U-46

By Seth Hancock

The Board of Education in School District U-46 unanimously approved \$340,731 in expenditure proposals at its meeting on Monday, April 20 which was held electronically due to the COVID-19 shutdown.

The largest items was \$99,300, from the education fund, for a two-year proposal with Clevr for forms and workflow software.

From Biggers Chevrolet and Enel X North America, Inc., U-46 will spend \$76,481 to purchase two electric vehicles as replacements for drivers’ education along with two permanent car chargers. The funding will come from the education fund along with a \$50,000 grant from Commonwealth Edison.

Bruce Phelps, senior business official, said the district will “partner” with Commonwealth Edison who “will collect the data” from the electric vehicles.

For the district’s tardy tracking system, U-46 will spend \$68,293 (education fund) with HERO by Schoolmint.

“Student timeliness in class every day is important to the student learning process,” the proposal states.

“HERO reinforces positive behaviors and allows students and parents to track progress.”

A contract renewal with the AVID Center was approved with a price tag of \$62,057 (education fund). Advancement Via Individual Determination is “a school-wide instructional system for students in grades 7-12,” the proposal states.

Also approved was participation fees in Project Lead the Way (PLTW) costing \$34,600 (education fund). PLTW is a “transformative learning experience” that “empowers students to develop and apply in-demand, transportable skills by exploring real-world challenges,” the proposal states.

The board also approved \$8.1 million in itemized bills.

### Business Bits

Walmart associates in Illinois have received a bonus in their paychecks on April 30, adding up to \$5.61 million statewide. In all, Walmart gave associates \$180 million in bonuses nationwide at month end April. When combined with the \$365 million announced earlier in April, the company has committed close to \$550 million in bonus payouts to its men and women serving on the front lines of these unprecedented times.

Walmart also announced that it reached its goal of hiring an additional 200,000 associates nationwide. Not only has the company helped provide work for almost a quarter million people impacted by COVID-19, it did so in less than six weeks.

## Bartlett High cast, crew party despite musical cancellation



Mike Miserendino, the theatre director for Bartlett High School, suggested the members of the Chicago cast dress up for their on-line Zoom production. (Courtesy photo)

Bartlett High School’s spring musical production of “Chicago: Student Edition” was scheduled to have its opening performance on Thursday, April 23, in the school’s auditorium. Due to in-person learning being canceled for the remainder of the school year and the closure of school buildings, the company had to do the next best thing -- have a Roaring 20s-themed Zoom party on what would’ve been their opening night.

Approximately 50 members of the cast, crew, orchestra pit and production staff participated in the party in 1920s attire and read through the script of the musical. Mike Miserendino, the director of the musical, wanted to do something for his students.

“It obviously wasn’t the same as a performance in front of an audience, but it allowed us all to come together and celebrate what would have been our opening night,” said Miserendino. “Our Zoom party was a huge success and a lot of fun. Plus, it was just nice to ‘see’ them all again!”

Last November, over 100 Bartlett students auditioned for the show and 42 were selected for the cast. Students had already been rehearsing for three months when they had what became their last rehearsal on March 13. Between the cast, technical crew and orchestra pit of musicians, the show was expected to have 120 students participate in its production.

“We are especially sad for the seniors who will not get to perform in their senior year musical,” Miserendino said. “For some of them, they have been a part of our theatre family for the past four years and this was the culminating event that they were looking forward to one last time to perform on the Bartlett High School stage.”

Some of these seniors include Chloe Fox who would have played the lead as Roxie Hart, Lawrence Yap as Billy Flynn, Kevin Colin as Amos, Charity DelPreto as Mary Sunshine, and Kayla Donahue as Matron “Mama” Morton.

“The entire production staff and company of students were so looking forward to sharing their art with audience members this weekend,” Miserendino said. “They had all been working tirelessly and deserved a live performance in front of a crowd. At least our little Zoom party could provide us all with a cathartic escape from our ‘quarantine’ and come together with laughter for a couple of hours. It was much needed.”