

Press Clippings 08/26/20

---The Courier-News--- 08/26/2020

History preserved

10 projects selected to receive Mayor's Awards

By: Gloria Casas



An exhibit at the Elgin History Museum last year chronicled **Elgin High School's** 150-year history. (Rafael Guerrero/Courier-News)



The Queen Anne-style house at 706 Douglas Ave. will be honored by the Elgin Heritage Commission Sept. 1 for the meticulous interior and exterior restoration work done by owners Paul and Jean Bednar. (realtor.com)

Thiel C. and Mary Towner paid \$6,300 in 1888 to build their Queen Anne-style house at 706 Douglas Ave. designed by noted Elgin architect William W. Abell.

Once a jewel of the Spring-Douglas Historic District, time had taken its toll on the nearly 3,000-square-foot-home by the time Paul and Jean Bednar entered the picture. They meticulously restored its interior and exterior — work that did not go without notice.

“They did a fantastic job. It’s now a major gem to that historic district,” Elgin Historic Preservation Planner Christen Sundquist said.

The couple is to be honored Sept. 1 by the Elgin Heritage Commission at the Mayor’s Awards ceremony, one of 10 projects being recognized for its role in preserving Elgin’s past.

The awards ceremony will be held at 7 p.m. at The Highland Loft Event Venue in downtown Elgin. It’s an invitation-only event because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but will be live-streamed on the city’s Facebook page for those who’d like to be there virtually.

The house is the fourth renovation in five years for the Bednars, who previously received a heritage award from the city in 2015 for a house they restored on Hill Avenue.

“Our main goal is trying to improve neighborhoods by taking the ugly duckling at a foreclosure and making it into a gem, thereby increasing the pride in the neighborhood and property values,” Paul Bednar said.

In the case of the 706 Douglas house, they were surprised to find it had such an open floor plan, which is unusual for the Queen Anne style, he said.

“It’s really a big house with big rooms and lots of details, especially the windows,” Bednar said. “There’s a number of stained glass and leaded glass.”

Among the biggest parts of the job was overhauling the kitchen, which Bednar described as a disaster. The interior took a lot of work, Sundquist said, because wood paneling had to be painstakingly removed while being sensitive to the house's historic character.

"I can't say enough with how impressed I am with it," Sundquist said of the home, which is now for sale.

Mayor's Awards are presented annually to recognize those who have preserved and promoted the city's heritage, Sundquist said. Recipients are nominated by their peers and selected based on their efforts to preserve historic architecture, neighborhoods and cultural resources.

This is the 30th anniversary for the Mayor's Awards, and they provide "great inspiration for those looking to do something preservation-minded," she said.

In addition to the Bednars, the other 2020 recipients are:

Downtown Neighborhood Association's Design Committee. For volunteering to restack, protect and catalog the 1923 Crocker Theater pieces for future use.

Elgin Math and Science Academy. For restoring and rehabbing the 1937 Art Cabin designed by Prairie School architect John S. Van Bergen.

Bluff City Cemetery's Common Grave Memorial Project. For installing a memorial marker at the Common Gravesite for those Elgin residents who were buried there after being relocated in 1968 from the Old Channing Cemetery. A tree and bench on the site were installed in memory of the late Steve Stroud.

"Education for All: **Elgin High School** – 150 years" exhibit. For creating a unique and engaging exhibit celebrating Elgin High School's 150th anniversary.

East Side Neighborhood Garden. For organizing a community garden, established in 2019, that has added value to the Elgin Historic District.

Explore Elgin Area. For promoting Elgin as an architecture destination through digital advertising highlighting Elgin's Historic House Tour, Open Elgin, the "painted lady" houses, city museums and Historic Elgin webpage to residents and visitors.

John Braese. For his leadership and involvement in the Elgin Civil War Reenactment that was held from 2017 to 2019 on the property adjacent to the Elgin Mental Health Center.

Mira Wojciechowska. For her volunteerism in support of Elgin's history and community events.

Patrick Mueller and Eric Nalepka. For their rehabilitation of the exterior and interior of 14-16 S. Chapel St.

The commission will also present six heritage building plaques to homeowners who researched the history and architects of their homes. More than 500 plaques have been presented since the program was established in 1986. This year's recipients are:

Tom Michalski and Annie Paczkowski, 335 N. Commonwealth Ave.

O'Connor-Leetz Funeral Home, 364 Division St.

Grant and Kristi Born, 112-114 N. Spring St.

Roberto Rizo, Jose Luis Rizo & Lilia Corral, 120 Tennyson Court.

Rachel Clark and Anne Vogt, 377 Vincent Place.

Cory and Doris Ooyen, 955 Wing St.

New principals take the helm at Larkin and South Elgin high schools and four other District U-46 schools

By: Rafael Guerrero

Six District U-46 schools are starting the academic year with new school principals, including Larkin and South Elgin high schools.

The new appointments were announced Monday, the first day of class in the 2020-21 school year.

“These leaders bring with them energy, passion and a dedication to helping us meet the needs of each and every student,” Superintendent Tony Sanders said in a news release. “As we head into a school year that will demand innovation and flexibility, I am very glad to have them on our team.”

Krystal Bush is the new principal at Larkin High School in Elgin. She has 30 years of experience in public education, most recently serving as principal of the DREAM Academy, U-46’s alternative high school.

Bush has also been associate principal at South Elgin High School, assistant principal at Liberty Elementary School in Bartlett and dean of students at Streamwood High School. She began her career in 1990 as a physical education and health teacher, the release said.

At South Elgin High, the new principal is Kurt Johansen, who left a job as assistant principal of Glenbard East High School in Lombard after seven years. Prior to that, he was the school’s dean of students.

Johansen’s first education job was as a special education teacher at East Leyden High School in Franklin Park in 2003, the release said.

Christine Zugel has been promoted from assistant principal to principal at Abbott Middle School in Elgin. She started at U-46 in 1991 as a language arts teacher at Kimball Middle School, began teaching at Abbott in 2003 and took over as assistant principal there in 2013, the release said.

Clinton Elementary School in South Elgin will be led by Jonathan Miquelon, who previously served as assistant principal of Tefft Middle School in Streamwood. Miquelon is a Larkin High School graduate who started with U-46 in 2005 as a substitute teacher and teacher’s assistant at South Elgin High School and worked as a social studies teacher at Elgin High School from 2008 to 2018, the release said.

Jason H. Gold left a job as a principal at Komarek Elementary School in North Riverside to assume the principalship at Fox Meadow Elementary School in South Elgin.

Before that, he was the coordinator of ELA and Math Initiatives and Teacher/Principal Retention and Development at Lyons School District 103; assistant principal at Oak Park School District 97, where he started as a gifted and talented coordinator; and a junior high school math teacher at Cary-based School District 26, the release said.

The final appointment is Andrea Gaitán-Bustos, who spent three years as assistant principal at Coleman Elementary School in Elgin before being named the new principal of Sunnydale Elementary School in Streamwood.

According to the news release, Gaitán-Bustos started at U-46 in 2008 as a fourth-grade bilingual teacher at Laurel Hill Elementary in Hanover Park. She has also taught at Lincoln Elementary in Hoffman Estates and Hilltop Elementary in Elgin and is a former bilingual instructional coach.

---Daily Herald--- 08/26/2020

We are re-sharing the following story which the newspaper updated to remove a reporter's error.

Despite morning Zoom outages, it was back to school Monday — via computer — for U-46's 38,000 students

By: Rafael Guerrero



First-grade teacher Pedro Ricardez uses Zoom on his computer at Lowrie Elementary School in Elgin Monday to work on Spanish exercises with his dual-language students at home. Monday was the first day of class at Lowrie and the 50-plus other schools that make up District U-46. (Rafael Guerrero / The Courier-News)

Monday was the first day of class for the 370 or so students who attend Lowrie Elementary School in Elgin, but the building they'd normally be roaming was nearly empty other than for a handful of teachers and administrators.

In the school's 131-year history, it was the first time the bell rang with pupils not in their seats. Instead, they were at their kitchen tables or bedroom desks or other places as they logged into remote learning using the Zoom videoconferencing platform to ensure safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It's surreal having such a quiet building on the first day of school," Principal Tiffany Robinson said.

While it may have been quiet at Lowrie, it was not an easy day for some of the 38,000 or so other students who found they were unable to get into Zoom thanks to a partial service outage the company experienced Monday morning.

Parents called schools worried they were doing something wrong, prompting the district to send out alerts on email and social media about the situation and the need to switch to the Google Meet platform.

By afternoon, Zoom services were restored for the majority of users.

"Many thanks to our resilient teachers, staff and families who remained patient and quick to find their way to Google Meet amid the widespread Zoom outage," Superintendent Tony Sanders said in a posted message. "I visited a dozen Zoom classrooms this morning and I was impressed with how well everyone handled the situation."

Many of Lowrie's teachers are working from home until in-person classes resume, possibly sometime in October. Three on Monday elected to work from classrooms in the school, Robinson said.



First-grade teacher Pedro Ricardez works on some Spanish exercises with his dual-language class Monday morning. He was one of the few teachers working from inside Lowrie Elementary School in Elgin as District U-46 began the first day of school using remote learning. (Rafael Guerrero / The Courier-News)

“I was just excited to have a purpose to get up and get out,” third/fourth-grade teacher Michelle Vacco said of teaching from her classroom Monday. “I wanted to send a message that I’m in the classroom. (E-learning) is still school. ... I think it is important we send that message to them.”

Vacco spent her morning guiding students on where to find items using the online learning management system, Canvas.

“For the most part everyone wasn’t getting kicked out,” Vacco said of students trying to get online. All but two of her 21 students were able to check in.

Vacco had bags of learning materials ready inside her classroom for students to pick up beginning Tuesday, the first day she’ll meet her pupils in person. It will all be done outside, with students and parents picking them up curbside.

One of highlights of the day, Vacco, said, were the 10-minute virtual breaks that let her students talk and catch up with each other while she muted her computer.

“They need to talk to their friends. At least Zoom is letting them do that,” she said. “I just sat there and smiled.”

First-grade teacher Pedro Ricardez brought a lot of energy to his first day of classes as he worked on Spanish exercises with his dual-language class.

“Con que comienza ‘escalera’?” Ricardez said to his students in Spanish. “Muy bien — e, e, e!” The question he asked was what letter the word escalera, which means ladder in English, starts with in Spanish. They told him it was the letter E.

“This is still kind of strange for me,” Ricardez said of teaching virtually. “I love to be with them (in person).”



A visitor signs in Monday on the first day of school at Lowrie Elementary in Elgin, where only three teachers were in classrooms and students were doing remote learning from home or other locations as a result of the pandemic. (Rafael Guerrero / The Courier-News)

In Ricardez's case, 15 of 24 students had checked in at the start of the school day and another six reached out later to say they had login issues, he said.

Whenever in-person classes resume, U-46 students will find a number of changes to their schools' interiors, officials said. At Lowrie, signage on the walls and on the floor remind everyone to keep their distance, walk on one side of the hallway and wash hands frequently. The district has installed portable hand-washing stations in some hallways.

Plexiglas partitions now provide a barrier between visitors and staff in the main office. Security screening protocols have also been stepped up, which people being questioned on whether they are experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms or feeling feverish. Teachers must use their key fobs to come in and wear masks when they can't socially distance.

Lowrie and other U-46 schools will still provide curbside meal pickup service for students, something the district started after the pandemic emerged in March. Two million meals have been provided so far, officials said.

Robinson said teachers are doing daily check-ins with students to ask how they're feeling emotionally and mentally. Teachers also have resources available should distance learning or other facets of the pandemic take a toll on them, she added.

"Having a few teachers (in the building) at least and at least hearing a few student voices via Zoom, it lifted up my spirits knowing our students were connecting with their teachers," Robinson said of the first day of school.

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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
August 26, 2020

Tidbits column:
View of Uncle Harry
See Page 3

Cheap Seats:
Unlikely pairing
See Page 5

Dist. U-46 introduces 'pretty much flat' budget

By Seth Hancock

As citizens face mounting economic pressures due to the government's impact on the economy under Gov. J.B. Pritzker over COVID-19, School District U-46 is patting itself on the back for proposing a "pretty much flat" budget for Fiscal Year 2021 which increases spending by \$6.2 million.

The budget was presented at the Board of Education meeting on Monday, Aug. 17 which was held electronically. A public hearing is set for Sept. 14 and a vote scheduled for Sept. 28.

Expenditures are proposed to rise from \$594.3 million to \$599.5 million as the district projects a sixth straight year of enrollment declines, and revenue is set to rise from \$596 million to \$602.4 million.

On the expenditure side, salaries are set to rise from \$303.1 million to \$313.7 million and benefits from \$100.6 million to \$106.4 million. Other expenditures (\$61 million), supplies and materials (\$43.2 million), purchased services (\$42.8 million), capital outlay (\$26.2 million) and non-capital equipment (\$6 million)

make up the other spending lines.

The district again plans to seek the largest property tax increase allowed under the law with revenue proposed to rise from \$306.9 million to \$319.1 million, a 4 percent increase. So-called "evidence-based funding" (EBF) from the state is set at \$197 million, federal aid at \$44.4 million, categorical payments from the state at \$22.1 million and other local revenue at \$19.9 million.

Dale Burnidge, director of financial operations, called it "pretty much flat with the previous year" because of a new government accounting standard requiring student activity fund accounts to be put in the budget. That equates to \$5.3 million in revenue and expenditures.

"These are the accounts at the schools.... These aren't new revenues or expenditures. This is just the first time that we had to include them on our district budget," Burnidge said.

Property taxes can rise based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus new construction and the levy is determined in December. CPI has hovered between 1.9 percent and 2.3 percent between 2016 and 2019, but the

district projects 1 percent this year but believes it will return to 2 percent in 2021 and 2022.

The district has seen a \$2 million annual increase in property tax revenue between 2017 and 2020 but is planning to seek an average of \$8 million additionally each year between 2020 and 2024 as the country faces recession or depression. It expects to receive \$319 million this year from \$307 million while rising to \$339 million by 2024.

EBF is expected to be flat from last year's \$197 million and the district plans for three categorical payments. EBF has jumped from \$120 million in 2017 to \$197 million in 2020.

U-46 expects federal revenue to increase including \$2.5 million from the CARES Act and nutrition funds rising from \$12 million to \$15 million "because we've been able to serve meals over the summer," according to Burnidge.

Salary and benefits are set to rise, including a 5 percent increase for health insurance, by \$16 million from \$404 million to \$420 million for a 4 percent increase. No new staff are planned to be added.

In 2017, salary and benefits were at \$358 million. That rose to \$362 million (1.1 percent) in 2018, \$378 million (4.4 percent) in 2019 and \$404 million (6.9 percent) in 2020.

On debt management, U-46 showed a principal reduction of \$117 million from a 2015 bond.

The district projects a loss of 483 students with enrollment falling from 37,886 students to 37,403. The district projects enrollment to drop to 35,252 by 2023-2024 but still plans to contin-

ue increasing spending to \$624 million.

Board members offered nothing but praise for the budget including John Devereux who said "it feels like good stewardship."

"I appreciate the efforts... in the sort of uncertain times to, you know, take the care and the caution in preparing a budget that sort of reflects the economic uncertainty, keeping expenditures roughly flat," Devereux said.

Sue Kerr, the board's president, did ask about total CARES Act funds. Burnidge said U-46 received \$7.8 million with the remaining being spent in the FY2020 budget.

Board member Melissa Owens agreed with Devereux and said the "state is facing its own financial crises" and "there's a lot of anxiety," but she "appreciate(s) the work that the finance team has done to put this together."

Superintendent Tony Sanders said "the board has been excellent financial stewards" in recent years with use of a property tax abatement, which the district plans to use again this year. The abatement is a property tax scheme that kicks the can down the road forcing future property owners to pay the brunt of tax increases.

The "financial stewardship" in recent years has shown large spending increases and increases in staff despite enrollment declines.

Total staff has increased from 4,242 to 4,954 between 2016 and 2020 while enrollment has dropped by over 3,000 students since its highs. From FY2012 to FY2019, enrollment dropped 5.6 percent and spending increased by 29.8 percent (\$128.1 million).

New principals assume post at six U-46 schools

By Seth Hancock

School District U-46 has announced six new principals for the 2020-2021 school year.

The list includes three elementary school principals, two high school and one middle school.

A district press release stated they "will take on new challenges and responsibilities across our schools. They have been named to positions that were left vacant due to retirements, resignations, or other opportunities within the District."

The elementary principals include Jonathan Miquelon at South Elgin's Clinton, Jason Gold at South Elgin's Fox Meadow and Andrea Gaitán-Bustos at Streamwood's Sunnydale.

Miquelon moves to the new position from within U-46 after being the assistant principal at Streamwood's Tefft Middle School since 2018. He began his career in 2005 as a substitute teacher at South Elgin High School and from 2008 to 2018 was a social studies teacher at Elgin High School.

Gold comes to the district from a North Riverside district where he was an elementary principal from 2016 through last year. He has had various roles in various school districts for 14

years.

Gaitán-Bustos has been an assistant principal in U-46 the last three years at Elgin's Coleman Elementary School. She's been with the district since 2008 working as a teacher at two elementary schools.

The new high school principals include Kurt Johansen at South Elgin and Krystal Bush at Elgin's Larkin.

Johansen comes to U-46 from Glenbard East High School where he was an assistant principal since 2013 and dean of students from 2009, and prior he was a teacher, since 2003, at East Leyden School. Bush was the principal at U-46's DREAM Academy and has worked in several roles in the district since 1990.

Christine Zugel is the new principal at Elgin's Abbott Middle School where she was the assistant principal since 2013. She's been with the district since 1991.

"These leaders bring with them energy, passion, and a dedication to helping us meet the needs of each and every student," Superintendent Tony Sanders said in the press release. "As we head into a school year that will demand innovation and flexibility, I am very glad to have them on our team."



Framed impact of pandemic

While smaller, local businesses have typically been hit hard by impact of the coronavirus pandemic, that fact appeared particularly true at Streamwood Bowl whose nearly empty parking lot on Sunday, Aug. 23 underscored the issue.

(Examiner photo by Bruce Leighty)

Village Board discusses resubdivision request

By Seth Hancock

The Village Board of Trustees discussed a resubdivision and variation request at its committee of the whole meeting on Tuesday, Aug. 18.

The plan is to resubdivide a property off of South Western Avenue by petitioner Katarzyna Cylwik. Surrounding the property are single- and multi-family homes.

"The 48,222 square foot (1.10 acre) parcels would be resubdivided to cre-

ate two single-family lots that would meet the minimum lot requirements of the SR-3 Zoning District," wrote Roberta Grill, planning and development services director, in a memo. "The existing house, detached garage and swimming pool will remain on Lot 1 and a new single-family house could be constructed on Lot 2."

The existing pool on the property is on the side yard, and Cylwik is also seeking a variation to allow that pool

remain on the side yard. According to Grill, the village's zoning ordinance "requires that pools be located in rear yards only."

The proposal will move to the Zoning Board of Appeals and Plan Commission for further review and a public hearing.

Trustee Aaron Reinke said it seemed "relatively straight forward" but raised concerns from a previous resubdivision from years ago. He said that previous petitioner was not fully aware of the legal implications and additional costs to building on a resubdivided lot.

"I wouldn't want to see someone surprised and then all of the sudden they feel like they've been taken," Reinke said. Village President Kevin Wallace said "that's a great point" noting "that

was a big hassle" at the time, and Trustee Raymond Deyne concurred.

Grill said the village would discuss that with Cylwik but said she believed she was aware, and engineering plans are still under review.

Wallace said he'd never noticed a pool at the property to which Grill said it is "behind a fence."

"We bought the house with the existing pool," Cylwik said. "The pool is in-ground, and I believe it was built when the house was built in 1953, or around that time, when there were no permits for the pools."

Wallace said it would be a "grandfathered swimming pool" then.

Regarding the second lot after the resubdivision, Cylwik said: "So far, we don't plan on building anything. We just plan probably of maybe selling it."

SRO contract with U-46 approved via board vote

By Seth Hancock

The Village Board of Trustees unanimously approved via a 5-0 vote, of an agreement with School District U-46 to provide School Resource Officers (SRO) for the 2020-2021 school year at its meeting on Tuesday, Aug. 18.

The Bartlett Police Department provides SROs at Bartlett High School and Eastview Middle School. The SRO salaries will be \$71,842 with a \$73.39 hourly overtime rate.

"School District U-46 would be responsible for reimbursing the Village of Bartlett for the annual cost of a non-probationary police officer's salary in exchange for assigning school resource officers at Eastview Middle School and Bartlett High School," wrote Geoffrey Pretkelis, deputy chief of police, in a memo.

U-46 will begin the school year in all distanced learning with no student attendance at schools. Middle school students are expected to return in a hybrid model by the second quarter, but high school is expected to remain in distance learning for the foreseeable future under the district's plans.

Pretkelis wrote that U-46 has "requested some minor changes to the language contained in last year's agreement to better reflect its current practices."

Included is changes to the language regarding the selection process of SROs when there is an opening. The contract states there will be a "collaborative interview process" between the police department and U-46 with the district providing an "order of preference," and the chief of police will make the final decision.

Language was added "that references the required school resource officer training standards established by the Illinois Law Enforcement Training Standards Board," and a new paragraph regarding "duties and responsibilities" aligning to U.S. Department of Justice and the National Association of School Resource Officers was added according to Pretkelis.

SRO duties and responsibilities, according to the contract, are to "build a positive relationship between law enforcement, students, and school employees. The goal of the program is to reduce crime, create a safe school environment, and provide a law enforcement resource to school administrators, teachers, and students."

Pretkelis stated that language was updated about body cameras in case the Bartlett Police Department "would like to consider implementing this technology during the school year."

Students schedules at U-46 encountering delays

By Seth Hancock

Schedules for students in School District U-46 are expected to be released by the end of this week.

The first day of the 2020-2021 school year was shifted from Aug. 12 to Aug. 24 and will start in all distance learning under the continued COVID-19 regulations after approval by the Board of Education at a July 27 special meeting.

In a statement from Superintendent Tony Sanders, student schedules were delayed.

"As we navigate the beginning of this unique school year and consider our recent family survey responses, we have had to shift our timelines for releasing some information, including student schedules," Sanders wrote. "We are working to integrate new information, including the family survey responses regarding their distance learning preferences for elementary and middle school students."

Sanders added: "We appreciate your patience and understanding as we develop some new programs and procedures during the 2020-21 school year."

High school schedules should be completed as Sanders stated they would be released as early as Friday, Aug. 14 with completion on Tuesday, Aug. 18. Middle school schedules and elementary teacher assignments are expected to be ready by Friday, Aug. 21.

Distance learning is expected to remain in place through the end of the first quarter, Oct. 22, for all students

while a hybrid model (mix of in-person and distance) is planned to begin in the second quarter for kindergarten through middle school students. High school is expected to remain in distance learning for the foreseeable future.

Youth cited in accident that sent motorcyclists to hospital

According to the Bartlett Police Department, on Sunday, Aug. 16, at approximately 3 p.m., Bartlett police and the Bartlett Fire Protection District responded to the intersection of Stearns Road and South Bartlett Road to investigate a motor vehicle crash. Witnesses alleged a 2000 Harley-Davidson motorcycle was traveling westbound on Stearns Road when it struck the passenger side of a 2014 Honda Civic that failed to yield turning left onto South Bartlett Road from eastbound Stearns Road. The 49-year-old motorcyclist and his 50-year-old passenger suffered non-life-threatening injuries as a result of the motor vehicle crash. They were transported to St. Alexius Medical Center in Hoffman Estates by the Bartlett Fire Protection District.

The 17-year-old driver of the Honda Civic was cited for failure to yield at an intersection and assigned a court date of Oct. 26, at the Cook County court facility located in Rolling Meadows.

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