

Press Clippings 09/02/20

---The Courier-News --- 09/02/2020

Finish line in sight

Work renovating EHS Memorial Field stadium, Larkin career and tech classrooms nearly complete

By: Rafael Guerrero



The renovated Memorial Field at Elgin High School includes new home and visitor bleachers, a turf field, synthetic track, fencing, a press box and LED lighting.



Larkin High School's culinary, child care, health care sciences and science classrooms were renovated this spring and summer.

District U-46 renovated Elgin High School's Memorial Field stadium, redesigned career and technical classrooms at Larkin High School and completed the second phase of its new bus depot this spring and summer.

The three projects were among the largest on this year's capital improvement work list, Plant Operations Director Sheila Downs said.

U-46 was fortunate in that it did not experience difficulty in obtaining building materials due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Downs said. "From a timeline perspective, we've been able to honor the timelines we forecasted," she said.

Money for the work was included in the 2019-20 fiscal year budget, Downs said.

Among the most visible of the projects undertaken is the \$5.2 million renovation of Memorial Field, which should be completed in a matter of days, Downs said.

The upgraded facility, used by Elgin and Larkin high school football teams, now boasts new home and visitor bleachers, a turf field, synthetic track, fencing, press box and LED lighting. Seating capacity will decrease from 3,700 to about 3,400 as a result of the changes.

Some student-athletes had a chance to test out the renovations Saturday during a cross country meet, Athletic Director Paul Pennington said.

“The finish line for the cross-country meet was on the track,” he said. “(The students) did a lap around. They were the first to use the facility.”

The artificial turf will allow more track and field events, regional sectional soccer matches and marching band practices to be held at the stadium, Pennington said. Artificial turf is more durable than natural grass and less likely to be damaged as a result of inclement weather, he said.

“It will allow kids to run on it for 20 years before it needs to be replaced again,” Downs said.

Another job tackled this summer was the second phase of the district’s new facility at 1019 E. Chicago St. in Elgin.

At a cost of \$6.8 million, new transportation offices were completed and mechanical systems and building facade upgraded for the building, which will service as the district’s second bus depot.

The East Chicago Street facility now accommodates the district’s 167 small- and medium-sized buses and wheelchair-accessible buses. The fleet of 178 large-size and multifunction activity buses are parked at the Shales Parkway facility.

The second bus depot allows the district to “segment the operations in two,” Downs said.

Transportation employees are using the west side of the East Chicago Street building. Under the third phase of the renovation project, the rest of the building will be remodeled for use as a new welcome and student registration center and to provide administrative office and records storage space, Downs said.

New at Larkin High School are upgraded classrooms for culinary, child care, health care sciences and science programs. The work cost \$7.3 million, officials said.

Among the new features added are introductory and advanced skills kitchens, a dining room area, early childcare classrooms, a playground, communal space, independent labs, simulator space, and classrooms, Downs said.

Workers also upgraded the high school’s science labs, she said.

Other smaller projects completed this spring and summer include:

Classroom upgrades for South Elgin High School’s Beacon Academy;

New floors at Lowrie and Washington elementary schools;

Upgraded tennis facilities at Streamwood High School;

Water pipes replacements at Elgin High School;

Mechanical systems upgrades and parking lot improvements at multiple schools.

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Volume 26
Number 17

"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
September 2, 2020

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It's all in the bag
See Page 3

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Conspiracy theory?
See Page 5

U-46 emergency purchase ratified to obtain cameras

By Seth Hancock

The Board of Education in School District U-46 unanimously approved of an emergency purchase costing \$220,190, to come from the education fund, for classroom cameras at its meeting on Monday,

Aug. 17 which was held electronically due to the COVID-19 shutdown.

The item was presented and approved the same evening.

Included are 500 conference cameras and 500 document cameras along with supporting equipment. The items are purchased from CDW (\$119,740) and Ipevo (\$100,450).

"This technology setup will give teachers the ability to teach the students in the classroom and remotely," the proposal states. "This setup provides optimal opportunity for teachers to record instruction to share with students, or model instruction for students. Modeling may have been impeded previously due to limitations of laptop computers."

Sue Kerr, the board's president, asked about how the cameras will be used.

Suzanne Johnson, deputy superintendent of instruction, said the regular desktop cameras on teacher computers "present challenges" for science labs, math classes and those teaching the youngest students among others.

"Since the transition to distance learning last spring, we know we've had a number of teachers who have expressed a need for a better camera set-up to be able to model lessons and to be more engaging with students," Johnson said.

Board member Eva Porter asked if the proposal was presented to the teacher's union.

Johnson said it was, and "they're input helped us to identify the appropriate number of cameras to utilize."

"This is just enough to spread across the schools for additional supplement," said Superintendent Tony Sanders.

Porter asked if once the COVID-19 shutdown is over and students return fully to classrooms if the cameras will be used "in an invasive way" to spy on teachers. Johnson said: "No, absolutely not."

Sabres tennis excited for opportunity to compete

By Seth Hancock

Although facing challenges, the Streamwood tennis team is excited to get out and play as it prepares for the modified 2020 season under COVID-19 restrictions.

When Sabres coach Daniela Necs took over the team last year, she had only three players enrolled to play at the start before finishing with 13.

This season, the Sabres have faced challenges having more players out with families being cautious and transportation issues, among others, presented from the COVID-19 climate, but Streamwood was able to get 16 girls out to compete this year.

"All this impacts the attainment of my ultimate goal, but in the end I will be more than happy if we are able to finish the season healthy and safe even with no additional athletes added to our team," Necs said. "But also making sure the ones who joined already have a great experience and that we offer them the best opportunities to improve or learn, depending on their levels, on a sport they can play a lifetime."

Necs added: "With the right attitude and perseverance,

there is no mountain high enough that cannot be reached."

Returning at singles are juniors Kaitlyn Esteban and Katelyn Nguyen at No. 1 and No. 2 respectively, both returning singles. Junior Amber Tanigue played doubles last year and returns at No. 3 singles.

Juniors Stephanie Hernandez and Gabriela Pytel return at No. 1 doubles and juniors Carolina Hurtado and Valeria Sanchez at No. 2 doubles. Junior Allani Gesundheit also returns at doubles while freshmen Kaleigh Allender, Maryann Soria and Ritu Thakkar are all new to the sport.

From face mask rules to regulations on handling tennis balls, Necs said the team has adapted to the changes and are happy to get out and compete.

"I think they are all handling things very well so far," Necs said.

Necs added: "It is indeed different but I think everyone who is on the team really enjoys it, and to be honest it feels great to be out of the house and move after six, seven, eight hours of staring at a screen in front of a computer."

Dist. U-46 Board approves distance learning text

By Seth Hancock

The Board of Education in School District U-46 unanimously approved the purchase of a distance learning handbook for teachers at its meeting on Monday, Aug. 17 which was virtual due to the COVID-19 shutdown.

The item was presented and approved the same evening.

The cost is \$95,309, through the education fund, from Corwin, A Sage Publishing Company for 2,600 digital and hard copies of "The Distance Learning Playbook" authored by Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey and John Hattie. It also includes six hours of professional development.

"The Distance Learning Playbook will serve as a framework for common language in U-46 upon which we can build professional development for teachers and administrators that will support learning experiences that ensure that all of our students are prepared

for success in college and careers," the proposal states.

The proposal adds: "The Distance Learning Playbook addresses staff self-care, the first days of school, teacher-student relationships, teacher credibility, teacher clarity, engaging tasks, planning instructional learning, feedback, assessment, and grading all in a distance learning setting. It is aligned with and supports the district's work with Standards Based Learning and Assessment and Social Emotional Learning and Equity."

Board member Eva Porter asked if beyond the professional development if there will be ongoing technical support. Celia Banks, coordinator of K-6 literacy, said the handbook is not about technology but rather "how to do instruction via distance learning."

Superintendent Tony Sanders said the district has a help desk which allows teachers to ask technical questions.



Not on or about serene pond

A serene day on and around the pond in the Marquette Woods Subdivision was in evidence on Sunday, Aug. 30 as cooler, less humid temperatures took over the area. The village continued to appear to be mostly in solitude as local reaction to COVID-19 continued to hamper outside activities.

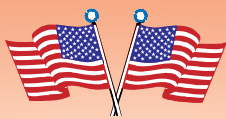
(Examiner photo by Bruce Leighty)

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U-46 ratifies text for
distance learning
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Ward calls out Villa:
Support resignation
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Subdivision proposal presented to commission

By Frank Muisenga Jr.

At the Planning & Zoning Commission meeting on Wednesday, Aug. 19, commissioners heard a proposal for a townhome and single-family residential subdivision on unincorporated land in the farming district.

Member Cynthia Tarka was absent.

According to Planner Lauren Blayney, M/I Homes, Naperville, requested feedback on a proposed 110-townhome, 218-single-family-dwelling-unit concept plan that would be located on the 120-acre Cavitt Farm property. Property encompasses land along McLean Boulevard, North Lancaster and Umbdenstock roads.

"This proposal is to only annex ap-

proximately 90 of the 120 acres," said Blayney. "This property is currently not annexed into the Village of South Elgin and therefore will require annexation into the village. Among other entitlements, rezoning of the property and an annexation agreement will be necessary."

"This would be back before the commission at some point in the future should the developer choose to move forward," said Director of Community Development Nancy Hill.

Blayney said staff feedback, to the applicant, suggested a roughly 11-acre park should be located north of North Lancaster Road along the western portion of the Spohr Family Farm.

"Staff's vision is that the park in this development would be an active park that would also serve the surrounding residential uses," Blayney said.

Applicant Marc McLaughlin, on behalf of M/I Homes, said the plan is to adhere to Unified Development Ordinance R-1 single dwelling unit and R-2 single dwelling unit district zoning requirements with no variations. Three and half dwelling units are proposed per acre.

"We're proposing nine models, for the single families, ranging from 1,475 to 2,700 square feet," said McLaughlin. "There's a two to five-bedroom option between those models, two to three baths and two to three car

garages."

McLaughlin said proposed townhomes would be a front and rear loads north of North Lancaster Road.

"I like your concept," said member Richard Watson. "I think it's nice. I'd like to see it get built. We had something like this come before us, 10, 12 years ago, and unfortunately the economy didn't handle it."

Member Jason Mickletvitz said he would likely not support any lot coverage variations if the proposal is presented to the commission in the future.

After the meeting, Hill said the next step is for the applicant to decide if the proposal is to be continued, which would begin a new process.

Panton Mill Park work update provided to board

By Frank Muisenga Jr.

At the Recreation Board meeting on Monday, Aug. 24, Director of Parks & Recreation Kim Wascher provided an update about the Panton Mill Park project.

"They are planning to turn the park back over to us on Sept. 8," said Wascher. "There are portions of it that have come back into our hands, some

of the sod areas. They're done with the installation and the upkeep that they needed to do, and now it's on us."

Currently, a water cannon is periodically being applied to those grass areas, according to Wascher. The week of Aug. 24, shelter and stage wood rafter staining was set to occur with installation the following week.

Wascher said one component is com-

pleted and other work continues.

"The trellis is completely done," Wascher said. "They're just finishing the masonry work, so all the brick work that wraps around the columns and putting in the seat wall that all has to be finished but then the splash pad will be completely done."

According to Wascher, staff splash pad operational training would likely occur in the next two weeks. However, in the coming weeks, staff needs to determine if the park is going to open in fall since current COVID-19 pandemic regulations would require restrictions on the size of groups and

other safety standards.

The comfort station is roughly 75 percent completed, signage is expected the week of Aug. 24, Wascher said. The next significant project was scheduled to occur Monday, Aug. 31.

"They will be grinding and paving the front of Village Hall, Spring Street and then all the way down Water Street to Prairie Street," Wascher said.

More detailed work such as blue fish and South Elgin prints at specific ground locations is set to occur during the asphalt installation too, according to Wascher. Interruptions getting into Village Hall will occur during this time.

Recreation Board given update on varied issues

By Frank Muisenga Jr.

At the Recreation Board meeting on Monday, Aug. 24, Director of Parks & Recreation Kim Wascher reported on a variety of topics including that an acquisition grant has been delayed.

According to Wascher, the process for an Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) grant agreement signing for riverfront property acquisition (to construct a bike path) has been slowed. State staff is lacking at offices due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"IDNR is as backed up as it can be," said Wascher.

Wascher also said the Parks & Recreation youth basketball program will not happen due to gubernatorial executive orders, Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity regulations and the legal interpretation provided by the village attorney.

"That's just one of the many examples of things we've had to change," Wascher said.

However, the village has started of-

fering a K-6 program at Clinton Elementary School on weekdays from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m., Wascher said.

"The Hub is our e-learning day program," Wascher said. "We are currently servicing only students in U-46 because they're the only ones that are full e-learning right now."

Up to 40 participants can attend, according to Wascher. Currently, 20 children are registered who are split up to attend on different days. School district curriculum is performed.

"We're following that elementary school schedule so that kids can plug their Chromebooks in, headphones on and they can just sit and learn," Wascher said.

After the meeting, Wascher said The Hub is set to end Oct. 22 as U-46 is planning to start a hybrid teaching approach for elementary schools in the second quarter.

Additional information about the program is available via southelgin.com/hub.



Cows forming groups

Sunday, Aug. 30 was a serene day in and around the village as cooler, less humid conditions took over in the area. In general, South Elgin continued to be in reserved solitude as part of local reaction to COVID-19 that limited outside activities, though grazing livestock formed its own grouping at the Kenyon dairy farm.

(Examiner photo by Bruce Leighty)

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