

Press Clippings 03/10/20

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Larkin High School renovation could begin in April

By: Madhu Krishnamurthy

Work on a more than \$7 million construction project to upgrade Larkin High School in Elgin will be done over the summer, pending school board approval.

Elgin Area School District U-46 wants to modify each of its five high schools to accommodate the adoption and rollout of new educational pathways and support various programs.

Larkin will be home to the culinary arts, early childhood and health care sciences pathways. That would require extensive renovations to fully support the curriculum.

During renovation, the school's science classrooms, lab spaces and prep rooms also will be updated, Sheila Downs, U-46 director of plant operations, told the school board Monday.

Once the school board approves the project, work would begin during spring break and be concentrated in the school's D Wing, which houses the culinary program.

"We are revamping the culinary program and the space," Downs said.

A newly accredited health care sciences program and early childhood program, which will be certified by the Department of Children and Family Services, have specific mandates that require certain upgrades. An old automotive shop would be converted into a childhood area and an outdoor concrete pad would be replaced with a fenced playground and bollards to meet the requirements of the early childhood program.

Construction would begin in April and is expected to take roughly 17 weeks, and students will be moved into mobile classrooms, Downs said.

"The plan is that the kids will not return to the D wing after spring break," she said. "They will use the mobile for passing periods. Eleven classes will be located in the mobile."

Due to the magnitude of these projects, officials are focusing on renovating one high school each year for the next five years until each school has been adapted for the pathways it will house.

Taxing districts join District 300 lawsuit against Sears to collect on lost tax revenue

By: Drew Zimmerman

A number of Chicago-area taxing districts have joined Algonquin-based Community Unit District 300 as plaintiffs claiming they are entitled to millions in tax revenue allocated to Sears when it was in violation of an economic development agreement.

The governments also joining the suit as plaintiffs include Barrington Library District, Elgin Community College, Barrington Township, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District and **School District U-46**.

"It did not make sense for us to remain listed as a defendant," said Mary Fergus, director of school and community relations for School District U-46. "We, along with other government bodies previously listed as defendants, believe that we are better suited to be listed as a plaintiff as we are joining District 300 to ensure recovery of revenue owed to us."

In 1989, the Economic Development Area and Tax Increment Allocation Act was created in an effort to keep Sears and thousands of jobs from leaving Illinois. After its passage, the village of Hoffman Estates approved an economic development agreement with the company that would offer financial assistance and subsidies to develop a corporate campus in the village.

In 2012 -- under the threat of Sears leaving the state once again, the village of Hoffman Estates amended the act to require Sears to maintain no fewer than 4,250 full-time equivalent jobs at its corporate headquarters in the village. In the event that Sears fails to comply with this requirement, the amendments will provide a formula for recapture of the subsidies based on the amount of time Sears failed to comply with the jobs requirement, according to the suit.

In October 2018, days before the company would file for bankruptcy, District 300 sued the village of Hoffman Estates and Sears Holdings Corporation over the latter's failure to comply with terms and conditions of the agreement.

Ken Florey, an attorney representing District 300, said because several governing bodies became plaintiffs, the school district's complaint had to be amended. Florey said this was a strong statement in the case.

In a settlement agreement with the Department of Commerce in 2017, Sears admits failing to comply with the jobs requirement at least as of May 31, 2017, and admits it continued to fail to comply with the jobs requirement at least through Dec. 15, 2017.

However, the suit alleges the village of Hoffman Estates incorrectly paid to Sears the amount of property tax revenue levied by the taxing bodies in 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2018 had it maintained 4,250 jobs for the entire 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2019 calendar years.

"(Hoffman Estates) had an obligation to verify and certify whether Sears was in compliance with the jobs requirement of the Sears EDA Act," according to the lawsuit. "However, for the village, it is more lucrative under the Sears EDA Act for Sears to be in compliance with the jobs requirement than not in compliance, so the village failed to meaningfully perform its verification and certification functions mandated by the Sears EDA Act."

At the time District 300 filed suit, the village was holding property taxes levied for the 2017 tax year in a special tax allocation fund which, if Sears was compliant with its agreement, would be distributed 55% toward Sears and 45% toward various taxing bodies within the state.

Because Sears filed bankruptcy, there was a hold on the 55% of 2017 taxes, or about \$9.7 million, pending further order of the bankruptcy court or an agreement between parties. In 2019, the bankruptcy court ordered the village of Hoffman Estates to release about \$2.5 million of 2017 special tax allocation funds to Sears.

In October 2019, the village was ordered to disburse \$2 million of the remaining 2017 funds to District 300 and the rest to Sears.

Elgin Lions taking orders for 36th annual Rose Day

Submitted by: Ed Bates



The Elgin Lions Club's 36th annual Rose Day is offering one dozen long-stemmed roses for \$15 for delivery on April 8-10. *Courtesy of James Beam*

Members of the Elgin Lions Club are conducting their 36th annual Rose Day.

They will be selling one dozen long-stemmed roses for \$15 for delivery on Wednesday to Friday, April 8-10. Purchasers can order fresh flowers for celebrating Easter, giving to a loved one, thanking someone, or just brightening up a room!

This is a major fundraising event that began in 1984, and was so well received that it is now an annual affair.

The roses can be ordered from any Elgin Lions Club member or an order can be placed by calling (847) 289-4206 and leaving a return phone number.

A club member will return the call and make arrangements for the delivery and payment. An order also may be placed by logging onto our Facebook page, elginlions.org, and payment can be made with PayPal.

The roses are flown here shortly before they are to be delivered directly to the homes of the recipients in the Elgin area by members of the Lions Club or other people interested in helping the Lions in the community. People who received the roses in the past have been impressed by their quality. They compare favorably with roses costing five times as much.

Proceeds of the sale will be used to further the charitable works of the Elgin Lions Club. The club provides eye care for people in the community who need it but have difficulty affording it. This is especially true for students in [Elgin Area School District U-46](#). The club realizes that if students can't see clearly they can't learn effectively, and the majority of the funds collected go to purchasing eye care for students who need it when their families have difficulty affording it. The club also participates in other charitable causes and donates money to other worthy charitable organizations.

Nearly all of the money collected by the various fundraisers conducted by the Elgin Lions Club remains in the Elgin area for the benefit of local people, and the money that does go to Lions International and the Lions of Illinois Foundation is used to help needy people wherever in the world they may live.

There is always room in the club for new members. Many have joined the club so they can be of some use to people in the community. It seems to be the common theme, and the club welcomes new members enthusiastically. More members mean that the club can do more!

Find out more about the Elgin Lions Club by calling (847) 289-4206 or visiting elginlions.org or checking out the Facebook page at www.facebook.com/ElginIllinoisLions/.

Learn about the club's food collections, running competitions, poker nights, candy sales, meeting schedules, good meals, informative guest speakers, occasional goofiness at meetings, and other things.