



Back When it Really Snowed

by Sofia Zeman

When a Midwestern lifestyle comes to mind, many prefer to think of a hard-working middle class and a booming agricultural climate. But one of the most notable aspects of living in Northern Illinois comes from its winters.

Normally fall winds to an end, and temperatures progressively drop in the months following. But that is not always the case for us. Yes, the temperature typically does drop as we coast through November and approach December. But, many residents within the City of Belvidere have commented on the seemingly irregular nature of the weather as of recent. Within the span of a few days, weather here changes from forty degrees and cloudy to hail and negative five in the blink of an eye.

While all of this feels out of the norm, the way weather has been moving through the area lately is relatively average for this time of year in Illinois. The temperature is still in its usual process of dropping as the Earth tilts away from the sun. As this goes on, it is common for variations to occur. At some point in the near future, the temperature will eventually plateau and reach an average through the bulk of the winter months.

Curious as to why there's nothing to be left the next morning after experiencing mountains of snowfall? This is because the surface temperature of the ground has not yet fully adjusted to the seasonal change. The ground is still warm, which melts the snow as a result. Which, again, is quite normal this time of year.

After decades of recording and analysis, the National Weather Service found that winters here have

Continued on Page 2...



Javon Bea Hospital Dedicated

by Charles Herbst

Mercyhealth's new Javon Bea Hospital and Physician Clinic in Rockford was formally dedicated Wednesday afternoon. Mercyhealth President Javon Bea was assisted by Chairman of the Board Rollie McClellan at the ribbon cutting and joined by hospital board members and various local officials. The hospital is located at 8201 East Riverside Drive, immediately west of the Boone County line.

Monsignor Daniel Deutsch, Vicar of Clergy for the Diocese of Rockford blessed the new hospital noting the importance of good health in the lives of people in the community. Various dignitaries, including Rockford Mayor Thomas McNamara and Winnebago County Board President Frank Haney noted the

Continued on Page 2...

Snow *Continued from page 1*

a seasonal average temperature of anywhere between 26 and 30 degrees Fahrenheit. If you think that's cold, be thankful that you were not around at the turn of the Twentieth Century. In the winter of 1903, this region hit an all-time low, with an average seasonal temperature of 18.3 degrees. Now that's cold!

The image above portrays Belvidere residents shortly after a particularly heavy snowfall in the early 1900s. This was regarded as a record-breaking amount of snow for the City of Belvidere at that point in time. These people spent many hours outside in the cold to help clear out the snow. With the evolution of street and snow management technology, it's nice to know that in this present winter, most of us will not have to dig up nearly as much snow as these people.

Carrying out everyday life in the midst of holiday shopping and celebration, can make these winter months quite chaotic. It's because of this chaos that we sometimes forget to acknowledge what's around us. In the busy rush to work or school, many of us aren't able to take time to appreciate that we didn't have to extensively worry about the condition of the roads, despite the most recent heavy snowfall.

On behalf of the *Boone County Journal*, we would like to thank all of the men and women that work to clean up Belvidere's snow-filled streets every winter in order to make all of our lives a little easier and a lot safer.

Mercy *Continued from page 1*

importance of the hospital to the community, which, at \$505 million, is the largest construction project in the history of Rockford. Haney approvingly called the hospital a "big swing" for Rockford.

The new hospital will serve as a regional hub for highly specialized care for both adults and children. It is the only state-designated children's hospital in the area. The hospital will have a Pediatric Intensive Care Unit, a Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, a Level II Pediatric Trauma Center and a Level I emergency/trauma center. These designations represent the highest rankings of facilities in the health care industry. The hospital is one of a select

few in the United States to have a specialized unit for abnormally small newborns.

The public is invited to an open house this Saturday, December 8 from 9am to 4pm. Comprehensive tours of the new hospital will be given. This will be the only chance for most people to see the state-of-the-art trauma, operating and intensive care facilities. The hospital will open to patients on January 5.

The City of Belvidere in November

by David Larson

The City of Belvidere in November dealt with several issues, most of which were non-political. The new owners of the former Bush Gardens bar and restaurant have offered to purchase the city municipal parking lot adjacent to the new Coaches Corner restaurant and bar. The amount of the offer was \$60,000. Alderman Clayton Stevens questioned the price and the issue was put on hold until an appraisal could be completed.

Belvidere's long-term storm sewer problem is a key deficiency in Belvidere's infrastructure. The south side storm sewer is inadequate to handle the rain from many storms because of the addition of several subdivisions and commercial properties over the past 60 plus years. It has been estimated that a completed project will cost the city between 40 and 50 million dollars. At the November 19th regular City Council meeting, two motions moved that project forward one more step. \$66,975 was approved to do engineering work on the Bellwood and Belvidere High School detention ponds as well as the 6th Street low flow channel. Once completed, these ponds will be modified to better handle the water flow going toward the west.

With the budgeting process completed, the City of Belvidere budget for the coming fiscal year will include a property tax increase of 3.22% next year. It is estimated that total property taxes for levied Belvidere will be \$5,878,157 in 2018 up from \$5,694,873 in 2017. This property tax increase is in addition to recent sales and motor fuel tax increases by the city.



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12/7 Trinadora Rocks
12/21 Madtown Mannish Boys
1/4 Written Warning

HOPE & ANCHOR
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12/8 Reverend Raven & The Chain
Smoking Altar Boys
1/11 Blues Disciples
2/9 Mike Wheeler Band

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Obituaries

Hern, Richard "Mike", 65, Belvidere, Dec. 4
Jensen, Anna, 69, Belvidere, November 14
Nichols, James, 76, Cherry Valley, Nov. 29
Reimer, Maxine, 87, Belvidere, November 30
Schriver, William "Bill", 74, Belvidere, Dec. 1
Smith, Rita, 78, Belvidere, November 26



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David Grimm April 1938 - Dec. 2000
Richelle Kingsbury Aug. 1955 - June 2013

THE BOONE COUNTY JOURNAL
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Each week, the Journal seeks to present a variety of voices.
Letters. Every attempt will be made to print all letters received with the exception of those that are libelous or obscene. Letters should be signed and include an ID or phone number, so that we can contact the author prior to publication to verify authenticity.
Guest columns. Community leaders are encouraged to submit guest columns consistent with our editorial guidelines for possible inclusion in the Journal.
Opinions. The opinions expressed in the Journal are those of their authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of The Boone County Journal management or ownership.

**Notice of Proposed Property Tax Increase
for City of Belvidere**

I. A public hearing to approve a proposed property tax levy increase for the City of Belvidere for 2018 will be held on December 17, 2018, at 7:00 P.M. at the City Council Chambers at 401 Whitney Boulevard, Belvidere, Illinois.

Any person desiring to appear at the public hearing and present testimony to the taxing district may contact Becky Tobin, Budget/Finance Officer, 401 Whitney Boulevard, Suite 100, Belvidere, Illinois 61008 (Telephone 815-544-2612).

II. The corporate and special purpose property taxes extended or abated for 2017 were \$5,694,873.

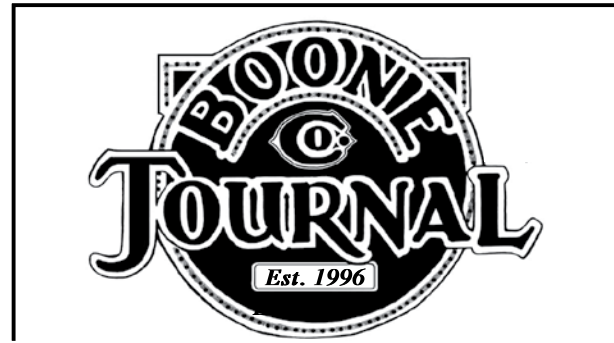
The proposed corporate and special purpose property taxes to be levied for 2018 are \$5,878,157. This represents a 3.22% increase over the previous year.

III. The property taxes extended or abated for debt service for 2017 were \$0.

The estimated property taxes to be levied or abated for debt service for 2018 are \$0.00

IV. The total property taxes extended or abated for 2017 were \$5,694,873. The estimated total property taxes to be levied or abated for 2018 are \$5,878,157. This represents a 3.22% increase over the previous year.

V. The tax levy for Special Service Areas #2 and #3 shall not exceed .12% of the value as equalized or assessed of taxable property within the Special Service Areas #2 and #3.



**Boone County Township Assessor's
2018 Annual Meeting**

The Boone County Township Assessor's Annual Meeting will be held, Tuesday, December 11, 2018 at 9:00 A. M. in the Boone County Board Room, 1212 Logan Avenue, Belvidere, IL 61008. This meeting is being held in accordance with the Illinois Property Tax Code, Article 9, Div 1, Section 9-15.

The purpose of the Assessor's Annual Meeting is for instruction on the updates in the Illinois Property Tax Code, methods of mass appraisal, functions and practices of the assessment process and plans for the 2019 Assessment Year. This meeting is open to the public.



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**NOTICE OF PROPOSED PROPERTY TAX INCREASE
FOR NORTH BOONE CUSD 200**

I. A public hearing to approve a proposed property tax levy increase for North Boone CUSD #200, County of Boone, State of Illinois, will be held on December 18, 2018 at 6:30 p.m. in the Board Room of the North Boone CUSD #200 District Office Building, 6248 North Boone School Road, Poplar Grove, IL 61065

Any person desiring to appear at the public hearing and present testimony to the taxing district may contact Melissa Geyman, Director of Business Services, 6248 North Boone School Road, Poplar Grove, IL 61065, 815-765-3322

II. The corporate and special purpose property taxes extended or abated for 2017 were \$9,030,906.53.

The proposed corporate and special purpose property taxes to be levied for 2018 are \$9,476,000.00. This represents a 4.93% increase over the previous year.

III. The property taxes extended for debt service and public building commission leases for 2017 were \$2,235,172.94.

The estimated property taxes to be levied for debt service and public building commission leases for 2018 are \$2,022,400. This represents a 9.52% decrease over the previous year.

IV. The total property taxes extended or abated for 2017 were \$11,266,079.47. The estimated total property taxes to be levied for 2018 are \$11,498,400. This represents a 2.06% increase

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Community News & Events

Park Board Commissioner Opportunities- The Belvidere Township Park District has two opportunities of leadership available in 2019. If you are looking to strengthen and support the mission of parks, recreation and conservation in Belvidere please consider accepting civic responsibility by becoming a Park Board Commissioner. Information can be attained at the Belvidere Township Park District office, 1006 West Lincoln Avenue or by calling 815-547-5711. The filing deadline is Friday, December 17th at 5:00 p.m. And requires a petition of 119 signatures of support. Both opportunities are four year terms and meetings are typically held on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at 5:00 p.m., exception in December with only one meeting the second Tuesday. Thank you for considering serving our community.

Annual Holiday Walk- Saturday, December 8, 2018. The event will be from 6pm-8pm and will be located at the Boone County Conservation District, 603 Appleton Road. Celebrate the season as you visit the past and enjoy an evening of peace and goodwill. **FREE ADMISSION!**

Christmas in Kirkland- Saturday, December 8, 2018. Located in Downtown Kirkland and Franklin Park. Vendors and crafts open at 2 pm at Franklin Township Shelter. Downtown activities begin at 3 pm. Free Hot Dogs, Chips and Water. Free Sweets and Free Hot Chocolate and Cider. Free Cookies, Punch and Coffee. Drop off your non-expired, non-perishable food items at marked barrels in various locations. Find us on Facebook!

Music Academy Provides Holiday Gift to Community- The Music Academy in Rockford presents its gift to the Rockford community, a free Holiday Concert and Carol Sing at 10 a.m. Saturday, December 8 in the Sanctuary of the

First Lutheran Church, 225 South 3rd Avenue. Families with young children are welcome. The Lucia Fest and holiday treats follow the concert.

Christmas Model Train Show- December 8th from 10am to 4pm. Located at the Capron Lions Community Building at Capron Lions Park. Free admission and open to the public. Take a stroll down memory lane as you view Model Train displays with many different sized trains set in different display scenes and take a look at photos of area train stations and train memorabilia.

Rock Valley College Orchestra Concert (Rescheduled) – The Rock Valley College Orchestra Concert that was scheduled for Monday, November 26, 2018, has been rescheduled to Monday, December 10, 2018. Come out to RVC's main campus for an evening of music on Monday, December 10, 2018 starting at 7:30 p.m. In the Performing Arts Room on the bottom level of the Educational Resource Center on RVC's main campus, 3301 N. Mulford Road, Rockford. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for students/seniors. Please visit rockvalleycollege.edu/concerts to view the remaining concerts for the winter season.

Spring Township Regular Board Meeting- Spring Township will be having a regular board meeting on Monday December 10th at 6:00 PM. The meeting will be held at the Spring Town Hall, 3150 Shattuck Road. Topics to be discussed include the levies for the township and road district.

Community Building Complex Committee Regular Board Meeting- Thursday, December 20, 2018 at 5:00 p.m. In the Community Building Board Room.

26th Annual Marengo FFA and Stateline Toy Collectors Toy Show- Marengo Community High School 110 Franks Road, Marengo Illinois. Sunday, January 20th 2019 from 9am-3pm. Contact Bill Larson with any questions at 815-226-9010 or email at ibill43@comcast.net

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Wife of Illinois Man Received World's Longest Letter

514 Pages From Dutch Pen Pal in 1940s

By Tom Emery

With the advent of e-mail, text messaging, and social media, some say that letter writing is a lost art. The wife of an Illinois man received a letter in the 1940s that is considered the longest ever written.

The spouse of Howard Randolph Holder, a Moline native who later controlled a string of radio stations in Georgia and California, was the recipient of a whopping 514-page communication from a pen pal in the Netherlands during World War II.

The letter, listed in the Guinness Book of World Records in 1972, describes the Nazi occupation of the country and the effects on the writer's own household.

Holder, who was born on Nov. 14, 1916, was himself a World War II veteran who served in the North African theater, earning the Bronze Star. Captured by troops under Edwin Rommel in February 1943, Holder spent nearly two years in German prison camps before escaping on his fourth try in January 1945.

Remarkably, he walked, hitchhiked, and caught trains across Russia and Egypt before finally making his way back to Naples. In 1995, he wrote a book, *Escape to Russia*, on the ordeal.

He had grown up in Moline, attending the public schools before earning a degree in psychology and Spanish from Augustana College in 1939. He then worked for WHBF radio in Rock Island from 1939-41 and for WOC in Davenport from 1946-47.

The local radio gigs were the beginning of a distinguished life in broadcasting for Holder, who was also one of the leading citizens of northern Georgia. He was a member of no less than twenty-seven charitable and civic boards in the region, and was honored in seven different listings of the Marquis "Who's Who" series, including recognition for the Who's Who in the U.S., the world, advertising, media and communications, and entertainment.

In 1942, Holder married Clementi Lacey-Baker of Louisville, Ky., a union that produced four children. At the time of the marriage, Clementi was in the early stages of a lengthy pen-pal relationship with a Dutch man, Anton Frederik van Dam that had begun in 1938, when both were eighteen years old. The friendship continued until van Dam's death in 1976.

Among the many exchanges by the pair was the sprawling 514-page mailing recognized as the longest letter ever written. Started in 1940 and completed in 1945, the letter was later transcribed by Clementi under the title "Dear Clem."

Howard and Clementi were also devoted letter-writers to each other. Miraculously, one set of their letters from his time as a POW was found in a prison camp 40 years after the war and later returned.

The world-record letter is now in the Holder family papers at the University of Georgia libraries in Athens, Holder's adopted hometown. Howard Holder died in 2002, while Clementi passed away in 2013.

**Opinion:
Happy Birthday:
The Solution that
Never was to Illinois'
Pension Crisis**

By Austin Berg | Illinois News Network

Illinois was born 200 years ago this week. But another significant birthday should provoke pause, because it points the way forward for our struggling state.

Five years ago, on Dec. 5, 2013, then-Gov. Pat Quinn signed into law a suite of pension reforms passed by Democratic supermajorities in the Illinois House and Senate.

They weren't perfect. Lawmakers didn't take pensions out of political hands entirely. Some thought the changes didn't go far enough to protect

taxpayers. And ultimately, reformers were either willfully blind or did not foresee the harsh treatment they would receive from the Illinois Supreme Court.

But the reforms were historic.

Barring their judicial demise, they would have brought about the most significant improvements to Illinois' fiscal health in generations – changing the course of the state entirely.

How could something as tedious as pension reform stand among the most important legislative actions in Illinois history? Here's how:

The state's number crunchers estimated the pension reform bill would have saved taxpayers between \$1.1 billion and \$1.4 billion in each of the budget years under Gov. Bruce Rauner. Savings of that size would have made the budget impasse between Rauner and House Speaker Mike Madigan much less likely.

No social service cuts. No racking up unpaid bills. No record-breaking income tax hike. All of this, without cutting a dime from current pension benefit checks for retirees and protecting every single active employee's earned benefits.

With Democratic supermajorities and a Democratic governor set to take office in 2019, it's worth revisiting what made those reforms so important.

First, what did they do? And second, how can lawmakers tackle them again without running afoul of the courts?

The most important thing to know about the 2013 reforms is that they protected already-earned retirement benefits. But they changed the accrual of future benefits.

Changes to future benefits focused on three areas: The first was increasing the retirement age for current state workers younger than 45. The second was capping workers' maximum pensionable salary, with future growth in the cap pegged to inflation. And the third was to eliminate 3 percent guaranteed post-retirement raises in favor of a true cost-of-living increase tied to inflation.

These might seem like small changes on their own. But taken together, they would be extraordinary.

Actuarial projections at the time showed the state's entire pension debt would have been eliminated or nearly eliminated by 2045, all while increasing the funding target for the largest state pension funds to 100 percent from 90 percent, and slightly decreasing the contributions employees had to make to their own retirement.

Today, pensions consume more than a quarter of the state's general funds budget. That, or worse, will remain the case for decades without changes.

Under the 2013 reforms, that share would have fallen to just over 1 percent by 2040.

So why did the Supreme Court stand in the way?

The majority opinion cited the pension clause of the Illinois Constitution, stating pension benefits may not be "diminished or impaired." It controversially considered promises of future benefits as part of that clause. In other words, if you're hired as a young worker in 1970, you have the right to an automatic 3 percent raise in your retirement check in 2020.

This extreme reading of the constitution again was upheld by the justices as the reason Illinoisans must pay 23 Chicago union leaders an estimated \$56 million in inflated pension payments based not on their public salary, but on their union salary.

Lawmakers passed the perk into law, were ridiculed, and then changed the law back.

Ah, ah, ah ... "diminished or impaired." A promise is a promise. The Illinois Supreme Court ordered Nov. 29 that the state honor this outrageous benefit.

That's why a constitutional amendment is so necessary. And it doesn't have to eliminate the pension clause in order to allow cuts.

A solid amendment simply needs to allow for changes in future benefits, while protecting what has already been earned by public employees. Voters could approve the amendment as early as 2020, and lawmakers could pass specific reforms that trigger the morning after Election Day.

Those changes need to be a bit more substantial than in 2013, because the problem has grown tremendously since then. But the principles can remain the same.

Illinois' worst-in-the-nation pension crisis causes despair. It's a massive problem, constantly bemoaned, that appears unsolvable.

But Illinoisans should know lawmakers in the past made big moves to fix it. It's politically possible. They just need a little reminder of our history.

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