

FREE

Friday • December 11, 2020
Vol. 25, Issue 32 • No. 1280

BOONE
COUNTY
LOCAL NEWS, OPINION & HISTORY
JOURNAL
Real Journalism for a Real Democracy

 **Subscribe Online**
www.boonecountyjournal.com

Progress Report Leads to Questions about Leath Building

by David Larson

Public Works Director Brent Anderson's report to the November 16 Belvidere City Council Committee of the Whole caused one alderwoman to ask the million-dollar question. "What is the city doing with the Leath Building?" asked Fifth Ward Alderman Marsha Freeman.

Anderson was reporting on the progress of the remediation of the land along the Kishwaukee River east of South Main Street and the walking path being constructed on it.

The city is enlarging the retention pond at East Avenue and the US 20 Bypass. The dirt it removed is being spread over land between the Leath Building on Meadow Street and the Kishwaukee River. That land, according to Anderson, has been excavated and polluted soil was removed to a landfill. The new fill from the high school pond will put a "cap" on the land, which will meet EPA/IEPA standards for remediation. The city has been able to pay for the remediation through the Brownfields Program. This project began during the Brereton Administration. Brownfields grants have paid for the total cost of remediation for the city.

A restrictive covenant in the title when the city purchased the property was that no residential use could be made of the property without remediation.

The City of Belvidere purchased the Leath property in December of 2009 for \$1. The purchase was approved with only one dissenting vote by alderman Clint Morris. Mayor Chamberlain was an alderman at the time and was one of the "yes" votes.

In May 2012, Alderman Bowley made a motion to repair a leak that had developed in the roof. When the city purchased the building, it employed Carlson Engineering to assess the condition of the building. At a June 2012 committee meeting, Chamberlain, in support of repairing the roof, cited Carlson Engineering's report, stating the building has a sound foundation and support system. Chamberlain said, "The building is in pretty good shape." A motion was put on the floor by alderman Bowley and seconded by alderman Snow to accept a bid by Superior Roofing for \$12,500 to repair 4,500 sq. ft. of the 21,000 sq. ft. roof.

Debate ensued with Alderman Morris leading a charge against repairing the roof, claiming the city was not able to afford it. A voice vote was taken and the motion lost. The former Mayor Brereton commented to this reporter, out of frustration, that the city had salvaged about \$50,000 in scrap metal abandoned in the building and had free use of the east end storage building for only a \$1.

To date the roof leak has not been addressed. The estimated cost to demolish the building is between \$500,000 to \$750,000, according to the city budget and finance officer.

When elected mayor, Chamberlain responded to a written question that this newspaper put to him and published in the *Journal* prior to his winning election in 2013.

Journal: What is your plan for the Leath Building?



There was a Future in that Ford

By David Larson

The day of May 1, 1907 was a big day in Belvidere. On that day, 4 "Runabouts" and one "Touring Coach" of the new Ford Model-T's were delivered to the new Manley Motors. Manley opened its doors in 1906. In this our "modern" day culture, it might be difficult for many people to imagine the anticipation, the excitement, or even the expectation of the new life that the delivery of these vehicles could have caused among the Belvidere residents of 1907.

A close look at the detail found in those 1907 Model-T's discloses the luxury and the comfort these vehicles provided when compared with the more-established mode of transportation of that day, a horse-drawn carriage, buggy or wagon. Today's automobiles can easily be compared to the comfort of a traveling living room with surround sound stereo and a universe of entertainment plus a mapping system so that you will never get lost, because it links with a satellite with GPS positioning.

Continued on Page 3

Chamerlain: The following are the steps I will follow to find a positive solution for the Leath Building:

"FIX THE ROOF! Allowing the building to deteriorate further is pointless. The City uses the building for storage, reducing the need and cost for other storage options.

Have a thorough engineering study completed to determine the building's viability for redevelopment. Once the true viability of the of the structure is determined, we can prioritize options for development. Have a new appraisal done on the property. What is its current market value? Secure bids to determine demolition cost for the building.

"Once we understand the building's structural integrity, market value, and estimated deconstruction cost, we will present the findings to the community, asking for their input. How

\$350,000 Illinois' Grant Available for Local Small Business

Deadline is December 15, 2020

The grant is intended to support operating costs needs such as payroll, rent, utilities and replenishment of inventory."

To be eligible a business must meet the following criteria:

- Located in the City of Belvidere
- Incorporated, Partnership or Sole Proprietorship
- In business before January 1, 2020
- Earned less than \$2.5 million in 2019
- Document a significant negative business financial impact due to COVID-19
- Expected to be fully operational after local and state emergency guidelines have ended

Use this url to learn more.

<https://www.ci.belvidere.il.us/news-and-events/covid-19/entry/back-to-business-in-belvidere-grant.html>

would they like to see us proceed? We can review previous ideas and see if they are of value to the current findings. Aggressively market the property to developers. We need an experienced partner to either rehabilitate the building, or redevelop the site after deconstruction. Looking at similar successful projects in other communities will give us a starting point. Multiple stakeholders may be necessary.

"Once a suitable project takes shape, the idea will be shared with the community again for their input and buy-in. An alternative to the redevelopment of the existing building or new construction of some type would be converting the property to community greenspace. A cooperative effort between government bodies could achieve realization of a greenspace option. Solving the Leath challenge will be a vital step in a downtown economic revival."

Community News & Events

Stroll's Virtual Visits with Santa Claus Connect Rockford Region to North Pole Next Three Sundays: Virtual visits with Santa, free for area families, will take place from 1-6 p.m. CST on the next three December Sundays. Families can register now for one three-minute timeslot at StrollOnState.com

Illinois Tollway Reminds Drivers Toll Violation Relief Program Ends December 30: The Illinois Tollway is reminding drivers that they have through December 30, 2020 to take advantage of TOLLING 2020 by paying a reduced, \$3.00 fee per toll for passenger vehicles, a savings of 85 percent over the \$20.00 fines previously assessed. Visit www.Illinoistollway.com for more information.

Klehm Arboretum & Botanic Garden Announces Winter Hours: Klehm Arboretum & Botanic Gardens are open to the public Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. - 4p.m.

Girl Scouts Latest Recruitment Drive Ensures Girls Can Join in Time for Annual Cookie Program! In these changing times, Girl Scouts offers girls a unique chance to be part of something larger than themselves. This year, Girl of Northern Illinois (GSNI) is offering a recruitment drive right ahead of the cookie program, so girls who join now will be able to take part in the largest girl-led business in the world! Through the cookie program, girls learn the 5 Skills of goal setting, decision making, money

management, business ethics, and people skills. The 2020-21 Girl Scout Cookie Program begins online on December 14, 2020.

Interested families can learn more and get started at www.girlscoutsni.org/snapshot.

Genoa Area Chamber of Commerce Holiday Light Show: Illuminate Genoa and show your holiday spirit! Judging will take place on Monday, December 14, 2020 from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM. All homes must be registered by December 7, 2020 and must have a Genoa address to participate in the contest. Register your home by emailing your name, address and phone number to info@genoaareachamber.com

Rockford Symphony Orchestra to Cancel Remaining 2020/2021 Season: In response to the ongoing restrictions as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, the Rockford Symphony Orchestra (RSO) has cancelled concerts and events that would have taken place in December of 2020 through May 2021.

The Rockford Symphony Orchestra will offer 2020/2021 season subscription ticketholders the option to donate the value of their tickets, credit the value for next season, or receive a refund. For more information on the Rockford Symphony Orchestra or to make a donation go to www.rockfordsymphony.com.

Boone County CASA's Giving Tree: Now until January 9, 2021, The Boone County CASA is accepting donations at Plante Fitness in Belvidere, IL for "The Baby Bank, a local non-profit that provides baby hygiene products to families in need. Items needed include diapers, baby wipes, formula, soap, detergent, and blankets. Stop by Planet Fitness and select a tag off the giving tree. Buy the item on the tag, then drop the item in the box.

— OP ED —

According to legend, Santa Claus leaves lumps of coal in the stockings of naughty children. This year Santa may need an extra 536 of them, one for every member of Congress and a lump for Trump. How have they been naughty? Actually, they have been shamefully negligent. They have abandoned millions of our people by allowing all but two of the pandemic aid programs to expire. The last two expire right after Christmas.

These lapsed programs offered vital economic assistance to fellow Americans who through no fault of their own suffered devastation as a result of the raging virus. They are our neighbors and fellow citizens. They include, among others, retail employees, service workers, and small business employees. They are not among the fortunate who can telecommute. They can only suffer without the income to pay bills, pay for housing, or pay for health care.

How have both Republican and Democrats responded to this genuine crisis? They have squabbled. They have bickered. Their hyperpartisanship has distracted them from responding to the plight of these folks who, after all, are also their constituents. They have not responded to suffering that has been visited more harshly on the more vulnerable segments of our society.

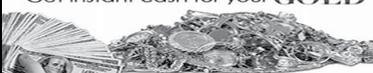
The shameful result has been a further rending or pulling apart of that society. One group can continue to invest in a bull market. The other group often cannot afford to invest in groceries. We are wallowing in a class based recession, with hardship focused disproportionately on one vulnerable segment of our society. A democracy at risk of class based cleavage is a democracy genuinely at risk.

Republicans and Democrats must put aside their destructive bickering now. They must rise above their hypartisanship and legislate for the welfare of everyone concerned. If they do not do so, the the only good consequence will be that Santa will at least know where to leave that coal. He has only to look for the 536 grinchs that stole Christmas.

Bob Evans
Rockford University

Obituaries

Bachelor (Koplin), Lois, 89, Belvidere, Nov. 14
Balentyne Sr., Richard, 91, Belvidere, Nov.29
Brahmsted, Reola, 96, Garden Prairie, Dec. 2
Emry, JoAnne, 89, Belvidere, December 3
Glover, Paul, 88, Belvidere, December 3
Kitzinger, Michael, 69, Belvidere, December 4
Vernam, Claude, 89, Belvidere, December 3
Yeager, Chuck, 97, Los Angeles, CA, Dec. 7

Get instant cash for your GOLD

WE PAY HIGHEST PRICES
Belvidere Collectible Coins
880 Belvidere Rd.
Belvidere, IL
815-547-7111
WE PAY 10% MORE THAN ANY OTHER OFFER!
Visit us Online at www.goldsilverjewelrycoin.com



Publisher/Editor: David C. Larson
Senior Writer/Editorial: Charles Herbst
Advertising: Bethany Staniec
Photography: Susan Moran
Office: Amanda Nelson

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

THE BOONE COUNTY JOURNAL
419 S. State St • Belvidere, IL 61008
Phone: (815) 544-4430 Fax: 544-4330
www.boonecountyjournal.com
news@boonecountyjournal.com

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.

Do you have a Car or Truck that you don't want?
Would you like to Donate to a Worthy Cause?
Simply follow the directions at this website:
<https://careasy.org/nonprofit/empower-boone-inc>
It is easy we will send a truck and it is tax deductible
The proceeds go to the local Food Pantry
Empower Boone in Capron IL

Boone County License & Title
Stickers - Titles - Plates
We Are OPEN
Bring:
Postcard Bill from the Secretary of State
Or
Old Registration Card
Or
Vin# + Plate # + Expiration Date
419 S. State St. Bel
815-544-2075


Ford

Continued page 1

In 1907, the idea of a "horseless carriage" was revolutionary and an idea that only a few local residents had embraced. Only the most progressive, the wealthiest and the most advanced thinking people in Belvidere would consider buying what many people of that early day called, "a machine." The same could be said regarding electric cars today, which are quickly becoming mainstream.

Belvidere's National Sewing Machine Company manufactured the Eldredge Automobile from 1903 to 1906. Had it succeeded, Belvidere would have been the larger city, relative to Rockford. To anyone alive at the time, the automobile was a spectacle. If you would like to see an Eldredge, stop into the Boone County Historical Museum where one in pristine condition is displayed.

Why park these on South State Street in front of the Peoples Bank? Who are the people in the picture? Was the Peoples Bank, a new, aggressive bank in Belvidere, providing the financing? Even the man in the panatorium window wants in the picture. Perhaps he was O.R. Hopgood, the proprietor.

The Model-T cars shown here were started with a crank. If the magneto and the spark were not set properly, the crank could recoil with a backfire and cause physical injury. Such a backfire resulted in a twisted wrist or a fractured arm or even a broken arm. These incidents could leave behind an indelible memory on anyone of their first Model-T. Today, we push a button while having coffee at the kitchen table in below-zero weather.

The angle of the photograph discloses the luxurious tufted-leather upholstery that was a standard feature of the Model-T's. A few years later, cloth upholstery was offered as a lower cost option. Wood paneling was also a part of the interior dashboard and as an accent on the car doors. Today, leather and wood, like democracy and newspapers, has stood the test of time.

The real beauty of the Model-T was in the profound simplicity of the vehicle. Henry Ford is often credited with developing the modern idea of how to create and how to manage a modern assembly line. The assembly line had all of the workers doing a different job to complete the creation of an automobile. Ford conceived of the idea that a lineup of people working at individual tasks could efficiently and completely assemble all of the many thousands of parts to create a working automobile by the time the car reached the end of the assembly line. Ford also conceived of the idea to create different models of an automobile that used interchangeable parts to make a number

of cars under different names and models. Today's modern assembly plant is a symphony of unionized labor and robots producing automobiles.

The five automobiles that graced the curb on South State Street on May 1, 1907 were the product of those innovations, which created today's consumer economy. The *Journal* wants to thank the Boone County Historical Society for allowing use of the photograph. We want also to acknowledge Wikipedia.com and James Middleton.

Advocates Tout Economic Benefits of Renewable Energy Investment

But path forward for Path to 100, other energy reforms remains unclear

by Jerry Nowicki Capitol News Illinois

While advocates in Illinois were optimistic that a series of measures reforming the state's energy landscape could pass in 2019, various factors caused the legislative package to stall while most of Gov. JB Pritzker's first-year agenda eventually became law.

At the time, advocates behind the Path to 100 Act warned of an impending "funding cliff" for renewable energy projects if the General Assembly did not act to increase the rate cap on ratepayer bills, which is the funding source of the renewable energy fund overseen by the Illinois Power Agency.

Now, amid a backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, an ongoing scandal ensnaring the state's largest utility and a potential upheaval of leadership in the state House, the lawmakers pushing for that bill say the funding cliff has arrived.

"The Illinois Power Agency announced the close of the state renewable energy incentives for residents in central and southern Illinois just this last Friday and incentives in Chicago and the rest of Northern Illinois are going to be gone in a matter of weeks as well," state Sen. Bill Cunningham, D-Chicago, said in a virtual news conference Tuesday. "This is a problem we've been talking about for years and we've been predicting and it's here now. Without new legislation, renewable energy programs will be shut down, it's going to be shut down for years to come."

There are solar and wind projects with existing commitments from the Illinois Power Agency that will continue to be funded, but applicants for new incentives will be waitlisted indefinitely.

Dawn Heid, who is CEO of the residential solar panel installation company Rethink Electric, said that's going to mean layoffs for her sales force as the waitlist grows.

Her installation crews, she said, will likely be employed through April 2021 as they finish installations for projects with currently committed funding.

"Beyond that we do not have any revenue sources coming in from renewable energy," Heid said.

The fund overseen by the Illinois Power Agency is replenished through a charge on the supply portion of ratepayer electric bills, which is currently capped at about 2 percent. The Path to 100 Act would lift that cap to 4 percent over a period of years, allowing for more money in the fund to be granted for new investments in wind and solar energy.

Illinois State University economics professor David Loomis estimated the impact of passing the Path to 100 Act would number in the billions of dollars from 2021 to 2033.

He authored a report showing the legislation would create or support 53,298 jobs during construction periods and 3,215 jobs during operations. That would create \$8.27 billion in increased economic output during construction and \$571 million per year in increased economic output during operations, per the report.

Rep. Will Davis, a Hazel Crest Democrat and the bill's House sponsor, also noted the report showed existing renewable energy projects have generated \$306 million in local property taxes, including \$41.4 million paid out in 2019.

"As a firm advocate for school funding and knowing that a lot of local school funding is derived from property taxes, these resources are going to go a long way," Davis said.

According to Davis, part of the purpose of the virtual news conference Tuesday was to build support for the Path to 100 Act in the General Assembly. While he said the bill is straightforward enough to pass on its own, he acknowledged it may be difficult without being tied to a larger legislative package.

Cunningham, the bill's Senate sponsor, said he was "not opposed" to attaching it to an omnibus bill, but said the funding cliff necessitates quicker action, "or we're going to really fall behind when it comes to generating renewable energy in Illinois."

"We've kind of gotten used to the practice as legislators of making big energy policy changes all at once. And unfortunately that's one of the reasons why this legislation has been tied up," he said.

There are various interests in play as the state tries to enter a carbon-free future while keeping energy costs low and ensuring the state has enough available energy producers to keep the lights on

Continued on Page 4

ROOM FOR RENT: Belvidere: Nice furnished room w/ fridge, near downtown, bus stop, Aldi, Drug & Dollar Stores. No Sec. Deposit. \$102/wk. or \$430/mo.
Call (815) 544-4466

Service Call Special \$19.95
Servicing all makes and models Over 30 years experience
815-332-7228



Pro Tree Care & Landscaping
Linda Johns owner
Over 30 years of service • 24 hr emergency service
General and Safety Pruning
Hedge and Shrub trimming • Tree and stump Removal
Spring and Fall cleanup • Firewood pickup and delivery
815-547-3345 jackoftrade81@mchsi.com




Charles Herbst
Attorney At Law

Practice Areas:

- Wills and Trusts
- Tax Strategy
- IRS Representation
- Real Estate
- Wealth Planning
- LLCs and Corporate

Education:

- LL.M. (Masters in Tax Law) New York University
- B.S. Business, J.D. Law (cum laude) Indiana University

Experience:

- International Tax Associates, Director of Federal Tax Research
- Ernst and Young LLP, Manager; Writer, Washington National Tax Writing Center
- Private Practice in the local area for over 13 years
- Former chairman of the written publications committee of the Indiana State Bar Association.

Over 25 years of experience
With a comprehensive approach to tax management.
Licensed to practice before the Internal Revenue Service nationally and in state courts in Illinois.

345 Bienterra Trail, Suite 3, Rockford, IL 61107
815 484 9482



BOONE COUNTY LICENSE & TITLE

What WE Can Do For YOU!

Illinois License Plates & Stickers for

- Cars • Trucks • Motorcycles •
- Trailers • Boat Trailers •
- Notary Public • Map Books •



Ask us for details about our over the counter Plates and Sticker service.

- License & Title Services
- Plates, Stickers & Renewals (Get sticker same day)
- Flat Fee for Services
- No Long Lines
- Friendly Helpful Staff
- Fast Convenient Service

Notary Public

Open 6 Days a Week
Monday thru Friday - 9 am to 5 pm
Saturday - 9 am to 1 pm

(815) 544-2075

Located on State Street at the

Journal

419 S. State Street
Belvidere, IL 61008

Energy

at peak usage hours, according to Sen. Michael Hastings, D-Frankfort. As chair of the Senate Energy and Public Utilities Committee, Hastings has been taking part in energy reform discussions for months.

He said it may be difficult to pass a bill in a “lame duck” session of the General Assembly before those recently elected in November are seated, due to the complexity of the various energy bills and an unclear leadership situation in the House.

The other major initiative before lawmakers, which is far more sweeping than the Path to 100 Act, is the Clean Energy Jobs Act. That bill deals with electrification of the state’s transportation sector and overhauls the way energy capacity is procured among other initiatives.

It’s backed by a number of labor unions that are part of the Climate Jobs Illinois coalition, the Illinois Environmental Council and a number of other advocates.

One of CEJA’s key measures would remove Illinois from the multi-state PJM capacity auction, putting the power to procure guarantees of future energy production in the hands of the state in order to give Illinois more authority to focus on renewables instead of carbon producers.

But Hastings said one difficulty that arises from such an approach is that the PJM market serves northern Illinois, essentially north of Interstate-80, while the rest of the state is on the MISO grid. He said working groups are currently exploring the possibility for a statewide solution on capacity procurements, rather than one that affects just the PJM market.

But there are also a number of coal-to-solar initiatives and other lower key energy measures to be considered, Hastings said.

“We have to have a diverse energy portfolio that’s clean, and that includes nuclear, wind and solar and then you also have to have some offset capability in the natural gas world,” he said. “You have to look at it globally.”

Capitol News Illinois is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news service covering state government and distributed to more than 400 newspapers statewide. It is funded primarily by the Illinois Press Foundation and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.

High Court: Pleading Guilty Does not Prevent Innocence Claims

Illinois Supreme Court’s decision sets legal precedent on this issue

by Sarah Mansur Capitol News Illinois

People who plead guilty to crimes are not automatically precluded from later asserting claims of innocence, the state’s highest court ruled on Thursday.

The Illinois Supreme Court’s unanimous decision creates a new precedent for state courts. This is the first time the high court answered the question of whether individuals who pleaded guilty can still successfully claim innocence.

Under Illinois law, individuals convicted of crimes can petition the court and successfully assert a claim of innocence if they can establish that their rights were violated during the court proceedings that resulted in their conviction.

The court’s 22-page opinion holds that the guilty plea of the defendant – in this case, Demario Reed – “does not prevent him from asserting his right to not be deprived of life and liberty given compelling evidence of actual innocence under the (law).”

The court’s decision also establishes a new standard that individuals who pleaded guilty and

Continued page 1

later claim innocence must meet in order for their petition to succeed.

The justices ruled that those individuals can prevail on innocence claims if they can provide “new, material, noncumulative evidence that clearly and convincingly demonstrates that a trial would probably result in acquittal,” the court’s opinion states.

In the case before the court, Reed pleaded guilty in 2015 to armed violence after he was arrested at a Macon County home for possessing crack cocaine and a sawed-off shotgun, which were found in the home. Following his guilty plea, Reed submitted a post-conviction petition asserting his innocence, based on a sworn affidavit from Davie Calloway, who was also at the home when Reed was arrested.

Calloway claimed in the affidavit that the cocaine found in the home belonged to him, and not Reed.

In January 2017, a Macon County judge dismissed Reed’s post-conviction petition, finding that Calloway’s testimony was not convincing.

Reed appealed to the 4th District Appellate Court, which is one level below the Illinois Supreme Court.

The appellate court agreed with the Macon County judge to dismiss the petition in a 2019 ruling that relied heavily on a 1970 Illinois Supreme Court decision, *People v. Cannon*.

In the Cannon case, the court rejected the defendant’s postconviction claim of actual innocence because, the 1970 Illinois Supreme Court opinion states, “(b)efore his plea of guilty was accepted, the defendant, represented by appointed counsel, was fully and carefully admonished by the trial judge.”

The appellate court concluded that it must follow the legal guidance in the Cannon case, “until the supreme court says otherwise.”

Illinois Supreme Court justices clarified in Thursday’s opinion that the appellate court’s reliance on the Cannon case law was misplaced, as the 50-year-old opinion served only as “dicta,” or a nonbinding legal opinion, and “does not control this case.”

“This court refuses to turn a blind eye to the manifest injustice and failure of our criminal justice system that would result from the continued incarceration of a demonstrably innocent person, even where a defendant pleads guilty,” the court’s opinion states. “Accordingly, we find defendants who plead guilty may assert an actual innocence claim under the (law).”

While the justices found that Reed was allowed to claim innocence despite his guilty plea, they did not accept Reed’s argument that Calloway’s affidavit would alter the outcome of a trial.

“We cannot say it was unreasonable for the court to question the truthfulness of Calloway, where he came forward only after being imprisoned and discussing the case with (Reed),” the opinion states.

The Illinois Supreme Court agreed with the appellate court’s decision to dismiss Reed’s post-conviction petition, although the two courts offered different reasons for the dismissal.

A spokesperson for Illinois Attorney General’s Office, which represented the state in this case, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Interested in Boone County?

Don’t Miss the News

The Boone County Journal

ONLINE \$12.99 A YEAR

Includes Searchable Archive
www.boonecountyjournal.com

Madigan Floats Income Tax Increase; GOP Leader Asks for Spending Cuts

\$3.9 billion budget deficit anticipated for this year

by Sarah Mansur Capitol News Illinois

As the state government attempts to close a multi-billion-dollar budget hole, Democratic House Speaker Michael Madigan has said he is prepared to vote for an increase to the state's flat income tax rate should the governor request it—a proposal met with pushback from his Republican counterpart, House Minority Leader Jim Durkin.

The \$3.9 billion budget shortfall, projected by the state budget office, that lawmakers will confront this spring has gained an increasing sense of urgency with the defeat of the graduated income tax constitutional amendment at the ballot on Nov. 3.

Voters rejected the initiative that would have replaced the state's flat income tax with a graduated income tax, which was projected to raise revenues by more than \$3 billion annually.

The state's flat income tax rate is currently 4.95 percent. The rate had been 3.75 percent from 2015 to 2017, and it was 5 percent from 2011 to 2014.

The state budget office has projected budget deficits ranging from \$4.8 billion in 2022 and \$4.2 billion by fiscal year 2026, according to a report last month from the Governor's Office of Management and Budget.

That report attributed the sizable budget deficit largely to the economic impact of the coronavirus

pandemic that has forced many businesses to shut down and led to skyrocketing levels of unemployment.

Madigan's comments, reported by the Chicago Sun-Times, came during a speaker candidate forum of the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus on Saturday.

Madigan, 78, has served as speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives every year since 1983, with the exception of 1995 to 1997, making his tenure the longest of any state House speaker in U.S. history.

But Madigan's support from his House Democratic caucus has splintered in recent months, following charges from federal prosecutors that allege high-ranking Commonwealth Edison officials bribed close members of Madigan's inner circle for years with lucrative no-work jobs and contracts, in exchange for favorable energy legislation.

In making his pitch to House Black caucus members, Madigan said he will provide strong leadership that might be necessary if Gov. JB Pritzker asks the Illinois General Assembly to address the budget shortfall by raising the state income tax rate—a scenario Madigan described as "very possible," according to the Sun-Times' report, which was based on a recording of the closed candidate forum.

"I'm prepared to vote for that, presuming it's the governor's request," said Madigan, D-Chicago, according to the Sun-Times.

Pritzker dodged a question at his daily briefing on Monday about Madigan's statement that he would support a tax hike endorsed by Pritzker.

"I'm focused on the cuts that need to be made in state government, making sure that we're paring back as best we can, making efficiencies in state government, looking to Republican and

Democratic leaders as I already have and asking them for their best ideas about what it is that we need to cut in state government," Pritzker said. "And I will say that I have not yet heard back from the leaders about what their best proposals are for what cuts need to be made. And so I'm awaiting their responses."

On Tuesday, Durkin, of Western Springs, called on Pritzker to release the spending cuts his administration requested from each agency leader last September. Pritzker made that request in an effort to reduce the state's bill backlog, which was roughly \$7.3 billion, as of June 30, 2019. The bill backlog had reached about \$7.6 billion as of Tuesday.

The September 2019 request by Pritzker's administration asked each Cabinet director to submit budget proposals that would reflect a 6.5 percent spending cut.

This September, Pritzker warned state agency directors to prepare for a 5 percent budget reduction this year, and a possible 10 percent cut in fiscal year 2022, which begins July 1.

When asked about whether Durkin has drafted his own proposed list of agency spending cuts, a spokesperson for Durkin said he has asked "repeatedly to begin by looking at this list of agency cuts."

In his letter to Pritzker on Tuesday, Durkin said he asked the governor to release the agencies' budgets reflecting a 6.5 percent cut when they spoke by phone last month.

"As of today, I have not received that document, and I am now asking again for the list of spending reductions by agency," Durkin wrote. "Speaker Madigan has stated he will work with you on another tax increase, but I hope you will respect the will of the voters and instead look to live within our means."



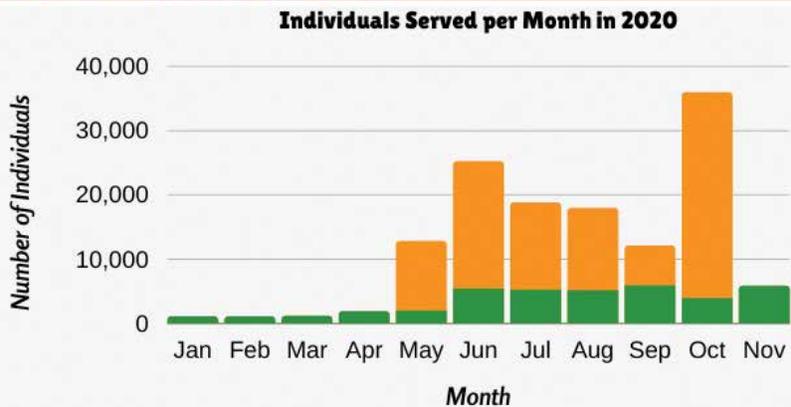
**EMPOWER
BOONE
FOOD PANTRY**

We are here to serve our neighbors in need and support our community during this difficult time.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

BAR GRAPH KEY:

-  = Additional Saturday drive-thrus in Belvidere
-  = Ongoing Tuesday hours at food pantry



26 VOLUNTEERS
3 STAFF
working to safely transport, stock, and serve food boxes on M, Tu, Th



36 SPONSORS
who are providing additional monetary support, helping us meet increased demand

YOU CAN HELP



CALL US
815-569-1771



DONATE
www.EmpowerBoone.org

GOP House Members Urge Special Session to Handle Jobless Claim Delays, Fraud

IDES has paid out nearly \$19 billion in benefits since March

by Sarah Mansur Capitol News Illinois

Three Republican lawmakers on Friday put pressure on Illinois Department of Employment Security officials to answer for the backlog in unemployment claims and the rising number of fraudulent unemployment claims filed, which has reached nearly 297,000 since March.

During a Zoom news conference, state Reps. Tom Bennett, R-Gibson City, Terri Bryant, R-Murphysboro, and Mike Murphy, R-Springfield, urged Gov. JB Pritzker to call a special legislative session and allow for hearings to address the agency's delays in processing unemployment claims, as well as the 296,914 fraud claims that had been filed as of Nov. 19, according to IDES.

"You (Gov. Pritzker) should lead at this point and call us into special session to address many of these issues," Bryant said. "I've said before, and I'll repeat it again: Congress is meeting, other state legislators are meeting. We met safely in May with nobody contracting COVID-19, so we know it's possible."

Murphy said his office continues to hear constituent complaints about delays in receiving unemployment benefits, and about fraudulent claims being made on their behalf.

"As a matter of fact, during this press

conference, I just got a text message from a constituent who said that they haven't got a call back in over 30 days," Murphy said. "But the majority of my complaints, recently, have been in regards to fraud."

Bennett said the lawmakers must begin with finding the facts and answers to outstanding questions.

"The problem is we're not getting the answers on why there are so many failures going on. We need to be able to figure out why the administration and IDES can't handle the job requirements. We know that COVID-19 has changed everything in so many ways, but we got to be able to respond," Bennett said.

When asked about the dollar amount associated with fraudulent employment claims in Illinois, Bryant said they don't have enough information to determine how much the state has paid out in fraud claims.

"We don't have an answer on the dollar amount because we're not sure yet on what is actual fraud, and what's being called fraud," Bryant said. "How do we know what is fraudulent and what is real, until we're able to have some hearings on this and get some answers?"

Last month, IDES acting Director Kristin Richards spoke during Pritzker's daily briefing to share how the agency has lessened the long delays that unemployment claimants have faced, by increasing IDES staff and implementing a "callback only" system, in which calls are returned in the order they are received.

Richards said the agency handled more claims in the first three weeks of the pandemic than it had during all of 2019.

In order to meet this enormous demand, IDES increased its call center staffing by about 600 percent, Richards said on Nov. 23. She said the agency also redeployed about 100 staffers to deal with claims maintenance and adjudication, and brought back dozens of retired workers.

As a result of these changes, Richards said many claimants are now receiving callbacks "within one to two weeks or less."

In an email, an IDES spokesperson said the agency has paid out nearly \$19 billion in benefits since March, which is more than 16 times the amount of benefits paid over the equivalent period in 2019.

"As IDES has been saying for months, we are working hard to respond to an economic crisis and stand up five new, complex federal programs while battling fraudsters who have used stolen identities to file for benefits nationwide," wrote IDES Information Strategy Director and Public Information Officer Rebecca Cisco.

IDES reported last month that the state's unemployment rate dropped to 6.8 percent in October, down from 10.4 percent in September. Meanwhile, the total number of nonfarm jobs in the state fell by about 1,100, to roughly 5.7 million.

The state agency reported more than 74,000 newly filed regular unemployment claims for

the week ending Nov. 28, which is a 13 percent increase from the prior week.

Those state unemployment claims are in addition to those filed under the Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation program, which provides an additional 13 weeks of benefits for those who have exhausted their regular jobless benefits, and the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program, which provides benefits to gig workers, independent contractors and other self-employed individuals who don't normally qualify for traditional unemployment insurance.

According to U.S. Department of Labor data, 228,583 Illinoisans filed new claims for extended benefits under the PEUC for the week ending Nov. 14, which is roughly 10,000 more than the week before. During the same period, nearly 144,000 self-employed workers were receiving continuing benefits under the PUA.

Both the PEUC and the PUA programs are funded entirely by the federal government, and were created under the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security, or CARES Act, which Congress passed in March. Funding for those programs is set to expire Dec. 26.

Capitol News Illinois is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news service covering state government and distributed to more than 400 newspapers statewide. It is funded primarily by the Illinois Press Foundation and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.

Pritzker Touts Importance of National Testing Strategy

COVID-19 positivity rate down, hospitalizations up

by Jerry Nowicki Capitol News Illinois

While COVID-19 infection rates continued to decrease Wednesday, the number of people hospitalized for the disease increased to its highest mark since last Friday.

Gov. JB Pritzker noted the importance of testing in suppressing virus positivity rates and targeting actions for mitigating spread. He was joined by Rajiv Shah, president of the Rockefeller Foundation, which is coordinating a national COVID-19 testing action plan.

Pritzker said the foundation has been "an important convener of public health officials and elected leaders to exchange best practices for protecting the health of their communities."

Shah said the foundation's goal is "fast, frequent testing" nationwide.

"Testing is really the only way out of the false

Continued on Page 8

A Public Notice is an important tool in assuring an informed citizenry; a conduit of information from the government to the public. Notices are mandated by legislatures to make sure there is a public window into the activities of governments, officers of the court and others holding a public trust. Among the most common types of public notices are: hearings, government budgets, notices of contract bids, foreclosures, probate notices, adoptions, and dissolution of marriages, name changes and assumed business names. There are four key elements to a public notice:

- Independent:** A public notice is published in a forum independent of the government, typically in a local newspaper.
- Archivable:** A public notice is archived in a secure and publicly available format.
- Accessible:** A public notice is capable of being accessed by all segments of society.
- Verifiable:** The public and the source of the notice can verify the notice was published, usually by an affidavit provided by the publisher.

Enabling an informed citizenry through newspaper public notices helped America to develop participatory democracy where it counts: where money is spent, policy is made and futures charted. Public notices by government and private parties are so tightly woven into the American fabric that many citizens may take them for granted. Located in easily found sections of the newspapers, public notices reach out to interested readers, leading them to opportunities. Voices are expressed on taxation, communities are formed around planned public improvements, and assets are saved from loss to unworthy creditors - all as a result of public notices.

Public Notice Network

Boone County License & Title Stickers - Titles - Plates We Are OPEN

Bring:
 Postcard Bill from the Secretary of State
 Or
 Old Registration Card
 Or
 Vin# + Plate # + Expiration Date



Illinois Investment Funds Pressed on Management Diversity

Lawmaker questions whether minorities are getting fair share of investment business

by Peter Hancock Capitol News Illinois

A legislative committee began four days of hearings on Thursday to examine whether public investment funds in Illinois are complying with state requirements for diversity goals in the hiring of investment managers.

That has been a key element of the effort by many lawmakers over several years to achieve racial and gender equity in state contracting. Sen. Napoleon Harris III, D-Harvey, a co-chair of the Special Committee on Pension Investments, noted that the asset management industry globally controls about \$100 trillion worth of investments, but minority- and women-owned firms handle 1 percent or less of all the investment management business.

“As our country faces a reckoning with social injustice and racial injustice, these times have illustrated that we must redouble our efforts to dismantle the system of racial discrimination that has harmfully impacted Black and brown communities nationwide and here in Illinois,” Harris said.

The hearings with public pension officials are part of an annual process the committee goes through to get an assessment of whether diversity is increasing or decreasing among the various investment funds that the state manages.

According to Harris, this year the committee intends to focus specifically on each fund’s policies regarding the use of “emerging managers” — firms that are new in the industry, particularly those started by minorities, women and people with disabilities, and are still trying to gain a foothold in state contracting.

“We began the emerging managers program through the passage of legislation in the spirit that the legislation was to help diverse firms get started and allow managers to get a larger percentage of the fees paid by the assistance,” Harris said. “The driving goal was that these programs would ultimately allow firms to grow and compete under larger and more traditional mandates. That, however, is not happening quick enough.”

Among those who testified Thursday was State Treasurer Michael Frerichs, whose office manages roughly \$30 billion of state funds, college and retirement savings plans and money held on behalf of local governments.

Frerichs said that since he assumed office in 2015, the volume of investments from his office assigned to minority-owned firms has grown from \$18 million to \$3.9 billion as of June 30, the end of the previous fiscal year.

But he also noted that one of the biggest stumbling blocks for emerging managers in the industry is their inability to meet traditional qualifying benchmarks, such as a track record of managing large pools of money.

“It’s sort of like we have a lot of talent sitting on the bench right now, but their numbers aren’t very good because they’ve never been asked to get into the game,” he said. “And if you never get a chance to play, it’s tough to show numbers.”

During his first four years in office, Frerichs said, the treasurer’s office not only increased diversity among its investment managers but also increased investment returns to the state. But his office has been less successful during the past year, primarily because the Federal Reserve has kept interest rates paid on Treasury notes at record low levels.

The committee also heard Thursday from the Chicago Teachers Pension Fund, which had about \$10.7 billion in assets under management at the end of June, according to its most recent report.

Angela Miller-May, chief investment officer for the fund, noted that CTPF has exceeded its

goal of investing at least 20 percent of its total assets through “MWBE” investment managers, which stands for minority, women or disabled business enterprises.

But the largest share of that, just under \$2.9 billion, was invested through women-led firms, which Harris argued was actually of little benefit to Black and brown communities.

“But we all know that of women, white women are probably a large percentage of those numbers, so when you really get down to it, the diversity still isn’t there,” he said.

The committee is scheduled to continue its hearings on Friday, when it will hear from the state’s largest pension fund, the Teachers Retirement System. The hearings will wrap up next week when the committee hears from the state’s two new consolidated downstate municipal police and firefighter pension funds.

Covid

continued from page 7

choice between shutting everything down and suffering widespread loss of life,” Shah said.

Pritzker credited the foundation’s information gathering for advancing the Abbott BinaxNOW antigen test, which gives rapid results. He said Illinois administered 15,000 such tests in the previous 24 hours.

“The federal government bought BinaxNOW tests in bulk and delivered them to the states to use at their design,” Pritzker said. “In the absence of federal government leadership on their efficacy, the Rockefeller coalition went to work and states were able to share what they learned.”

Pritzker said Massachusetts launched an accuracy assessment on the tests and found “a minimal number of false positives,” passing the information along so that other states did not have to replicate the work.

Because of U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines, the BinaxNOW tests are considered probable COVID-19 cases instead of confirmed cases, which is why the state now combines the two numbers in reporting daily case counts.

Pritzker said testing demand slowed before the Thanksgiving holiday, but an uptick is expected. The state now averages 96,000 tests per day on a seven-day rolling basis as of Wednesday, he said.

Shah said more states are pushing for national coordination by joining the foundation’s testing alliance.

“There are now 22 states including Illinois that, on a bipartisan basis, have come together to say that we should have common protocols, share best practices, understand which tasks can be deployed at what frequency and come together to do pooled procurement, thus lowering the price of each unit of testing supplies acquired and increasing both volumes and supply,” he added.

Pritzker said he has repeatedly called for a national testing strategy through the federal government and he has repeated the request to the

transition team of President-elect Joe Biden.

“Even with all the well-deserved excitement around a vaccine right now, it will be months before vaccines are available to the general public,” he said. “So it’s incredibly important that we do everything in our power to temper the spread of this virus in the coming weeks and months.”

Shah praised a University of Illinois rapid and widespread testing program that allows for frequent tests of students and faculty and results in timely contact tracing and quarantining when tests come back positive. He said the program offers a blueprint for operating schools safely.

“It is very clear to us that throughout 2021, and certainly for the first half of next year, if schools are to be open, if health care workers are to be safe, if certain essential businesses are to operate in a high background community-spread environment, testing will be more important than ever,” he said.

The Illinois Department of Public Health reported another 179 virus-related deaths over the previous 24 hours, bringing the death toll to 13,666 since the pandemic began. There have been 812,430 confirmed and probable cases of COVID-19 out of 11.3 million tests conducted.

As of Tuesday night, there were 5,284 people hospitalized with the virus in Illinois, an increase of 85 from the day before. Non-COVID hospitalizations increased as well, dropping the number of available beds statewide to 7,798, meaning 23.9 percent of beds were unused.

Intensive care bed use increased by 105 from the day prior to 1,176, with available beds dipping below 600 for the first time during the pandemic at 596. That left 17.8 percent of ICU beds available. There were 647 ventilators in use as of Tuesday night, leaving 69.3 percent available.

Statewide, the seven-day average case positivity rate dipped to 9.6 percent Wednesday as IDPH reported another 8,256 confirmed or probable cases among 92,737 test results reported. Regionally, positivity rates ranged from 10.3 percent in Region 3, which includes the Springfield area and several surrounding counties, to 15.4 percent in Region 7, which includes Will and Kankakee counties.

Interested in
Boone County?

Don't Miss the News

**The Boone County
Journal**

ONLINE \$12.99 A YEAR

Includes Searchable Archive
www.boonecountyjournal.com

Boone County License & Title

Stickers - Titles - Plates

We Are OPEN

Bring:
Postcard Bill from the Secretary of State
Or
Old Registration Card
Or
Vin# + Plate # + Expiration Date

419 S. State St. Bel
815-544-2075

