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Village View

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Volume 14 | Number 12 | June 16, 2020

B-MAC EDITION
Blue Island, Midlothian, Alsip, Crestwood

Blue Island raises Police and Fire Chiefs pay 6%

by Jan Glaz

At a recent meeting of the city council, officials in the City of Blue Island agreed to fund increases for both Police and Fire Department Chiefs. Alderman, Fred Bilotto, reported that in the Police Department, more so than in the Fire Department, there were subordinates earning more than the Police and Fire Chief.

A motion passed authorizing the transfer of \$5,508.00 from "Account #410, Police Department, Line Item #5100 Salaries Full-Time/Sworn Officers-Patrol Officers: to "Account #410 Police Department, Line Item #5100 Salaries Full-Time/Sworn Officers-Patrol Officers-

Police Chief" in order to fund a 6% increase in the current salary of Police Chief, retroactive to January 1, 2020.

A second motion passed authorizing the transfer of \$5,508.00 from "Account #420 Fire Department, Line Item #5100 Salaries Full-Time Firefighters, to Account #420 Fire Department, Line Item #5100 Salaries Full-Time Fire Chief" in order to fund a 6% increase in the current salary of the Fire Chief, retroactive to January 1, 2020.

"Just on base salary terms, the 6% increases will bring in line where the Police Department and Fire Department Chief's

earn more than their subordinates. Of course, with overtime there's a possibility that subordinates can still earn more. Even with the pay increase, the City of Blue Island is way below the average of other communities in the area of Chief's salary," stated Bilotto.

In other official news: Fireworks are illegal in the City of Blue Island. You may be arrested and/or fined. In addition, it is unlawful for any person, firm, co-partnership or corporation to knowingly possess, offer for sale, expose for sale, sell at retail or use or explode any display fireworks, flame effects or consumer fire-



City of Blue Island Alderman, Fred Bilotto

works within the city.

The City of Blue Island reminds the public to please be considerate of others. During the recent events of civil unrest, the Blue Island Police Department is focusing on the protection of the residents and property. Please do not bring unnecessary stress upon the residents by the use of fireworks. We are asking for your cooperation at this time.

Sokolow Theatre/Dance Ensemble to Premiere Rooms2020

Sokolow Theatre/Dance Ensemble will premiere a virtual performance video of Anna Sokolow's Rooms, to be titled Rooms2020, on Thursday, June 25, 2020 at 7 p.m. Rooms2020 will be available to view at sokolowtheatredance.org.

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If life imitates art far more than art imitates life, then Anna Sokolow was distinctly ahead of her time.

Rooms, Sokolow's 1955 masterpiece, examined the psychic isolation and unfulfilled desires of characters isolated in their small, city apartments. The controversial and groundbreaking work breathed with the loneliness and alienation following the breakdown of wartime solidarity, when the threat of atomic annihilation, the 1952 polio epidemic, and the Red Scare hung like invisible contagions and created a mood of pervasive uncertainty and dread over America.

The Sokolow Theatre/Dance Ensemble began rehearsals for Rooms in August 2019 as one half of a concert series scheduled for March 2020 entitled "Real+Surreal" that would include Sokolow's 1970 surrealist dance/theatre work Magritte, Magritte. Rooms was intended to be the "real" half of a program that celebrated these works on their 65th and 50th anniversaries.

Then, a new contagion spread across the world, and human existence changed. In 2020,

Rooms has become both real and surreal. Anna Sokolow's 1955 choreography resonates with uncanny power in a world where people everywhere are living quarantined in their homes. Surely, cut off from each other in the grip of a global pandemic, we are all living Rooms.

This abrupt change in circumstances has forced an adaptation in our approach to Rooms that has required the company to rise to unique challenges to its directors, its dancers, and in how the performance will be presented.

Separated from one another, our rehearsals and theater dates cancelled, The Sokolow/Theatre Dance Ensemble has come together to create a virtual presentation of Rooms.

While the three directors (artistic director Samantha Gérecht and associate artistic directors Eleanor Bunker and Lauren Naslund) rehearse the dancers and direct camera angles over Zoom, the responsibility of actual video recording has been taken on by the dancers themselves. They were ready for performance in the theatre, and now need to rethink, restage, light, film, and costume themselves with what they have access to where they are self-quarantined.

The recordings made by the dancers will be edited by Ms. Naslund into a full-length video version of Rooms, to be titled Rooms2020.

McCloud Services locating in Crestwood

by Jan Glaz

On June 4th at the Village of Crestwood Board of Trustees Meeting the board passed an Ordinance granting a Special Use Permit for McCloud Services, Inc. to be located at 4731 W. 135th Street, in Crestwood, IL. McCloud Services is a leader in pest management and disinfectant solutions for health care, hospitality, property management, retail industries and residential markets.

McCloud Services was founded in 1904 in the Chicago stockyards by William Bailey McCloud as W.B. McCloud & Company, Inc. and have a foundation of 112 years of

industry and market experience. For additional information please visit: www.mccloudservices.com/about-mccloud

A Resolution met with board approval to commit local funds for the 'Crestwood Gardens Storm Sewer Improvement Project'(25% of the total project cost of \$1,652,485.00) an amount of \$413,121.25 from non-home rule sales tax.

Crestwood officials reported that in 2018 an option "Text-to-911" became available in the Village as an extension of 9-1-1 services, where a voice call is not possible. However, making a voice call to 9-1-1 is the preferred access in an emergency. Texting is not instantaneous in an emergency and may take longer than dialing or voice calling.

Only text when no oth-

er option is available and only text for emergencies that require immediate response from police, fire or Emergency Medical Services (EMS). Provide exact location and nature of emergency, avoid text abbreviations or slang. Be aware there is no guarantee that a text will be delivered or received in a timely manner, if at all.

In regard to COVID-19 Crestwood shared information released from "NENA the 9-1-1 Association" stating that if you are exhibiting 'emergency' warning signs of COVID-19 such as extremely high fever, difficulty breathing, shortness of breath, persistent pain, pressure in the chest, confusion or bluish lips/face than "Call 9-1-1". For additional information in regard to "NENA the 9-1-1 Association" visit: www.nena.org/about.

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Join our one-day event for ALL and spread the love of music!

If you have any questions, feel free to connect: mmc@imfchicago.org.

Look on website for more information at <http://makemusicchicago.org>.



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FAR SOUTH EDITION

Volume 18 | Number 12 | June 16, 2020

Mokena, Oak Forest, Orland Park, Tinley Park

Oak Forest requires Sergio Auto to cleanup

by Jan Glaz

Mr. Sergio Garcia petitioned the City of Oak Forest to approve a Special Use Permit (SUP) for an Automotive Mechanical and Electrical Repair and Maintenance Shop "Sergio's Auto" located at 15330 South Cicero Avenue. The use of the business has been existing for 25 years but due to the longevity of the business, the City does not have a Special Use Permit on file.

On June 9th at the Oak Forest City Council Meeting, Community Development Director, Travis Bandstra, reported that Sergio Garcia is making the request in order to plan his retirement and to sell or lease the business. Without a Special Use Permit nothing can be transferred to a new operator.

Certain conditions were listed as required before the permit can be issued. A fence separating the rear of the property from the residential west; construction from the rear of concrete or asphalt pavement of approximately 1,500 to 2,000 square feet; and all vehicle storage is to be in compliance with building and fire codes.

A discussion ensued prior to roll call for approval. Oak Forest Mayor, Henry Kuspa, voiced, "We want a well-kept yard, no rubbish. Clean it up. This is not a junk yard! Install security lighting - in all areas of the lot." The city council agreed adding that only vehicles with proper registration and current license plates are to be allowed on the premises. The council voted to grant Sergio Garcia Special Use Permit with the above stipulations and set a period of 3 months to clean up the site.

Before the meeting adjourned, the city council approved the sale of two properties located at 16001 and 16005 South Lorel Avenue to Mr. Daniel Plazinski of Klanutm Homes, LLC. Mr. Plazinski, an Oak Forest resident, operates a roofing and construction company. He has offered \$24,000 for the two lots, which is equivalent to appraised value. The sales contract stipulates that construction must commence within one year on both properties and that a ranch or two-story home be built. If construction is not pursued the City reserves the right to purchase back the properties.

Mokena approves Chandler Services property revision

by Jan Glaz

A 2nd Amendment to the Special Use Permit for Chandler Services, Inc., 10203 W. 191st Street, Mokena, IL met with full board approval on June 8th at the Village of Mokena Board of Trustees Meeting. Under the terms of the authorized Special Use Permit (second) amendment Chandler Services, Inc. agrees to establish the area south of the creek as a detention pond and compensatory storage area, and also agrees to provide additional landscaping along the southern property line in accordance with the proposed plans.

Highlights of the Special Use Permit (second) amendment include: Chandler Services agrees to install a berm and (11) six foot tall blue spruce evergreen trees along the southern portion of its property and agrees to sub-

mit to the Village a Construction Escrow funded in the amount of \$337,757.53 for the purpose of paying construction and development costs related to the proposed improvements. Chandler Services also agrees to complete all property improvements to the satisfaction of the Village by September 1, 2020 and agrees to obtain a permit from the Village, and pay all related fees.

Chandler Services, Inc. is a family owned corporation established in 1980 as a complete truck and transit repair facility specializing in the diagnostic and repair of, among others, Cummins Engines, Detroit Diesel Engines, Mack Trucks, Volvo and El Dorado National Buses. For in-depth information please visit Chandler's website at: www.chandlerservicesinc.com or phone 708-478-4200.

New & noteworthy: The Village board passed a Resolution in regard to the sale of carry-out or delivery of cocktails and mixed drinks for off-site consumption. The Resolution is in response to recent action by the Illinois General Assembly via House Bill 2682 that became law on June 2, 2020, and as applies to Class D and Class E Restaurant liquor licenses in Mokena, defined by the Village's Liquor Control Ordinance.

The law includes a requirement that tamper-evident and sealed containers be used for cocktails or mixed drinks, and that drinks be placed in the trunk or rear area of the vehicle in which they are being transported. The containers are to be labeled as defined and the drinks delivered only by an employee of the restaurant. Provisions allowed by the State of Illinois legislation and incorporated in the Village's Resolution will expire on June 2, 2021. For questions or additional information contact Kirk

Zoellner, Assistant Village Administrator and Deputy Liquor Commissioner at (708) 479-3900.



Village of Orland Park President, Keith Pekau

Orland Park initiates Sales Tax Sharing Program

by Jan Glaz

On June 1st at the Village of Orland Park Board Meeting, the board approved an ordinance amendment designed to establish an economic development incentive assistance program: "Non-traditional Sales Tax Sharing Program". The purpose is to recruit and retain businesses within the Village, thereby stimulating the economy and providing employment for residents of the Village and others. Village President/Mayor, Keith Pekau, and the board of trustees, provided details in regard to the program.

Sales taxes collected and used by the Village are increased by further expanding goods and services available for purchase by businesses and consumption by residents and others. As an example, small Businesses impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic can apply for a 90-day, 50/50 sales tax share. Other programs include:

A 'Back-fill Vacant Restaurant Incentive Program', to induce potential applicants to back-fill existing vacant restaurants with new restaurant establishments, allows for sales taxes derived from

an applicant's property or business (in an amount not exceed 50% percent of the Village's share of any sales taxes generated) to be used towards improvements for the business.

'Hotel Incentive Program' (New Hotels): The Village currently collects a 5% Transient Occupancy Tax. This tax shall be shared with a new hotel to be used towards improvements of the business. The 'Hotel Incentive' for (Existing Hotels) allows eligible applicants to receive 2% (or 40% of the net) of the Village's share of hotel tax proceeds to be shared to the existing hotel for a period of 12 months.

Industrial development applicants who wish to locate or expand their operation within the Village of Orland Park may apply to receive an amount of up to 50% of the Village's share of enhanced sales taxes. There is also a 'Commercial Impact Program' and an 'Advanced Manufacturing Incentive Program'. The "Non-traditional Sales Tax Sharing Program" can be viewed in its entirety on the Village Website at [www. https://orlandpark.org/](http://www.https://orlandpark.org/) For further information visit the Village Hall, 14700 Ravinia Avenue, Orland Park IL, or phone: 708-403-6100.

Tinley Park revises rental requirements

by Jan Glaz

On June 2nd and in light of Cook County's recent amendment 'Just Housing Ordinance' (JHO) of the Cook County Human Rights Ordinance that went into effect on January 1, 2020, the Village of Tinley Park adopted an 'Ordinance Adding Sub-Chapter 129E.081' to the

Village Municipal Code.

Cook County's Just Housing Ordinance (JHO) amendment limits landlords background checks and places an undue burden on lessors in verifying qualifications of potential tenants. The JHO amendment imposes certain restrictions on criminal background checks and a rigid set of requirements that sets forth a step-by-step screening process. Landlords are limited in conducting a criminal background check and are unable to use criminal convictions as a reason for denial of a prospective tenant application.

Trustee William Brennan reported that amending Tinley Park's Rental Code Ordinance benefits owners/landlords of rental properties to conduct background checks without the limitations imposed by the JHO. This would benefit the owners/landlords of rental properties in that they would not have to abide by the current JHO restrictive requirements. It will further benefit the Village in protecting and preserving the neighborhoods' public health, safety and the welfare of residents by requiring these criminal background checks.

In other board meeting news: Trustees voted to adopt an Ordinance to decrease the number of Class "A" Liquor Licenses by (1) and to increase the number of Class "AV" Liquor Licenses by (1). The Ordinance is in response to a request of petitioner '350 Brewing Company, located at 7144 183rd Street. The petitioner is proposing to convert a private party room located within the establishment into a video gaming terminal room. The Class "AV" liquor license allows for both the retail sale of alcoholic beverages for consumption on the premises and video gaming terminals.



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SOUTH SUBURBAN EDITION

Volume 21 | Number 12 | June 16, 2020

Chicago Ridge, Worth, Palos Hills, Palos Park, Palos Heights

Village of Worth Vehicle Stickers

The expiration date for the 2019-2020 vehicle stickers have been extended to August 29, 2020. The Village Hall is currently closed to the public; however, you may fill out the vehicle sticker application and put in our drop box with a check or mail the application and payment to the Village Hall. Your stickers will then be mailed to you. There is a \$2.00 discount on each sticker until July 18, 2020. The new 2020-2021 must be displayed on the bottom passenger side of your windshield by midnight on August 29, 2020. Penalties will be applied to all stickers purchased after August 29, 2020.

Vehicle sticker application: <http://www.villageofworth.com/DocumentCenter/View/931/20-21-Vehicle-sticker-application> and follow instructions.

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by the dancers will be edited by Ms. Naslund into a full-length video version of *Rooms*, to be titled *Rooms2020*.

Lyric Opera of Chicago on 98.7 WFMT Saturdays at noon

Beginning on Saturdays in June and continuing every Saturday through July 25, broadcasts of Lyric Opera of Chicago's opening night performances from the 2017/18 Season will be heard locally on WFMT 98.7FM, online at wfmt.com/listen, and on radio stations across the country via The WFMT Radio Network. Lyric's dramaturg

Roger Pines and WFMT's Lisa Flynn host.

Local broadcasts on WFMT of the following opera performances begin at 12:00 noon/CDT on Saturdays:

June 20: *Rigoletto*/Verdi (sung in Italian)

June 27: *The Pearl Fishers*/Bizet (sung in French)

July 4: *Die Walküre*/Wagner (sung in German)

July 11: *Faust*/Gounod (sung in French)

July 18: *Orphée et Eurydice*/Gluck (sung in French)

July 25: *I puritani*/Bellini (sung in Italian)

Broadcast times and dates outside the Chicago area may vary; please check local listings.

Daniel Goldberg is the producer for The Lyric Opera of Chicago Broadcasts.

David Polk was the executive producer for this series.

George Preston is general manager of WFMT.

Moraine Valley hosts virtual Juried Student Art Exhibition

The Moraine Valley Community College Juried Student Art Exhibition, an annual student showcase since 1994, is being hosted online. Twenty-four works of art, ranging from watercolor paintings and digital art to photography and ceramics, can be viewed at morainevalley.edu/studentexpo.

"This is an important event every year for these students and their families, especially those who are graduating. We thought hosting it virtually would be a way for the students to see their work showcased and see the other students' work. I felt like they would be missing this opportunity if we didn't find a way to do it," said Chris Matusek, assistant professor of Art.

Feedback from her students has been very positive. "They are thrilled their pieces are being showcased and very excited to see everyone else's work. I'm very excited about it, too," Matusek said.

Student artwork was created by Celine Alonzo, Monica Campana, Ethan Damian, Marissa Delich, Jamie Fields, Jolene Fritsch, Genae Grabowski, Ewelina Jurkowski, Saja Khalil, Lila Koszulinski, Karen Luevano, Millie McMahan, Leona Petreikis-Sillunas, Sydney Rastrullo, Lisette Vargas, Vernessa Williams and Abigail Wise.



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SUBURBAN EDITION

Volume 46 | Number 24 | June 16, 2020

Burbank, Evergreen Park, Hickory Hills, Justice, Oak Lawn



Village of Justice Lipinski Center, 7256 Skyline Drive

Justice implements new governmental operations

by Jan Glaz

Officials in the Village of Justice voted to approve an Ordinance ratifying directives pertaining to the administration of governmental operations during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Prior to passing the Ordinance Trustee Ed Rusch Jr. asked that employees report to their perspective places of employment. Rusch did not want employees taking village business home and stated, "Our people should be working on location if they are being paid."

Village Treasurer/Financial Consultant, Kelly Zabinski, commented regarding the Lipinski Center, 7256 Skyline Drive. The Lipinski Center document will be changed - to be closed until December 31, 2020. Trustee Rusch again repeated, if employees are being paid, they should be at work. Trustee Melanie Kuban and Mayor Wasowicz closed the discus-

sion saying they will make note of the comment.

Trustee Kuban reported that the Village is putting in place cost saving measures. "Due to COVID-19 Village revenues are far less than expected, therefore, spending cuts are needed and the board will be working to cut costs."

In other Village news: The board approved the extension of the deadline for purchasing vehicle tags to July 31, 2020. Anyone who lives in the Village of Justice or houses a vehicle in the Village for more than 50% of the time is required to purchase a sticker. Village sticker purchases assist the Justice Police Department patrolling the neighborhoods, keeping the community and its residents safe. For further information in regard to vehicle stickers please contact the Village at 708-458-2520.

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A Message from Oak Lawn Community High School

A Message from Superintendent Michael Riordan

It has been over two weeks since the tragic killing of George Floyd occurred in Minneapolis. Over the past 15 days we have witnessed countless protests throughout the country in the name of fairness, equity, and justice for all, with the ultimate goal being the end of racism in all forms, especially for members of the black community. One such protest took place recently right in front of our school which was organized by one of our recent graduates. In the wake of this turmoil and the incredible pain and fear that so many have experienced, I wanted to share the following message with our students, parents, staff and community.

Oak Lawn Community High School is 100% committed to the engagement, empowerment, and enrichment of every one of our students. The first sentence of our school's mission statement highlights the fact that we are a "diverse and inclusive school" where all students are supported and challenged to achieve their maximum potential. These supports and challenges include the development of our student's social and emotional skills, such as empathy, conflict resolution, self-advocacy, and social justice. We are proud of our students and staff who have taken action to support people of color. We fully support these individuals and, in fact, encourage and empower



them to continue taking action in an effort to positively influence our community.

Oak Lawn Community High School will continue to engage and empower our students in many ways. We are absolutely committed to this endeavor, and we will renew our efforts to maintain an equitable environment where all of our students are treated with dignity and respect and where opportunity and access are available to all.

Oak Lawn Community High School also fully acknowledges that we have more work to do. We need to listen to and address the needs of all students, especially our students of color. We will continuously monitor all policies, practices, and procedures to ensure that our school fairly and equitably addresses the needs of all students. We will continue to provide effective training for our staff to ensure that unconscious biases do not result in any type of discrimination in the school setting and beyond. We are committed to our role of preparing students for future success through a safe, supportive and intellectually challenging environment committed to the values of Spartan PRIDE.

A Message from Principal Jeana Lietz

Over the past two

weeks, I have experienced an overwhelming number of emotions; I have been frustrated, sad, and at times paralyzed by inaction. The events around the country and in our own community have caused me to reflect on our actions, and I feel that what we have done is simply not enough: Our students still feel unseen and experience discrimination. I want EVERY student to feel like OLCHS is their home and be comfortable here. As a white woman, there are privileges that I have enjoyed and injustices that I have never faced. To hear the stories of our students, staff, and our community who have faced injustices and how they feel disconnected and underrepresented brings me to tears.

During the past couple school years, our administration at Oak Lawn Community High School began to focus on race and diversity and the embedded issues of inequity in our building, and education in general. Some of the steps we have taken so far include working as an entire staff to make students feel engaged in our school and community and empowering them to make changes when they aren't. Part of our work includes issuing a school climate survey every year, then looking at those results for areas of improvement. This past year I started an Equity Council made of students of diverse backgrounds (race, gender, sexual preference) where students give feedback about policies, practices,

and actions in our building that are discriminatory. We have started to examine data to identify areas of inequity. We have done research about restorative discipline practices.

Oak Lawn Community High School can and will do better for our students and our community. We need to ensure that we are listening to and addressing the needs of all students, especially our students of color and other marginalized groups.

I am committed to specifically:

Continue the work of our student-led Equity Council.

Solicit even more feedback from students. And then listen and take action on that feedback.

Create new groups and continue to promote existing groups that celebrate diversity such as our Muslim Student Association, K-pop club, Alliance, Organization of Latin American Students (OLAS).

Educating myself and our staff on issues of racism and what we can do to fight these injustices in our building, and beyond.

Implement recruiting and hiring initiatives designed to increase diversity among our staff that mirrors our student body.

Regularly examine data to identify places of inequity and unfair treatment (placement, grades, discipline, etc).

As always, I encourage students, staff, or any member of our community to reach out to me at any time with concerns or ideas for improvement.

Pappas: Taxpayers now have more time to pay delinquent Cook County property taxes

A new Illinois law increases from nine months to 13 months the time that taxpayers have to pay delinquent Cook County property taxes before they are offered to investors, giving more breathing room to homeowners and business people struggling to pay their bills, said Treasurer Maria Pappas, who helped draft the legislation. "This additional time can make the difference between keeping your home and seeing it taken away," Pappas said today. "No one knows how long this economic downturn caused by the outbreak of COVID-19 will go on, but this legislation will provide help to hard-pressed taxpayers long after the pandemic is over."

At one time, property owners had a dozen months to pay delinquent taxes before the Annual Tax Sale. In 2014, the Illinois General Assembly shortened the time, which last year was nine months. Pappas has pushed to extend the time, an effort culminating in the of SB 685. Gov. J.B. Pritzker signed the bill into law on June 5, 2020.

"I am grateful to the Legislature for helping our most vulnerable taxpayers, and I am especially thankful to Rep. Mike Zalewski from Riverside, who sponsored the amendment that increased the time before the Tax Sale," Pappas said.

The Annual Tax Sale, required by state law, is the start of a legal process that



Treasurer Maria Pappas

can end in a loss of property ownership. Owners can avoid the Tax Sale by paying all delinquent taxes and interest before the Sale begins. Pappas obtained a court order to postpone this year's Tax Sale, originally scheduled for May 8, 2020. She will reschedule the Sale after the Governor's pandemic disaster declaration is lifted. More than 42,000 properties currently owe more than \$130 million in delinquent taxes for Tax Year 2018 (due in 2019).

Community recovery fund applications are open!

The Cook County Community Recovery Fund application is live. Funds are available to support eligible suburban small businesses and independent contractors through the COVID-19 pandemic. Apply here: <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/3a6c8b87a2964d8f96bde5e9c1ee78a8>.

If you need assistance completing the application or have other questions about the fund, please go here: Comments/Questions at <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/1f37a8c3d3884c16bfa8dc08185ee668>.

This loan fund offers one-time, zero-interest loans of up to \$20,000 for small businesses and up to \$10,000 for independent contractors in suburban Cook County. Loans will be administered by the Chicago Community Loan Fund and provided by a network of community lenders.

Applications are open until Wednesday, June 17, 2020, at 11:59 pm.

Who can apply?

Small Businesses are eligible if they are: employing 25 or fewer employees, earning less than \$3 million in annual revenue, located

in suburban Cook County, and revenues have decreased more than 25% as a result of COVID-19.

Independent Contractors are eligible if you are: making at least half of your yearly income in 1099 contract work, earning less than \$100,000 annually, and residing in suburban Cook County.

Currently, not-for-profits are not eligible for this program.

More information can be found at <https://www.cook-countyil.gov/content/frequently-asked-questions-community-loan-fund>.

NEPA Reform is Long Overdue

By Drew Johnson

Ever wonder why it took just over a year to build the Empire State Building but can easily take three years or longer to build a new road today?

One reason is the National Environmental Policy Act, a 50-year-old law that requires the federal government to conduct environmental reviews of all infrastructure projects. Since the law's inception, these reviews have become tedious and expensive.

In an effort to speed up infrastructure projects, the Trump administration is working to change how government agencies implement this law.

The administration's plan would streamline NEPA assessments while maintaining environmental standards. That will save millions of taxpayer dollars and help restore our infrastructure to its former glory.

Signed into law by President Nixon in 1970, NEPA was the country's first significant environmental policy. The law requires federal agencies to assess the potential environmental impact of every project that involves federal land or funding. Public and private entities often need to secure NEPA permits before they can fix roads, build bridges, or erect power lines.

Since it was enacted, the NEPA approval process has become costly, complex, and time-consuming. To receive a per-

mit, applicants must comply with various sets of rules dictated by multiple federal agencies. Today, NEPA reviews often last more than four years and produce thousand-page environmental impact statements.

This process delays even the most straightforward infrastructure projects. Consider a recent proposal to raise the roadway of the Bayonne Bridge, which connects New York and New Jersey, by a mere 64 feet. The proposal spurred a five-year, \$2 million NEPA review that produced around 20,000 pages of documentation.

Delays like this have left American infrastructure in desperate need of repair. The Department of Transportation estimates our roads and bridges need \$800 billion of improvements. Maintaining our nation's water systems will cost more than \$632 billion over the next decade. And a fifth of all passenger rail lines are in "poor condition."

Shoddy infrastructure financially strains American families. Expenses like the rising prices of goods as a result of slower transportation times, time and fuel wasted during commutes, and an aging electricity grid all eat into family budgets. Infrastructure deficiencies will cost every U.S. household \$3,400 per year in disposable income until 2025. If left unchecked, subpar infrastructure will

cost more than \$5,000 per household annually starting in 2026.

Ironically, NEPA even impedes green energy projects that could help the environment. Consider the Cape Wind project, a Greenpeace-backed plan to erect a wind farm off the Massachusetts coast. The project's NEPA review was marred with lawsuits and took more than a decade to complete. Cape Wind was abandoned in 2017, after burning through \$65 million of private and public money.

Fortunately, the Trump administration has devised a way to stop these needless delays without compromising the rigor of environmental reviews. The administration's plan would place a single federal agency in charge of every NEPA review, and direct all agencies to complete these reviews within two years. Agencies would also have the ability to use existing data when possible, in order to further streamline reviews.

Over the past 50 years, NEPA has gone from an effective environmental policy to a regulatory roadblock. The Trump administration's plan will slice through the red tape and make this law work for Americans once again.

Drew Johnson is a government watchdog and environmental policy expert who serves as a senior fellow at the National Center for Public Policy Research.

Hurley's bill would increase benefits for 1st responders who get COVID

Continuing her commitment to first responders across Illinois, state Rep. Fran Hurley, D-Chicago, recently passed new protections for police and firefighters who have contracted COVID-19.

"Police, firefighters and other first responders put their lives on the line every single day to protect our communities, even more so now as they work on the

frontlines in the fight against COVID-19," said Hurley. "First responders deserve our utmost respect, support and protection both during everyday life and especially during this unprecedented time."

Hurley passed House Bill 2455, which expands workers compensation benefits for first responders who have lost their lives in the line of

duty to include all those who have contracted COVID-19. Hurley's bill passed the legislature with unanimous bipartisan support and now heads to the governor's desk to be signed into law.

"It is critical to expand our support for first responders as they continue their fight against COVID-19 and work in dangerous conditions to keep our neighborhoods safe

and limit the spread of this virus," continued Hurley. "I urge the governor to sign this legislation into law immediately to show Illinois' support for the men and women who put their safety on the line to protect our communities."

For more information, please contact Hurley's constituent service office at 773-445-8128 or RepFranHurley@gmail.com.

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Orland Park's Fourth of July celebrations

Independence Day is the most significant national holiday in the United States and celebrating it is always a highlight of the summer season. It celebrates the Declaration of Independence, adopted on July 4, 1776. The Declaration of Independence is an unassailable document that embodies everything we hold dear as Americans.

Based on guidance provided by Governor Pritzker at his May 8 press conference, the Village of Orland Park is proceeding with its 4th of July fireworks show at Centennial Park, with modifications.

Centennial Park is a large area that allows for proper social distancing measures. Of course, the ultimate decision regarding the personal risks involved and the appropriateness of attending the celebrations in-person must be made by each individual in light of all the circumstances presented by the current pandemic, and the known variability and biological behavior of the individual's medical condition.

Performing at 7:15 pm at Centennial Park will be Gone 2 Paradise. Because of the park-wide sounds system, music can be heard anywhere throughout Centennial Park. Those attending should maintain groups



of less than 10 with social distancing of at least 6 feet between groups.

The fireworks show will begin at 9:30 p.m. The display will incorporate higher altitude fireworks and remove low-level fireworks so that residents can enjoy the fireworks at home. The fireworks display and synced music will live streamed via the Village's YouTube channel.

Those wishing to watch the fireworks at Centennial Park should maintain groups of less than 10 with social distancing of at least 6 feet between groups.

This year, vehicular access to Centennial Park and Centennial Park West parking lots will be restricted to those displaying a current Village of Orland Park vehicle sticker.

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"The ideals of the Declaration of Independence have emboldened us to forge our own paths as individuals and as a nation," said Mayor Keith Pekau. "Independence

Day is about celebrating the values that the country was founded upon. The Declaration of Independence was written with the theory that every person has inherent rights, called "self-evident truths." It reads: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

"At great risk, many Americans stood up too many forms of tyranny and oppression, and however long it takes, liberty prevails," said Pekau. "It is important that we continue to celebrate Independence Day as a reminder of our unalienable rights."

Moraine Valley to offer classes predominately online this fall

Moraine Valley Community College in Palos Hills

will continue to offer its courses predominantly on-line for the fall semester and has shortened its academic calendar.

Fall classes will occur in two formats, online or hybrid. Most classes will be online offered in synchronous and asynchronous formats. The hybrid offering, when classes are taught both online and face-to-face, is reserved for career and technical education courses and select laboratory classes that require a limited amount of time on campus to learn and practice hands-on skills.

The college also has shortened its academic calendar by a week, reducing the semester from 17 weeks to 16 weeks. The adjustment will help to account for any flare up of the pandemic, which has been predicted to occur as winter approaches.

The hybrid class offerings also will begin on Aug. 10, earlier than the rest of the college's classes, which start on Aug. 24.

Registration for the fall semester is under way. Get started at morainevalley.edu/starting-remotely.

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Bite-Size tips to skip holiday stress and ‘hanger’

(NAPS) When the holidays are here, for many people, that means having a lot on their plate, literally and figuratively. Fortunately, there are ways to lighten the to-do list and even sneak in a little nutrition. You don't want a household full of people

who are “hangry”: angry from being hungry. It helps if you can balance your menu with a few simple, easy dishes and snacks, such as blueberries, in addition to the more time-intensive holiday staples.

Blueberries are a no-

muss, no-fuss option: just rinse and go. They're great for munching while cooking and they can add a burst of sweet-tart flavor to your favorite sauces, compotes, jams or chutneys.

“I love cooking with blueberries because they're so versatile and can be used in a wide variety of both sweet and savory dishes. Plus, they're really good for you and are a convenient way to meet the recommended amount of fruits per day, which is often a bit more challenging during the holidays,” says Sonali Ruder, DO.

“Fresh blueberries are a source of four essential nutrients: fiber, vitamin C, vitamin K and manganese. One serving—a handful or a cup—contains only 80 calories and naturally occurring sugars. I always have fresh blueberries in my fridge or frozen blueberries in my freezer to add a quick boost of nutrition to dishes like oatmeal, yogurt, smoothies and sauces,” she adds.

Simplify your kitchen time. There are so many delicious recipes that don't keep you working away all day. For a sweet and savory appetizer, snack or dessert option, try these Blueberry Brie Bites. They're so elegant and festive that no one will suspect how easy they are to make.



These Blueberry Brie Jam Bites can add a festive touch to your holiday entertaining, yet they're simple to prepare.

Blueberry Brie Bites

Makes 15 bites

Ingredients:

1 box (15-count) mini phyllo shells

4 ounces Brie cheese, rind removed

1 cup fresh or frozen blueberries

1/2 teaspoon chopped, fresh thyme

1 tablespoon maple syrup

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350° F. Arrange phyllo shells on a baking sheet. Cut the Brie into small pieces (about 1/2-inch). Mix the blueberries, thyme, and maple syrup together in a bowl. Place a piece of cheese in each phyllo shell and top with a spoonful of the blueberry mixture. Bake in the oven 16–18 minutes, until blueberries start to soften and Brie is melted. Remove from oven and serve.

Learn More: You can find more holiday recipes, tips and fun ways to celebrate with blueberries at www.PositivelyBluetiful.com.



In the Shadow of the Valley, by Bobi Conn (Little A, 2020)

The greatest challenge in life, according to Socrates, is to “know thyself.” Recently, sources as diverse as the New York Times and High Times, Guideposts and Glamour have run stories advocating soul-searching and self-discovery in the age of corona.

Bobi Conn, who hails from an oxycontin-drenched “holler” in Eastern Kentucky, shows us how it's done.

Her heart-wrenching memoir, *In the Shadow of the Valley*, is an examined life par excellence.

Conn is not the same girl who grew up and grew scared in the valley. She is a writer who learned to tell her own story but rejected the trope that “the self, of course, is the main character of each of our stories — the hero, the martyr, the one whose suffering really matters and whose goodness is remarkable, whose shortcomings are both comprehensible and forgivable.”

Bobi gives us all of herself: not just the pretty parts. Her people, she writes, “are probably stereotypes.” There were few of her parents' or neighbors' bad habits that she escaped: “I thought of the choices people make — choices my family made, choices I made and was still making — and how ugly they look to the world. Smoking, drinking, my dad and his pills. Cutting myself. My mother's choice to marry a monster, her choice to have his children — was it a choice? Would it have been better to never have been born at all?” These are some heavy questions for self-study.

Conn's life wouldn't be good fodder for a movie: it's too bleak, too violent, too unkempt. She grew up on a dirt road, a couple miles from the nearest town, in a small, beautiful valley that was surrounded by dense forest and circled by the ancient Appalachians. Her wooded playground was a paradise, where she played for hours with her younger brother, hiding and swimming and eating wild blueberries and skinny-dipping in the creek. Inevitably, they were called back to witness their father's uncontrolled, inexplicable rage, and their mother's maddeningly meek suffering. Her house was filthy, with garbage overflowing and cigarette butts piled in the corner; guns, drugs, sheets for shades.

“I wondered whether any other men were ever good, whether any of them ever loved their children or touched their wives with tenderness. I wonder whether the women were gentle, or whether the hallow expressions accurately reflect their despair, their loneliness, their sense of futility.” Whew. Not in her town, where pain and poverty was a constant most of us will never understand. But it's worth it to try.

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A few simple steps can help you and your family be more comfortable at home for less money.

Hints For Homeowners: Be Cool And Save Money

(NAPSI) Many Americans may be surprised

to learn that almost half their utility bill goes toward heating and cooling their home. Fortunately, the U.S. EPA's ENERGY STAR Program offers resources to help you beat the heat, all while saving a, saving money and

protecting the climate. Here's how:

Maintain or Upgrade Your HVAC System: Check your system's air filters. A dirty air filter will make the system work harder to keep you

cool, wasting energy. Filters should be inspected once a month during heavy use.

If your heating and cooling equipment is more than 10 years old or it needs frequent repairs,

it may be time to consider a replacement. The ENERGY STAR Heating and Cooling Guide helps you navigate an HVAC equipment upgrade that will keep you comfortable and help you save money, year round. Visit www.energystar.gov/HVACguide.

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Help For The Self-Employed

(NAPS) Whether you run a part-time business, do freelance work, or own your own business, you're in good company. About 16 million adults in America work for themselves, and nearly half that number are baby boomers.

Even though self-employment comes in many forms, with a wide range of specific needs, some of the challenges are universal, including taxes. If you're new to the self-employment journey, you'll need to be prepared for some financial adjustments.

Avoiding Surprises at Tax Time: Older adults who have spent most of

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ments for self-employment.

Instead of the familiar W-2 from a single full-time job, self-employed adults may find themselves juggling multiple 1099s, wrestling with the time-consuming work of tracking expenses learning how to plan, save and submit quarterly tax payments.

If you work for yourself, you may need a resource that can help you handle multiple self-employment tax requirements. AARP Foundation Self-Saver is an online tax-tracking resource that allows you to connect your bank account and automate your self-employment tax withholding and payments.

As work Connie Johnson explained, "I'm an AARP member and I just hap-

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pened onto Self-Saver. I felt like a miracle had happened. I had no idea I had to pay self-employment tax because as a contractor you're considered self-employed, so that was a little bit of a shock. I feel peace of mind knowing that has been taken care of."

AARP Foundation Self-Saver: Self-Saver saves you time and money with a set of tools that make tax time simpler, automated and less of a surprise.

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penses paid. The program provides an estimated tax rate based on factors that adjust as your income and other statuses change.

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Work At Home In Comfort And Safety

(NAPSI) According to Darrell Smith, executive director of the International Window Film Association, window film makes a lot of sense for homeowners eager to save money on their energy bills.

"Solar-control films can block as much as 80 percent of the solar heat coming through glass into a building, decrease the heat load on the air-conditioning system and reduce energy costs," Smith says.

With more people working and studying from home, window film allows in abundant natural sunlight while blocking 99 percent of the sun's harmful UV rays to better protect the skin (from possible cancer) and eyes (from cataract development), while reducing the fading of floors and furnishings. Smith estimates that 40 to 60 percent of color fading is caused by UV exposure. Windows may also be upgraded for safety, as window film helps to hold glass pieces together if the window is impacted and broken.

For even a 3,000 square foot home, window film may be installed in a day or less with minimal disruption. Window film installers clean the glass before installation, keep the work space clean and practice safe contact as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control. Find a local dealer/installer at www.iwfa.com.

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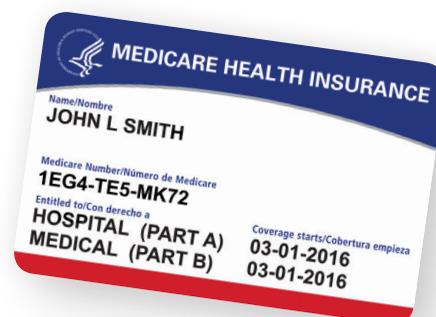
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