



Side Tracks

your express route to upcoming VG events

Council Discusses Recycling Changes Along With Plans For Senior Center

By Bill Price
Staff Writer

Mayor Cassandra Eversole-Gunter called to order the February 11, 2019 City Council meeting and proceeded with the roll call. Those present were Alderman Bruce Allen, Darrell Griffith, Derek Johnson, Michael Leon and two junior Alderman Grace Hutchison and Molly Mixell. Alderman Thelma Blaney and Robert Stipp were absent. The Mayor then asked everyone to stand and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the last regular City Council meeting held January 28, 2019. The minutes were approved unanimously. A motion was made to approve the closed session minutes of the last regular City Council meeting held January 28, 2019. The minutes were approved unanimously. The next motion was made to approve the claims for payments in the amount of \$235,098.19 which was unanimously approved.

Andy Kieser, project manager at Fehr Graham who normally presents the Engineer Report was not available. Scott Arbuckle reported that the WTP project was moving along smoothly. Mayor Gunter took the opportunity



to congratulate Scott on completing the hours necessary to obtain his Water Operators License while attending the Annual Water Conference last week.

The next item on the Council's agenda is reserved for public comments. While no one was available for comments the Mayor's office and the City Council have now provided a Constituent Request Card. This will afford the opportunity for those who may not be able to attend the regular Council meet-

ings to be a part of the City's operations. The Constituent Request Card is available at the Council meetings and anytime during business hours at City Hall. Someone will respond to your request.

The Mayor then moved forward to the Business matters for the Council to address.

- Approve payment of monthly statement from Bud's auto parts - \$230.25. Council approved with one abstention.

- Approve the hiring of Robin Cowman to be the

Senior Center Coordinator- Sarah Bush Lincoln hired Robin and she accepted the position and began on January 22, 2019. She will also be administering the activities portion at the center. The Council approved her hiring unanimously.

- Approve hiring of recreational program director. Unanimously approved

- Approval of WTP contractor payment number 9 - \$683,181.86. Unanimously approved

- Establishment of updates for annual cleanup days- tentative days for the cleanup are June 21 and 22. Unanimously approved.

- Accept resignation of Officer Jeff Bachman. Unanimously approved

- Approval of anticipated closure dates for City Hall relocation in May. The anticipated closure dates are May 20 through May 22. Unanimously approved

- Approval of CA-6 (Hauling of rocks) purchase for Public Works facilities (estimated \$3400). Unanimously approved

- Approval to waive bidding and seek proposals for stump grinding/removal. Unanimously approved

Council moved forward with the Committee Reports.

- Administration and Risk Management - Chairperson Blaney - Absent

- Community Development - Chairperson Johnson - The Community Development Board will meet at 5 PM on February 26 and the new Park Board will also be meeting on February 26 at 6 PM.

- Emergency Services- Chairperson Leon-Mike once again brought attention to the concern of the 20 MPH speed limit on Main Street. He has discussed this with Police Chief Dennis Gire. Chief Gire conducted a 2 day traffic survey and found no significant speeding problem. Alderman Leon wanted also to encourage dog owners to be mindful of their pets and cleanup after them. He reminded everyone that the city has an ordinance addressing this and to be a good neighbor. Fire Chief Ross Elston extended a call for volunteers needed during daytime hours at the fire department. Anyone interested please contact Ross at the fire department.

- Franchise Development - Chairperson Stipp - Absent

- Public Works - Chairperson Allen - Bruce used the opportunity to combine his public works report with the franchise development report. Along

Cont. pg. 8

Minimum Wage Increase Heads to Pritzker's Desk

Governor says he will sign bill 'in coming days'
By Jerry Nowicki
Capitol News Illinois

SPRINGFIELD - A bill to raise Illinois' minimum wage to \$15 by 2025 needs only Gov. J.B. Pritzker's signature to become law, and his office said he stands ready to act in the coming days.

"Today is a resounding victory for the 1.4 million Illinoisans who will soon get a hard-earned and well-deserved raise," Pritzker said in a news release Thursday. "After nearly a decade of delay, I applaud the House and Senate for passing a living wage with the fierce urgency this moment requires."

The House galleries were filled with cheers from advocates - many of them currently making the minimum wage - as the final 69-47-1 favorable vote became official.

Prior to the final vote, Pritzker was on the House floor smiling and shaking the hands of Democratic lawmakers - even as Republican Minority Leader Jim Durkin was lamenting the lack of bipartisanship behind the effort in his floor speech.

"This is not the way to start out the General Assembly," Durkin said, adding Republicans had "basically been

told your interests and your thoughts are not valid and we don't care."

All in Durkin's Republican caucus were joined by four Democrats opposing the bill while one, Stephanie Kifowit of Aurora, voted present after two hours of debate.

In their final efforts to derail the fast-tracked bill, Republicans once again shared stories from business owners, universities, colleges and schools within their districts detailing layoffs, closures and increased property taxes.

Rep. Charlie Meier, an Okawville Republican, said the bill would hurt agriculture and small-town businesses such as groceries.

"The small family farms will suffer the worst with the organic farms, orchards, vineyards, wineries, and the livestock industry being hit the hardest of all," Meier said. "This is another Illinois law that will yet again put our region at a disadvantage."

Rep. Tom Bennett, a Gibson City Republican, cited a National Federation of Independent Businesses study which said Illinois would see 93,000 jobs lost because of the increase. Rep. Terri Bryant, a Murphysboro Republican, said the bill would cost Illinois' public universities

\$112 million by the time it is implemented.

Republicans also brought up the hundreds of millions of dollars the bill would add to the state's expenditures as human service providers - especially nursing homes, 25 of which have closed since 2014 because of inadequate Medicaid reimbursements - universities and other departments request more funding to pay for the higher labor costs.

But Rep. Will Guzzardi, Senate Bill 1's House sponsor, continued to point to data which shows no impact on job losses when communities see an "incremental" minimum wage increase, and spoke to the dignity of the worker.

"The only way to stop being poor is to have more money," he said. "And that's what this legislation is going to do. The working poor in our state are going to have more money. We will treat their labor with the dignity and respect it deserves, and we will allow them to provide a better standard of living for themselves and their families."

While Republicans continued to argue that the studies cited by Guzzardi predict only an incremental increase - not an 82 percent spike in six years - many Democrats

were convinced by the moral argument.

Rep. Emmanuel "Chris" Welch of Westchester was among them.

"People should not go to work 40 hours a week and still not be able to put food on the table," he said. "Dr. King said there is nothing but short-sightedness to prevent us from guaranteeing a livable income for every American. Let's not be shortsighted today."

Rep. Celina Villanueva, a Chicago Democrat, said further progress was necessary and the fight for 15 was only the "first step" toward worker dignity.

"What we're really talking about is the dignity and respect of our workers," she said. "I don't think 15 is enough. I've never thought 15 was enough."

Guzzardi said 41 percent of all workers in Illinois make less than \$15 per hour, and more of those workers are in their 40s, 50s and 60s than are younger than 25; and 48 percent of African Americans and 61 percent of Latinos make less than \$15 per hour.

Those minimum-wage workers will begin seeing their increases in January 2020, when the minimum rate goes from \$8.25 to \$9.25

before increasing to \$10 on July 1, 2020, and \$11 on Jan. 1 2021. After that, it would increase by \$1 every January until it hits \$15 in 2025.

For Iashea Cross, a personal assistant and low-wage worker in the health care field who was in the gallery from Chicago, the bill means a brighter outlook in the future.

"I might be able to let go of that second job in the future that I have just to make ends meet," she said. "For me, the passage of this bill means that finally we are being recognized as the working people of the state that help it continue to move forward."

The bill also maintains a tip credit, which allows employers to pay tipped workers 60 percent of the minimum wage if tips make up the other 40 percent. A training wage for teen seasonal workers is also part of the bill, and that wage will top out at \$13 per hour.

A tax credit for businesses with less than 50 full-time equivalent employees is also part of the final bill, starting at 25 percent of the difference between the current minimum wage and an employee's wage in the final quarter of the previous calendar year. It would decrease by 4 percent each year until it hits 5 percent in the final two years.

Bright future in store for Parr, FFA

By Tony Hooker
Staff Writer

Callie Parr was raised in an agricultural environment. She just didn't realize it at the time.

Parr, Villa Grove High School's Ag/FFA teacher, knew she had always wanted to be teacher, but didn't know until her arrival at Murray State that her love for education could combine with her love of horses. With this being national FFA week, she decided it would be a great time to sit down and learn a bit more about this Ag dynamo.

How long have you been a teacher?

I've been teaching for 15 years.

What called you to teach Ag?

I grew up, from the time I was in sixth or grade, with horses, and we were always doing things in the environment and we were gardening, raising our own food. All

through high school, I didn't understand that that was agriculture, at all. I thought that agriculture was just row crops, hogs and cattle. When I got to college, I was a actually a special education major with an equine science minor. I walked into my first ag class, I realized that my entire high school career, whether I was learning about genetics and trying to apply that to horses' coat colors and in math, I'd been learning how to figure area and trying to apply that to figuring acreages, and I walked out of my first ag class ever in college and saw that "Hey, there's a place where they teach that right off the bat and you don't have to learn it on your own!" I changed my major on my very first day of college. I had known I wanted to be a teacher since my sophomore year of high school, but I wasn't sure what I wanted to teach because I couldn't

stand the thought of teaching the same thing, over and over again. When I realized what an Ag teacher did, I thought "That's exactly what I want to do!" <laughs> It was kind of a light bulb moment!

Where did you grow up?
I went to high school in Fairfield, IL.

Did your family have a farm?
It was just a rural area. My family raised horses. My senior year, I did Illinois high school rodeo, and that's how I ended up at Murray State. I went down there to compete in rodeo, which I only did for one semester. I kind of tossed that aside and focused on Ag education.

Were you a big FFA member as a student?

I wasn't in any FFA or Ag classes as a student. At all.

You've certainly revitalized FFA and Ag at Villa Grove High School, for sure!
Thank you. It was quite a



Callie Parr and members of FFA enjoying national convention at Indianapolis. Photo courtesy of Callie Parr

jump for me into ag, and my family again didn't realize that horses were considered ag. We perceived agriculture as being just the very, very traditional production agriculture

but once I got educated on the fact that it's in everything in the food and fiber system and how expansive it is, in everyday life, I realized just how much my

Cont. pg. 8

FFA Appreciation Breakfast
Thursday, February 21st
6:30-7:30AM Located in the
Ag Shop

VG Schools K-8 spring
Picture day
2/21

VGJH VB vs Cerro Gordo
2/21 @ 6:00 pm

Scholastic bowl @ Division
Tournament 2/21

FCC youth group Pancake
Breakfast
2/24 @ 8:00 am

VG City Council mtg
2/25 @ 6:00 pm

JHVB @ IESA 2A regional
tournament at Blue Ridge
Middle School
2/26 at 5:30 pm

VG Kindergarten
Registration
2/26 at 6:00 pm

VG Scholastic Bowl @
conference tournament at
Arcola
2/28 at 4:30 pm

Villa Grove PTO
Literacy night
2/28 @ 6:00 pm

Ash Wednesday Services
3/6 - 7pm @ CUMC

VG Schools
Early Dismissal
3/7 @ 1:30 pm

VG Schools Parent/Teacher
conferences
3/7 from 3:00-7:00 pm

VG Schools Parent/Teacher
conferences
3/8 from 8:00 am- 11:30 am

Sacred Heart Catholic
Church Fish Fry
3/8 @ 4:30

VGH Girl's Track @ EIU
invite
3/9 at 8:00 am

VGSB @ ALAH
3/11 at 4:30 pm

VG City Council
3/11 @ 6:00 pm

VG PTO mtg
3/11 @ 6:30 pm

If you have an upcoming event that you would like to see featured in Sidetracks, email us at vgnews@mchsi.com or call us at 832-4201