

# III. State Police investigation leads to felony charges in Hammond murder

On September 30, 2021, the Office of Piatt County State's Attorney Sarah Perry charged Blayton M. Cota, a 19-year-old male of Granite City, Illinois and two juveniles, ages 16 and 17 of Springfield, Illinois with First-Degree Murder.

As it relates to the First-Degree Murder charges (Class M Criminal Felony); Cota and the 2 juveniles are alleged, on or about January 26, 2021, to have murdered Michael Brown with a firearm while committing a burglary.

These charges resulted from an incident that occurred on January 26, 2021, when Illinois State Police Division of Criminal Investigation Zone 5 officials were requested by the Piatt County Sheriff's Department to assist with a death investigation. The victim, Michael Brown, a 65-year-old male of Hammond, IL was found deceased in his residence on S. C Street in Hammond, IL.

The 16-year-old juvenile was taken into custody on September 30, 2021, the 17-year old Juvenile was taken into custody on October 5, 2021 and Cota was taken into custody on October 4, 2021 by ISP DCI Agents. Cota is being held in the Piatt County Jail on \$1,000,000 bond, 10% to apply. Both juveniles are being confined in juvenile detention facilities.

ISP DCI Zone 5 was assisted by the Attorney General's Office of Illinois; Illinois Department of Natural Resources; Logan, Menard, Piatt, and Sangamon County Sheriff's Offices; Lincoln, Petersburg, and Springfield Police Departments; and the Piatt County Coroner and State's Attorney's Offices. No additional information will be released in this open and ongoing investigation.

Anyone with information regarding this investigation or other crimes are encouraged to contact the Illinois State Police, Division of Criminal Investigations at (217) 278-5004 (tip line) or by email at [ISP.DCI.Zone05@Illinois.gov](mailto:ISP.DCI.Zone05@Illinois.gov).

All subjects are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

# Douglas County Board Plat and Planning subcommittee meeting

**By Jim Allen**

Chair Tom Hettinger called the meeting to order on October 1, 2021 at 9:00 with committee members Jim Mikeworth and Dick Hein present. Cindy Baer, Supervisor of Assessments was also present with her monthly report.

The first item on the agenda was an ongoing problem with a building permit for Laverne Schlabaugh. Mr. Schlabaugh had submitted a permit for a building that needed approval from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the Army Corps of Engineers. Approval was needed due to the fact that the proposed structure might be in conflict with existing floodplain maps. Baer had received approval from the IDNR, but had no response from the Army corps. If there is no response from the Army Corps soon, the committee recommended approval of the permit.

Further discussion on requests for building permits for structures that might be in the floodplain centered on the fact that many people do not know what restrictions the county faces in regards to such structures. This can cause some misunderstanding when such permits are submitted to the county. The county does not wish to restrict approved structures, and at the same time does not want people to build without an approved permit. If a building is built without a permit showing it is not in a floodplain the owner can be forced to remove the structure and return the site to its previous condition.

Assessor Baer is in the final stages of revising the permit application to make it shorter and more easily understood. She suggested that after the revision later this month that a meeting should be held to inform what the permit process contains. Among the information will be: what the building permit does, when the building permit was created, and when it went into effect. This will help to raise awareness of the need for building permits as well as what the procedure for a permit entails. Discussion will also explain the penalties for violations regarding building permits. Illegal septic hookups are still a problem and it is hoped that the meeting will explain why those hookups cause potential problems not only for the owner, but for those adjacent to their property.

The committee received an update on the reassessment of the LOVE'S truck stop and the costs associated with that work. Baer noted that it took 8 1/2 hours just to measure the asphalt and concrete at the site. This time and the time to finish the reassessment will be presented to the Plat and Planning Committee and at that time a recommendation will be made as to whether the township will be billed for the work that was not completed.

# Douglas County Health Dept. Gold and Silver Spoon Award Update

**By Russell Anderson**

The Douglas County Health department has updated their award qualification. To receive the Category I & II Gold spoon award, an establishment must have no priority violations, no more than 1 priority foundation violation, no more than five core violations, zero repeat violations, excellence in training of Certified Food Protection Managers and Food Handlers at the required level at all times. Silver Spoon awards will be awarded to establishments that do not meet the Gold Spoon requirements but have no priority violations and excellence in training of Certified Food Protection Managers. Category III awards will remain the same.

I would welcome conversation about this program and other topics concerning the food program. I can be reached at 217-253-4137 or by email through our website, [www.dchealthdept.org](http://www.dchealthdept.org).



Photo: Go Time Sports Productions  
Villa Grove Blue Devil senior cheerleaders pictured from right to left are Morgan Smith, Ava Vollmer, Taylur Orwick, Kirsten Foreman, Molly Little, and JoBeth Crafton.



Photo: Go Time Sports Productions  
Seniors Jackson Wiesing and Amelia Williams represent seniors in the Villa Grove Music Department with their families at Villa Grove's senior night football game on Oct. 8.

my Personal side

By Craig Hastings



**Enough is Enough!**

There has to be a definitive red line drawn not to be crossed! If crossed swift and immediate consequences! I'm mad as hell. What happened to Senator Kyrsten Sinema, (D-Ariz.) last week cannot be allowed to happen. Demented activists of her own party followed her into a public restroom and captured cell phone video of the Senator enter into the restroom, into a stall, use the restroom, and exit to a sink to wash her hands. Why? Because Senator Sinema disagreed with the ridiculously expensive "Build Back Better" bill her own party is trying to sell to the American taxpayers. Because the Senator won't lie down and just accept something she knows is disastrous for the country, she was bullied by activists even into a public restroom. This should be a clear violation of the law and any offenders taken into custody immediately. I will tell you this; should someone ever do the same to me I'll be the one going to jail and the camera guy to the hospital to have their cell phone removed from an orifice it wasn't designed to fit.

This is America! How did we get to a point where one of the most private acts God built into our design has become something that can be recorded for all the world to view? I'm old and I know it. I was raised differently than today's carefree, no secrets, let it all hang out generations but, as Ol' Joe would say; "Come On Man!" I'm a Trump guy but I'll blame this on President Trump. He took some much incoming on his personal life during his four years in The White House it became commonplace. Trump shed it all like water on a duck and moved on without flinching. The more Trump

blew off the lies and rumors the more lies and rumors the dishonest media made up and spread to the little viewers they had left. So, because Trump was tough enough to successfully move past it all, it has unfortunately become commonplace.

It has to stop. Someone or some people will be killed over such invasions of their privacy. What's next, cameras secretly planted in our homes with no consequences? Will cameras be in every public restroom, motel rooms, dressing rooms, tanning salons, anyplace someone might undress or do embarrassing bodily functions!? I know, I know, some of you think I need to adjust. Times have changed and these newest generations don't care like my generation. It's not that I don't know some of this. I've been surfing way too many TikTok videos since my recent sign in and I see some of this craziness. People taking off their clothes just enough to let the imagination take over, making obnoxious noises however they can with whatever body parts they can manipulate. I'm asking again, what is happening to us!? Americans don't do these things!

I've recalled some of my very first columns I ever wrote for The Journal. These were from nearly thirteen years ago. Several times I made my own predictions based on nothing that social media absorbed through the internet access would destroy America. I believe that as of to date, American values have been the first casualties of the internet crisis. Yep I think it's a crisis. People's lives are being destroyed whole families at a time. Are you aware there are "apps" you can download that can perfectly meld your own head and neck onto

any other person of choice? Clothed or naked? Doing disgusting things you would never do? It's true. Someone sent me a video with my head and Gus' head singing a ridiculous song as we bobbed and weaved to the rhythm of the beat! When Charlie was Sheriff at the same time I was Chief here, he and I did actually get into a riff one night about something we disagreed. Not a big deal but, the very next day I was sent a video featuring two cartoon characters of frail stature dressed in skin tight outfits. Charlie's head was on one and mine on the other and we were dancing around in a boxing ring fighting! Neither landed a punch and adding to this was music to match the theme playing in the background. Both videos were hilarious and it was all in good fun but, can you only imagine what could be done to someone running for a political office? And yes, Charlie and I figured out our differences the next morning and all was well and remained so.

The bigger downside to all of this new technology is that this technology will only get more sophisticated. Will anyone but Trump be able to withstand what's to come to all of those who dare run for public office? Will the talent pool of qualified candidates dry completely up because they fear public humiliation through graphic depictions of themselves and family? I think so. So who does that leave us to lead us? You tell me because I have no idea. Me, I'll check out of this world in time to miss the worst of it but my children? What's life going to be like for them in twenty years or less? The 50's and up generations have to find a way to turn this around. I know, let's ban cell phones, computerized letters (email), and teach kids the ability to make change from a dollar to a customer paying with only cash.

*(The views and opinions expressed in the submitted columns are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of The Journal.)*



# Happy Halloween Weekends

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