

# School Board plans for next phase of capital improvement projects

The Tuscola School Board put phase 2 of its building improvement plan into motion Monday night by approving a request for proposals.

Like the first phase, the Board plans to seek proposals for the \$15 million in projects and interview those who respond and then choose a company to manage the projects. Separately, the Board hired Gray Design architects and WRF Engineering for preliminary design work.

Gray Design has done the work on the \$5 million first phase but is not the district's "architect of record." Superintendent Gary Alexander said the district does not have to use its architect of record if the cost is under \$40,000. The Gray Design price was \$27,900 for what Board member Chris Rennels called "vision casting" with

schematic drawings. The district will own the drawings and can use them with any contractor or construction manager they choose, Alexander said.

Board member Darold Spillman asked whether Gray Design could be designated as the architect of record and Alexander said they could. "It's pretty easy to do," Alexander said.

Alexander said phase 2 will include upgrades to the high school's stage and cafeteria as well as modernization of classrooms.

Meanwhile, the Board approved bids for fencing at North Ward and the high school. The bid for North Ward was \$41,550 while the high school bid, which includes replacing the perimeter fencing with new, black fencing and several gates, was

\$148,371.50. Both bids were Fromm Main Street Construction.

The bid includes removal of old fencing at the high school. Alexander said he hopes the North Ward project can be completed before school resumes next fall. He said the district has sales tax revenue to pay for the fencing. The sales tax funds can be used only for capital improvements.

Alexander said he was asked if the \$15 million in bonds sold for renovations could be used to help pay teacher salaries. He said it would be illegal to do that since the bonds were sold for the express purpose of capital improvements.

The Board also approved a revised tentative budget and set a budget hearing for 7 p.m. June 27. Alexander noted that the last payment

from the state for the personal property replacement tax was \$1 million. "That's never happened before." He said schools across the state have reported windfalls from the tax this year but don't expect it to repeat next year. He said he will probably budget for 60 percent of this year's receipts.

He also reported that the district's health insurance is going up 13 percent due to the district's loss ratio. He said he looked into other health insurance plans but could not find anything cheaper due to claims within the district.

In other business, the Board approved a lease agreement with Midwest Transit to replace the district's bus at a cost of \$12,703 per year for five years. In response to Board members' questions, Alexander said the cost of bus chassis

has gone up about \$3,000 but that Midwest Transit is absorbing that cost.

The district's bus is not used to transport students to and from school; that is provided by Gould Bus Service.

The Board also approved asking voters again if they want to go to an at-large election of Board members. Alexander said it is required by law to place the question on the ballot since the district had to appoint a member after the last election. The question was asked during the last election and was turned down by voters.

Also Monday, the Board approved donations as follows: \$100 from Monical's Pizza, \$250 from Dairy Queen and \$25 from Tuscola Home Center, all for East Prairie Fun Days.

Resignations were ac-

cepted from Hannah Church as music teacher, Ashlee Ellerbush as East Prairie Scholastic Bowl and Student Council sponsor, Christy Hoel as prom sponsor, Darcey Voyles as prom sponsor, Stephen Massey as paraprofessional, Mike Bingaman as paraprofessional and Ashley Wishard as East Prairie special education teacher.

Hired was Lyle Pettyjohn as a custodian and Julia Hudson as a paraprofessional. The student summer help list also was approved.

During the meeting, the administrators thanked the substitute teachers for their work this year including full-time teachers who helped cover classrooms when needed.

Wade Wilcox and Jerrod Baird were absent from the meeting.

# Planting going slowly here and nationally

Planting has gone slowly in both Douglas County and the rest of the nation. According to the May 16 crop progress report, Illinois farmers have planted 55% of their intended corn acres, compared to a five-year average of 70%. Nationally, just 49% of the corn is planted, as opposed to 67% on average. Soybean planting is behind as well. 38% of the soybeans are in the ground, compared to the 45% five-year average.

Late planting does not mean poor yields. We can still raise good crops this year. But the chances of bumper yields decrease every day. One source says the corn yield goes down about half a bushel each day after May 20. Ultimately, the weather dictates what our corn and soybeans will yield this year. A favorable summer could still give us decent crops.

Planting soybeans ahead of corn continued to gain popularity this spring. Some farmers planted all their beans before they planted any corn. Soybeans mature when the day length shortens in the fall. They can get more hours of sun when planted in April. No one ever planted soybeans before corn until just the last few years.

We planted some beans then switched and planted our corn. We wanted to get our

corn planted as early as we could. Hopefully, it will mature and dry down normally. Whatever late-planted corn yields, it is likely to be high in moisture and expensive to dry to a safe moisture level.

Unfortunately, part of our early planted beans do not have a good enough stand and will have to be replanted. It was a timing issue. The soil crusted and the soybeans couldn't force their way through the ground. Fields planted before and after these are fine.

What is considered a good stand of soybeans has evolved through the years as well. When we cleaned beans that we saved from the year before and planted them without any treatment, we tried to plant 10 or 11 beans to the foot or row, something like 190,000 to the acre. Now we plant around 140,000 to the acre and end up with a final population of 120,000 plants.

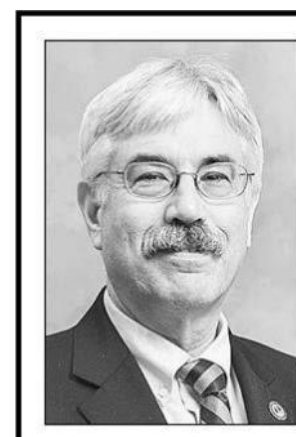
The United States needs to raise good crops to make up for shortfalls around the world. South America grows most of its corn as a double crop after soybeans. Hot dry weather has hurt that crop this year. France, the European Union's biggest grain producer is undergoing a long-term drought. They are the 6th largest wheat producer

in the world and the world's 4th largest exporter of wheat. Recent forecasts cut the French wheat crop by 10 percent.

There has been a lot of speculation about how many acres of crops Ukraine farmers may plant. I have heard from 30 to 50% of last year. They cannot export the crops they have in storage from last year as well. Most of that grain goes out of the country through the Black Sea. Those ports are in ruins and sown with mines.

Railing the grain west would seem to make sense, but there is another problem with that. Ukraine railroads are a different gauge than Western Europe, a relic of the Soviet Union period of history. The railcars must be switched to running gears to match the other rails or unloaded onto cars that match the rail gauge. It is a problem I would never have thought of.

The very warm weather in mid-May brought both corn and soybeans out of the ground quickly. We saw corn emerge in 5 days. That would seem preferable to struggling for two or three weeks under cold conditions. The calculation to determine how long it will take a plant to emerge uses a base of 50 degrees. A day when the high is not 50 means no growth. April had several days with a



## Douglas County Agriculture

Larry W. Dallas  
Illinois Farm Bureau  
District 12 Director

high of 50 degrees or less.

As we plant the crop for 2022, we are always thinking about next year. I think that the wet weather most of the Corn Belt experienced spread out planting and prevented any shortages of fertilizer and herbicides so far. This fall may be a different story as we all try to apply nutrients for next year.

The Federal government is making \$500 million available in a fertilizer production program. That amount would not build one nitrogen plant, and it would be years for it to produce anything. Illinois Farm Bureau submitted comments to the US Department of Agriculture recommending that money could be used to expand fertilizer storage, both on farms and for small fertilizer outlets. This would not increase fertilizer supplies, but it

would make that fertilizer more readily available during the crush of spring and fall application.

The dry fertilizers we use are easily handled and stored. These can be purchased at any home center in bags. The liquid and gaseous nitrogen that we use is another matter. The liquid products are corrosive and need to be stored in plastic or stainless-steel tanks, with containment to catch any spill. Anhydrous ammonia must be stored under pressure. A tank rated to store natural gas is not rated to store anhydrous. There are unique problems and expenses to fertilizer storage.

I was part of the early discussions about the proposed nitrogen plant at Tuscola. The people we were dealing with were Eastern European and Turkish companies. They

planned to produce urea, a dry nitrogen granule that is the last product in the manufacturing process of natural gas into fertilizer. You can store it in a bucket if it is kept dry and spread it by hand.

One of the principles commented to me that there is a lot of direct injection of anhydrous ammonia in the US. I told him they might want to set up to sell anhydrous too. Our larger-scale agriculture has the equipment and expertise to handle that product, and benefit from its relative cheapness compared to other more manufactured forms of nitrogen. A small European farmer would be more likely to require a dry product easily handled and spread.

We were able to put a lot of corn and soybeans in the ground in about 10 days of running time. We need some more good weather to finish planting and move on to the next operations. We have nitrogen to go on several acres and a lot of herbicide needs to be sprayed. An extended nice spring would have been nice, but a late wet spring is what we were dealt. This kind of year sells a lot of farm equipment. Bigger stuff covers the ground faster.

Thank you for reading about Douglas County Agriculture, and fertilizer, this month.

# Marketplace

## AUCTIONS

237+/- Acres: 3 Tracts - McLean County, Illinois

157.58+/- Acres 10AM JUNE 21ST 79.41+/- Acres 11AM between Cookville & Lexington. 1 Tract, all tillable. 132.8 PI Parke Regency Hotel-Bloomington

Call for details or see firstmidag.com David Klein, Auctioneer Lic.#441.001928 309-261-3117 dklein@firstmid.com

## MISC.

# PROTECT YOUR FAMILY



Keep mercury out of the environment by safely disposing of your old mercury thermostat.

To find a recycling location, visit: thermostat-recycle.org/zipsearch



## PUBLIC NOTICE

### JUNE 28, 2022 PRIMARY ELECTION

#### GRACE PERIOD REGISTRATION & VOTING

If you are not registered to vote by the voter registration deadline of May 31, 2022, but you are a qualified resident of Douglas County, you may register to vote in person in the County Clerk's Office located on the 2nd floor of the Courthouse, Tuscola, Illinois and once registered must vote in person at that same time in the County Clerk's office.

FIRST DAY: JUNE 1, 2022  
LAST DAY: JUNE 28, 2022

#### EARLY VOTING

This allows a voter to make application for a ballot and vote without having to be absent from the County on Election Day.

Registered voters may vote early in the County Clerk's Office from 8:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M., Monday through Friday.

EARLY VOTING BEGINS: MAY 19, 2022

#### VOTE BY MAIL

Registered voters may vote by Mail if they are unable to vote early or in person at the polls. Voters may request a ballot be mailed by contacting the County Clerk's office at 217-253-2442 or [elections@douglascountyil.com](mailto:elections@douglascountyil.com) for additional information in mailing a ballot.

**LAND AUCTION**  
**ABSOLUTE AUCTION**  
81.17 AC ± | 1 TRACT | CHAMPAIGN CO, IL  
AUCTION: LIVE AND ONLINE AT RANCHANDFARMAUCTIONS.COM  
AUCTION DATE: 6/9/22 | AUCTION TIME: 10:00 AM  
AUCTION LOCATION:  
1 HOTEL AND CONFERENCE CENTER  
1900 S 1ST STREET | CHAMPAIGN, IL  
IN COOPERATION WITH WHITETAIL PROPERTIES REAL ESTATE, LLC  
ADAM CRUMRIN, AGENT (217) 276-2334  
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