

Southwestern Illinois Commercial Real Estate Transactions

The Illinois Business Journal is proud to publish commercial real estate transactions recently completed by commercial brokers across Southwestern Illinois.

◆ BELLEVILLE

- Catholic & Community Credit Union sold a 2,294-square-foot office building at 6024 W. Main St. to Davis Development & Consulting, LLC. BARBERMURPHY represented the seller.

◆ BETHALTO

- David DeLaurent sold a commercial lot at 102 West Bethalto Drive to Boundless Real Estate Holdings, LLC. BARBERMURPHY represented the seller.

◆ CAHOKIA HEIGHTS

- Bethel Church sold 10.5 acres of land at 2616 Mousette Lane to River Bottom Land Trust 255-10. BARBERMURPHY represented both parties.

◆ COLLINSVILLE

- ICO Hartmann Realtors leased a 7,900-square-foot retail suite at 126 West Main St. to Willow & Grace Boutique, LLC. BARBERMUR-

PHY represented both parties.

- CCPO Properties, LLC leased 1,150-square-foot office/retail space at 850 Vandalia, Suite 120 to Alex Alvarado. Kunkel Commercial Group represented the landlord and tenant.

◆ DUPO

- IVA Properties, LLC sold a 5,198-square-foot, two-building complex located at 605 Railroad Ave. to Decker & Segura Management. BARBERMURPHY represented the seller.

◆ EDWARDSVILLE

- Retail Place, LLC leased 1,265-square-foot retail space at 1181 S State Route 157, Unit 1C to The Exercise Coach. Kunkel Commercial Group represented the tenant.

◆ FAIRVIEW HEIGHTS

- RETKO Group, LLC. leased 9,923-square-foot office space at 11

Executive Drive to Illinois Department of Public Health. BARBERMURPHY represented the landlord.

- 10314 Lincoln Trail, LLC leased a 180-square-foot office space at 10314 Lincoln Trail to Matthew F. Gornet. BARBERMURPHY represented both parties.

- 10314 Lincoln Trail, LLC leased a 180-square-foot office space at 10314 Lincoln Trail to Gartavia, LLC. BARBERMURPHY represented the lessee.

◆ MARYVILLE

- MPEC, LLC an Illinois limited liability company leased an 1,150-square-foot medical space at 2236 Vadalabene Drive, Suite 3 to Serene Renewal, LLC. Kunkel Commercial Group represented the tenant.

◆ O'FALLON

- YHT LLC, an Illinois limited liability company sold an 1,500-square-foot office building at 813 West Highway 50

to Golden Wolf Homes, LLC an Illinois limited liability company. Kunkel Commercial Group represented the purchaser.

- YHT LLC, an Illinois limited liability company sold an 1,500-square-foot retail building at 815 West Highway 50 to Golden Wolf Homes, LLC an Illinois limited liability company. Kunkel Commercial Group represented the purchaser.

◆ RED BUD

- George Obernagel III and James Fitzgibbons IV sold 17.58 acres along Old State Route 3 to Kenneth and Judith Ostendorf. BARBERMURPHY represented the sellers.

◆ SHILOH

- Derek Strunk sold a 20,400-square-foot commercial lot at 2301 Country Road to Midwest Solar Solutions, LLC.

- Kunkel Commercial Group represented the seller and purchaser.

Wisper Internet instrumental in connecting Afghanistan refugees

Imagine leaving everything you have ever known, with only the clothes on your back. Boarding a military plane for an unknown destination leaving behind family, friends and loved ones not knowing if they will live or die.

This was the case for 22 Afghan families who now call Missouri and the communities of Joplin and Carl Junction, home, with the assistance of the Raise Community.

In recent weeks, Wisper Internet, based in Mascoutah, has been instrumental in keeping those families connected to their families now under the grip of a totalitarian regime. Helping them learn English, find jobs, obtain driver's licenses and connecting the refugee children with education through fixed wireless internet.

During the frantic 17 days of airlifts from Kabul International Airport, last August, 123,000 Afghans were evacuated and 77,000 of those approved to come to the U.S. were originally taken to military bases before spreading to communities like Joplin all over the country.

Raise Community social worker and housing coordinator Tammy Nyachira explained the organization of volunteers based in Joplin originally signed up to accept and house 50 refugees coming from the Afghanistan evacuation, but that number quickly ballooned.

Nyachira explained the people now living in the Joplin and Carl Junction communities were lucky enough to be evacu-

ated because they or someone in their family unit had assisted the U.S. military in some way, shape or form over the last 20 years, but it wasn't without consequences.

"They were lucky to leave with just their basic paperwork and nothing but the clothes on their backs," Nyachira said. "They came with hardly anything. What they have now, they were given at the military bases in America. Some were living in basic camps on the bases and others, like in St. Louis, were in hotels in Indiana and Washington D.C."

For some of the refugees the consequences were even greater and Nyachira said each individual family still has various levels vulnerability and concerns for their safety here as well as the safety of their loved ones still under Taliban rule.

Many have had family members killed and one woman had both of her parents murdered. Another man and his family narrowly missed a suicide bomber who was able to approach Kabul International Airport's Abbey Gate, where he detonated an explosive device that killed 13 U.S. troops and about 170 Afghans.

"He had his family in that location for two days," Nyachira said. "For some rea-



son, he doesn't know why, he decided to try another spot and missed being killed in the blast by a matter of minutes. He told

me 'It could have been us.' The amount of trauma and loss these people have endured is unbelievable to think about."

Wisper helping

Unlike refugees in St. Louis and other areas, a goal of the Raise Community was to get their refugees into actual homes and duplexes as soon as possible.

Nyachira said this has helped the families feel more comfortable in their new country and promotes a sense of community while starting new lives from scratch.

As of April 1, Wisper has successfully connected 15 of those families with wireless broadband internet overcoming language barriers and challenges of not possessing identification like driver's licenses or Social Security cards. Future Wisper projects for other refugee families are also ongoing.

"We have a great appreciation for Wisper and how helpful they were in the process," Nyachira said. "I have worked with other utilities, and they seem to make things harder than they need to be.

Wisper did everything they could to ease the burden and get them hooked up."

Nyachira added working with Wisper and other groups during the refugee resettlement process has renewed her soul.

"To see people accommodating people who don't look like us or pray like us," Nyachira said. "It's been a hopeful experience."

Wisper founder and CEO Nathan Stooke said connecting communities is Wisper's sole aim. Employees are encouraged to do the right thing, even when it may be the more difficult option.

"These families have been through the unimaginable and will continue to have those scars," Stooke said. "If Wisper as a company and our employees can do anything to ease their struggle, it is an honor to provide an essential utility to start their new lives. A small gesture from us, means the world to others."

Upcoming projects for Wisper include a \$500,000 network upgrade to Fairmont City, Ill. In 2003, Fairmont City was one of the first communities Wisper fully equipped with fixed wireless internet and now, 19 years later it will be the one of the first to be retrofitted with new technology from the tower to customer's homes.

Wisper ISP, LLC is a wireless internet service provider with 200 employees and 20,000 subscribers across Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma.

Bill would require schools to offer vegan, vegetarian options upon request

By PETER HANCOCK
Capitol News Illinois

Public schools in Illinois may soon be serving a lot more vegan and vegetarian meals, thanks to a bill that cleared the General Assembly.

House Bill 4089 requires school districts to provide a plant-based lunch option that complies with federal nutritional requirements to any student who submits a prior request to the district asking for such an option.

Sen. David Koehler, D-Peoria, the lead Senate sponsor of the bill, said the proposal was meant to accommodate students with certain religious, cultural or health concerns.

But the bill drew some opposition from Republicans who called it an unfunded mandate on schools and argued that it



School cafeterias may soon have to offer plant-based meal options for students who ask for them under a bill that will soon head to Gov. JB Pritzker's desk. (Credit: Morguefile.com)

could lead to even more dietary mandates.

Sen. Jason Barickman, R-Bloomington, said schools already have the authority to offer plant-based food options because

there is nothing in state law prohibiting it.

"And so if we're going to embrace the notion of local control in allowing our local units of government to make their own decisions, here lies an example of where we can put that to work," he said.

Sen. Jil Tracy, R-Quincy, pointed out that the Senate Education Committee held a hearing on Senate Bill 4147 that would require schools to offer halal food options. That's food deemed permissible under Islamic law.

"It makes you ponder, could you then have a Jewish kosher school required option, or one that is specific to any religious following," she said. "So it seemed to us, the Republicans in the Education Committee, that perhaps a task force to study this and how much it costs for a school district to do this, how much of a need there is, should be explored."

But Sen. Mattie Hunter, D-Chicago, argued that plant-based diets are generally healthier for people and that passage of the bill could help promote healthier lifestyles.

"It doesn't matter what ethnic group, what your religious background is. The fact of the matter is, it's simply healthy eating," she said.

Koehler said the impact of the bill might be minimal because there may be some districts in which no students ask for plant-based option. He also said there is little difference in the cost of plant-based foods compared to meat-based meals.

The bill previously passed the House on March 4, 96-7. It passed the Senate on March 29, 42-10, and next will be sent to Gov. JB Pritzker for his consideration.

If signed, the measure would go into effect on Aug. 1, 2023.