

City of Tuscola approves First Friday Farmer's Market

By Dominik Stallings

The Tuscola City Council approved a First Friday Farmer's Market on a vacant lot at 128 W. Sale from May to October. Jessica Suding, owner of Rainbows and Sunshine Boutique, will host the monthly event and plans to have live music and activities for kids.

The Council approved the transfer of the State's tax bonding allocation. The allocation of \$560,000 will be transferred Eastern Illinois Economic Development Authority in order for the money to be used in the region. Tuscola has been a "home-rule" community since 2003 but has never used the allocation since. The allocation can provide tax-exempt financing for economic developments such as commercial or industrial projects in Tuscola's jurisdiction. However, projects unusu-



CAPTAIN KEVIN ENDRES received a Tuscola Fire Department service award for 35 years of service. On his left stands Chief Brian Moody. Lieutenant Dr. Bill Hemmer received an award for 25 years of service to the Tuscola Fire Department. On his left stands Mayor Daniel Kleiss. Submitted photo.

ally combine the allocations from several jurisdictions and are usually many times larger than Tuscola's allocation.

The Council approved the consent agenda, which included the payment for Clark Dietz for the Downtown Improvements engineering costs of \$13,623, which included surveying and preliminary design for the two alleys east of Main Street.

It also included the payment request for the Donohue Master Meter Station Engineering for the designing and the loan application for the Meadowview Water Main replacement and the Master Meter Station Replacement.

The Council approved declaring the 1969 Squrt fire truck as surplus. Fire Chief Brian Moody said the vehicle is no longer serviceable and beyond practical repair. There also is

no longer any room to store it with the new fire truck purchased recently. Chief Moody secured an offer from a collector in New Jersey for \$1,000.

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The Council also approved a street closure for the Kiwanis Egg Hunt on April 1.

Angie Gordon, the billing clerk for the city, gave notice that she intends to retire on June 16. The city has begun soliciting and reviewing applications. Some applicants have already been interviewed. A new candidate should be recommended next month and start work in mid-April.

VG BOE

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Based on the proposed package by Omni Performance Contracting Group, roof repair wasn't in the budget for another few years. So, the solar panels would need to be removed and replaced during roof repair.

School Board President Jim Clark suggested that the new addition roof be used instead.

QFB Energy noted this area isn't as large, but they would look into utilizing the new space for roof models instead. They also determined that they could try and utilize more ground arrays, as well. Once roof repairs are completed, new arrays can be added at a future time, as well. QFB will return at a later meeting with

an updated proposal. Overall, the Board is interested in implementing solar energy.

With the implementation of solar energy, the district can get a tax credit. Upfront, the district will pay nothing to implement the solar arrays. After year 17, the solar energy will become profitable. The arrays are warranted for 25 years, but have a life span of 30 years.

The time frame for the beginning of panel implementation from contract signature is six months.

Omni Performance Contracting Group also addressed the board. They have been working with the building and grounds committee and have started the implementation of proposed improvements.

At the current time, roof

renovation cannot be funded. To repair the section of the roof that is being looked at, costs would be over \$800,000. This exceeds current funding, so the roof will not be renovated at this time. It still has a few years left at its current state.

The repairs that will take first priority are window and door maintenance. These can be done with a matching maintenance grant. So, the school will allocate funds and grant funds will be matched.

The proposed package for the near future includes the replacement of high school facade windows, asbestos abatement of select window caulking and project management for the abatement, replacement of gym panels, caulking and maintenance of band room windows, repair

of panel and windows for section 209, and locking mechanism maintenance on four high school doors. Total cost for all of these repairs comes to \$658,460.

Some alternate projects include elementary bathroom renovation and southern exposure repair.

Principal Jones noted that the south side leaking issue was not addressed in this package. Omni noted that the issue can be looked at but would need to be estimated based on further exploration of the area.

The Board agreed to move forward with the window and door package proposed by Omni and investigate issues regarding leaking.

The Board then approved the Seniority Roster for 2023-2024. They also approved the

proposed 2023-2024 School Calendar. The new calendar will bring back a week-long spring break, but the first 3 days are emergency days. Winter break will also go through the 5th of January.

For the Superintendent's report, Dr. Munson addressed the Workers Comp rating. The district is at a 0.79, anything below 1 being a good rating. Superintendent Munson also reported that the School Maintenance Project Grant was funded.

Principal Beck congratulated students on attending the Douglas County Spelling Bee with one of the students placing second place. The 100th day of school took place on January 27 and MAPS testing was completed. Roller skating was implemented in PE class with PTO assisting in the costs

of roller skates. Kindergarten registration will take place on March 7 from 6-7:30 p.m. in the school cafeteria. Upcoming dates include March 2 for Reading Night, March 8 for SOAR Night, and March 16 for Parent Teacher Conferences.

Principal Jones congratulated both Jr. High and High School Dance teams for bringing home 2nd place in High School Hip Hop and 2nd place Junior High Pom. Jones also congratulated the 7th grade boys basketball team for winning Regionals and 7th grade girls basketball winning J Hawk Tournament. The ACES team will advance to sectionals. Prom will take place on May 13th.

The next meeting will take place on March 20, 2023.

Schools

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tion, which is not known.

The boards were approved unanimously with Jarrod Baird and Jessi Young absent.

The scoreboard discussion began after an old board for the football field blew over in a windstorm more than a year ago. That board was sent to Bryant Industries of Tuscola for recycling, Alexander said. The school's insurance carrier paid the district a little more than \$15,000 on the damage claim.

Alexander thanked Wilcox and Baird for their efforts in raising the funds for the scoreboards. Board member Darold Spillman added kudos at the end of the meeting.

Wilcox said about all of the money raised comes from within the community from businesses wanting to "give

back" to the town.

He added that he would like to involve students in a marketing class to go with him to businesses to "show them how to do this."

He said, "People are going to want to come here and watch their teams play us" because of the boards. He said the outdoor board will be one of the largest in the state.

In other business, the Board held a special meeting Tuesday, Feb. 21, to approve an agreement with Equistar Chemicals LP for property valuation on land where the shuttered Lyondellbasell plant (formerly USI) sits. The company sought to have the validation lowered to reduce its tax burden.

The school district agreed to a five-year validation as follows: 2019, \$8.2 million; 2020, \$7.2 million; 2021, \$6.2 million; 2022, \$2 million; and 2023, \$1.25 million.

In other business Monday, Alexander reported that bills for the month totalled \$3.2 million, but \$2.1 million of that was for capital improvements. Sales tax revenue remains strong and was up \$13,429 from a year ago. He credited Love's Travel Center for the increase.

He also reported that the states transportation reimbursement is down this year to 79.5% after running nearly 100% last year. He said the difference is due to schools statewide using less bus service due to the pandemic, so there was more money available for distribution. With school services back to normal, he said he expects the state reimbursement to fall to 75% next year.

Also Monday, the Board heard a presentation from Jeremy Rodenaugh, technology director, about upgrading the district's website.

Alexander said the current

system is difficult to use and that he asked Rodenaugh to look into alternatives.

Rodenaugh recommended a new system that is based on an easy-to-use app that could automatically send posts to Twitter and Facebook and other social media as well as create text and voice alerts. He said more than half of the schools in the region use the app-based system. It would eliminate the need for the district's current phone alert system, which costs the school \$1,750 a year.

The recommended system isn't cheap, he noted. There would be an initial \$11,000 setup fee plus a \$9,200 annual fee. The first year would incur both charges. He said he may be able to negotiate a cheaper price.

He noted that the district's current website is hosted on-site with a district server. He recommended that it be hosted off-site. Doing so would not eliminate the need for the district's own server, though, as other files are also kept on it.

Board member Chris Renels asked if the recommended system requires a multi-year contract. Rodenaugh said it would auto-renew with a maximum 3% annual increase unless the district gave notice to end the service.

The Board approved two memorandums of understanding (MOU) with the teachers' union. Was for insurance.

When the district changed health insurance carriers, the district's costs went way down but the deductible went way up - from \$600 to \$2,500.

To offset the increase for personnel, the district eliminated the \$84 per month employee contribution and agreed to pay up to \$891.96 annually with options to have the amount applied toward dependent care premiums, a cash reimbursement or a deposit into a health savings account. The MOU expires at the end of the calendar year.

The second MOU was regarding a new dean of students position. Justin Bozarth, currently guidance counselor and head boys basketball coach, was named to the new position. He is working toward an administration certification and will become high school principal when his degree is earned.

Other hires Monday were Lacy Meyer, paraprofessional, and Michael Resendiz as high school math teacher. Angie Gough was moved to secretary at East Prairie Middle School.

Three retirements were approved. Jerri Quinn, bookkeeper, will retire on Dec. 31. Suzanne Rominger set her retirement for the end of the 2025-26 school year, and Pam Hemingway will retire at the end of this school year.

Donations accepted were \$2,000 from Arthur MCC Thrift Shop Network for Help

a Child, \$327.50 from Tuscola Kiwanis for Help a Child, and \$250 from Brad and Tammy Bennett for Science Olympiad.

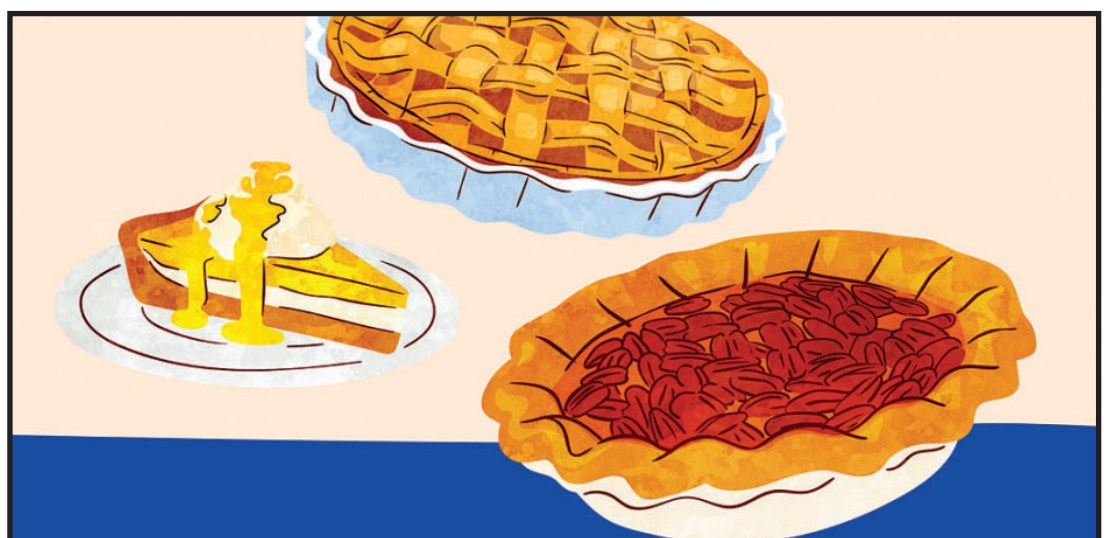
During principal reports, East Prairie Principal Jared Vanausdoll recognized students who placed in the countywide spelling bee. Lydia Koch received third place. Will Petry came in 7th, and Frances Burlew was 10th. Beau Whitson was an alternate.

Students of the month were Peyton Hershberger, fifth grade, Alydia Long, sixth grade, Braxton Cruzan, seventh grade, and Connor Musgrave, eighth grade.

He also thanked the student council for paying for upgrades to the sound system in the gym and said that the Key Club, Builders Club and K-Kids are working together to establish a free library at the Douglas County Health Department. They are taking book donations at all three schools.

North Ward Principal Jason Wallace said that Feb. 28 is Rare Disease Day and students and staff are encouraged to wear green in support of a student with a rare disease, or another color for any other rare disease they wish to highlight.

Due to one snow day being used, the May schedule was modified, but Spring Break remains April 3-10. With the change, graduation day for the high school was set for May 27. Promotion day for East Prairie is May 25.



THE TUSCOLA FFA ALUMNI ANNUAL

PIE AUCTION & CHILI SUPPER

SATURDAY, MARCH 11TH

DINNER AT 5:30 PM

AUCTION AT 7:00 PM

TUSCOLA COMMUNITY BUILDING

PIE IN THE FACE CONTEST

ALL PROCEEDS BENEFIT THE TUSCOLA FFA CHAPTER & COMMUNITY

Grease

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Some of the themes of that time period are as relevant as ever today. Grant Kauffman, a student actor, said that peer pressure is still something kids deal with today. However, to him, the fight scenes and the obsession with muscle cars aren't very relatable nowadays.

Steffens said that the musical is similar to the movie and that they toned down some of the more adult themes for the show to make it more appropriate for families.

Kauffman is playing one of the lead roles, Kenickie, a leader of the "Burger Palace Boys" or the "T-Birds" if you've seen the movie. Danny, played by Brady Urban, is the other leader of the group. "We are like best friends,

but both trying to be the alpha male of the group. Kenickie is the rebellious one who gets held back a lot," said Kauffman.

So far, the musical is coming along nicely, according to Kauffman. He noted that they are incorporating some of the iconic dances from the original musical, but adding in their own flair.

"I'm very excited about it. We have a lot of people who fit their roles very well. By the time the show comes around, we'll have perfected it to a tee," said Kauffman. "There's this feeling that we're ready to go and do the best that we can,"

The musical is getting extra help from Jeri Cardiff, a new music teacher at the school.

The cast consists of Reggan Smith as Sandy, Aly Brucker as Rizzo, Elle Jones as Frenchy, Raeanna Boyer as Jan,

Gracie Johnson/ Liriel Jones as Marty, Brady Urban as Danny, Grant Kauffman as Kenickie, Chase Nixon as Doody, Thomas Spillman as Roger, Karson Jeffers as Sonny, Lanie Yantis as Patty Simcox, Andrew Spillman as Eugene Florczyk, Elizabeth Lee/ Olivia Wallace as Miss Lynch, Cameron Mills as Vince Fontaine, Liam Jones as Johnny Casino, Lidia Manzella as Cha-Cha Digregorio, Mike Rosenbaum and Jared Vanausdoll as the Teen Angels. The ensemble consists of Chris Boyd, Brady Cain, Mikayla Dunn, Tristan Gadomski, Mackenzie Herschberger, Gracie Johnson, Liriel Jones, Hannah Kidwell, Elizabeth Lee, Lidia Mazella, Brogan Rennert, Trey Waldrop and Olivia Wallace. Katie Gibson is assisting as the stage manager for the musical.