



Reduced Staff At Fieldcrest To Save The District Some \$660,000

by MJ Langner

After months of discussing reducing costs for the district, the Fieldcrest Board of Education has voted to reduce staff at their meeting held on March 25th. The board began making some of these decisions of reducing costs in January when they cut out the daycare program serving children of staff in the district. The ultimate goal of the cuts was to reduce costs by between \$600,000 and \$700,000 for the 2026-2027 budget. The honorable dismissals of the certified and non-certified staff made at this month's meeting will achieve that goal reducing costs by approximately \$660,000.

Superintendent David Johnson outlined the plan at February's meeting, providing a list of positions that would be eliminated. These included Curriculum Director, one Primary School 1st Grade Teacher, Daycare Director, Daycare Teacher, Two Daycare Assistants, Part-Time Custodian, High School Reading Interventionist, High School Math Interventionist, Middle School Interventionist and 7th Assignment and Six Teaching Assistants (from various buildings). The curriculum director position is being reduced following the upcoming retirement of Cindi Koudelka. The district has opted not to replace Koudelka.

At this meeting, the list was finalized and approved by board members. The list included Emma Thompson 1st Grade Teacher at Fieldcrest Primary School, Jodi Gochanour Fieldcrest Day Care Director, Amber Kleppin Fieldcrest Day Care Teacher, Mackenzie Meyer Fieldcrest Day Care Assistant, Kylie Perry Fieldcrest Day Care Assistant, Mason Ewing High School Teaching Assistant, Shelby Halley High School Teaching Assistant, Casi McKay Primary School Teaching Assistant, Jena Thacker High School Teaching Assistant, and Brent Weiland High School Teaching Assistant.

The dismissals will take effect May 20, 2026, except for the day care staff which will be effective May 22nd.

The board also approved annual reduction in force for extra

duty certified and non-certified, overload/dual credit and reduction in time for non certified and dismissal of non-staff caused by changes in the school's needs. This is routine action for the district as the summer break arrives and planning for the next school year begins.

In other business, the board approved resignations from several staff members, including Nathan Furar - High School - Math Teacher, Haley Hartzler - Intermediate School - Reading Interventionist, Daniel Thomas - High School - Math Interventionist, Brianna Schmitt - Intermediate School - 5th Grade Teacher, and Austin Schroeder - High School - Teaching Assistant.

The board also approved the senior trip to Great America and a Cubs/Sox game. A donation from the Toluca Rotary of \$1,490.38 was also approved. The Intermediate School has used this money to repair a laminating machine, purchase a tv and mount, and

City Of Toluca Curbside Clean Up Day To Be Held On Saturday, April 25th

City of Toluca Curbside Clean-up on Saturday, April 25, 2026. Get rid of old furniture, mattresses, and stuff you can't fit in a garbage cart. Items must be at the curb by 6:00 a.m.

Clean Up Guidelines: GFL can NOT take the following items: Tires, Paint, Batteries, Appliances (white goods), Yard Waste, Hazardous Material (oil, gas, solvents), E-Waste (computers, TV's, electronics)

For curbside cleanup: 1) Volume limited to approximately 5 cubic yards of material 2) Construction debris must be bundled, be less than 5 feet in length, and weigh less than 50 pounds per bundle 3) Wrap old mattresses in plastic to protect driver 4) No concrete.

NOTE: Tire disposal will be \$5.00 for regular tires and \$10.00 for light duty truck tires. NO tractor tires will be accepted. For tire disposal contact the City of Toluca at 815-452-2406.

Rideshare Driver Unionization, Human Composting Bills Among 264 To Advance

by Jenna Schweikert, Nikoel Hytrek and 2 others

The Illinois House passed 264 bills out of committee this week ahead of Friday's deadline, kicking the legislative session into high gear with two months to go before adjournment.

The legislation included a bill allowing rideshare unionization and human composting, regulating prison mail and setting standards for determining a juvenile's fitness for trial.

While the committee passage of bills marks early progress, most bill sponsors said they're still working on amendments before their measures head to the full chambers for a vote. All bills will need approval from the House, Senate and governor to become law.

View our other committee coverage for the week:

Rideshare unionization

Rideshare drivers would be able right to unionize under House Bill 4743, sponsored by Rep. Yolonda Morris, D-Chicago. It passed the House Executive Committee with a partisan vote of 8-4.

"This is really life-changing legislation for these workers. ... It sets a standard for the entire industry," said Genie Kastrup, Service Employees International Union Local 1 president. "It creates a framework for workers to be able to join the union. It also gives drivers the power to select who that union is."

But Morris said she's working on a compromise amendment to the bill. The Illinois Labor Relations Board and Illinois Department of Labor had concerns about provisions involving a charge on rides that would go towards grants for union members.

An identical version in the Senate had a subject matter hearing on March 10 but was not voted out of committee before the Senate deadline.

Composting as burial option

The House Energy and Environment Committee on Tuesday passed a bill to allow composting of human remains as a burial option.

The Natural Organic Reduction Regulation Act, introduced by Rep. Mary Beth Canty, D-Arling-

ton Heights, would grant cemeteries, crematories and other funeral service providers permission to operate facilities and equipment to compost human remains. It also establishes rules around the practice.

"What we are trying to do is give the people of Illinois the freedom to have the burial they choose, the funeral that they choose," Canty said. "We find that deeply respectful."

Canty committed to hold the bill and return to the committee with a "substantive amendment" to address concerns about regulation and liability. Some Democratic committee members hung their support for the bill on the promise it would be amended.

The bill passed the House in the previous General Assembly with three Republicans joining 60 Democrats in support, but it was not taken up in the Senate.

David Goebel of the Illinois Cemetery & Funeral Home Association spoke against the bill, highlighting philosophical concerns and impracticalities like how long it takes to compost a human body, whether that time would cause a backlog, and how to transport the resulting soil.

"Our association members uniformly feel this process lacks the dignity traditionally afforded to the dead," he said, though he acknowledged other people have different opinions.

The bill passed the committee 18-9, on partisan basis.

Prison Mail

House Bill 4235 would prohibit the Department of Corrections from charging inmates and their correspondents more than the U.S. Postal Service rate for mail and mail scanning services. It passed a House judiciary committee unanimously.

The bill's approval comes months after a separate legislative committee allowed new rules permitting the department to scan and digitize mail as it seeks to crackdown on drugs and other substances finding their way into state prisons. The rule makes some exceptions for photographs, books and legal mail.

But some lawmakers don't think that rule or the bill, sponsored by Rep. Rita Mayfield, D-Waukegan, will solve the contraband issue.

"We know that everywhere that they've done this, contraband is still coming into these facilities," Rep. Kelly Cassidy, D-Chicago, said. "This is not the answer. This is some company making money on the backs of the people that we are incarcerating."

In many circumstances, the

exact source of the contraband has been elusive, but physical mail has been largely blamed.

"The introduction of contraband into a facility can be multi-causal," Rep. Patrick Windhorst, R-Metropolis, said. "Just because you cut off one cause doesn't mean there aren't other causes. And just because the other causes occur doesn't mean that we start the one cause that we stopped."

School foods

House Bill 5507 would ban "ultraprocessed" foods in schools. The bill passed out of a public health committee on a partisan 6-2 vote.

Bill sponsor, Rep. Sonya Harper, D-Chicago, said she plans to bring an amendment to more clearly define "ultraprocessed foods" and move the implementation of the bill from the Department of Public Health to the Illinois State Board of Education.

"This bill does not make immediate changes, but it creates a multi-year timeline that includes rulemaking, reporting and training before any restrictions take effect," Harper said. "We all know that diet-related illness, obesity and other health issues are tied to

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Marshall Co. Audit Copies Available

The Marshall County audit has been completed. A copy is available on our website at <https://marshallcountyillinois.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/26-4.pdf>. It is also available on the Comptroller's website. <http://warehouse.illinoiscomptroller.com>. Type in Marshall County and click GO. A paper copy is available in the treasurer's office.

Antioch Christian Church To Hold Easter Services In Toluca

You are invited to join members and friends of the Antioch Christian Church in Toluca to commemorate the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

At 6:00 p.m. on Good Friday, April 3, we will remember His death for our sins. (John 19:17, 18) The Lord's Supper will be available for all believers.

At 8:00 a.m. on Easter Sunday, April 5, we will celebrate Christ's resurrection. (Matthew 28:6) A time of fellowship will follow.

Please join us at 700 North Main Street in Toluca.

Marshall County Court News

DISSOLUTION OF MARRIAGE

Leia A. Knapp (D) and Jason M. Knapp (P). 3/20/26 "Dissolution of marriage/union"

MARRIAGE LICENSE

Keil James Endress and Jalynn Clare Keedy

FINES LEVIED

Donald R. Jackson Jr. "Reckless conduct" 3/20/26 fine \$3,239. 12 Months supervision.

Katherine A. Dienert 1/19/26 by County Traffic "speeding 26-34 MPH over limit" 3/25/26 Charge amended/reduced "driving 15-20 mph above limit" fine \$850, 90 days supervision.

Spring A. Cohoon Flick 2/8/26 by County Traffic "speeding 26-34 MPH over limit" 3/25/26 Charge amended/reduced "driving 15-20 mph above limit" fine \$1,232, 90 days supervision.

Carlos Dobar 2/18/26 by Henry. "Junk and debris; Inoperable vehicle; Vacated/trial court; Inoperable motor vehicle; Inoperable motor vehicle; Inoperable motor

vehicle. 3/20/26 Guilty, fine \$900.

Stephanie A. Kerr-Ragains 3/3/26 by County Traffic "driving 15-20 mph above limit" 3/20/26 fine \$164.

Nicholas-Evan Clarin Cuizon 3/15/26 by County Traffic "driving 15-20 mph above limit" 3/20/26 fine \$164.

LAND TRANSFERS

Grantor: Esther Lentz. Grantee: Esther Lentz, Esther Sims. Subdivision Santa Fe the 1st Add block 39, Lot 1, Notes Ex W 82'. Block 39, Lot 2, Notes Ex W 82'. Block 39, Lot 3, Notes Ex W 82'. Block 39, Lot 4, Notes Ex W 82'. Quit Claim Deed.

Grantor: Randy G. Starnes. Grantee: Nathan Steele. Cottons 4th Add. Block 2, Lot 3. Warranty Deed.

Grantor: Stringtown BBQ Inc. Grantee: Matt Sinn, Megan Sinn. Section 36, Township 29N, Range 2W, Govt Lot --SW, Notes Pt. Lot 3, Washburn Industrial Park Sub. Section 36, 29N, 2W, --SE, Pt. Lot 3, Washburn Industrial Park Sub.

Warranty Deed.

Grantor: Amber K. Hankins, Brent Hankins. Grantee: Connie Sue Bullen, Holmes & Heacocks Add, Lot 124, Notes + Pt. Alley. Lot 135, Notes SE 40', + Pt. Alley. Lot 136, Notes SE40' + Pt. Alley. Warranty Deed.

Grantor: Kaitlyn Asher. Zachary Ryan Asher. Grantee: Hunter Ozga LLC. Lacon (Original Town) Lot 6, Notes Ex E50'. Lot 7, Notes Ex E50'. Warranty Deed.

Grantor: Dirk Murphy, Melissa L. Murphy. Grantee: Marcia V. Ginger, Troy J. Ginger. Section 14, Township 12N, Range 9E, Govt Lot --SW-SW, Pt. Subj to ease. Section 14, 12N, 9E, --SE-SW, Notes Pt., Subj to ease. Warranty Deed.

Grantor: Mark H. Leigh Co. Tr., William L. Leigh Co. Tr. Grantee: Leigh Family Farms LLC. Section 33, Township 29N, Range 1E, Govt Lot --SW, Notes Ex Pt. 1.041A. Section 32, 29N, 1E, --SW-NW, Notes E20A. Section 30, 29N, 1E, --NE, Notes S 1/2 of W 1/2. Section 14, 12N, 8E, (Continued On Page 4)

