



# SOUTHERN CHAMPAIGN COUNTY TODAY

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• 6 Pages

SERVING ALL OF SOUTHERN CHAMPAIGN COUNTY

## South County SPOTLIGHT

St. Patrick Catholic Charities - Tolono IL Free Food Pantry Every Monday from 5-6:30 & Friday 9-10:30 Located at the Parish - providing Fresh produce, meat and pantry items. Serving all of Champaign County.

The Giving Place is open every Wednesday from 4pm-6pm in Tolono to help families in need of food items

3rd Thursday of every month Tolono Fun Day Committee Meeting 6:30 @Police Station

1/19 Sidney American Legion Meeting at 6pm

2/2 Village of Sidney Board of Trustees Meeting at 7pm

2/7 Catholic Charities of Champaign and Piatt Counties is hosting a Bingo Night at the Elks Lodge in Savoy, doors open at 5pm

If you have an upcoming event that you would like to see featured in Spotlight email: [jamie@thecounty-chronicle.com](mailto:jamie@thecounty-chronicle.com)

## Village of Sidney Board of Trustees Discusses Property Issues

January 5 Village of Sidney Board of Trustees Meeting Coverage

By Ann Rhoton SCCTP News Correspondent

The Village of Sidney Board of Trustees met on Monday, January 5 in the Sidney Community Building meeting room at 7:00 p.m. Village of Sidney President John Finn brought the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. following the recitation of the pledge of allegiance by all in attendance and a roll call of trustees in attendance to include Trustees Leroy Schluter, Matt Laurent, Donna Hooker, Dan Gadeken, and Bret Harris. Trustee Tyler Bickers was not in attendance.

Village of Sidney President John Finn asked if there was any public comment.

Brett Franzen from The Goose & The Gander, LLC spoke about the possibility of downtown Sidney businesses having a street fair and was told that plans for that would need to be done under the Sidney Improvement Group.

Village of Sidney Board of Trustees trustee and Sidney Improvement Group President Donna Hooker asked Mr. Franzen if this was something that the businesses wanted to do on their own or if they wanted the Sidney Improvement Group to help them and he responded that they just wanted to know what they needed to do to have a street fair; i.e. what the rules are, etc. Mr Franzen will be going to one of the Sidney Improvement Groups' meetings.

Cindy Shepard, State Organizer in Illinois for Energy Builders was in attendance at the meeting to update the board concerning a possible

Sidney Community Benefits contribution from the BayWa r.e. solar farm east of Sidney solar farm developers and reported that BayWa r.e. was not ready to talk about specifics yet.

There were no additional comments from the public and President Finn moved on to ask trustees to look at the Monday, December 1 regular meeting minutes and to approve them if they so choose. A motion from Trustee Leroy Schluter seconded by Trustee Matt Laurent to approve the Monday, December 1 regular meeting minutes carried.

A public hearing publicized in newspaper notices and through letters sent to downtown Sidney property owners requesting special use permits was held within the meeting.

The properties originally zoned for business and not zoned for having people living in them (residential) was what was being discussed by the property owners, the general public, and the Village of Sidney Board of Trustees.

A representative of Sidney Fire and Rescue was in attendance and voiced concerns about making sure that the property owners have definite doors in and doors out of the properties, that they wanted to have everybody be safe, and went on to report that the buildings were designed for business and not residential use when they were built so they wanted to make sure that safety was being considered within the building plan designs.

The Village of Sidney President and trustees' position was that the businesses ask-

ing for special use permits needed to have smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, lights in the front and in the back of the building, in and out front and back door entrances, and other needed items to be in code.

Also noted by the board was that any granted special use permits would only be in force for the current property owner and that special use permits would have to be revisited by the Village of Sidney Board of Trustees and new property owners in the event properties are sold.

Mark Catron, in attendance at the meeting as a representative of the Sidney Masonic Lodge, requested that the Village of Sidney send out a letter with information in it of all of the items that the Village of Sidney wants the property owners to have to be in compliance of special use permits.

A motion from Trustee Bret Harris seconded by Trustee Matt Laurent to approve the finding and decision as presented with discussed changes allowing for a special use permit for the property owner of 212 South David Street carried.

A motion from Trustee Bret Harris seconded by Trustee Matt Laurent to approve the finding and decision as presented with discussed changes allowing for a special use permit for the property owner of 214 South David Street carried.

A motion from Trustee Bret Harris seconded by Trustee Matt Laurent to approve the finding and decision as presented with discussed changes allowing for a special



use permit for the property owner of 216 South David Street carried.

A lengthy discussion concerning the 220 South David Street property took place. It was noted that issues at the property were bad enough that they are life-saving issues and that the property was dilapidated to the point that the Village of Sidney could not support a special use permit.

A motion from Trustee Bret Harris seconded by Trustee Matt Laurent to approve the finding and decision as presented with the incorporation of changes as discussed which denies a special use permit at 220 South David Street carried.

Village of Sidney President John Finn began his comments by leading a discussion to approve changes to Section 6.5: Overtime Compensation of the Employee Policy Handbook. A motion from Trustee Bret Harris seconded by Trustee Matt Laurent stating that anything over regular hours should be time and a half carried.

A lengthy discussion under

President Finn's comments concerning changes to Section 6.7: After-duty Emergency Call Out/Village Board Meetings took place. No action was taken.

Discussion to approve retro-active pay for maintenance staff for the 11/24/2025 - 12/07/2025 pay period took place under President Finn's comments. No action was taken.

A discussion amongst trustees on whether or not to keep the village time clock took place under President Finn's comments and they decided to continue using the village time clock.

Village of Sidney Attorney Marc Miller had nothing to report.

Village of Sidney Maintenance Supervisor Dustin Butts reported that Kevin Dodd will be digging drainage tile on Byron Street starting tomorrow (Tuesday, January 6).

Trustee Matt Laurent expressed his desire to have sidewalk snow removal done on Main Street **Cont. pg. 2**

## Community Opinions Matter: Tolono Board TIF Funding

By Diane Ducey Staff Writer

After catching the Village of Tolono meetings online, I caught up with an active citizen who spoke out during the public input, to provide me with his presentation:

Here is a copy of my speech with the date it was given at the board meeting. I also gave a copy to each board member so they could see the chart, rather than read a list of numbers because we all would have been bored by line 2.

I lived in Tolono from 2009 to about 2012, moved to Philo for a bit, and then I moved

back to Tolono in 2021. So, the Unity area has always been home for my adult life.

I was actually approached by other members of the community to talk about the TIF, because before now I hadn't really paid that much attention to our board meeting.

I looked into it a little, had a general understanding of what it was, and actually thought to myself that this sounds illegal. (Diverting tax dollars,)

On December 16th the Village held a special TIF meeting before their board meeting. I wasn't able to attend in person,

but I watched and listened via Zoom.

I have volunteered my time with the schools over the years and have spent a lot of time with the Park District. I am not on the Park board, but I am actively involved in their softball and baseball programs. So, I get a lot of questions about the parks and why things aren't fixed or why something hasn't been replaced etc. and the answer is simple.

They don't have the money. When I listened to Bree Ocasio speak at the TIF meeting about the parks projected loss, suddenly it all made

sense. They are not receiving the funding they should be because it is being diverted into the TIF fund.

From there, I began getting really invested. Bree asked that the village get a 5th grade level education on TIFS, so I decided to start posting to our community page, The Tolono Wire.

What was started as just informative posts, quickly turned into me being opposed to the idea of TIF 2. The more I looked into the information, the more I disliked what I saw. Diverting tax dollars away from the school, parks, fire

department, and library in exchange for what seems like a lot of empty promises.

Those in favor of the TIFs say it's an opportunity for growth and development and fixing the parts of town that are older and in need of repair.

What I saw in the village's own reports was a lot of lines with \$0. Now I am hoping that I can get the Village Board Members to take a hard look at locking our village into another 23-year agreement, when so little was done with the first one.

Casey Wilson

## Lawsuit puts Illinois on Offensive Against 'Menacing' Immigration Raids

Illinois and Chicago sued the Trump administration Monday, seeking to severely limit immigration agents' authority in the state after accusing the feds of unleashing an "organized bombardment" to coerce state and local officials to change their immigration policies.

State and city leaders want to end the feds' "roving patrol" policy of interrogating people they encounter on the street about their citizenship and immigration status without any probable cause. They're also seeking to limit crowd control tactics such as using tear gas to disperse non-violent crowds and to prevent the feds from scanning the biometric information of state residents.

"Border Patrol agents and ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) officers have acted as occupiers rather than officers of the law," Illinois Attorney General

Kwame Raoul said in a statement. "They randomly, and often violently, question residents. Without warrants or probable cause, they brutally detain citizens and non-citizens alike. They use tear gas and other chemical weapons against bystanders, injuring dozens, including children, the elderly and local police officers."

Raoul, along with the city of Chicago, filed the 103-page lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois. It accused the federal government of applying pressure over policy differences through means such as withholding federal funds, attempting to deploy the National Guard and, most disruptively, executing an immigration enforcement operation described by state officials as "causing turmoil and imposing a climate of fear." It also seeks to prevent

immigration enforcement at "sensitive locations" without "appropriate reasoning," including courthouses, schools, social service organizations and medical facilities. And it seeks to bar immigration agents from "trespassing" on private property to make arrests, in violation of the 4th Amendment. The suit argues immigration agents only have the authority to do so within 25 miles of a U.S. Border to prevent illegal entry to the country.

The state is asking the court to find that the federal government's "menacing, violent, and unlawful incursion" violates the 10th Amendment, and to order federal agents to stop using tactics that exceed their statutory authority.

"Unlawful tactics, unnecessary escalations"

Gov. JB Pritzker released a statement in support of the lawsuit, writing that "in the face of the Trump Administra-

tion's cruelty and intimidation, Illinois is standing up against the attacks on our people."

"Today, Illinois is once again taking Donald Trump to court to hold his administration accountable for their unlawful tactics, unnecessary escalations, and flagrant abuses of power," Pritzker said.

The lawsuit names, among others, Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, Immigration and Customs Enforcement Director Todd Lyons, and Border Patrol Commander Gregory Bovino — the public face of DHS' Operation Midway Blitz immigration enforcement campaign — as defendants.

Much of the lawsuit pulls from claims brought in an earlier suit by media organizations and protestors who challenged the feds' use-of-force tactics. The plaintiffs motioned for the case to be

reassigned to the same judge in that challenge, U.S. District Judge Sara Ellis, according to reporting by the Chicago Tribune and Sun-Times. Previously, she issued an injunction against use of force in that case, but the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals later stayed it.

Read more: 7th Circuit stays judge's order restricting immigration agents' use of riot control weapons | Judge hesitant to grant dismissal of lawsuit over immigration agents' use-of-force tactics in Chicago

DHS spokeswoman Tricia McLaughlin told Capitol News Illinois in a statement the latest suit was "baseless."

"The fact is that sanctuary politicians in Illinois and Chicago released violent criminals including murderers, rapists, drug dealers, pedophiles, gang members, and terrorists, onto its streets and their dereliction of duty cost lives—just ask Katie Abra-

ham's father," McLaughlin said, referring to a 20-year-old Glenview woman who was killed in a hit-and-run crash last year allegedly by a Guatemalan in the country without legal authorization. "This is a baseless lawsuit, and we look forward to proving that in court."

Minnesota, along with the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, filed a similar lawsuit Monday seeking to block a surge of immigration enforcement in that state. It comes less than a week after an ICE agent shot 37-year-old American citizen Renee Nicole Good at close range while she was apparently attempting to flee a traffic stop.

'Campaign of coercion'

The Illinois lawsuit claims that Midway Blitz is part of a "campaign of coercion" by the Trump administration attempting to force state and local governments, including Illinois and the city of Chicago. **Cont. pg. 4**