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Honoring the Fallen

BY MARK HOSKINS

The Altamont community gathered this past Monday to celebrate Memorial Day and honor those who have served our country and paid the ultimate sacrifice.

The annual parade stepped off at 10 a.m. and was followed by a service at Union Cemetery put on in conjunction between the Altamont VFW Post 7676 and the American Legion Post 512.

Pastor Marcus Manley led the gathered crowd in an opening prayer after a flag raising during which the ACHS band played the Star Spangled Banner.

Next, Bill Weaver, Pastor at Altamont First Baptist Church gave a speech regarding the sacrifices made by our military members. Weaver is a retired United State Air Force Colonel who served from 1986 - 2012.

In describing the valor with which our military members serve, Weaver stated, "Their oath was fulfilled by their selfless action in securing freedom for whoever their war was meant to protect."

Weaver discussed a friend



Members of Legion Post 512 raise the flag.

of his who died while serving our nation. Major Ray 'Big Dog' Estelle lost his life by a terrorist attack from an Afghan lieutenant colonel who went rogue while working with our military. Major Estelle left behind a wife and two young children.

"He would never say his death was in vein. His warrior spirit knew why

he served and for whom he served."

Weaver stressed the importance of remembering the fallen, but also to honor them by spreading grace and God's love. "We remember the sacrifices of those by giving to others."

A ceremonial wreath was laid followed by a 21 gun salute and the playing of taps.



Guest Speaker retired Air Force Colonel Bill Weaver

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Monday, June 1

9-11 a.m. - Sip, Chat & Relax! at Fayette County Senior Citizen Center. Free coffee, cocoa, and tea.

10-11 a.m. - St. Elmo food pantry at 512 North Main, St. Elmo

5:30-6:30 p.m. - St. Elmo food pantry at 512 North Main, St. Elmo

Tuesday, June 2

1-3 p.m. - Food pantry at First United Methodist Church at 308 N. Second St., Altamont

Friday, June 5

1-10 p.m. - Kickoff to Summer Jamboree at Vandalia Swimming Pool. Live music, food trucks, raffles, and giveaways

Monday, June 8

9-11 a.m. - Sip, Chat & Relax! at Fayette County Senior Citizen Center. Free coffee, cocoa, and tea.

10-11 a.m. - St. Elmo food pantry at 512 North Main, St. Elmo

5:30-6:30 p.m. - St. Elmo food pantry at 512 North Main, St. Elmo

6 p.m. - Altamont City Council meeting at municipal building

7 p.m. - Altamont School Board meeting in district board room at the high school

Tuesday, June 9

Noon-2 p.m. - Card Sharks at Fayette County Senior Citizen Center

1-3 p.m. - Food pantry at First United Methodist Church at 308 N. Second St., Altamont

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St Elmo BOE Approves FY26 Tentative Amended Budget

BY MARK HOSKINS

The St. Elmo Community Unit School District #202 Board of Education met on Monday, May 18 for their regularly scheduled meeting. Among several items of new business, the board discussed and approved the district's fiscal year 2026 tentative amended budget.

Superintendent Travis Portz reported that the district is in good position financially with 9 of the district's 11 funds operating with a positive differential in revenue and expenditure. The only fund that is negative by a significant amount is fire, prevention, safety which is -\$746,335. Portz explained that is due to payments for the district's window project coming out of this fund.

But overall the district is operating with \$6,207,155 in revenues and \$6,139,709 in

expenses. Portz explained that the positive difference of \$67,446 would actually be \$813,780 without the window project.

The district's total fund balance is \$9,445,212 with an operating budget of \$7,659,443. These numbers were as of May 18, so it is possible they can change slightly before the end of the fiscal year, June 30, 2026. The school district will hold their budget hearing on June 29 at 7:15 p.m.

In other new business, the board approved a new 12 month contract for electricity with Direct Energy. The district is locked in at a rate of 9 cents per kilowatt. This is up from the eight cents the district is currently paying at Homefield Energy.

Portz reminded the board of how volatile energy pricing

can be. "If we wait until September when our contract is up, we almost surely will end up paying 11 cents or more at Ameren. Everyone will be going up in price this summer, so we are better to lock in now," said Portz.

Board member Jared Morrison suggested signing a 36 month contract to lock in the nine cent rate for the next three years. The board decided to go with the 12 month contract and see where prices are next year. The board of education approved the 2026/27 Coaches Handbook. Portz explained that there were no real changes to the handbook, other than dates. The handbook covers rules, handling of equipment, etc. for all sports.

The board approved the March 2026 edition of the Press Policies. The only significant

change involves FOIA requests. Portz explained that school districts may now require anyone submitting a FOIA request to prove there are a human to avoid any district from being inundated by AI or 'bot' requests.

A contract with Stacy Gibson was renewed for her services as a speech pathologist for the school district. Gibson's contact is renewed at \$67.25 per hour, which is a \$2 per hour increase from last year. "It is an increase, but it is still about \$10 an hour cheaper than what we would pay at telehealth, which is subpar service anyway. And Stacy does a fantastic job," said Portz.

The school board approved their own meeting schedule for the 2026/27 school year. The board will continue to meet on the third Monday of the month at 7:30

p.m. But the board decided to move their meeting earlier in the winter months as meetings will begin at 6:30 p.m. between the months of November and February.

A copier lease was renewed for four years with Watts Copy Systems, Inc. The current lease costs \$399 but the new four year lease will only cost \$380.23.

In personnel moves, the board accepted several resignations. They approved the resignation of Samantha Elliott, Jordyn Gour, and Kambelle Ashmore, all effective at the end of the 2025/26 school year. The board also accepted the resignation of Kendyl Schultz as an assistant 5th/6th grade basketball coach.

The next St. Elmo Board of Education meeting will be held on Monday, June 29 at 7:30 p.m.