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Vol. 104 • No. 88

LOCAL NEWS... LOCAL VIEWS

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 28, 2024

\$1.25

Water reclamation rate resolution passes Enterprise zone expansion approved at City Council meeting

BY JEFF HELFRICH
MANAGING EDITOR

ROCHELLE — At its meeting Monday, the Rochelle City Council unanimously approved a resolution establishing water reclamation rates for Rochelle Municipal Utilities that will take effect Aug. 1.

RMU's rate structure had not changed since Aug. 1, 2021. The city recently had a rate analysis conducted based on its expenses, revenues, outstanding debt and future infrastructure investments over the next five years. The rate study resulted in an average rate increase per year over the next five years of 2.86 percent for residential, two percent for industrial, and three percent for Creston/Hillcrest customers. The rate increase will run through 2028 and will "ensure continued investment" in the city wastewater system.

Since 2015, the city has made "significant" improvements to its water reclamation collection and treatment system including constructing or lining over five miles of sanitary sewer, hundreds of manholes and upgrad-



(PHOTO BY JEFF HELFRICH)

At its meeting Monday, the Rochelle City Council unanimously approved a resolution establishing water reclamation rates for Rochelle Municipal Utilities that will take effect Aug. 1.

ing approximately half of the wastewater treatment plant to meet future regulations. This May, phase two of upgrades at the wastewater treatment plant will begin, and that is a \$10.7 million project with \$3.5 million principal forgiveness on the loan.

"The goal is to keep the rates at a sustainable level to ensure water treatment is reliable," RMU Superintendent of Water/Water Reclamation Adam Lanning said. "We always

compare our rates to surrounding communities to make sure we're competitive. And the goal is to avoid artificially-low rates that will burden future generations when we'd see massive infrastructure needs and rate increases to pay for them."

The new rate structure also changed summer sewer saver rates to include April and May, but deleted October to cover when customers are filling pools. The city did not

previously have a policy on pool filling prior to the new rate structure.

Enterprise zone

The council unanimously approved an amendment to its Lee-Ogle Enterprise Zone membership ordinance that will see the LOEZ expanded, especially around Rochelle.

See CITY page 3



RFD sees another call record

BY JEFF HELFRICH
MANAGING EDITOR

ROCHELLE — The Rochelle Fire Department saw another record in total emergency call numbers in 2023. Firefighter/paramedics responded to 2,674 EMS calls and 455 fire calls for a total of 3,129.

In 2022, Rochelle Fire reached the 3,000-call mark for the first time in its history, going on 3,028 total calls including 2,613 ambulance calls and 415 fire calls. Both of those metrics increased from 2021, with 2,207 EMS calls and 316 fire calls seen that year. The department has seen calls rise for the past 20 years with the exception of one year, when it stopped doing transfers for Rochelle Community Hospital.

See FIRE page 2

Rochelle schools hold informational meeting on county schools facilities sales tax ballot item

Potential 1-percent sales tax: 'Ultimately this is a direct democracy question'

BY JEFF HELFRICH
MANAGING EDITOR

ROCHELLE — On Monday, Jason Harper, superintendent of both Rochelle school districts, made an informational presentation to the community on the county school facilities sales tax referendum item that will be appearing on the March 19 election ballot.

About a dozen people attended the meeting at Lincoln School. The presentation was given later that evening in Spanish as well. It covered the basics of the county school facilities sales tax, answers to frequently-asked questions, and a question and answer session was held.

A law passed in 2007 to allow for a county-wide sales tax in Illinois to benefit schools for expenses including facilities, security, mental health services and school resource officers. The sales tax must pass in a county by referendum during an election. That has not taken place in Ogle County, and the measure failed on the ballot locally



(PHOTO BY JEFF HELFRICH)

On Monday, Jason Harper, superintendent of both Rochelle school districts, made an informational presentation to the community on the county school facilities sales tax referendum item that will be appearing on the March 19 election ballot.

back in 2013. There are 57 counties in Illinois that have the county schools facilities sales tax.

The referendum would

have to pass on the ballot county-wide. The sales tax would be an increase of one percent. Ogle County currently has a seven per-

cent sales tax, and after the potential increase, it would be eight percent.

The additional sales tax would apply to items that

are already taxed, with the exception of vehicles and unprepared food.

See TAX page 11

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TODAY



AFC FFA students attend events

AFC FFA students recently attended the Section 2 FFA Proficiency Judging event and the Ground Zero Conference at WIU. Page 5

WEATHER

WEDNESDAY
HIGH LOW
40 21

THURSDAY
HIGH LOW
47 20

FRIDAY
HIGH LOW
54 33

SATURDAY
HIGH LOW
65 38

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OBITUARIES

• REBECCA 'BECKY' BARRY
• STEVIE LYNN DODILLET
• BRIAN JUDE JAEGER
• BARBARA A. DETIG
• ELAINE MAE (HACKMAN) JACOX

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INSERTS

• KIDS CREATE AN AD
• FARM & FLEET

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LOCAL NEWS

FIRE: Chief Sawlsville reflects on number of calls received in 2023

From page 1

“It’s not a huge spike, but we haven’t seen huge spikes,” RFD Chief Dave Sawlsville said. “It just creeps up every year. That’s what was monumental in 2022, as we broke the 3,000 mark. Which had never happened before. We were curious to see if it was going to be a spike and go back down or if it was just going to keep rising. I know people were wondering if this was a pandemic spike in recent years, but it’s not showing that. It’s the normal growth that it does every year. For a while, fire calls were on their way down, but they’re on their way up again too.”

Sawlsville said he’s unsure why fire calls rose last year, but said it could be due to people cooking at home more versus going out to eat. The number-one cause of residential fires is cooking. The RFD chief said EMS vs. fire calls usually are at about an 80-20 split proportionally.

As far as EMS calls rising, Sawlsville attributed that to less access to care for those that are ill in the community with immediate physician appointments being harder to schedule. Emergency room numbers have risen along with EMS call numbers, he said.

“I think it’s just a culture that’s developed,” Sawlsville said, “Back in the 1970s and 1980s, people had family doctors that were available to them 24 hours a day seven days a week. Now it’s tough to even get an appointment with your primary care provider in a short time frame. For urgent stuff like fevers and cuts, now it’s just the culture. They

show up in the emergency room. Some people aren’t comfortable driving or able to. If you don’t have access to primary healthcare, the ER becomes primary healthcare. It’s a nationwide trend that isn’t going to change anytime soon. I anticipate the numbers will continue to rise. There’s plenty of healthcare need, but not enough staffing. If you talk to police officers, firefighters or emergency room personnel, staffing is always the number-one challenge.”

RFD got some reinforcements this past year to deal with rising call numbers. The Rochelle City Council approved a new contract with the firefighters’ union to hire six more firefighter/paramedics by 2026, and three have been hired already. RFD’s staffing each shift has moved to five from four and will move from five to six when the additional three firefighter/paramedics are hired.

Along with higher call numbers and overlapping calls bringing about the expansion, fire departments locally and nationwide have seen shortages of paid on-call and volunteer firefighters in recent years, which RFD relies on to aid with overlapping calls and fires. Sawlsville said he feels more comfortable when seeing large call numbers since the staffing expansion.

“Our ability to get the second and third ambulances out the door kept us up at night,” Sawlsville said. “This year we went from four to five. Now we can get that second ambulance out on a very timely basis. Now when we get a fire call we have enough staffing



(PHOTO BY JEFF HELFRICH)

The Rochelle Fire Department saw another record in total emergency call numbers in 2023. Firefighter/paramedics responded to 2,674 EMS calls and 455 fire calls for a total of 3,129.

to take the fire engine and ambulance in case there’s an ambulance call during the fire. And it lends itself better to simultaneous ambulance calls and we can improve our response times. But sometimes we get three calls at the same time, so we still have to call out for help. But we’re in a much better place. It’s going well and I’m happy with it.”

Sawlsville said that before the most recent staffing expansion, RFD was “a little behind the curve” with addressing staffing to deal with larger call numbers. He believes the planned expansion to six and a dedicated group of paid on-call firefighter/paramedics will have the department “in good shape” for years to come.

RFD also has a partnership with the Ogle-Lee

Fire Protection District and its stations of Hillcrest, Flagg Center, Steward and Creston, which also helps to supplement its response. RFD automatically responds to calls in those town areas along with personnel from their local stations and the OLFPD provides automatic aid to RFD for larger incidents like fires.

“Our partnership with Ogle-Lee helps out greatly with dealing with larger call numbers,” Sawlsville said. “It recently showed itself again. We had an abandoned house fire in Creston. We weren’t real aggressive because it was abandoned, it was the middle of the night and cold. We still had three engines and all the staffing we could’ve hoped for. That partnership is unique. There aren’t very many

towns of 9,000 people that can get four engines at a structure fire in 10 minutes. And we’re on the same radio frequency and we train together.”

In the coming weeks, RFD will finish its dorm remodel that will provide more privacy for firefighters and the addition of two showers. The change was brought about by RFD having more female firefighters than it ever has and studies showing that showering after a fire is an important part of firefighters’ health after exposure to toxins in smoke that can be absorbed through the skin.

Sawlsville said he also expects the delivery of a new ambulance in 2024, which will replace one of the department’s ambulances that is a 2000 model and has seen issues with parts availability. In 2023,

RFD and the OLFPD cut the ribbon on their new fire training facility, which has saved time with training.

Increased staffing has allowed RFD to rotate its crews to prevent burnout.

“Everybody doesn’t have to go on every single call,” Sawlsville said. “And it allows folks to get back to what they were hired for. When staffing is tight, you have to wear a lot of hats and ask people to do things they weren’t necessarily hired for. And they stepped up. We’ve been very successful at getting grants. Our grant writer had to be a frontline firefighter. And he was happy to do it. With increased staffing, we can have frontline firefighters get back to doing frontline firefighter work and the things they were hired for and came here to do. That’s been a big relief too.”

Our 2024 event was a tremendous success and we raised \$90000 - allowing us to give \$11,250 to each of the 8 groups!!

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HOPE, Focus House, Hub City
Senior Center,
Pegasus Special Riders,
Rochelle Area Community Foundation,
Shining Star & C.A.S.A.*

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• City of Rochelle
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• KSB Hospital
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• Little Hubs Learning Center
• Lizzie's Oodles of Noodles
• Maintain Your Smile
• Martin and Company
• Maun Nah Tee See Country Club
• Merlin's Greenhouse and Flowers
• Mike Rogers
• Mitch Busch
• Nothing Bundt Cakes
• Ogle County Brewery
• Old School Pizza
• Par A Dice
• Party Time Rentals
• Pemberton Plumbing and Heating
• Prairie Fire Golf Course
• Printing Etc-Russ Barber
• Ray and Cecile Schwartz
• Richard and Marilyn Overby
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• Sunrise Restaurant
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• The Rose Barn
• Tinez Tacos
• Volcano Falls
• Whiskey Acres
• Wills Chiropractic
• Zanies' Comedy Club

And to anyone we accidentally missed, thank you for helping make this event happen!

LOCAL NEWS

CITY: Council approves resolution opposing state senate bill

From page 1

The enterprise zone provides incentives for development projects in Lee and Ogle counties, primarily for construction and real estate improvements for businesses. Incentives include real estate tax abatement and building materials sales tax exemption for construction within the enterprise zone. Amendments to the enterprise zone must be approved by governing bodies with property in it.

Through state legislation last year, enterprise zones were permitted to add 3,000 acres.

The amendment identifies industrial and large-scale development parcels in and around Rochelle and Dixon. Additionally, several smaller commercial areas have been identified with the assistance of county assessors including several commercial-scale apartments, those larger than a duplex and built as apartments. The LOEZ's leadership hopes that will incentivize landlords to enhance living conditions for renters.

The amendment will net 1,376 acres in Rochelle, 707 in Dixon, 31 in Mt. Morris, 15 in Amboy, 15, seven in Oregon, one in Franklin Grove, and one in Ashton for a total of 2,140 added. Prior to the amendment, the Lee-Ogle Enterprise Zone had 3,656 acres of unallocated space available to it. Upon the amendment's anticipated approval by the state, 1,517 acres will remain available for future additions to the zone for future economic



(PHOTO BY JEFF HELFRICH)

The council unanimously approved a resolution opposing State Senate Bill 2881, which would alter how municipalities like the City of Rochelle annex and regulate unincorporated property. Non-home rule municipalities like Rochelle can currently only exercise powers explicitly granted by law, however, the Illinois General Assembly has granted broad authority to municipalities to pass ordinances and regulations to carry out their powers.

development projects.

Mayor John Bearrows serves as chair of the LOEZ board and said the expansion has been in the works for several months.

"It's an expansion to increase industrial benefits to draw people to our communities," Bearrows said. "With all the negatives there are about Illinois and doing business, this is one of the things we can have in these locations that other people aren't going to have."

LOEZ Administrator Andy Shaw said the city's

current enterprise zone areas have been fruitful.

"Rochelle has been doing good work with the amount of zone that was given to it in 2017," Shaw said. "Certainly it makes sense that this is where some more would go. Because there's been a lot of success here."

City of Rochelle Economic Development Director Jason Anderson said the new areas have been strategically chosen for potential future development based on where RMU infrastructure is.

SB 2881

The council unanimously approved a resolution opposing State Senate Bill 2881, which would alter how municipalities like the City of Rochelle annex and regulate unincorporated property.

Non-home rule municipalities like Rochelle can currently only exercise powers explicitly granted by law, however, the Illinois General Assembly has granted broad authority to municipalities to pass ordinances and regulations to carry out

their powers.

SB 2881 would require any land subject to an annexation agreement to be contiguous to a municipal boundary. That would eliminate the city's current ability to regulate properties within its 1.5-mile extraterritorial jurisdiction and reduce its ability to annex property and deal with certain local land use ordinances, contributions of land or money and property tax abatements. The city believes SB 2881 would harm all municipalities and hinder economic

development in the state.

"What we really don't want is the state getting involved in our land-use subjects," City Manager Jeff Fiegenschuh said. "That's what people elect our city council for, to make those decisions."

March 5

Bearrows said during the meeting that he and Fiegenschuh will host their annual State of the Community address on Tuesday March 5 at 2 p.m., both at City Hall and live on Facebook.

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LOCAL NEWS

OBITUARIES

Rebecca ‘Becky’ Barry

NORTH HAVERHILL, N.H. — Rebecca “Becky” Barry, 80, of North Haverhill, NH passed away at Cottage Hospital in Woodsville on February 22, 2024. Becky was born in Rochelle, IL to Floyd and Betty Barnes. She was a 1961 graduate of Rochelle Township High School. She attended Hamline University & National Teachers College.

She is survived by her husband of 40 years, Charles of North Haverhill; sister Sue Engebretson of Rockford, IL; stepdaughter Amy Perry (Paul) of West Newbury, VT; stepson Robert Barry (Sandy) of Bow, NH; two granddaughters Katie Barry Zhu (Jesse) of Durham, NC, and Suzie Barry Lofgren (John) of Pensacola, FL; a niece Becca Engebretson, and several great-nieces. Becky taught at a one-room school in Alexandria, NH, then worked as the Hunter Education Coordinator for the NH Fish and Game Department. After

her retirement, she worked as a Court Security Officer for the Grafton County Sheriff’s Department. Inspired by time spent at the family cabin on Lake Waubesa, in Wisconsin, Becky developed an adventurous spirit and a great love for the outdoors. For many years she, along with sister Sue and the “Maries” would gather in Ely, MN, for a canoeing trip in The Boundary Waters. These adventures provided material for “The Voyageuses” a book written by Becky and her sister Sue. Becky also helped Charlie write his memoir “Behind Badge 32”. She and Charlie made over a dozen trips to the Canadian Rockies, and she enjoyed annual winter vacations to Siesta Key, FL. She had a great fondness for her English Springer Spaniels, Thatcher and Maggie. Becky developed a love for knitting in her later years. She always had a ready supply of hats for anyone who needed one. She and Charlie enjoyed rides



throughout northern NH and VT looking for wildlife. Rebecca and Charlie made arrangements to be cremated, and half of their ashes will be laid to rest in Rochelle at Lawnridge Cemetery in Rochelle, and half will be laid to rest in New Hampshire. A graveside service will be held at the Elmwood Cemetery, in Franconia, NH, on Friday, June 7, 2024, at 1 PM. A Rochelle service will be held by the family at an undetermined date.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to: Barry Conservation Camp, % Wildlife Heritage Foundation of NH, 54 Portsmouth Street, Concord, NH 03301.

Stevie Lynn Dodillet

ROCHELLE — Stevie Dodillet, 33, of Rochelle IL passed away Sunday January 28th 2024. She was born December 22nd 1990 in Dixon at KSB Hospital.

The daughter of Renee Stover (Richard Stover) and Terry Dodillet (Teresa Dodillet). Stevie attended Ashton Franklin Center Highschool. Stevie is survived by

three children Landin, Noah, and Lucas. Sibling Clarissa Dodillet. Grandparents John Stover of Ashton great grandmother Arlene Davis of Rochelle and Clyde and Deborah Chrisco of Gosnell AR.

A celebration of life will be held at 10 AM Saturday March 9th at First General Baptist



Church at 500 S 12th St, Rochelle IL with Pastor Angelo Bonacquisti.

Brian Jude Jaeger

ROCHELLE — Brian Jude Jaeger, 68, passed away peacefully Sunday, February 25, 2024 at Serenity Hospice and Home in Oregon, Illinois. Brian was born on July 22, 1955 to Theodore E. and Helen T. (Valiulis) Jaeger in Rockford, IL. He was a lifetime resident of Lindenwood where he was a wonderful neighbor and a great friend.

While attending Kishwaukee College, Brian worked at Eagle grocery store as he worked to earn his Associates Degree. He continued his education at Northern Illinois University where he received his Bachelor’s Degree in Production Management. He then went to work for Sundstrand in Rockford, IL. Later, he went back to college and earned another

Bachelor’s Degree in Computer Science. After that, he started his own business, Jaeger Computer Services, and served the community through his business for 25 years. Brian was a member of St. Patrick Catholic Church of Rochelle and the Knights of Columbus. He served on the Lynnville Township Board. He also worked for St. Patrick Catholic Church as the building and grounds maintenance person.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his sister, Deborah Jaeger on October 1, 2023.

Brian is survived by his sister, Rita (Denny) Gorsuch of Kokomo, IN; niece, Carmen Gorsuch and nephew, John Gorsuch.

The visitation will be from 9:30 - 10:30 A.M.,



Thursday, February 29, 2024 at St. Patrick Catholic Church, 236 Kelley Drive, Rochelle. The funeral mass will follow at 10:30 A.M., Thursday with Father Jesus Dominguez officiating. Burial is at St. Patrick Cemetery in Rochelle. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to St. Patrick Cemetery Perpetual Care Fund.

Visit www.ungerhorner.com to sign the online guest book.

Elaine Mae (Hackman) Jacox

STEWART — Elaine Mae (Hackman) Jacox, 97, of Stewart, passed away Sunday, Feb. 25, 2024, at Stonecroft Village in Mendota. She was born March 19, 1926, in Rochelle, the daughter of Harry and Alta (Woods) Hackman. She married Harold L. Jacox on Nov. 16, 1947.

Elaine farmed with her husband for over fifty years. She also loved to grow asparagus and tomatoes. She was a member of the Paw Paw United Methodist Church for 70+ years. She was active with the church turkey supper and Crusaders. She was a member of the Paw Paw Red Hats. She enjoyed playing cards, especially euchre and 500. Elaine and Harold wintered in Texas for thirty-five years.

Elaine is survived by four children, Donna

(Greg) Politsch of Paw Paw, Pam (Brian) Lowery of Aroma Park, IL, Lloyd (Judy) Jacox of Louisburg, NC, Allan (Deb) Jacox of Stewart; six grandchildren, Dwayne Hopkins of Oshkosh WI, Dawn (Joe) Arjes of Paw Paw, Shawn (Jason) Gibson of Covington, IN, Chad (Tammy Martinez) Cox of Kempton, IL, Cody (Kayleigh) Jacox of St. Albans, VT, and Cole Jacox of Stewart; four great-grandchildren, Sabrina (AJ) Ireland, Zac Cox, Noah Cox, and Ashton Gibson; and one great-great child, Teagan Ireland.

In addition to her parents, she is preceded in death by her husband, Harold; two brothers, Erwin Hackman and H. Gale Hackman; two sisters, Shirley Herrman and Bev Hackman; and one grandson, Harold Bend.

Visitation will be from



4-8 P.M. on Thursday, February 29, 2024 at Torman Funeral Home, 510 Flagg St. in Paw Paw.

Funeral services will be at 11 A.M. on Friday, March 1, 2024 at the funeral home with Pastor Ken Foster officiating. Interment will follow in Wyoming Township Cemetery in Paw Paw. Contributions in Elaine’s name may be directed to the family for a memorial to be established. Please visit www.tormanfuneralhome.com to sign the online guest book.

LINDENWOOD — Barbara A. Detig, 87, passed away Tuesday,

ROCHELLE POLICE DEPARTMENT

ROCHELLE — On Feb. 20 at 12:53 p.m. Christopher C. Messer, 41, of Ashton was arrested for driving while license suspended. He was released on a notice to appear with a March 15 Rochelle court date.

On Feb. 21 at 8:18 a.m. Paige E. Bennett Nay, 51, of Rochelle was cited for no valid registration. She signed a promise to comply and was given an April 5 Rochelle court date.

On Feb. 21 at 3 p.m.

February 27, 2024 at her home in Lindenwood. Services are pending

Lynette S. Carmichael 71, of Rochelle was cited for speeding 61 miles per hour in a 40 miles per hour zone. She signed a promise to comply and was given an April 5 Rochelle court date.

On Feb. 21 at 2:39 p.m. Colton R. VanKirk, 32, of Oregon was cited for no valid registration. He signed a promise to comply and was given an April 5 Rochelle court date.

On Feb. 21 at 6:57 a.m. Alaina R. Eubanks, 25, of Rochelle was cited for speeding 52 miles per hour in a 30 miles per hour zone. She signed a promise to comply and was given an April 5 Rochelle court date.

On Feb. 22 at 10:02 a.m. Irma Ugalde, 28, of Rochelle was cited for no valid registration. She signed a promise to comply and was given an April 5 Rochelle court date.

On Feb. 22 at 11:06 a.m. Rosa A. Yunes, 64, of Aurora was cited for speeding. She signed a promise to comply and was given an April 5 Rochelle court date.

On Feb. 22 at 2:16 p.m. Charles M. Whittaker, 60, of DeKalb was cited for speeding 60 miles per hour in a 40 miles per hour zone. He signed a promise to comply and was given an April 5 Rochelle court date.

On Feb. 22 at 3:46

with the Unger-Horner Funeral Home in Rochelle.

p.m. Isaiah S. Bargman, 20, of Rochelle was cited for speeding 74 miles per hour in a 40 miles per hour zone. He signed a promise to comply and was given an April 5 Rochelle court date.

On Feb. 23 at 3:03 p.m. Brandon S. Bergman, 36, of DeKalb was arrested on an outstanding DeKalb County warrant and transferred.

On Feb. 23 at 1:37 p.m. Kerelyn S. Sarmiento, 27, of Rochelle was cited for no valid registration. She signed a promise to comply and was given an April 5 Rochelle court date.

On Feb. 24 at 10:45 p.m. Jose P. Morales, 24, of Rochelle was arrested for no valid driver’s license. He was released on a notice to appear with a March 15 Rochelle court date.

On Feb. 26 at 9:21 a.m. Joseph T. Snider, 57, of Rochelle was cited for no valid registration. He signed a promise to comply and was given an April 5 Rochelle court date.

On Feb. 26 at 12:35 p.m. Kaitlin E. Burns, 28, of Rochelle was cited for speeding 52 miles per hour in a 30 miles per hour zone. She signed a promise to comply and was given an April 5 Rochelle court date.

All individuals are considered innocent until proven guilty.

Report policy

Any arrests listed in this paper are merely charges and the defendants are presumed innocent unless proven guilty in a court of law. Please note that all police reports received from the

Rochelle Police, the Ogle County Sheriff’s Department and the Illinois State Police, will be printed without exception.

Requests to omit particular reports will not be considered or honored at any time.

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ASHTON NEWS



AFC Academic Team earns second in Prophetstown
On Feb. 17, the Ashton-Franklin Center High School Academic Team traveled to Prophetstown to compete in the 40th annual Masonic Bowl Tournament. The Raiders earned second place in the tournament and in addition to the plaque and medals the team won \$300 for the Scholastic Bowl Program.



AFC Scholastic Bowl Team reaches 20 wins
The Ashton-Franklin Center Scholastic Bowl Team improved to 20-6 after defeating South Beloit. The Raiders season continues the weekend of Feb. 24-25 as they travel to Prophetstown to compete in the Masonic Bowl Tournament.

Earlville man arrested for unlawful possession of a stolen vehicle

DIXON — An Earlville man was arrested the night of Feb. 18 and charged with a number of crimes including unlawful possession of a stolen vehicle, a Lee County Sheriff's Office press release said.

On Feb. 18 at approximately 10:26 p.m. depu-

ties from the Lee County Sheriff's Office responded to 291 Illinois Route 2, Dixon, for a report of motor vehicle theft. The vehicle was located by the Dixon Police Department and stopped as it came into Dixon city limits. The driver was identified as William Whitford, 31,

from Earlville. Through the investigation, Whitford was arrested and charged with the following: Possession of a controlled substance (class one felony), unlawful possession of a stolen vehicle (class two felony) aggravated battery to a peace officer (class two

felony), resisting/obstructing a peace officer (class four felony), criminal trespass to vehicle (class A misdemeanor), driving while license revoked (class A misdemeanor), and failure to appear warrant for parole violation.

The Lee County Sher-

iff's Office was assisted by the Dixon Police Department. Whitford was taken to the Lee County Jail, where he was held for a detention hearing. All charges are merely an allegation, and the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

Citizens are reminded to call the Lee County Sheriff's Department at (815) 284-6631 or Crime stoppers at 1-888-CAUGHT-UP. Callers can remain anonymous and receive rewards of up to \$1,000 if their information leads to an arrest.

Custer Park woman charged following fatal hit and run

DIXON — On Feb. 2, the Lee County Sheriff's Office announced charges stemming from a Dec. 4 fatal hit-and-run traffic accident. The traffic accident that occurred near the intersection of Sterling Road and Walton Road at approximately 9:29 p.m. on Dec. 4. Kristin Kisich,

age 42, of Custer Park, Illinois is being charged with the following offenses: Failure to report and leaving the scene of a motor vehicle accident involving death (class one felony), and leaving the scene of a motor vehicle accident involving death (class four felony).

From the investigation, 40-year-old Patrick J. Yocum from Rock Falls was walking near the area and was struck by a vehicle. Yocum was located by a passerby in the middle of the roadway. He was transported to KSB Hospital by the Amboy Fire Department and was later pronounced

deceased. Evidence left at the scene revealed that the offending vehicle had significant front-end damage to the grill, hood and windshield of the vehicle. The offending vehicle was identified as a Jeep Cherokee with the model years being from 2014-2018. A media release with the offending

vehicle information was disseminated the following day on Dec. 5. Over the afternoon of Dec. 5, Ms. Kisich contacted the Lee County Sheriff's Office and reported that she may be responsible for the incident. Her vehicle, a 2014 Jeep Cherokee, was located at a residence

in Dixon. It was subsequently impounded as part of the investigation. Detectives interviewed Ms. Kisich and obtained a statement. Further investigation was conducted that culminated in the charges listed. All individuals are considered innocent until proven guilty.



AFC FFA members participate in Section 2 FFA Proficiency Judging and travel to Western Illinois
On Jan. 31, Ashton-Franklin Center FFA members Izzy Cater, LaHelah Cunningham, Hailey Grover, Kate Viall, and Andera Aldridge traveled to Western Illinois University for Ground Zero Conference (left). They spend a very intensive day learning about being a leader. The Ashton-Franklin Center FFA also competed in Section 2 FFA Proficiency Judging on Feb. 7 (right). Five AFC FFA members competed in seven different recordbook areas. Students interviewed with ag teachers and industry professionals about their projects. Ian Untz: Diversified Crop Production Placement. Brooke Burger: Beef Production Entrepreneurship. Logan O'Brien: Swine Production Placement, Landscape Management. Jacob Warrenfeltz: Small Animal Production & Care. Kate Viall: Fruit & Nut Production, Safety. Logan and Kate will be moving on to the district competition in March.



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After being born and raised in Rochelle, Carl Hansen made the decision to enlist into the United States Army in 1949. Hansen's first overseas tour was in Korea for about a year, before being evacuated to Japan. Hansen then returned to the U.S. and Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri for a short time.

Rochelle native Carl Hansen

BY JEFF HELFRICH
MANAGING EDITOR

ROCHELLE — After being born and raised in Rochelle, Carl Hansen made the decision to enlist into the United States Army in 1949.

"I'm not sure why I chose to enlist," Hansen said.

"Myself and a couple of other guys decided to do it. I told my folks I joined when I was 17. It was kind of scary for a while after World War II and when Korea came up. But I was pretty fortunate."

Hansen's first overseas tour was in Korea for about a year, before being evacuated to Japan. There, he served in the Japan Quartermaster Petroleum Depot in Yokohama and was stationed on a little island refueling Navy ships for about a year. Hansen then returned to the U.S. and Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri for a short time.

Hansen had volunteered to return to Europe and went to France for three years for more work with petroleum. After that tour ended, he went back to the U.S. at Fort Hood, Texas before his entire unit was transferred to Fort Carson in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Hansen would meet and marry his wife in Colorado Springs. He then left the Army for about a year before returning for another tour in Germany for two years. And then Hansen came back stateside to Fort Monmouth in New Jersey, where he went to school for calibration. After a stint at the Army Depot in Sacramento, California and another school stint at Fort Monmouth, Hansen returned to Europe for three years and took his family with him.

"I was in calibration and we went all over Europe and calibrated equipment," Hansen said. "We had teams that would do it. A lot of military people were selling their leave time back to the government at that time. I thought to myself that I had a once-in-a-lifetime thing. I used that leave time to take my family around Europe. And we did. We went all over. We went to a little island in the North Sea off the coast of Germany called Sylt. The American Coast Guard was stationed there. During WWII, it was the safest place in the world to be, because all of the airplanes from every country depended on that island and its radar signals to find their way home. So, nobody would ever bombed the island. It was a very small island. We stayed there at a German submarine base. Because everything on the island was so expensive."

After his deployment to Europe with his family, Hansen returned to the

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American Hero



(COURTESY PHOTOS)

er, before being evacuated to Japan. There, he served in the Japan Quartermaster Petroleum Depot in Yokohama and was stationed on a little island refueling Navy ships for

served 20 years in U.S. Army



states and Fort Monmouth for about a year. He then left the Army for the last time after serving for 20 years, two months and 22 days.

Hansen would return to Northern California to work in calibration and electrical work for the government, which he did for 20 years before retirement. He now resides in Abilene, Kansas at age 92.

The most enjoyable experiences of his time in the service involved overseas deployments, Hansen said. He enjoyed refueling Navy ships in Japan, and while in Europe he enjoyed going to petroleum depots in France, Germany and Spain and taking samples to test that it was up to military specifications.

"When I first got to Japan, I worked in an office and I didn't care for my job," Hansen said. "An officer came in one day who I knew and he asked if I liked my job. I told him how I felt, and he offered to give me a new job, the one taking samples. And then I got transferred to a place an hour north of Paris. I was in charge of the petroleum there. I had to make sure it was safe and watch shipments."

Hansen was asked once how many different countries he'd been to. He didn't know, so he got out a map one day, and found that he had spent time in 48 different counties during his service.

"And I loved every minute of it," Hansen said. "I used to always tell people that in 20 years in the Army, I only had one bad assignment, which was in Korea. But then I thought Korea couldn't have been so bad, because I'm still here."

Hansen said he stayed in the military for 20 years because of how much he enjoyed traveling. He liked his assignments and got to see the country and world. His service also gave him education for the rest of his career in the civilian world.

"I saw a lot of places. And none of it was bad," Hansen said. "What I remember most is being able to take my family around Europe with my leave time. The most unique place I ever was was that little island of Sylt. It had a one-lane road from one end of it to the other and every so often there would be a wide spot in the road to pull off and let an oncoming car

through. I'm thankful that I enlisted and served."

Honoring Our American Hero is a series that will print twice a month in the News-Leader. If you know an American Hero you would like to have featured, contact Jeff Helfrich at jhelfrich@rochellenews-leader.com or call 815-561-2151.

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LOCAL VIEWS

Ron Kern: Farmers' credit world

ACCORDING to USDA about 97% of the United States' 2.1 million farms are considered family farms and 88% of all U.S. farms have a gross cash farm income of less than \$350,000 annually, putting them in the small family farm category. This means that most farms in the U.S. are small, family-owned businesses that rely on the availability of finance options to fund the high cost of producing the food, fiber and renewable energy our country and the world rely on every day.

According to USDA's most recent Farm Sector Income Forecast, interest as an expense increased by about 43%, or \$10.3 billion, to \$34.42 billion in 2023. Interest rate hikes have not only increased the cost of credit as an input but have also limited farmers' ability to use it. This Market Intel will give you a glimpse of farmers' credit world and explain how changes in that environment could lead to challenges with liquidity, a problem that is hard to fix.

An extremely important part of farm finances, farm liquidity is "the ability of a farmer to generate cash quickly and efficiently in order to meet his or her financial obligations." Some assets, such

as corn in storage, can be sold and turned into cash quickly and are considered assets with high liquidity. Others, such as a crop that was recently planted or livestock that have not yet been born, take more time to turn into cash and can require additional input expenses to become the final product for sale, such as grain or marketable livestock. When farms get tight on cash due to the high cost of operating or from overspending, lack of liquidity can become a real problem.

Liquidity is measured using several different accounting ratios. Working capital is not a ratio, it is a measure in dollars of total assets minus total liabilities. This is a measure of available cash. Working capital needs are highly variable by farm size, exposure to risk and volatility of the overall business environment.

When net returns are more variable, more working capital is needed. Due to these differences, it is helpful to measure working capital by either gross revenue or value of farm production.

One of the most used liquidity ratios is the current ratio. The current ratio (sometimes called the "working capital" ratio) measures a farm's ability

to pay off debt due within one year. It is the ratio of current assets divided by current liabilities. A current ratio of 2 or higher is considered good. Anything below 2 is cause for concern.

The debt service ratio, sometimes called the term debt coverage ratio, measures a farm's ability to use operating cash flow to pay debt obligations. Lenders typically like this ratio to be 1.5 or greater. A ratio of 1 would mean that the farm has adequate cash flow to meet payment obligations. A ratio less than 1 would mean the farm falls short and will have to rely on other resources to service debt.

It is helpful to evaluate working capital needs in comparison to gross revenue or value of farm production. The working capital-gross revenue ratio is a measure of whether or not a farm has adequate working capital for its level of gross revenue. A farm with a ratio of 30% or greater is considered strong, 10-30% is cause for concern, and a ratio less than 10% is considered vulnerable.

The interest expense ratio shows how much gross income is being used

to pay interest on debt. In years when interest rates are low, this ratio may be overlooked as it remains well within healthy parameters. However, when interest rates go up, the interest expense ratio can be a stark reminder that taking on unnecessary debt or too much debt can be costly. When more capital is being used to pay for interest, it means less capital is being paid toward equity-building principal.

Farmers have many recurring annual costs such as land rent, input expenses and debt payments. A farm with strong liquidity has cash available to pay these recurring costs and potentially pay for growth such as new land or equipment purchases.

Problems with liquidity can arise from changes in the financial environment. For example, when costs of inputs such as fertilizer, seed and fuel go up, it takes a greater amount of working capital to pay for them. When working capital is depleted, farmers have a variety of options to help liquidity. Selling cash assets such as crops in storage may be an option but may be costly

if market conditions are not favorable. One of the most common solutions to liquidity is through a variety of credit-based solutions such as operating loans. While credit-type solutions can be a great option, they can be expensive and endanger the long-term sustainability of a farm.

U.S. farm sector liquidity has been good and strengthening since 2020. However, the recent drop in ad hoc government assistance combined with Federal Reserve-driven interest rate hikes and increasing operating costs have changed the financial environment.

The debt servicing ratio used by ERS is a modified version of the term debt coverage ratio. USDA uses this ratio to measure the share of production plus direct government payments that are used to pay off farm sector debt. A higher debt servicing ratio implies that a greater share of production is needed to pay off debts. ERS forecasts the ratio to rise from .21 in 2022 to .24 in 2023. Higher cost of debt from sustained elevated interest rates could lead to continued debt servicing ratio growth in 2024.

While ag sector liquidity has been strong in recent years, the financial

environment has changed and high interest rates are adding another expense to farmers' lists of rising input costs. Operating loans and other forms of financing cost farmers a whopping 43% more in 2023 than in 2022 and are forecast to remain elevated for much of 2024, causing working capital stocks to decline faster and forcing farmers to lean on expensive credit to provide liquidity. When farmers pay more for interest on that credit, less money gets paid toward principal. The amount of income being used to pay interest on farm debt in the U.S. has increased at a rate not seen since the 1980s.

There are many tools available to help farmers persevere when liquidity makes their business vulnerable, but it's important for decision makers to remember a lesson from the 80's. Short-term borrowing during times of vulnerability can turn into costly long-term debt. Excellent management and decision making are a must to remain resilient during times of vulnerability.

"Money isn't the most thing in life, but it's right up there with oxygen on the 'gotta have it' scale."

-Zig Ziglar

Ron Kern is the manager of the Ogle County Farm Bureau.



Ron Kern

PAID LETTER

Letter: Support for Horner for coroner

DEAR editor,

I have known Chad Horner for over 30 years. I had the distinct privilege of working with him for 19+ years during my career at Ogle County Hospice, now Serenity Hospice and Home.

In those years, when we were together doing our mutual work, he was amazing in his care, compassion and concern for all he encountered. Our work takes a special degree of gentle strength and care for all involved.

He always was a consummate professional. His gentle kindness, firm grasp of situations and the needs of all were a gift to all involved.

His faith guides him to the integrity and excellence with which he devotes the actions of life. The strength with which he dedicates himself to all he does is apparent. Since my retirement, I have had many opportunities to volunteer beside him. His family reflects the man he is.

It is my privilege to support him for this position of

Ogle County Coroner.

He will bring knowledge, understanding of the needs of our county, wisdom and integrity which public office requires.

—**Lorrie Bearrows**
retired executive director of Serenity Hospice & Home Chana

Rochelle News Leader — New political letter policy

THE Rochelle News-Leader is implementing a new political letter policy.

We will now be accepting election letters endorsing or advocating for or against a ballot measure, party or candidate as paid advertising announcement.

The fee is \$25 minimum for a 200-word letter and 10

cents a word for additional words over 250. Like other letters to the editor, the writer's name, address and phone number are required. Phone numbers and exact addresses are not published. We have the right to reject letters which don't meet publishing standards and will determine if the letter qualifies as a paid

endorsement. Paid letters will be identified with a label and may or may not appear on the opinion/letters page.

Most newspapers that have adopted this approach cite one main reason: Political campaigns for years have used newspaper opinion pages for what amounts to free advertising. As these

letter-writing campaigns become more widespread and sophisticated - some campaigns even pay people to write letters to the editor - newspapers are flooded with requests to publish them, especially in the run-up to elections.

Will we still publish letters complaining about the county board or school

board? Yes. But if you want others to vote for or against a candidate, or for or against an issue on the ballot, you will need to pay a fee. Not a large fee - \$25 for up to 200 words.

Some key dates to keep in mind for political endorsement letters:

The primary election is Tuesday, March 19, 2024.

The last batch of letters that endorse candidates for this election will be printed in the Wednesday, March 13, 2024 issue of The Rochelle News-Leader must be received by noon on Monday, March 11, 2024.

To submit a letter, email Managing Editor Jeff Helfrich at jhelfrich@rochellenews-leader.com.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The Rochelle News-Leader encourages responsible letters to the editor on subjects of interest to our readers. Editing may be necessary for space, clarity or to avoid obscenity or libel, but ideas will not be altered. All letters must bear the handwritten signature of the writer and include address and phone number or e-mail address for verification purposes. Neither the street address nor phone number will be printed. Letters should be typed or

legibly handwritten, and no anonymous letters will be published. Any letters from boards or organizations must include at least one name of an individual. Any criticism of public officials should be limited to issues related strictly to their position or actions made in office, as personal attacks will not be published. Letters involving private disputes between the writer and a business will not be published. Political endorsements will be published, however

letters from candidates endorsing themselves will not be printed. Letters may be dropped at the News-Leader office (211 IL Route 38 East), mailed to the News-Leader (P.O. Box 46, Rochelle, IL 61068) or e-mailed (news@rochellenews-leader.com.) The News-Leader reserves the right to edit or reject any letter to the editor for any reason, and letters chosen for publication do not necessarily reflect the views of this newspaper.

COMMUNITY



(COURTESY PHOTO)

The Rochelle Area Community Foundation (RACF) is honored to partner with Central Bank through their associate payroll deduction program.

Central Bank supports RACF with payroll deduction program

ROCHELLE – The Rochelle Area Community Foundation (RACF) is honored to partner with Central Bank through their associate payroll deduction program. This program has continued for several years and serves as an easy way to give to RACF. Associates decided on a designated amount to RACF each pay period. They can also choose to

donate to any of the funds held at RACF. Central Bank's human resources department keeps track of each payroll deduction, and they donate a lump sum twice a year.

"When I think of community, I think of the associates at Central Bank," Emily Anaya, RACF executive director, said. "Each associate gives with intent and purpose

to make Rochelle, and the surrounding areas, a better place. They are continuously giving back through each pay period, where their dollars are invested and grow, allowing RACF the ability to grant to qualified local nonprofit organizations. The financial support given to RACF stays right here in our community. The positive effect from

every donor dollar leaves an endless impact on the community we serve."

If you are a business and want to know more about partnering through a payroll deduction program, or if you want to learn more about recurring gifts, please call the Rochelle Area Community Foundation at 815-561-3600 or email at director@rochellefoundation.org.

THE KITCHEN TABLE MENU

7034 S. Klondike Road | Rochelle, IL 61068 | 815-561-9074

If you would like to volunteer with us, please email us at kitchentablerochelle@gmail.com

KIDS MENU: Chicken Nuggets w/Fries
OR Hot Dogs with Chips

**All menus are subject to change. If you would like to check before coming out, please call us at 815-561-9074

www.KitchenTableRochelle.org

February 29 – (Thursday) – Spaghetti with Meat Sauce, Salad, Bosco Sticks

BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

Feb. 28 Ben Altice	March 2 Addison Perkins	March 6 Nicole King
Feb. 28 Lucas Donoho	March 5 Briggs Bridgeman	

Call 815-561-2151 to submit names for birthdays and anniversaries



- Feb. 3 - Sofie Meyers, Rochelle, \$250
- Feb. 4 - Mercedes Barrientos, Rochelle, \$50
- Feb. 5 - Allison Wagner-Huntley, Byron, \$25
- Feb. 6 - From the Heart, \$50
- Feb. 7 - Judith Koelzer, Friena, Texas, \$25
- Feb. 8 - Nancy Meyers, Rochelle, \$25
- Feb. 9 - Kaylee Fowler, Rochelle, \$25
- Feb. 10 - Justin Adolph, Rochelle, \$25
- Feb. 11 - First State Bank, Rochelle, \$50
- Feb. 12 - John Gonzales, Rochelle, \$25
- Feb. 13 - Kathleen Lutz, Rochelle, \$25
- Feb. 14 - Ariana and Antonio Welle, Oregon, \$250
- Feb. 15 - From the Heart, \$25
- Feb. 16 - Shining Star, Dixon, \$25
- Feb. 17 - Michelle Ocampo, Rochelle, \$25
- Feb. 18 - RACF, \$50
- Feb. 19 - RACF, \$25
- Feb. 20 - Crystal Crom, Cloquet, Minnesota, \$25
- Feb. 21 - From the Heart, \$25
- Feb. 22 - Crystal Hueramo, Rochelle, \$25
- Feb. 23 - Christa Seebach, Rochelle, \$25
- Feb. 24 - Gus and Armande Vasilopolous, Rochelle, \$25
- Feb. 25 - Noel Allison, Rochelle, \$50
- Feb. 26 - Maplehurst Farms, \$25
- Feb. 27 - Cynthia Lopez, Rochelle, \$25
- Feb. 28 - Marcy Bruhn, Rochelle, \$25
- Feb. 29 - Jake Meyers, Rochelle, \$25

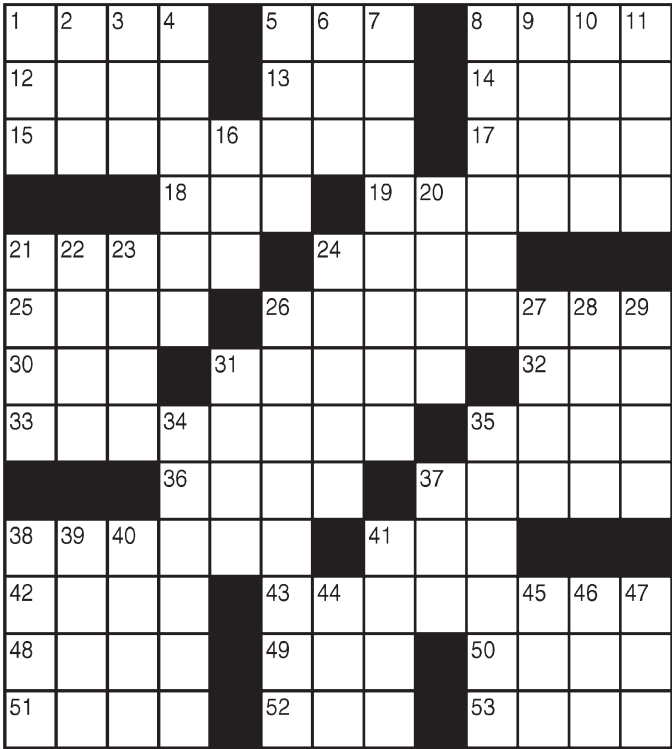


Coffee Break

King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Not so hot?
- 5 Dog tags, e.g.
- 8 Quick look
- 12 Antioxidant berry
- 13 French vineyard
- 14 Impetuous
- 15 Dungeon's quality
- 17 Actress Rae
- 18 Small batteries
- 19 Detroit hooper
- 21 Like a neglected lawn
- 24 Coop group
- 25 Within (Pref.)
- 26 Foppish behavior
- 30 Caustic cleaner
- 31 Loud
- 32 Dean's list stat
- 33 Writer Steel
- 35 Three- sloth
- 36 Barn birds
- 37 Travesty
- 38 "Jane Eyre" author
- 41 Tofu source
- 42 Chicago's Mayor
- 43 Hanging loosely
- 48 Location



- | | | |
|------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 49 Swiss canton | 10 Canadian gas brand | 35 "Fearless" singer Swift |
| 50 Roasting spot | 11 "Star Trek II" villain | 37 Boating hazard |
| 51 Church song | 16 Aye undoer | 38 Humdrum |
| 52 Domino spot | 20 "500" race | 39 "Gilmore Girls" daughter |
| 53 Harvest | 21 Use a blowtorch | 40 Utah city |
| | 22 New Age singer | 41 Use scissors |
| | 23 Genesis garden | 44 "Exodus" hero |
| | 24 Salutes | 45 "— had it!" |
| | 26 Prettified | 46 Museum-funding org. |
| | 27 Composer | 47 Econ. measure |
| | 28 Detail, briefly | |
| | 29 Created | |
| | 31 Salamander | |
| | 34 Sea off Sicily | |

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Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

8				6			9	
		4	8					1
	7				9	5		
		3		8	4			7
	9		6			3		
2				1			4	
	8		4					3
		6			2	9		
3				7			2	

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦♦♦

♦ Moderate ♦♦ Challenging
♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

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CryptoQuip

This is a simple substitution cipher in which each letter used stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Solution is accomplished by trial and error.

Clue: **G** equals **R**

W Y Z J H A G J K K I L V A I M Q W S I L I
V M L V S V G G J Q, W U J M L I G
W Y Z J H ' L I M L H S U W Q N V
U V R O W I - Q V R O W I .

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6	2	1	2	8	7	5	6	9	3	4	8
8	6	9	2	3	1	9	6	7	5	7	4
4	8	4	7	5	3	7	6	2	1	8	2
3	7	5	3	9	6	4	7	2	8	1	2
6	9	8	4	1	3	5	7	9	2	6	4
5	1	5	2	7	2	9	8	6	4	9	4
7	9	2	4	4	8	6	3	1	5	1	5
8	3	3	6	5	4	2	1	7	7	9	8
1	9	3	8	3	5	8	4	2	2	6	8
2	4	9	1	6	7	5	3	7	6	1	4

Answer

Weekly SUDOKU

6	2	1	2	8	7	5	6	9	3	4	8
8	6	9	2	3	1	9	6	7	5	7	4
4	8	4	7	5	3	7	6	2	1	8	2
3	7	5	3	9	6	4	7	2	8	1	2
6	9	8	4	1	3	5	7	9	2	6	4
5	1	5	2	7	2	9	8	6	4	9	4
7	9	2	4	4	8	6	3	1	5	1	5
8	3	3	6	5	4	2	1	7	7	9	8
1	9	3	8	3	5	8	4	2	2	6	8
2	4	9	1	6	7	5	3	7	6	1	4

Answers

King Crossword

CryptoQuip

If you crossed a centipede
and a parrot, I wonder
if you'd end up with a
walkie-talkie.

Answer

WHO'S WHO IN REAL ESTATE

How to find the right real estate agent

WORKING with a real estate agent can give both buyers and sellers an edge in what continues to be a challenging real estate market. Agents, brokers and Realtors® are professionals who have distinct expertise and knowledge of the process of buying and selling homes. That expertise is evidenced by how many people rely on real estate professionals each year. A 2022 Zillow Group Consumer Housing Trends report found 88 percent of homeowners choose to list their homes with a real estate agent when it comes time to sell. Individuals understand that it can be in their best interests to work with real estate professionals, but they may not know where to look as they seek to work with one. Here are some tips for finding the right match in a real estate professional.

- Know the difference

in real estate professionals. Real estate agents are required by the state in which they operate to pass a real estate license exam. Real estate brokers take it a step further and undergo additional training, which could bring additional experience to the table. Realtors® are members of the National Association of Realtors® and beholden to its strict code of ethics. These individuals also may have undergone additional training that qualifies them to work with certain types of clients, such as seniors.

- Seek referrals. Friends or family members, or even others in the community, can put people in touch with real estate professionals. When asking for referrals, individuals can inquire about certain professionals and how they handled buying and/or selling a home.

- Work with the right type of agent. Generally speaking, real estate

agents either work with buyers or sellers in the transaction. Many will do both, but some specialize in buying or selling. Find a professional who either does both or specializes in your position.

- Research an agent's online presence. Use the internet to see if the agent has a website, a particular philosophy or a specialty. This also may be a place to check online reviews. Don't be dissuaded by one or two poor reviews. However, if there are many, it may be best to look elsewhere.

- Meet and interview potential agents. Individuals should speak with a couple of real estate professionals to see what they offer. This is a good way to determine if there is a connection there, and whether the agent will get the results needed. A well-prepared agent will come with data, including "comps" of properties in the area. Professionals



typically have information about the current market trends and a portfolio of the homes they have brokered recently.

- Go with gut instincts. If it's between two people of equal qualification,

select the person with whom you have a stronger rapport. This person will be guiding you through a sizable financial transaction, so comfort level is important.

Finding the right real

estate professional can take some time. But the right professional will guide clients through the often complex and occasionally frustrating process of buying or selling property.



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LOCAL NEWS

TAX: Elementary district holds informational meeting Monday night

From page 1

Based on the most recent numbers, a county schools facility sales tax could net the Rochelle elementary district \$813,202 per year. It would net the high school district \$443,491 per year, the Kings School District \$46,181, the Creston School District \$42,259, and the Eswood School District \$26,082. The money is based on students in Ogle County, of which the Steward School District has none, so it would not see any new funds. Steward does receive county schools facilities sales tax funds from Lee County.

The Rochelle elementary school district has seen large expenses recently as it deals with aging

buildings. Tilton Elementary School was built in 1949. Central Elementary School was built in 1939 and May Elementary School was built in 1959.

The elementary district is currently in the process of pursuing renovations at Tilton School. The board plans to pursue \$14-16 million worth of needed upgrades at the school after finding in a health life safety evaluation that an estimated \$7.8 million worth of work is required at the school for those issues. The district plans to issue bonds for that money and wants to utilize an additional \$6-8 million from its reserves for other improvements involving security and spatial concerns including its pick up and drop off areas.

It was said at the Ro-

chelle Elementary School District's November meeting that it could leverage that hypothetical \$813,202 a year in new sales tax funds into about \$8.8 million in projects.

Along with facilities, security, mental health services and school resource officers, the money can be used to abate property taxes and make rates lower for property owners within the district.

Harper said that while the elementary school district would utilize the funds for school safety improvements, SRO funding, mental health and facility improvements, the high school board would use it to abate property taxes until it saw needs arise for other designated uses of the funds. Rochelle Township High School is

about 20 years old and does not have a current facility improvement need.

"The RTHS board's immediate plan if the referendum passes would be to do a lesser tax levy of about four percent," Harper said.

For school resource officers, RTHS currently has one SRO and the elementary district has one SRO between all of its buildings. Harper said the districts have "ongoing and regular conversations" with the Rochelle Police Department on SRO needs, but RPD does not currently have the staffing to dedicate another officer to a school, Harper said.

Based on public data from May 2022 through April 2023, 55 percent of the county's sales tax revenue came from the

Rochelle area. However, Rochelle schools account for about 30 percent of Ogle County's total number of students.

"There is a discrepancy there," Harper said. "That is a question I've received out in the community. And if Rochelle doesn't pass it and everybody else in Ogle County votes for it, it will be put into place. The majority of Ogle County voters will decide it."

The language on the March 19 ballot will read: "Shall a retailer's occupation tax and a service occupation tax (commonly referred to as a 'Sales Tax') be imposed in Ogle County at a rate of 1% to be used exclusively for school facility purposes, school resource officers, and mental health professionals?"

The county schools facilities sales tax has no sunset clause or end date for counties it's passed in by referendum. But if no district has obligated funds to future bond payments, a county board could put it back on the ballot to be repealed in the future.

Harper did not take a public position for or against the county schools facilities sales tax, and only presented information to the community at the meeting.

"Ultimately this is a direct democracy question," Harper said. "We're all going to go to the voting booth, shut the curtain and make a decision. And whatever that decision is, the majority will rule. And then the school boards in Rochelle will react based on that."



(COURTESY PHOTO)

Youth camp counselors devote their time to the 4-H campers to ensure a great time.

Northern Illinois 4-H Summer Camp set for June 9-13 in Polo

OREGON—Registration for 4-H Summer Camp 2024 is open! Camp is set for June 9-13 at Rock River Christian Camp, Polo. Sign up today to get your child in on all the fantastic fun!

4-H Camp is a five-day, four-night residential camping experience that is conducted cooperatively by University of Illinois Extension staff in Boone, Carroll, DeKalb, Jo Daviess, Lee, Ogle, Stephenson, Whiteside and Winnebago Counties and the professional staff at RRCC.

Historically, parents have sent their children to 4-H Camp for a variety of reasons: to have fun, to make new friends, to develop new skills, to be physically active, and to appreciate nature. 4-H Camp is about way more than one week of fun. Sending your child to 4-H Camp will allow them to create memories they will carry through adulthood. 4-H camp teaches youth to make good decisions, build their self-confidence, become

independent, and gain the ability to work well with others. These skills will help youth develop into strong adult leaders. In addition, 4-H camp counselors devote much of their time to ensure today's campers have the same great experience they did as children.

Campers at 4-H Camp will check in from 6-6:30 p.m. on Sunday, June 9 and check out from 6-6:30 p.m. on Thursday, June 13. During camp week, youth will engage in various activities designed to challenge, educate and entertain. Two or three free-choice periods will be offered daily, including hiking, shooting sports, arts and crafts, crate stacking, team-building challenges, zip-lining, swimming and more. The 4-H camp counselors will provide evening activities, including campfires, a games night, and a dance. It is guaranteed to be a blast!

4-H Camp will be open to all boys and girls ages 8-14 by June 9. 4-H membership is not required;

however, all participants will be expected to comply with the same high behavior standards expected of 4-Hers. Youth must be interested and excited to have a week of outdoor fun away from television and technology.

The cost is \$300 for 4-H members and \$320 for non-4-H members until March 1. After that date, the price goes up \$50. All camp fees must be paid in full by May 15. Download a camper application online at <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/bdo/northern-illinois-4-h-camp>, or you can register online at <http://go.illinois.edu/4HSummerCamp>. You may also call an office near you with questions or if you need a reasonable accommodation to participate in this program: Jo Daviess County at 815-858-2273; Stephenson County at 815-235-4125; Ogle County at 815-732-2191; or Whiteside County at 815-632-3611. Cabin slots for boys and girls will be filled on a first-come, first-serve basis.

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HUB NEWS March 2024

February Hub Award Winners



Dylan Etes

As one teacher stated: "[Dylan] constantly goes out of her way to help her peers if they have questions. She is patient and kind when working with every student. Dylan is the perfect example to use when explaining what it means to be a Hub."



Sean Dorwaldt

One of Sean's teachers said that he is "always bringing a good attitude, sense of humor, and a smile to me and his peers." Teachers also noted that he is willing to stick around and help clean up and put things away – to go the extra mile.



Danica Ward

Besides being a great student in the classroom, Danica has gone above and beyond by putting together a slideshow for the winter activities assembly. We thank her for all she does for RTHS!



Manny Cruz

Cruz was nominated for being a great leader of his peers, his commitment to academic success, and service to clubs/organizations at RTHS. He truly helps make RTHS a better place.

Calendar of Events

March 4 Regionals Scholastic Bowl TBD

March 7 SIP Day – Half day for students
– Dismiss at 11:30am
RTHS Job/Career Fair
Choral POPS Concert 7pm

March 14 RTHS Flex Schedule – 2:15pm
Dismissal

March 18 RTHS Board Meeting 5:30 pm

March 21 RTHS Flex Schedule – 2:15pm
Dismissal

March 25-29 Spring Break



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Illinois in the ILCA
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WEDNESDAY, FEB. 28, 2024

ROCHELLE NEWS-LEADER • SECTION 2 • PAGE 1

SPORTS



ALL-CONFERENCE HUBS

Fifteen Rochelle Hub football players earned I-8/KRC honors this season.

See page 6 for more details

RTHS Wrestling



(COURTESY PHOTO)

The Rochelle Hub varsity wrestling team traveled to the Grossinger Motors Arena for the start of the IHSA Dual State Championships on Friday. The Hubs fell to Lombard Montini 56-22 to conclude the season with a 24-7 record.

Season concludes at state meet

Rochelle matmen fall to Montini 56-22 at IHSA Dual State Championships

BY RUSSELL HODGES
SPORTS EDITOR

BLOOMINGTON — The Rochelle Hub varsity wrestling team sent four individuals to the IHSA State Championships in Campaign earlier this month. Over the weekend, Rochelle traveled to the Grossinger Motors Arena and wrestled in the IHSA Team State

Championships for the first time since the 2017-18 season, when the Hubs reached the semifinals and finished in fourth.

Rochelle battled Lombard Montini in the Elite Eight round on Friday evening, falling 56-22 to conclude a tremendous 2023-24 season. The Hubs (24-7, 5-0 Interstate 8) wrestled their way into the team state meet

after defeating Yorkville Christian 39-30 at RTHS this past Tuesday. Four Rochelle wrestlers earned bout victories during Friday's match against Lombard Montini.

"The only word I could use to describe this season is successful," head coach Alphonso Vruno said. "We repeated as conference champions, we beat a really good Rockford East team to

win the regional and we beat a private school in Yorkville Christian to advance to the team state meet. We will have a strong senior presence in the room next year and we are looking for this sophomore class to learn from those seniors so they can eventually take over as leaders."

Junior Kaiden Morris won the opening bout of the

match against the Broncos, taking down Gavin Ericson and earning a first-period fall in the 215-pound bout to give the Hubs a 6-0 lead. Sophomore Brenden Voight was the second winner of the match for the Rochelle matmen, scoring a 10-2 major decision against Montini's Lewis Wais-Montoya in the 144-pound bout.

Rochelle closed out the

match with back-to-back wins. Sophomore Roman Villalobos received a forfeit in the 175-pound bout and senior Brock Metzger finished the match with a first-period fall over Lucas Yates in the 190-pound bout. Metzger concluded his career with 110 victories and is one of three senior starters who will be departing from the varsity lineup after this season.

RTHS Boys Basketball

Hubs fall to Freeport in IHSA Regional Championship

Lewis drains eight 3-pointers and leads with 26 points in 82-77 loss on Friday

BY RUSSELL HODGES
SPORTS EDITOR

ROCKFORD — With its season on the line and an IHSA 3A Regional Championship victory in the balance, the Rochelle Hub varsity basketball team erased a 20-point deficit and gave the Freeport Pretzels everything they could handle, coming within three points in the final minute.

The second-seeded Pretzels looked ready to blow the fifth-seeded Hubs off the floor midway through the third quarter, where Freeport forced a Rochelle timeout after taking its largest lead of the game. But the Hubs refused to back down, rallying behind an outstanding shooting display from junior guard Carson Lewis, who drained a game-high eight 3-pointers on Friday.

Rochelle made the Pretzels sweat in the final minutes, where the Hubs clawed to within single digits and trailed by as little as three points with under 10 seconds remaining. Despite a feverish comeback, Rochelle fell a few points short, as two free throws and a missed shot by the Hubs at the buzzer resulted in an 82-77 victory for the Pretzels and a season-ending loss for

Rochelle.

"In the third quarter, it seemed like we weren't making shots and we were taking contested shots that led to run outs and two-on-one situations," head coach Tim Thompson said. "We would've just packed it in and given up if this were a week and a half ago, but we hung tough and Carson made a couple of big shots. We were able to get ourselves back into the game with some steals and some easy buckets. Our kids kept hanging in there and I thought they played great tonight."

Fresh off an upset over the Woodstock Blue Streaks, who were seeded third, Rochelle (11-22, 3-7 Interstate 8) showed up ready to play on Friday evening, with Lewis drilling a trio of first-quarter triples to help the Hubs hold a 19-18 lead. Freeport's Carson Hartog knocked down two 3-pointers in the second quarter for the Pretzels, who took advantage of missed free throws and offensive rebounds to take over control of the game and build a double-digit advantage.

Free-throw shooting was troublesome for the Hubs, who missed 12 total shots and went just 10-for-22 from the char-



(PHOTO BY RUSSELL HODGES)

Junior Elijah Harley is guarded by Freeport's Deklyn Rustad during the Rochelle Hub varsity basketball game against the Pretzels on Friday.

ity stripe in the game. The Pretzels, however, went 23-for-32 on free throws and 11-for-13 during the fourth quarter to close out their regional championship win.

"When we get to games like this, we have to find ways to win," Thompson said. "That's what we talked about before the game. Even if people on the Freeport side didn't

think we had a chance to win, there were 20 kids involved in our program who believed they could win and they got after it... It came down to a free-throw contest at the end

and we lost that free-throw contest. If we made more of those free throws, we could've had a shot and we could've had the lead."

See HUBS page 3

SPORTS

RTHS Boys & Girls Bowling

(COURTESY PHOTOS)



Rochelle Hub and Lady Hub student-athletes take home RTHS and Interstate 8 Conference awards

The Rochelle Hub and Lady Hub bowling teams held their awards banquet at T-Byrd Lanes this past Wednesday, with several student-athletes taking home RTHS and Interstate 8 Conference awards. Seven RTHS student-athletes including Dalila Garcia, Anahi Alanis (Honorable Mention), Declan McGee, Levi Waddle, Caleb Mortensen, Jon Alanis and Logan Frye (Honorable Mention) received Academic All-Conference honors (above). Luke Norris was the Boys Most Improved Player winner, while Andrew Powell was the Boys High Game, Boys High Series, Boys High Average and Boys Most Valuable Player winner. Cassidy Vincent was the Girls High Average and Girls Bowler of the Year winner, while Makenzie Liezert was the Girls Most Improved Player winner, Kylie McCullough was the Girls High Series winner, Anahi Alanis was the Girls Sportsmanship Award winner and Faith Adams was the Girls High Game winner (middle). Five RTHS student-athletes including Sam Tracey (Honorable Mention), Cassidy Vincent, Kylie McCullough (Honorable Mention), Andrew Powell and Logan Frye received All-Conference honors.

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SPORTS

RTHS Dance

(COURTESY PHOTOS)



Rochelle Lady Hub student-athletes earn RTHS and Interstate 8 awards during Friday banquet

The Rochelle Township High School dance team held its awards banquet at RTHS on Friday evening. Four RTHS student-athletes including Alessandra Bonilla (Honorable Mention), Audyn Kemp, Addison Stewart and Alayna Smardo (Honorable Mention) received Academic All-Conference honors from the Interstate 8 this season. Addison Stewart (right) was also named the Dancer of the Year Award winner.

RMS Girls Basketball

(PHOTOS BY ROBIN RETHWILL)



Rochelle Middle School seventh-graders concede home loss to Prairie Knolls in conference action

The Rochelle Middle School seventh-grade girls basketball team hosted Prairie Knolls in North Central Junior Conference action this past week, falling 45-11. Above, Jehan Jaradat (left) contests a shot and Elise Hardcastle (right) looks to steal the ball away from a Prairie Knolls player.

HUBS: Rochelle's season concludes in IHSA 3A Regional Finals

From page 1

Behind a balanced offensive attack and success off the dribble, Freeport took a 38-31 halftime lead over the Hubs, who fell further behind as their offense went cold during the third quarter. The Pretzels continued attacking the

basket, drawing enough fouls to enter the double bonus and convert shots at the free-throw line. Freeport guards Kazion Morehead and Dedric Macon sparked the Pretzel offense, with Morehead scoring 22 points and Macon adding 15 points. Freeport carried a 61-

47 lead into the fourth quarter, where Lewis exploded for three more triples after being held in check over the second and third quarters. The junior guard led all players with 26 points and led Rochelle back into the game, while freshman forward Brody Bruns and senior guard

Eli Luxton put home key layups in the paint over the final minutes.

Bruns and Luxton each had 10 points for the Hubs, while junior guard Elijah Harley added 12 points including a pair of layups in the fourth quarter. Junior guard Cayden Moore had 10 points and senior guard

Jack Tracey finished with nine points to round out all scorers for Rochelle.

"It was important that we stood out there and watched Freeport take the trophy," Thompson said. "I thought that burned our kids on the inside. We need two or three-sport athletes at Rochelle, but Freeport

has mostly basketball players and we came really close to taking it from them tonight. If we can find more time to get work in on the basketball end, then we can take a huge leap... We need to get back to work and we'll have tons of minutes to fill next year."

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Saturday, March 9th Starting at 9:30 a.m.

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HUB SPOTLIGHT

2023 I8-KRC Blue Conference Champions



Rochelle Hubs Football

(COURTESY PHOTO)

Fifteen members of the RTHS varsity football team were Interstate 8/Kishwaukee River All-Conference honorees this season. Twelve were First-Team honorees.

Twelve Hubs earn I-8/KRC First-Team honors

BY RUSSELL HODGES
SPORTS EDITOR

ROCHELLE—Fifteen members of the Rochelle Hub varsity football team brought home All-Conference recognition from the Interstate 8/Kishwaukee River Blue Division coaches for the 2023 season. Twelve of the All-Conference honorees were First-Team award winners, while three Rochelle student-athletes took home Honorable Mentions during the 2023 campaign.

Five Hub linemen received First-Team All-Conference honors in the fall. Those linemen include senior tackle Landon Mickley as well as junior linemen Kaiden Morris, Colton Czekala, Ryan Senne and Jack Carmichael. Mickley concluded his career as a three-year varsity player and a two-year varsity starter at right tackle. Morris was named the I-8/KRC Lineman of the Year for the 2023 season, recording 22 tackles and two sacks while starting all 10 games at right guard.

Czekala took over as Rochelle's starting center and filled a rotational role on the defensive line for the 2023 season, totaling seven tackles. Senne shined on the defensive side of the ball, recording nine tackles with four tackles for loss and one blocked kick. Carmichael returned as Rochelle's starting left guard this season and has now played two years on the varsity team.

First-Team All-Conference honorees at the skill positions include junior running back and free safety Grant Gensler as well as junior strong safety and wide receiver Elijah Harley. Gensler was an IHSFCA All-State Honorable Mention in 2023, rushing for 1,085 yards and 12 scores on offense

while totaling 39 tackles and one interception on defense. Harley recorded 20 tackles and two pass breakups and hauled in nine catches for 140 yards and one touchdown.

Freshman running back Dylan Manning earned First-Team All-Conference honors for the first time after rushing for 726 yards and 11 touchdowns. Junior quarterback Carson Lewis also received First-Team All-Conference honors for the first time, throwing for 634 yards and seven touchdowns in his first season as a starter. Junior tight end and defensive end Jack Pavlak was named a First-Team All-Conference honoree after 10 tackles, four tackles for loss and one sack.

Senior linebacker and tight end Brock Metzger led Rochelle with 58 tackles while adding seven tackles for loss and two sacks to earn First-Team All-Conference and I-8/KRC Defensive Player of the Year honors. Senior cornerback and wide receiver Tommy Tourdot led the Hubs with four interceptions and three pass breakups to take home First-Team All-Conference honors in 2023.

Rochelle's three All-Conference Honorable Mentions were junior lineman Alex Pemberton as well as sophomore running back Roman Villalobos and junior cornerback Xavier Villalobos. Pemberton started at left tackle and played on the defensive line, totaling five tackles.

Roman Villalobos rushed for 546 yards and six touchdowns in his first varsity season. Xavier Villalobos concluded his second varsity season with 16 tackles on defense along with two interceptions, two forced fumbles and two fumble recoveries on defense.



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