

The Nosy Neighbor

Vol. 20, Issue 2

March 1, 2018

Village Hall
1202 4th St.
P.O. Box 69
Orion, IL 61273-0069

Phone 309-526-8139
Fax 309-526-8444

Read more about
A Great Hometown
at
www.orionil.org

E-mail
vcclerk@orionil.org

Inside this issue:

New Meter Reader	2
Scheduled Street Improvements	2
Meal for Seniors	2
Larkins' Term (cont'd)	3
Quad City Trails	3
Larkins' Term	4

March 20th Public Safety Tax Referendum

Last year in the September Nosy Neighbor, its cover story was about Henry County's desire to charge user fees for dispatching services. The fees were intended to cover the county's increasing public safety costs.

County officials were poised to charge certain taxing bodies but not others, seemingly based on affordability. At one point, Orion's proposed costs were estimated to be about \$17,000 annually.

After much objection by a Henry County mayor's coalition, led by Jim Cooper, the Henry County Board voted against the user fees.

In lieu of fees, Cooper and others promised to campaign for approval of a county-wide 1/2 percent sales tax to cover public safety expenses. A prior attempt had been defeated by public referendum.

County residents have another opportunity to vote for the sales tax on March 20, 2018. If the tax is defeated, county

officials might be forced to continue their plan to charge user fees to taxing bodies. Each affected taxing body will in turn need to find a way to pay those fees.

Following are observations from the Henry County website:

With a public safety tax in effect, non-residents as well as residents would help pay the cost of public safety. Anyone passing through the county and making a taxable purchase would provide revenue for the public safety of Henry County.

Revenue from a 1/2 percent sales tax can only be used for crime prevention, detention, police, medical ambulance, fire fighting, or other emergency services. Public safety services some might not think of are the county coroner, State attorney, public defender, jailers, and courthouse security personnel (protection of judges and the court system).

Exempt from the proposed tax are groceries, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, cars, boats, and motorcycles.

If a cup of coffee and doughnut cost \$1.84, the public safety tax would add only \$0.01 to the purchase.

The question on the ballot will look like this:

“To pay for public safety purposes, shall Henry County be authorized to impose an increase on its share of local sales taxes by one-half percent (0.50%)? This would mean that a consumer would pay an additional \$0.50 in sales tax for every \$100 of tangible personal property bought at retail.”

**YES
NO**

Vote **Tuesday, March 20th**. To find your polling place contact Henry County Clerk Barb Link at 309-937-3575 or blink@henrycty.com.

Smoke Detectors Offered

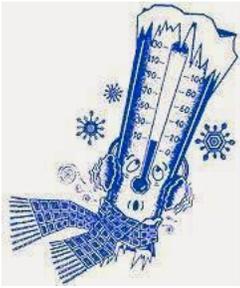
Free smoke detectors are available to residents of the Orion Fire Protection District, according to Orion Fire Chief Doug Smutzer.

Chief Smutzer said higher than normal fire deaths have been recorded this winter season.

A grant from Modern Woodmen, via representative Jenny Lees, made it possible for the district to offer free smoke detectors. To obtain a free smoke detector contact the Orion Fire Protection District at 309-526-3365 and leave your contact information.

The death rate per 100 reported home fires is more than twice as high in homes that do not have any working smoke detectors compared to the rate in homes with working smoke detectors, according to the National Fire Protection Association.

Cold Blast Welcomed New Meter Reader



Dennis Cooper has been hired as meter reader for the Village of Orion. He recently retired from Frontier Communications after a lengthy employment with the phone and internet provider. Cooper began his duties with the village January 1, 2018.

As luck would have it, Cooper was met with a cold blast of January weather—below zero temps and even colder wind chills—but he managed to obtain all readings with little or no trouble.

All water supplied from the village water distribution system is metered, and it is illegal to bypass a meter. Owners or occupants of premises where a meter is installed are responsible for its care and protection from freezing or any injury or interference. Meters shall be readily accessible at all times to the meter reader and inspectors of the water department.

The village meter reader can read meters any day of the week, including weekends and holidays, and at any time of day, except for before dawn and after dark.

13th Street Court Rehab on Tap for Summer 2018

The 13th Street Court rehab has taken a bumpy path on its way to being placed on the fiscal year 2019 schedule. It was first postponed because the street department is a one-man show and the department's employee could not handle the project while attending to the remainder of the department's needs. The village board then asked its engineering firm to draw up specifications so the project could be put out for bid. Engineering costs would be just under \$10,000 and a preliminary estimate for the project's cost was \$98,000.

Since the street superintendent's estimate for doing the project in-house was far less, the village board reconsidered its options. Talks are underway to hire a summer employee to assist with the street project. First, job parameters must be determined.

The project entails removing the existing oil and chip surface, laying geotech fabric, building a base, and completing with a 3" asphalt surface.



Meal Service for Seniors

Seniors might want to take advantage of a hot meal every Tuesday at Orion United Methodist Church.



Some could have missed this information in a previous edition of The Nosy Neighbor so it's being printed again for the benefit of seniors looking for food and fellowship.

Orion United Methodist Church hosts a senior citizens meal every Tuesday at noon in its Fellowship Hall. This service is provided by Henry County. It's a great opportunity for those 60 and older to receive a hot meal at the church or delivered to their homes. Cost is only \$2.75 for a meal at the church. To have a meal delivered to your home, the cost is \$3. After the meal there is time for fellowship and playing cards.

For seniors who have not yet participated, the first meal is free. To ensure enough meals are on hand, those planning to attend must reserve a meal by Monday and specify whether it is for dine-in or carry-out. Call Iris Swanson at 309-278-2510 or John Schenk at 309-737-6161.

The senior citizens group looks forward to including more people at its meal site.

Larkins - Cont'd From Pg 4

corner of 4th Street and 10th Avenue, in the village's downtown, but was looking to move to ground adjacent to Illinois Hwy. 150.

In October, the plan for sewer upgrades was presented to the public. A low interest loan offered by the IEPA was being considered and the project was proposed to be completed in two phases—the sanitary relief main plus partial plant upgrades, then completion of the plant upgrade. A one-year gap was projected between the two phases. Costs were projected to be \$3,049,566 but would climb closer to \$4 million before all was said and done.

The village's low-to-moderate income was too high, making it ineligible for grants. The defeat of the TIF district, which was proposed as a source of revenue for the sewer project, narrowed the options of how to go about paying for the sewer project. Larkins proposed a user fee of \$1/per 1,000 gallons be instituted on monthly water and sewer bills.

Increasing the property tax levy was also put forth. In order to generate enough revenue, the existing property tax rate would have to almost double. There were concerns that borrowing the amount necessary to fix the sewer system could pose a problem with the village's debt limit, however, the village had little choice but to move forward with IEPA demands.

The board ultimately voted to establish a functional plan to pay for the sewer project based on an increase in sewer user fees. The facility plan for the sewer upgrade was completed and forwarded to the IEPA.

Meanwhile, Larkins announced he would make plans to call a meeting to discuss ways to promote business and residential growth in Orion. After attending a Northwest Municipal Association meeting, he learned businesses and developers are often attracted to a municipality by tax incentives, such as a TIF district.

The village board learned approval of a lagoon system required a hearing before the Illinois Pollution Control Board. As a result, Larkins and village attorney John Ames traveled to Springfield in January 1997 to discuss the project. The duo then met with Bloomington attorney Tom Jacob, who had helped create Orion's TIF district, which was later struck down in court. Larkins wanted to discuss the possibility of setting up another TIF district, albeit a much smaller one, in order to spur development.

After the failure of the original TIF district, can Larkins convince the village board to give it another go? To be continued.

-Lori A. Sampson

Amidst discussions of a sewer plant upgrade, how to pay for it, and the possibility of another TIF district, Sewer Superintendent Chris Lundburg and his wife welcomed a baby boy into their family.

Stay tuned for the continuation of Larkins' term in the next edition of The Nosy Neighbor.

Quad City Trails For Your Enjoyment

Though no trails exist in the village of Orion, trails of every kind can be enjoyed in the Quad City area. Bi-State Regional Commission, an organization established in 1966, serving local governments in five counties in Iowa and Illinois, and of which the village of Orion is a member, developed a fun tool to encourage and improve outdoor physical activity. This tool is a web-based interactive trails map and it can be found at www.QCTrails.org.

A press release provided by Bi-State informs the reader that the QC area boasts more than 300 miles of non-motorized recreational trails and nearly 7,500 acres of parks. QCTrails.org is a free, interactive website that serves as a resource to highlight multi-purpose trails, parks, and side-paths.

Bi-State invites people to use its site to search a growing collection of four-season trails in the QC, whether it be hiking, strolling, running, riding a bicycle, horseback riding, or paddling a water trail. Each detailed trail includes a route with points of interest like parking areas, restrooms, cultural attractions, and parks.

Set up a free QC Trails user account and save your trail experiences. Mark trails you've completed, indicate favorites, and create a wish list. Bi-State describes this service as an opportunity to improve physical activity throughout the year. Choose a new trail every week and have fun in the outdoors.

Find a trail at www.QCTrails.org





The Nosy Neighbor
P.O. Box 69
Orion, IL 61273-0069

Nonprofit
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT 9
ORION, IL 61273

POSTAL CUSTOMER
BOXHOLDER
ORION, IL 61273

Larkins Takes the Reins After Ryden Resigns

Bill Larkins' term as acting mayor began on August 19, 1996. Mayor Jan Ryden had resigned, leaving the position open, and Steve Morse, a trustee, had also resigned. The village board was left to not only appoint an acting mayor but also a trustee.

The selection process started off a tad rocky when a motion was made to appoint Larkins as acting mayor only to hear an opposing motion by Steve Begley to appoint trustee Mel Drucker. The opposing motion died for lack of a second. A vote on the original motion followed, with Begley abstaining. Drucker was absent and all others voted in favor. Larkins was in as acting mayor.

Larkins took over the reins right at a time when the board was under fire from the Illinois EPA to upgrade the sewer plant and install a sewer relief main. Four alternatives to upgrade the plant were developed by village engineers but two were eliminated by the IEPA. This left the options of a lagoon system and an oxidation ditch. The board, with the exception of Begley, voted to recommend the lagoon system for presentation to the IEPA. This was the least expensive option to initiate and operate.

Sewer Supt. Chris Lundburg attempted to persuade the board to change its mind in favor of the oxidation ditch, to better maintain levels of B.O.D., ammonia and effluent. He was also concerned the IEPA might change its mind 20 to 30 years down the road and require a mechanical plant be reinstated. The board listened to the argument but stuck to its guns due to the difference in cost.

In September, the board appointed Charles Rhoades to fill the vacancy left by Morse.

Orion resident Lynn Lang, who volunteered to take care of the flower garden in Central Park, held a plant sale, netting \$210 to be used for plant purchases for the next season.

Augie DeMay and Earl Papini, owners of the local Chevrolet dealership and garage, applied for approval to extend water and sewer to a site where construction was planned for their new building. Augie & Earl's Chevrolet was situated on the