

Ghostbusters
New movie
draws on legacy
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Birthday
New Central kids
celebrate for state
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Fast Duck
Kalei McDaniel
looks to spring
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DELIVERING
THE NEWS
OF MASON
COUNTY
SINCE 1849

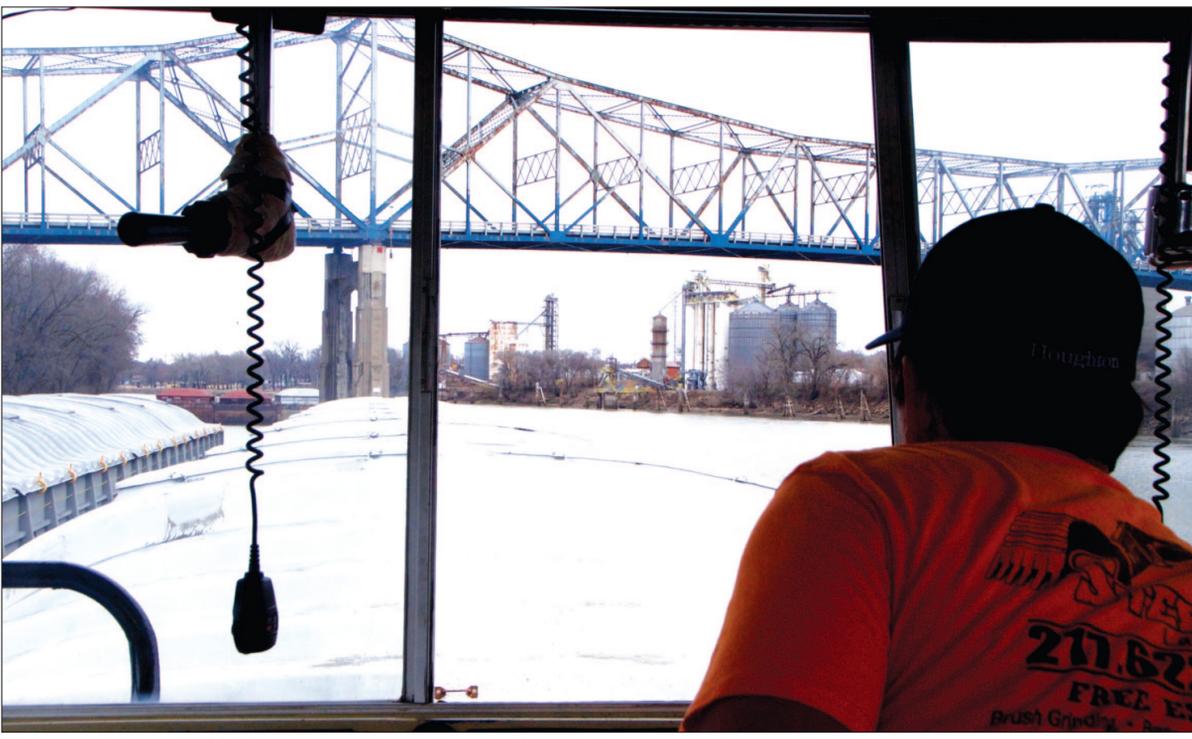
HAVANA, ILLINOIS
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December 15, 2021
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DEMOCRAT

Mason County's Oldest Business - Est. 1849



EVAN HOUGHTON, A tug pilot with Jack Tanner Havana. Illinois Waterway Ports are now the eighth largest inland port in the nation. Photo by Bob Martin.

Havana buys tornado siren for south side

BY GAVIN MALISKA

The Havana City Council voted Tuesday to spend \$27,880 for a new tornado siren that will reach uncovered areas on the city's south side.

City Fire Marshal/Zoning Officer Matt Fliege learned in early November that failure of an aging siren left portions of the city's south side without audible warnings of approaching storms.

After hearing reports from residents, he ran a series of tests during the usual first Tuesday tornado drills and found the oscillating siren at Main and Pearl streets could be heard only faintly on the southwest side and

could easily be covered by the sound of winds from severe weather.

Fliege said the siren wouldn't be available for 10 weeks but could be installed and ready for the tornado season in the spring.

"It will take minimal work to get the site prepared on Tinkham, so we should be well prepared when storm season comes around," Fliege said "We had our monthly tests this morning and found the other sirens are working as they should."

The decades-old siren at the city's sewage treatment plant off Illinois 78 failed in early 2020, and the city subsequently spent

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Port cities on the Illinois hope new status brings river of money for improvements

BY GAVIN MALISKA

From the banks alongside it, or from a bridge crossing it, the Illinois River may look the same as it always has anywhere from Havana to Starved Rock, but in only the past few weeks the river has gained importance and influence.

The new status is the result of an official recognition of the role played by the river in moving to market the crops produced by Illinois farmers and items manufactured by Illinois companies. Nothing changed but a U.S. government agency started paying attention and noted that ports along this stretch of the Illinois combine to be the eighth largest inland port in the nation and the 42nd largest U.S. port overall.

The Corps of Engineers Navigation and Civil Works Decision Support Center, along with the Waterborne Commerce Statistics Center, issued its approval on Oct. 9 for the creation of three port statistical areas in the heart of the corn belt that included the Illinois Waterway Ports and Terminals, those facilities along the Illinois River that bring together river, rail and road to move freight.

That recognition didn't just happen but resulted from years of lobbying by a group of like-minded people who knew the work being done along the river but wanted everyone else to know about it, too.

One of those influencers is Robert Sinkler, a retired Army colonel and former commander of the Rock Island Engineer District who now is COO of Streamside System Inc. and a senior advisor for Dawson & Associates.

For Sinkler, the benefit of the port's recognition is obvious.

"As I've said for a long time, you can't invest in a port that doesn't exist," he said. "Now that the Illinois Waterway does officially exist as a port, there should be increased opportunity for a wide range of funding opportunities from the economic development grants to possibly getting federally authorized small boat harbors dredged."

About 34.4 million tons of freight are shipped on the Illinois River each year, mostly passing through the 175-mile portion of the river between Ottawa and Havana. That stretch includes Peoria, Pekin, the Heart of Illinois Regional Port, Havana Regional Port, Illinois Valley Regional Port, Ottawa City Port,

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Former home of Oney's Foods to be torn down

BY GAVIN MALISKA

The building that formerly housed the Oney's Foods store on Promenade Street in Havana will be torn down in the next month, owners of the property said Thursday.

Shan Clevenger, real estate manager at Quincy-based Niemann Foods Inc., which owns the building and the former Alco store next door, said the roof is no longer "structurally safe."

The Oney's Foods store closed in 2010, and Niemann Holdings bought the real estate in 2015, according to Clevenger. The Alco store closed a couple years after that.

Niemann's owns and operates

See ONEYS on Page 3



THE FORMER ONEY'S Foods store on Promenade Street in Havana will be razed in the next 30 days after the roof became "structurally unsafe."

Christmas wishes ...



SANTA PAID A visit to downtown Mason City for Friday night's Reimagine Christmas parade and event. He gave hugs, handed out candy canes and spread holiday cheer. The event drew hundreds of people downtown before bad weather hit.

Covid-19 cases jump by 124

Hospitalizations also increase in Mason County

BY WENDY MARTIN

Mason County Health Department Administrator Curt Jibben said it was hard to say for certain why cases were climbing, but indoor gatherings like Thanksgiving, and fewer precautions as people start letting their guard and masks down may play a role.

Jibben added that a similar bump might also be anticipated after Christmas, unless it just folds into the current spike.

"Of course, it is also flu season so we urge people to take precautions and stay home if they are not feeling well, or are exhibiting symptoms," Jibben said.

He also urged residents to get their booster shots, or get their vaccinations if they have not already done so.

A total of 59 young people were among the 124 new cases of COVID-19 diagnosed in Mason County over the past week from Tuesday, December 6 through Monday, December 10.

The number of new cases in Mason County include four hospitalizations.

In the previous four weeks the number of new casts climbed from 10, to 26, to 35, to 78.

IDPH ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Mason County Covid-19

Vaccine Administration Data

Vaccination Data as of 11/29/2021

Total Administered Doses 13,959	5-11 Vaccinated 4.44%	18-64 Vaccinated 53.01%
Fully Vaccinated 6,483 47.79%	12-17 Vaccinated 25.33%	65+ Vaccinated 80.94%




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Havana again calls off meeting on side-by-side ordinance

BY GAVIN MALISKA

The Havana City Council again delayed consideration of allowing side-by-sides to be driven on city streets and put off any action until January. Ald. Ed Ray has found himself in the position of having to bring the matter before his Licenses, Ordinances & Legal

Committee at the same time he has been the most vocal opponent to the vehicles. He said he decided to cancel the Tuesday night committee hearing because five days before a city employee tested positive for COVID-19. "We had one called but canceled it," Ray said. "We had intentions to do it, but with the situation we chose not to." Tuesday was the second time in the

past month, Ray has said he was going to have his committee meet on the matter only to call it off before it was posted. Although Ray called off his committee's meeting in consideration of the positive COVID case at City Hall, the council did meet in the City Center as the public works committee to approve hiring Farnsworth Engineering to file an application for a grant. Unlike the committee

meeting on the side-by-side ordinance, Stadsholt said the public works committee "had to be done." Ray said before the meeting that he was concerned the matter would attract 30 to 40 people to attend. "Can we just pick a date and set it so we can move on?" Ald. Dan Griffin asked Ray. "That was my intent," Ray said.

"It's looking like we're just pushing it out," Griffin said. "Either way we've still got to keep business rolling, and I feel that the COVID matter is pushing it out longer and longer. We're making ourselves look bad by just not addressing the issue...and moving along." Ray said he wouldn't be at the next council meeting, so the ordinance wouldn't be addressed until January.



HAVANA ROTARY BELL RINGERS Bob Himmel, Bill Knake and Jim Easley collect donations on Main Street Saturday morning to help fund their annual Christmas Basket program to ensure everyone has a special meal this December. Distribution is coordinated with the Havana Emergency Food Pantry.

ONEY'S

from Page 1

the County Market food store on U.S. 136 in Havana, along with 41 other supermarkets in Illinois, Indiana and Missouri. While the Oney's building has been leased for storage, the Alco side has been mostly vacant, other than for community events and holiday toy drives. Until recently, John Lorek had used that building as a base for his Illinois Ability Sports charity. The food store had been owned and run by Gene Oney until his death in 2009. He started Oney's at the corner of Plum and Adams streets in 1966, then moved to the 8,500-square-foot store on Promenade in 1970. The

building was expanded several times over the years. "I am sorry to hear that they are going to have to tear down the former Oney's building," said Sheryl Roos, Gene Oney's daughter. "I was hoping they could have developed the building into something to benefit the community. "I have lots of memories of working with my Dad and family and all the great employees we had," she said. "Also, I can't forget to mention all the customers that came through our doors for over 40 years. After the building is gone I hope the community will remember all the wonderful

things my Dad did for them." The building has been leased out for storage for a few years, Clevenger said, and the tenants are currently working to remove their property. When it's empty, the building will undergo asbestos abatement procedures before it can be razed. Although Clevenger said the job has not yet been put out for bids, she estimated it will be leveled within 30 days. The Alco building will remain on the site, Clevenger said. "We don't have any immediate plans for the Alco side," she said. "It's for lease or sale if anyone's interested."

SIREN

from Page 1

\$26,000 to install the oscillating siren along Main Street. The new siren will be built by the same manufacturer and installed on city-owned land on Tinkham Hill, at the intersection of Tinkham and

Pearl streets. It will be placed on a pole and complete the city's system, with the siren on Main and smaller sirens at the Fire Station on Market Street and in Rice Park.

In other business: -The Council approved issuing \$100 Christmas bonuses for city employees, excluding elected officials. The city will pay the taxes on the bonus so the

employees will receive the entire \$100. -Public Works Director Jewel Bucy said his department has been relieved to find the newly installed automation system is running as it should, keeping

workers from continually visiting the water pump station to turn equipment on and off. The system had been replaced using federal money granted to the city through the American Rescue Plan Act.

PORT

from Page 1

and Seneca Regional port. The work of the industries that move freight on the river and the value of the cargo is huge, but the ports have received no federal funding at all while other ports have realized billions in tax dollars flowing from Washington. "There is \$17 billion available for ports and waterways in the infrastructure legislation," Sinkler said. "Some of that will go to the Illinois Waterway. We

should start getting a glimpse of that after the first of the year when federal agency work plans and implementation guidance starts becoming available." The Havana Regional Port District is getting ready for the expected funding that comes with recognition. Bob Martin, chairman of the district (and owner of this paper), said the group is just starting to study the Havana Port and what moves

through it. "We got a \$250,000 grant through the Illinois Department of Transportation and just signed a contract for a study by Hanson Engineering out of Springfield," Martin said. The firm first will look at all the traffic going through the area, include rail, trucks and the river, along with the types of commodities coming through, whether grain, coal or manufactured goods. "It really enhances our ability to apply for and compete for federal grant funds," Martin said. While the amount of corn and beans put onto barges at the elevators along the river in Havana contributes greatly to the tonnage moved along the Illinois, Havana also works in alignment with other ports in other river cities, he said. That's teamwork

that can longer be overlooked. Like the study being done by the Havana Regional Port District, Sinkler said cities and counties along the Illinois River should be doing their homework to determine what they need to make the most of their locations,

preparing detailed capital needs requests for improvements under the guidance of IDOT and other state agencies.



A RAFT OF barges moves along the Illinois River. The formation of the Illinois Waterways Ports helps cities and counties along the river compete for a share of \$17 billion in federal funding through infrastructure legislation. Photo by Bob Martin.

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