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DELIVERING  
THE NEWS  
OF MASON  
COUNTY  
SINCE 1849

**HAVANA, ILLINOIS**  
Wednesday  
May 25, 2022  
#21 \$1.25

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Mason County **DEMOCRAT**  
Mason County's Oldest Business - Est. 1849

# Havana gives workers \$1K in hazard pay

BY GAVIN MALISKA

Stadsholt's description of the resolution unanimously adopted by the council. That changed in the week after the vote to give department heads—such as the police chief and public works director—the \$1,000.

"This comes under the ARPA funding of 'COVID hazard pay,'" Stadsholt said. "The county did it with a process called premium pay but this is coming under the ARPA funding for COVID hazard." Stadsholt said the bonuses were the subject of discussion with the city's labor attorney and unions representing employees.

Stadsholt said the city's administrative assistant, Savannah Burgett, and City Clerk Jesse Hall put together the list of employees who qualified for the bonus, although that list and the number of people on it was unavailable a week after the vote. Burgett resigned her position with the city this month but still will receive the \$1,000, she said.

Last December, the Mason County Board voted to use \$162,878 in ARPA funds for "premium pay" for county employees who worked during the pandemic. The premium amounted to \$3,000 per employee and included all full-time and regular part-time workers with at least 20

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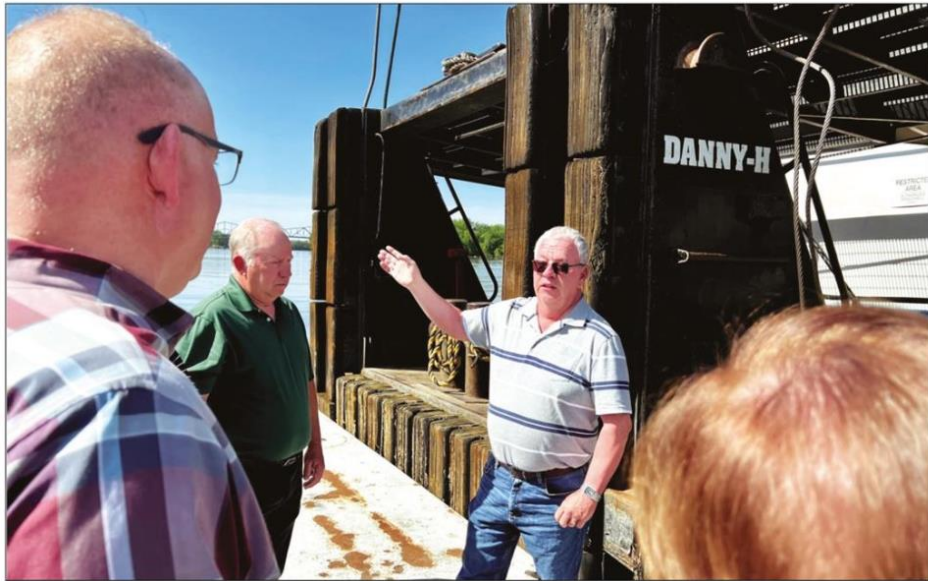
Some Havana city employees will be receiving one-time \$1,000 payments from the city as "COVID hazard pay" for having worked during the pandemic.

The City Council unanimously agreed on Monday to give certain employees money from the city's share of American Rescue Plan Act. The vote was taken even though the resolution was still being drawn up by the city's attorney and some details—such as who will receive the bonus and the total cost to the city—changed in the week following the meeting or were still unavailable.

ARPA sent funds from the federal government to the city to help it withstand the economic impact of the pandemic. Havana will receive \$412,000 total in ARPA funds over two installments. The second \$206,000 payment is expected this summer.

Mayor Brenda Stadsholt tabbed the money for employees as "COVID hazard pay" and said it would go out to full-time employees who worked for the city from March of 2020 through April 30 of this year.

Exempt from the bonus will be elected officials and part-time employees, according to



**DANNY HOUGHTON PREPARES** to bring a the Havana port facilities from the view of those who group aboard the tug that carries his name for a tour of work the river. Photo by Bob Martin

# Corn Belt Ports group tours Havana

BY GAVIN MALISKA

The people who put Havana on the map as part of the Corn Belt Ports, the largest inland port in the nation, came to town for a tour and the Third Tuesday coffee at the City Center.

Havana and all the other port cities along the Illinois and Mississippi rivers have been in existence, of course, for hundreds of years after the French voyageurs discovered what native Americans knew for centuries, that the locales offered fertile land and fresh water

that moved from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico.

But it took a group of like-minded individuals and some math and geography to group together active river port communities into three definite transportation hubs: the Illinois Waterway Ports and Terminals along the Illinois River from Joliet to Cass County—including Mason County and Havana; the Mid-America Port Commissions of Illinois counties surrounding Quincy and Missouri and Iowa counties on the western banks of the Mississippi; and the Mississippi River

Ports, including Illinois, Iowa and Missouri counties along the Mississippi.

Among the three areas that make up the Corn Belt Ports, the Illinois Waterway Ports make up the largest area as to tonnage moved on the river, Sinkler said.

Col. Bob Sinkler (Ret.) told city and county government officials, professionals and merchants the work to combine all the individual ports into the Corn Belt Ports was meant to awaken the people in the federal government

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# PORTS

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with their hands on the money, that this vibrant economic engine was operating in the middle of the country and could use some federal help, and federal money, to maintain and improve the infrastructure.

"In 2021, we created on the Illinois River the equivalent of the Port of Pittsburgh," he said. "The Port of Pittsburgh is 200 miles long, handles about 15 million tons a year. We created that same thing here."

The goal, he said, "was to bring more federal direct and indirect investment, from a wide variety of sources, into the region."

Before that, only St. Louis was recognized by federal authorities as having ports worthy of federal investment by the U.S. Department of Transportation. Maps used by the federal government to make decisions for use of resources didn't show any of the ports along the Illinois River or north of St. Louis on the Mississippi, according to Sinkler.

## Magazine ranking

Each October, Global Trade Magazine publishes rankings of the largest ports in the United States, Sinkler said, and the goal for the Corn Belt Ports is to be included as a Top 50 among U.S. ports and Top 10 among inland ports every year.

"The Illinois Waterways ... is larger than the port of Vancouver,

larger than the port of Miami; Galveston, Texas; Brownville, Texas," he said. "So a lot of these ports you're familiar with and are viewed as nationally significant, we handle a lot more tonnage than that."

## Seen as one port

In Illinois, the Illinois Waterway Ports, composed of 10 counties along the Illinois River from Mason to Grundy, handle shipping equivalent to the 42nd largest port in the nation and the eighth largest inland port. Recognition as one port "should have been done a long time ago," he said.

The positive effect of uniting individual areas into the Corn Belt Ports has been seen already as different projects in the area were awarded \$1.24 billion in the federal infrastructure act.

"We've never seen that kind of investment before, since the 1930s," Sinkler said. "Timing was perfect, and there's more expected."

The U.S. Department of Transportation is expected to double the amount of federal dollars spent on port maintenance and construction, Sinkler said, so the identity of the area as part of the largest inland port in the U.S. should improve chances for local projects to attract funding.

"That can only help," he said. "We want to help everybody be

successful competing for grants."

As part of a local effort to promote transportation potential in the Havana area, Bob Martin, chairman of the Havana Regional Port District, told the Third Tuesday gathering about the \$250,000 grant the U.S. Department of Transportation awarded late last year to inventory and catalog activities and facilities—river, road, railroad and airport—within a 50-mile radius.

The grant allowed the group to contract with ports engineer Greg Kelahan of Hanson

Professional Services to conduct the inventory and develop a master plan. Kelahan said he has been looking at freight data, to see what is being moved through the area, with an eye toward potential demand for services.

"We're going to also do some site selection work, hopefully to find a site that we can potentially develop as a port and develop a master plan for that site," Kelahan said.

Sinkler said the infrastructure bill could provide the funds for development of such a site.

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# MEMORIAL DAY

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flags along U.S. 136 as the Avenue of Flags. Volunteers will meet at 6 a.m., at the west end of the cemetery to put up the flags, weather permitting.

Anyone from the community who wishes to help honor those who served this way are welcome to come and help.

## Havana ceremony set for City Center

Havana American Legion Post 138 and Veterans of Foreign Wars Posts 6408 come together on Monday, May 30, at 10 a.m. at the Havana City Center to host a ceremony honoring Mason County residents who perished in the country's wars.

The veterans groups decided to move the ceremony indoors to allow for seating and address any concerns about the weather.

As in past years, the ceremony will recognize those from Mason County who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

The spotlight this year will be on U.S. Marine Corps CW4 John W. Frederick, Jr., who served in World War II, Korea and Vietnam, and died while being held as a POW in Vietnam.

Memorial Day began as Decoration Day after the Civil War when communities gathered to decorate the graves of those who fought and died in the war between the states. It is federal holiday always observed on the last Monday of May.

## Mason City slates flags display

Members of Mason City American Legion Post 496 will be displaying casket flags that were donated to the legion by families of military veterans who passed.

Half of the nearly 400 flags will be posted in Memorial Park with the other 200 flags at Mason City Cemetery. The postings will be done starting at 6 a.m. on Monday, May 30, and will be removed about 4:30 p.m.