



Life in the big house, 1870s

Comets aim to end season on high note



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He said, she said, they said View is different from all sides on Lyons' retirement

BY MARNEY SIMON
EDITOR

The change in leadership at the Braidwood Police Department is nearly complete, as a new interim chief has been appointed with plans to make that a permanent appointment later this month.

But the story on the end of Todd Lyons' more than four years as Top Cop in Braidwood is not over.

Lyons resigned effective immediately last week. Lyons said he was approached by Mayor Karen Hart and asked to resign for the good of the department and the city.

Members of the public asked the City Council during their regular meeting on Oct. 10, just hours after the resignation, for a clear explanation of why Lyons was asked to resign, and offered examples of positive per-

sonal experiences with Lyons as part of their frustration over the decision.

Hart announced during that meeting that Lyons had submitted his resignation papers as of Oct. 10, but did not comment further at that time.

During an interview with the *Braidwood Journal* on Oct. 13, Hart said Lyons sent an email on Oct. 3 letting the mayor and the members of the police department know that he was going to retire, only to rescind that letter of resignation a few days later.

Hart and members of the police department said that beginning last spring, Lyons had become disengaged with staff.

"There had been some concerns that had been voiced by the police to the commissioners about what was happening in the police department, that was way back," Hart said.

"Everybody really thought it was just a couple of guys [complaining] about their boss. We didn't really take much thought into it. But as it went on, and this was probably in May or June when it started to rumble. Then we got busy with sergeants' contracts, then his contract got tabled, then it all kind of snowballed and it became more and more concerning."

Hart said she asked the commissioners to join her in having discussions with Lyons and the officers to get to the bottom of the issue, and said she wanted to have a resolution by the end of October. But, she said, after giving that end of October date, Lyons instead submitted his first letter of resignation, which was sent to the mayor, commissioners, Reed-Custer School District, and the members of the police department. Lyons also let the *Braidwood Journal* know

that he would be retiring as of Oct. 6. Hart said she met with Lyons on Oct. 4 to discuss the resignation.

"There were concerns about more administrative accountability, follow-through, and given that seems like very little, it just built up," she said. "It was something that was being difficult for the rest of the PD to handle, so they said, so we addressed those with Todd."

Hart said that during that conversation, Lyons offered to rescind his resignation.

Lyons disputes that claim, saying that the mayor asked him to rescind the letter, which he said he then did.

According to Hart, though, things continued to decline.

"A week and a half after that, the climate just got a little more tension, there was talk of people leaving and it just was snowballing," Hart said. "And

I said, well, it looks like I have to do something one way or another, which I did not want to do. I didn't buy into this, but something has to be done.

"I had asked [City Attorney] Bryan Wellner to just write a simple statement saying I am retiring as of such and such a date, so he did that and I had that paper and I walked in and I asked one of the officers to please come in the office with me so that there would be a third party there," Hart continued. "And I simply said to Todd, he said what do you want to talk about, and I said I think it's time that you put in your retirement papers, I think it would be best for the department and best for Braidwood if you would do it, and I would like you to go out with your

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Photo by Marney Simon

THE BRAIDWOOD FIRE PROTECTION District officially took over fire and ambulance calls in Custer Township on Oct. 1. This week, the fire personnel officially moved into the fire house on Route 113. An IGA between Braidwood and Custer's fire districts outlines that Braidwood will operate out of the Custer Park station at all times with at least two people on staff.

Braidwood opens the doors at Custer Park fire station

BY MARNEY SIMON
EDITOR

The fire station in Custer Park has officially reopened, operating with a full time staff for what officials say is the first time in its more than six decades of history.

On Monday, firefighters began their first day at the firehouse under an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) between the Braidwood Fire Protection District (BFPD) and the Custer Fire Protection District (CFPD), which handed operations of ambulance and fire protection services in Custer Township to Braidwood.

The IGA, which went into effect on Oct. 1, required Braidwood to occupy the station within 60 days, but Braidwood Fire Chief Chris Jude said the goal was to be on site sooner.

Over the past three weeks, BFPD came into the station, cleaned, set up sleeping quarters, fixed the IT infrastructure to connect to Braidwood Station 1, performed some inspections,

moved in Braidwood's apparatus, moved Custer's apparatus to be liquidated, and moved the Custer ambulance into the reserve position.

Jude said the next step is for Braidwood personnel to serve the district while continuing training and understanding their new duties to a more rural area. Including acclimating to one of the biggest differences in operations between Braidwood and Custer—water.

"Everything out here is going to be porta-tank operations with tenders (water tanker trucks), where as in town we have hydrants for the most part," Jude said. "We brought out here our pumper tender 2412, which has got 2,500 gallons of water on it, so that's a good start on a house fire. It also has a big porta-tank on it, which is like a big swimming pool we stick on the ground and then the tenders come in and drop water. So, out here is a lot of rural firefighting, but we used to do it when we covered Custer for those four or five years as it was anyway."

Jude also noted that portions of Braidwood, including Shadow Lakes, do not use water hydrants, so the department's firefighters are well trained and prepared for non-hydrant firefighting.

"It's nothing new, I think the only real challenge for our guys to train and get better on is the fact that we're responding with a jump company of two people," the chief added. "In the fire service we do not go interior firefighting unless we have the same amount of people on the outside. So, our firefighting will be get water... stretch a line, get a hose and water on that fire, perform any rescues that need to be done at the time while we're waiting for the Calvary to come in from the other station. That is going to be a challenge in training for them because we're so used to showing up with five immediately and we go to work interior firefighting right away if it's conducive."

Jude said the rural conditions of long driveways and setback homes will also be a change, but one firefighters are already training for. And,

he added, an additional benefit to manning the station is having a fully operational 24-hour firehouse on the opposite side of the railroad tracks from Station 1.

"Our guys are dealing with the railroad tracks in Braidwood, so now it's nice to have someone over here," Jude said. "This morning I sat for five minutes for a freight train to go by. So, to have someone over here who can respond in any direction, here in Custer or on the east side of the tracks in Braidwood. My biggest concern was the school, all the Custer kids go there, so now we have the capability of providing that service even if a train is blocking it."

As far as the controversy that surrounded the IGA, which included six months of contentious meetings, the resignation of two Custer trustees, signs proclaiming a hostile takeover that were subsequently vandalized, and a walkout of Custer staff following the vote, district offi-

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Will County transit plan stalled at County Board

BY MARNEY SIMON
EDITOR

An effort to expand public transportation services into southern Will County seems to be running low on gas.

The plan to address the lack of public transportation options in portions of Will County included a public engagement period in 2022, which was included as part of a study of the various paratransit and dial-a-ride systems in Will County presented last month to the County Board. That document identified a variety of gaps and inefficiencies for residents who require mobility assistance.

The final result of that study was the Access Will County Plan.

The study, officially the Access Will County Paratransit Integration and Efficiency Study, examined the existing paratransit system of Will County, which is currently served by 12 separate dial-a-ride systems that primarily serve seniors and people with disabilities. Those systems operate in various townships throughout the county, predominantly in the easternmost region, with no transit options in Wilmington, Reed, Custer,

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Trucks remain a topic of concern for Braidwood residents

BY MARNEY SIMON
EDITOR

Residents of Braidwood used their time meeting with elected and appointed officials last month to inquire about an issue that's been a hot topic for years in the city—what is up with the trucks?

In September, about 20 members of the public attended the second of three town hall style meetings, where residents can interact with the mayor, commissioners, and city administrator Tony Altieri.

One of the questions brought to the floor was the status of the planned truck stop at I-55 and Kennedy Road. In spring of 2022, the City Council approved the initial plans presented by developer Sam Makin and Braidwood Truck Stop LLC to annex 10 acres into the city of Braidwood, as well as a planned development (PUD)

special use permit to allow for a commercial development.

That development is set to include an approximate 24,000 square foot truck stop providing gasoline and diesel fuel, as well as a hotel with 22 lodging suites, a locker room with private showers, a laundry facility, 10 gaming machines, retail/convenience store sales, and multiple restaurant developments. The site plan also includes 83 standard parking stalls, four ADA parking stalls, and 83 truck parking stalls.

During last month's town hall meeting, Altieri said there was an internal issue within the corporation created when one of the partners left the

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