



RC honors students of the month

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## Comprehensive plan open house slated for this month

BY MARNEY SIMON  
EDITOR

It was January 2022 when city leaders in Braidwood were first informed that the city would receive technical assistance creating a new comprehensive plan.

Now, with public comments and survey results in hand, the city is ready for the next steps, starting with an open house and discussion at the end of this month.

Last year, the city of Braidwood was awarded assistance from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) for creating a new comprehensive plan, a process equi-

alent to roughly \$150,000. The new plan will replace the city's previous comprehensive plan, which was passed in December 2004 and is long out of date.

Following a survey period early last year, the city held an informational meeting in February 2022, where city leaders, representatives from CMAP, and members of the community put pen to paper to kick off the process.

A comprehensive plan is a long term plan designed to help guide development and growth, while maintaining what the community deems to be "good qualities" of the city.

Such plans serve as a framework for city and community leaders, residents, local business owners, and potential investors on the vision of the community.

A comprehensive plan can help the residents and business owners in the city make informed decisions on land use, transportation issues, infrastructure, and capital improvements.

Of the public input so far, revitalization of downtown has been a big issue for residents, as well as commercial or industrial business development on the city's outskirts. Residents who responded to that initial survey noted they would like to see the addition of a bank, more

business variety, and more family friendly businesses.

Survey participants also said they'd like to ensure Braidwood is safe for walking, biking and driving.

Additional items on the survey including a desire for additional community events and events for families and teens. Maintaining the small town feel of Braidwood—including keeping the crime rate low, creating a community center, enforcing local ordinance laws, and keeping Braidwood from becoming more like bigger cities such as Joliet—were all on the list of things responders wanted to see out of the plan.

To move ahead in the process,

the city has set a date of Nov. 30 for an open house. The event will take place at the Fossil Ridge Public Library from 6 p.m. until 8 p.m.

While the survey portion of the planning process has long been closed, residents can still participate in some aspects online. An interactive map where residents can drop a pin onto a site in Braidwood and comment on what they would like to see improved, added, or even remain the same is available as part of CMAP's official page on the project. As of Tuesday, there were 24 total pins dropped on that map, noting areas

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Photo by Marney Simon

OPENING BUNTING HARDWARE WAS the fulfillment jack Bunting's lifelong dream to own his own business. The portion of Reed Street at Comet Drive where that business stood until Jack Bunting passed in 2000 has now been dedicated as Jack & Karen Bunting Memorial Drive.

## A lifetime of dedication honored

BY MARNEY SIMON  
EDITOR

To anyone just passing by, the lives of Jack and Karen Bunting may have seemed like typical small town faire in Braidwood in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s. Like so many others from the area, Jack worked at Caterpillar and Karen raised the couple's four children, Liz, David, Matthew, and Jacqueline.

But the Buntings did much more than lead a quiet life in the country.

The couple's years of service and dedication to the city of Braidwood and its residents were recognized over the summer with the official dedication of an honorary street in their names.

"My Mom and Dad were very civic minded," Liz Bunting Dixon said of her parents. "Her grandpa was the mayor here and police chief here and several other things,

so she got that from them. Dad just got it, I think he got it from Mom. That was his mission. To live with him, his mission was to make sure that Braidwood was the best thing."

Dixon said her Dad getting involved with the community took on a bit of a snowball effect as the children grew.

"When my brothers were younger, he coached little league," she said. "And Dad would go pick kids up in the back of the pickup truck to make sure that they got to the baseball games because their parents weren't home or didn't have time. And if they didn't have a baseball glove, he'd go find a baseball glove. He wanted those kids to do this, and if they wanted to do it then they were going to do it."

After little league, it was Cub Scouts. And from there, it was on to the school board.

"His first political posi-

tion, if you want to call it that, was school board when it was still two separate school districts and he ran for the Braidwood schools," Dixon said. "He was on there and Custer Park was struggling. And, I'm not saying he did it all by himself, but he was instrumental in saying that we need to combine these school districts, because if we combined them then the tax dollars will be used better and Custer Park will be served better. So, he worked on that and they got that done. He was president for two or three terms on the consolidated board."

Dixon's father was also part of the board when they built the high school.

Next, he served on the Wilco Board as President for one term and Vice President for several terms, back when Wilco was held at Joliet Central High School.

"He stayed there long

enough to make sure they got a new building," Dixon said.

Jack Bunting also served with the Rotary Club, acting as president for a few terms and serving as the Interact leader. Interact is Rotary International's service club for youth ages 12 to 18.

"They put basketball teams together and they went to a conference and they won first place in the conference," she said. "He was really proud of that."

Shortly after that, a seat on the City Council opened up due to a resignation, and Bunting was appointed as finance commissioner. He filled out the remainder of that term, then ran for his own term, winning that election.

On the council Bunting helped secure funds for a new water tower by approaching the school district. In exchange for the district

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## No injuries in Custer Township structure fire

STAFF REPORT

Just one month into its new agreement to provide fire and EMS services to Custer Park, the Braidwood Fire Department got its first call for a structure fire in the rural township just to the east.

On Nov. 2, the members of the Braidwood Fire Protection District (BFPD) responded to a call at 19247 Bauer Rd. of a structure fire.

The call came in around 12:30 p.m.

BFPD Chief Chris Jude noted in a press release that district personnel were on scene of an unrelated ambulance incident at the time of the call.

The response was upgraded based on information provided by dispatch. While en route to the scene, the BFPD were informed that animals may be trapped.

"Firefighters arrived on scene and were faced with a fully engulfed pole barn, that was unattached from the

home," Jude said in the release. "Arriving firefighters immediately began fire suppression and observed several animals in the vicinity of the fire. The animals were quickly cooled with fire hoses and remained safe in their pen. No animals were injured."

Firefighters secured rural water operations for water supply, and continued with extinguishment efforts until the fire was declared under control.

There were no civilian or firefighter injuries as a result of the fire.

The homeowners were not home at the time of the incident, and the fire was discovered by a passerby.

The cause of the fire is under investigation by the Braidwood Fire Protection District and the MABAS Division 15 Fire Investigation Team.

The Braidwood Fire Protection District was assisted by several other area fire departments.

## Autumn burning returns to Midewin

STAFF REPORT

Residents should not be alarmed if they spot smoke and fire inside the confines of Midewin while traveling north.

The USDA Forest Service will be conducting prescribed burning throughout Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie during the fall of 2023 and the spring of 2024.

Because of changing weather conditions, Midewin officials note that it is difficult to say exactly what days burns will be conducted. In many cases the final decision cannot be made until the day of the burn.

All prescribed fire projects will be conducted in accordance with an approved burn plan to ensure the safety of people and property in the area. Burn plans describe the specific conditions under which burns will be conducted including the weather, number of personnel, and

opportunities to minimize smoke impacts.

Visitors are asked to avoid areas where prescribed burns are being conducted. As a result of the burns, some residents and visitors may see or smell smoke. People should not be alarmed; the fires will be carefully monitored.

Local authorities will be notified prior to burn days and kept informed throughout burning operations.

Prescribed fire provides the following benefits:

- Reduces hazardous fuels
- Minimizes the spread of plant and animal disease
- Removes invasive species that threaten species that are native to an ecosystem

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