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## Village see 400% increase in home solar permits

BY ERIC FISHER PUBLISHER

The year 2023 was the year more Coal City residents took a strong interest in solar power.

The Coal City Building Department saw a 400% increase in issuing permits for home solar projects, resulting in approximately 35 homes now being power by the sun.

There were 12 permits issued for new residential installations, that's up from three the year before and the most issued in a single year.

"While on a percentage basis it was a significant increase, but overall 12 new solar projects is small but shows there is growing interest," commented Kyle Watson, the village's deputy building official.

Homeowners had to pay \$100 per permit, which offsets expenses in performing electrical service inspections. As for investment in the community, Watson said the lowest he has seen for a solar panel install is \$11,000. Others have cost more like \$27,000.

"There are a lot of variables there," Watson said. "Depends on the size of the roof, the commitment from the company as to whether the panels are being leased, rented or bought outright by the homeowner. It seems like every solar company prices it differently."



ABOUT 30 HOMES in the Village of Coal City have installed solar panels on their rooftops in recent years. In 2023 the village issued 12 permits for solar projects after having only three in 2021. The growth in solar has been slow but welcome as most of these homeowners lease or rent the panels and equipment.

Watson suspects there was a jump in permits from fear that grant money from the state for solar was going to dry up.

"It's a big investment for the homeowner so the grants help. Company are pushing more people to sign up but I have only seen one homeowner who bought the solar panels system outright. Everyone else is either leasing or renting them so the solar companies are offering a portion of their electric bill back and are still involved with maintenance issues, if there are any," Watson said.

Permits for new single family homes dropped to just eight for 2023, the fewest in three years. In 2019 the city saw 12 new homes built.

Watson believes the decline in new home construction is due to the price of lumber, high mortgage rates and the fact there are fewer available lots within the city limits.

"Years ago our growth occurred mostly at Meadow Estates Subdivision which is now full. We're kind of limited right now to the older lots within the village for single-family growth. We've got some new homes being built on lots scattered around the town but no new subdivisions in the works."

Another drop in permits was seen for fences, which averaged 70/year pre-Covid, was 53 in 2021.

SEE PERMITS PAGE 2

## 600 throws and counting



ST. JUVIN POST 1336 VFW members (from left) Bill Bomba, Mike Lareau and Earl "Shorty" Fatlan present one of their Blankets for Vets commemorative throws to Post Commander James "Hoppy" Phillips. Since 2013 St. Juvin Post has presented over 600 of the throws, each with the vet's name or nickname and a custom label that reads "The members of St. Juvin Post 1336 Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Coal City IL present this throw to you as a symbol of your service to a grateful nation."

Wet and Wild

## First winter weather packs less punch than predicted

STAFF REPORT

After a mild start to the winter season in December, Mother Nature finally brought the white stuff into the region for a visit, first with a lighter snowfall after the New Year, and then a bit more Monday night into Tuesday morning this week.

While the snowfall in the region was not as heavy as forecast models predicted, the storm did bring about an inch of wet heavy snow followed by rainfall. The storm left roadways slick in the pre-dawn hours of Tuesday, with the Illinois State Police reporting dangerous road conditions in western Illinois with wet roads and some icing locally.

The storm was enough to keep local school districts on their toes.

In Wilmington, students were sent home on Monday with their Chromebooks in anticipation of a potential e-learning day on Tuesday, but the district was able to keep those students in class when the heavier snow stayed away.

The Reed-Custer School District enacted their remote learning plan for Tuesday, allowing students to log in from home for the day.

Both districts opted to use remote learning rather than traditional snow days again this year, when possible.

Students are sent home with their technology in order to participate in e-learning, which allows the districts to complete the school day without the need to add an emergency day to the calendar at the end of the academic year.

Coal City School District Unit 1 utilizes traditional snow days, but was able to keep school in session on Tuesday when the storm showered down less snow than predicted.

Meanwhile, local roads were reported to be clear by the morning commute, thanks to local municipal public works crews, as well as state and county officials salting and plowing.

Wilmington, Coal City and Braidwood all prohibit street parking when snow accumulates to the depth of two inches or more, until that snow is removed.

Residents are also asked to clear the way around fire hydrants located on residential lots while shoveling so that local fire protection districts can locate those hydrants quickly in case of an emergency.

SEE WINTER PAGE 2

## Street side parking prohibited when snow piles up

STAFF REPORT

The villages of Coal City and Diamond have snow routes in place and failure to comply will find drivers digging into their wallets.

Winter weather has arrived and drivers should be aware of town rules when it comes to street side parking when the snow falls.

Municipal code prohibits street side parking, in both villages, when a roadway is being cleared of snow. Specifically, in the event of a two inch or more snowfall vehicles must be removed from streets in a timely manner.

Any vehicle continuously parked on a village of Coal City street in excess of 48 hours after a two inch or more snow fall will be issued a village P-ticket. The ordinance allows the village to tow a vehicle if it remains parked after a ticket has been issued.

During times of snow removal the village's restrictions on parking on or across a sidewalk will not be enforced in residential areas, thus giving residents use of the full length of a driveway.

In Diamond, vehicles are to be removed from village streets to allow for snow plowing and removal. There is no on street parking allowed overnight during a 2 inch snowfall.

Additionally, in the village of Diamond, the mayor can proclaim a snow emergency in the event of or in anticipation of winter storm. When this occurs vehicles are prohibited from street side parking along an emergency street declared within the mayor's proclamation.

In the event an emergency is declared after 11 p.m. and prior to 6 a.m., residents have until 7 a.m. to move vehicles.

The village of Diamond reminds residents to not allow children to play in snow piles created by snow plows, and to use extreme caution when shoveling especially heavy wet snow.

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