

Diamond damage investigated



Summer projects underway



Vol. 122, Issue 27  
1 section • 14 pages  
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WEDNESDAY, JULY 12, 2023 | A FREE PRESS NEWSPAPER • (815) 634-0315

## Unit 1 spending to top \$39.5 million

### Tentative budget includes 9% jump in revenue

BY ANN GILL  
EDITOR

The Unit 1 School District entered into a new fiscal year on July 1 and five days later it placed on file a budget that, in its tentative form, puts expenditures at \$39.5 million, an increase of 4.52% from the prior year.

Revenues for fiscal year 2024 are projected at \$38.7 million, an increase of 9.1%. The figures reflected in the financial plan are guaranteed to change prior to the budget adoption in

September.

As the district's chief school business official Jason Smith told the Board of Education, "This year is probably a little bit different than previous years because there are several things going on that will impact what the final budget looks like compared to this," Smith said.

Two key items that will factor into the final figures are collective bargaining and capital improvements.

The contract between the Coal City Community Unit 1 Education Association [CCUEA], the union representing the district's certified teaching staff, and Board of Education expires this year.

The two sides are negotiating terms including salary adjustments. "Negotiations with the teacher have an impact on how the final numbers adjust out,"

Smith said.

Additionally, the district has engaged in a facility improvement project and there is a cost to that.

The Board is currently considering its funding options and according to Smith, "based on the funding discussions this Board has, and decisions they make about some of the capital projects, it might involve some bonding particularly where certain expenses and revenues come from based on the timing of things."

There are a number of projects on the improvement list including a renovation of the high school stadium and that could come with in the next fiscal year.

And, as always there are final adjustments that come between tentative and final budget. Revenues reflected in the tentative budget

show \$35.4 million is to come from local sources—\$17 million coming from a negotiated tax agreement with Constellation Dresden Generating Station.

State funds are projected at \$2.4 million and federal dollars received should be around \$860,000.

The majority of all funds received go to support the education fund and in the coming fiscal year spending from that fund is projected at \$26.2 million.

Since the education fund is where salaries and benefits are paid, that is one line item that will certainly change prior to September. There is already a 7.39% increase reflected in the education fund from what was budgeted the prior

SEE BUDGET, PAGE 2



Images courtesy of Albertsons Companies

SITE WORK IS underway for the Jewel-Osco that will anchor the new Diamond Marketplace Shopping Center at Route 113 and Will Road. The 62,000 square-foot grocery store will include a pharmacy and Starbucks.

## Diamond's new Jewel

BY ANN GILL  
EDITOR

Blue jeans, boots, pharmacy and food—four key items the mayor of Diamond has been working to secure for the village.

In the past year, Kernc and the Diamond Village Board have secured two of the items that have been written on a white board in her village hall office—food and pharmacy.

Village officials announced last fall that after nearly two decades of coaxing, Jewel-Osco is moving forward with plans to construct a 62,000 square-foot grocery store on the southeast corner of Route 113 and Will Road.

The store—complete with a pharmacy and Starbucks—will serve as the anchor of the new Diamond Marketplace Shopping Center, a site the mayor expects will begin to develop now that Jewel is under construction.

The site includes five outlots of a little over one acre that front Route 113. There is enough space for another anchor type store.

"I have some meetings coming up with [with potential businesses] and it's going to be really exciting if it happens," Kernc said.

The level of excitement inside the Village Hall is at a high as the mayor watches



Images courtesy of Albertsons Companies

THE OSCO WILL be located on the west side of the 62,000 square foot building and include a drive-up window. The store is slated to open in the first quarter of 2024.

the Jewel-Osco take shape.

Earth-moving work began last month, a project that comes at price of more than \$1 million.

Initial site work includes grading, construction of a retaining wall, multi-use paths and access points.

Ingress and egress from the store will be along Will Road and that requires enclosing the deep ditch running along the east side of the roadway.

Crews have cleared the ditch in preparation for the

installation of a 4-foot by 8-foot culvert that will extend south from Route 113 along the property line.

The entire 40 acre site was acquired in 2004 by TBS Development Services Group, Inc., for Albertsons, the parent company of Jewel. Even with changes in the company's corporate structure over the past two decades the concept of operating a store in Diamond never wavered.

The company's investment in Diamond is around \$30 million and it did receive

an incentive package from the village that includes tax increment financing funds and sales tax reimbursement, as well as the ability to utilize economic incentives that come with the village's enterprise zone such as sales tax exemptions on purchases of building materials and manufacturing equipment.

The village also committed funds toward site development.

Construction of the building will commence once

SEE JEWEL, PAGE 2

## \$41 billion plan to repair Illinois roads

### Local projects include bridge replacements, I-55 interchanges

STAFF REPORT

SPRINGFIELD — The Illinois Department of Transportation unveiled a plan on Friday for spending nearly \$41 billion in federal, state and local funds over the next six years to repair and upgrade roads, bridges, airports, rail lines and other infrastructure throughout the state.

The state has earmarked \$143.7 million for interchange reconstruction and bridge replacement along Interstate 55 at Route 129 and Lorenzo roads and the village of Coal City is set to received ADA upgrades estimated at \$500,000.

The latest version of the plan, which IDOT updates annually, is the largest multi-year plan in state history. It's driven by the state's 2019 Rebuild Illinois capital infrastructure program. The initial six-year Rebuild Illinois plan included \$33.2 billion for transportation, funded largely by annualized increases to the state's motor fuel tax and increases to driving-related licensing fees that took effect in 2020.

"Over the next six years, we're investing over \$40 billion to improve all modes of transportation across our great state," Gov. JB Pritzker said at a news conference in Springfield. "And that means better roads and bridges, modernized transit and aviation, and expanded and faster passenger rail service."

More than half of the plan, \$27 billion, will go toward road and bridge projects, including \$4.6 billion in the current fiscal year. That will fund repair and reconstruction of 2,866 miles of roadway and 9.8 million square feet of bridge deck on the state highway system, along with another 738 miles of roadway and 1.1 million square feet of bridge deck in systems maintained by local governments.

The project list includes a variety of improvements across Grundy and Will counties including replacement of

the two bridges that carry Interstate 80 over the DesPlaines River.

The bridge replacement is part of an estimated \$1 billion improvement that begins at Ridge Road in Minooka and extends east along the interstate to US Route 30 in New Lenox.

The improvements set for the year 2025-2029 include Interstate 55 at Route 129 and Lorenzo Road for interchange reconstruction and bridge replacement, reconstruction and utility adjustments, construction of auxiliary lanes, widening and resurfacing of 2.5 miles of highway. The \$160.5 million project also includes engineering for design, location and environmental studies, land acquisition and construction engineering.

The ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act] sidewalk improvements slated for Coal City will extend along Route 113 from DeWitt Place east to Lincoln Street.

"This is a major corridor for Coal City and we invite any investment in the community," Village Administrator Matt Fritz said.

The area slated for improvement is also a main access for children who walk and bike to school, and the administrator noted it will enhance safe routes to school.

"So to have ADA sidewalks will be greatly appreciated," Fritz said.

Additional projects for Grundy County include bridge improvements on Interstate 55 southwest of Gardner Road, a \$2 million bridge replacement on Route 117 east of Reddick, reconstruction Route 6 from Lakewood Drive to Route 47 in the city of Morris and bridge replacement on Tabler Road over the I&M canal.

The multiyear plan also earmarks \$13.96 billion for other modes of transportation, including \$9.85 billion for transit systems, \$2.67 billion for freight and passenger rail, \$1.25 billion for aviation projects, and \$190 million for ports

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