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Quiet zone back on track

BY ANN GILL
EDITOR

While city leaders were discussing the need for a railroad quiet zone, the blare of a freight train's horn was heard inside the Coal City Village Hall last week.

The days when municipal meetings are put on pause until the train passes could soon be a thing of the past.

Over the last 13 years, engineer Jeff Pintar has been working with the village and it appears that the concept of a quiet zone for Coal City is back on track.

Pintar, director of municipal services at Robinson Engineering, appeared before the Village Board last week with an update on the long term project to silence the trains as they pass through town.

"We started this back in 2010 with high

hopes of getting this implemented as quick as possible. We have been on again, off again for 13 years doing what we can to bring the players to the table and the good news is I am standing before you because we are on again and moving this forward in the most expeditious manner," Pintar told trustees.

After years of working with the Federal Railroad Authority [FRA], Illinois Commerce Commission [ICC] and Illinois Department of Transportation [IDOT], "we have the right people in the right positions both at the railroad and IDOT to move this forward," the engineer said.

The idea of a quiet zone is to cease the routine sounding of train horns at crossings in Coal City. That would be from Carbon Hill Road on the west to Fifth Avenue on the east.

"We want to improve the quality of life for your residents by taking the train horn away,

but what we have to focus on is safety. When we talk about railroads and vehicular traffic coming together, safety is of the utmost importance. We have make sure all the crossings are safe to take that train horn away," Pintar said.

The village is going to have to close three crossings in the name of safety.

"When we think about safety here in Coal City I hope we can all agree that the Division and Lincoln Street crossing is one of the most challenging," Pintar said.

The concept—one that has been on the books for over a decade—has been to close off access to Division Street and construct a cul-de-sac at the south end of Lincoln Street.

Pintar said that will significantly increase safety at the Division Street crossing. That site is also projected to be improved including the installation of new crossing gates.

Robinson Engineering is also recommend-

ing that First Street at First Avenue become a dead end. The First Avenue crossing would remain open, however vehicle traffic would no longer have access from First Street.

Additionally, the engineers recommend the closure of the Kankakee Street crossing.

"We work with the ICC and FRA and they want to eliminate as many crossings as possible and we know that is something the Board doesn't take lightly. But because of the close proximity of Broadway to that Kankakee Street crossing eliminating that crossing altogether will give you enough quiet zone credit to make it safe enough to implement the quiet zone," Pintar said.

There are seven active crossings in the village—Fifth Avenue, First Avenue, Division Street [Route 113], Kankakee Street, Broadway,

SEE TRACK, PAGE 2

Drilling for water

BY ANN GILL
EDITOR

If all goes as scheduled, contractors will begin drilling a new water well for the village of Coal City within the week.

Equipment is being moved on-site this week.

The village and Coal City Fire Protection District are finalizing the terms of an easement agreement that will allow the town to place the necessary electrical components of the system within a storage garage owned by the fire district.

The well—known as well 7—will be located along DeWitt Place, just west of Coal City Fire Station 1. Its construction is part of a \$5.6 million expansion of the village's water treatment plant.

Instead of constructing a separate well house to hold the electrical components, the fire district offered to provide space within the block storage garage located on the southeast end of fire station's parking lot.

Village Administrator Matt Fritz said the location for this well makes a great deal of sense.

"The first is it's adjacency to the existing raw water main, which shall allow the pumped water to be conveyed easily to the existing water treatment plant location. The second is the increased resiliency this location shall offer since the untreated water well would provide an additional location for additional water should a major fire occur and multiple fire stations are looking for places to fill up or due to a power outage, this facility would be enabled to provide water regardless of the power grid," Fritz said.

The electrical components will be installed along the south wall of the garage and the village will have its own access code to gain entry into the space.

The fire district is granting the village temporary construction access to the site and permanent maintenance access.

"So should there be any expansion of the fire station to the south we could still get to that well and maintain it," Fritz told

SEE WATER, PAGE 2

A new place for play

Hope Helps All Inclusive playground phase 3 grand opening set for Sept. 10

STAFF REPORT

It was a hot a humid day, but as the community knows nothing can stop Hope Helps from fulfilling its mission.

Seven years after community volunteers came together to set the first piece of equipment in the Hope Helps All-inclusive playground, the non-profit organization, backed by volunteers, was back in the park last week to install the final six pieces of its nearly \$700,000 investment.

As the organization's founders noted, it was a full circle moment as the first and final builds were held on the same date—Aug. 25—in 2016 and 2023.

The first build was held in a down pour and the final in a string of three straight days of high heat.

With cooling towels around their necks and bottles of water tucked into their pockets, the volunteers got to work installing the new playground equipment, landscaping and placing new memorial/honorary benches.

The community build day brought dozens of volunteers and a handful village public works employees into the park and they made use of every minute of the day.

Working in teams they installed a Boogie Board, Hemisphere Climber, Bobble Rider, ReviSpin and Double



Photo by Ann Gill

COAL CITY RESIDENT Dean Marketti [center] checks to make sure the equipment is level. Marketti teamed up with [from left] Rick Vota and Mayor Dave Spesia to install new equipment in Hope Helps All Inclusive Playground.

Oodle Swing, as well as a musical instrument center. The final bolts were tightened by the organization's founders Brittney and Robert Kaluzny and their children, Robert David, Izzy, Zeke and Gabby.

The development of an all inclusive playground in the village of Coal City

SEE PLAYGROUND, PAGE 2



Photo by Ann Gill

COAL CITY POLICE Chief Chris Harseim has presented newly hired police officer Kirstyn McKim [right] with badge 923. McKim was sworn in by Village Clerk Alexis Stone [left] on Aug. 23. She departs for the police training academy on Sept. 5

Coal City Police welcome new officer

BY ANN GILL
EDITOR

Coal City's newest police officer will report for 16 weeks of basic law enforcement training starting next week.

Kirstyn McKim was sworn into her new position during the Village Board meeting on Aug. 23. As members of the police force looked on, she was presented with badge #923 from Coal City Police Chief Chris Harseim.

The 23-year-old Wilmington resident studied criminal justice at Joliet Junior College and previously served in security for Constellation at its Dresden Generating Station.

McKim will report for training

on Tuesday, Sept. 6. She will complete the required coursework to become a certified officer at the University of Illinois Police Training Institute in Urbana-Champaign.

Additional instruction will be in patrol rifle, taser certification, LEADS [law enforcement automated data system] and juvenile officer.

"Good luck at the academy, I know you will do well," Mayor Dave Spesia told McKim who was surrounded by family during her swearing in.

McKim's hiring brings the police force up to 12 officers, "hopefully [officers] 13 and 14 will follow," Harseim said.

"I'd like to thank the Board for giving us the permission to do the

new hire with Kirstyn, it's nice to have her on board," the Chief said.

The Village Board has directed the Board of Fire and Police Commissioners to hire two additional patrol officers to fill vacancies within the department.

McKim was the final hire from the officer eligibility list and that prompted commissioners to draft a new list.

The process for that begins with a written test for nine candidates earlier this month. The list has not yet been posted.



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