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Main Phone 630.834-8244
Fax 630.834-0960

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General Information:
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E-mail:

Advertising Department:
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Administration:

Chris Fox
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Village board approves intent to issue up to \$5 million in bonds to finance Garden Station project

Proposal calls for 344 residential units and nearly 13,000 square feet of retail space near the village's Metra station

STAFF REPORT

The Villa Park Village Board voted unanimously during its Dec. 7 meeting to approve a resolution declaring an official intent to issue Tax Incremental Revenue bonds of up to \$5 million to facilitate the construction of a mixed-use, residential project near the village's Metra station.

According to information provided by the village, Hawthorne Development has requested that the village issue tax-exempt obligations payable solely from available tax increment revenues of the project. Those funds would finance a portion of the design and construction of the project.

"These bonds will not be backed by the full faith and credit of the Village of Villa Park," the village noted in the agenda for the Dec. 7 board meeting. "These bonds are for the purpose of financing a portion of the cost of the design and construction of the project. The total amount which the village intends to borrow through the issuance of the bonds will not exceed \$5 million."

Dr. Ganesan Vish, the founder of Hawthorne Development, gave a presentation about the project during the Dec. 7 board meeting, which took place remotely.

His firm's proposal calls for a \$115 million project—called Garden Station—that will be built in two phases adjacent to the village's Metra station. The area for the proposed development is surrounded by Ardmore Avenue to the west, Vermont Street to the north, Beverly Avenue to the east and Terrace Street to the south.

The total project would consist of

344 residential units (270 one-bedroom apartments, 64 two-bedroom apartments and 10 three-bedroom apartments), along with 12,930 square feet of retail space and 454 parking spaces.

Vish said the first phase of the project will include the construction of 145 of the one-bedroom units, 39 of the two-bedroom units and five of the three-bedroom units. He stated the estimated monthly rental rates of the units would be between \$1,612 and \$2,101 for the one-bedroom apartments, between \$2,629 and \$2,951 for the two-bedroom units and \$3,324 for the three-bedroom units.

The second phase would include the construction of the additional apartment units, with similar monthly rental fees as the apartments built during the first phase. The online presentation during the meeting stated the project called for 344 residential units, but the numbers in a table included in the presentation add up to 349 units.

Listing some of the amenities of the proposed Garden Station project, Vish noted a courtyard with a swimming pool, a clubhouse/resident lounge, a business center/sun deck, a fitness center, conference rooms, a climate-controlled parking garage and a pet spa. The project would also include four passenger elevators and two freight elevators. Vish also described the Garden Station project as an energy-efficient building.

Vish said his firm's goal is to include a restaurant and a breakfast place in the project's retail space. Vish added that he expected the first phase of

the project to be completed in the third quarter of 2022. He said construction for the project's second phase would begin around that time, and that the entire project would be completed by the end of 2023.

Before voting to approve the resolution to express the village's intent to issue the bonds for the project, board members asked Vish several questions. Trustee Nick Cuzzone asked Vish if he was concerned about locating the project near a train station at a time when fewer people are commuting to Chicago by train. Vish said that while there has been an exodus from the city, people have to live somewhere, and many of them prefer a suburban environment.

Cuzzone also asked if any of the project's apartments would be Section 8 units for low-income residents. Vish said there were no plans for Section 8 housing in the project. He also said two professional companies are vying to serve as managers of the residential units.

Trustee Cheryl Tucker asked Vish about the project's large number of one-bedroom units. Vish said he expected Garden Station's primary clientele to be single working people who are looking for one-bedroom apartments. Tucker also asked if Vish's company was ready to begin construction by March 2021. Vish said his firm has a construction firm ready to begin

by that date.

Trustee Christine Murphy asked Vish why his project included apartments instead of condominiums. Vish said that current trends indicate that suburban apartments are more attractive than condominiums. He said that could change in the future.

Villa Park Village President Albert Bulthuis stated that the village has been waiting a long time to have something developed in the area around the village's Metra station. In 2016, the village board approved a redevelopment agreement with another developer—Golden Spike Development—for a six-story complex of about 23 residential units at the same site of the current project. That proposal, which never materialized, called for the construction of mainly apartments.

Golden Spike's proposal to build in the area near Villa Park's Metra station dates back several years before the 2016 redevelopment agreement. Golden Spike initially proposed building condominiums at the site, but in 2012 the company asked the village board to allow the development to be built as an apartment complex.

The village created a Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) district in the area including the proposed Garden Station site in 2014. TIF status allows municipalities to utilize future property tax revenues to fund improvements in an underdeveloped area.

District 88's longtime superintendent passes away

Helton served as the district's top administrator since 2012

STAFF REPORT

District 88 Superintendent Scott Helton died on Thursday, Dec. 10. According to a statement released by District 88 Board of Education President Donna Craft Cain, Helton suffered a stroke in late October and was being treated at a rehabilitation facility.

District 88 includes two schools—Willowbrook High School and Addison Trail High School. The district serves about 3,900 students; each of its two schools has an enrollment of approximately 1,950.

Helton became the district's superintendent in the summer of 2012, when he replaced Steve



Dr. Scott Helton
Superintendent,
School District 88

Humphrey, who retired that year. Prior to that, Helton spent 11 years as Addison Trail's principal. Craft Cain's statement noted that Helton had more than 33 years of experience in education.

"At this time, we ask that you please keep Scott's family—including his three sons, Scott Jr., Joe and Tommy—in your thoughts and prayers," added Craft Cain's statement.

The president of the District 88 Board of Education added that she's known Helton since she joined the board in 2004.

"His passion and dedication were second to none," said Craft Cain. "He was a tremendous leader who always put the needs of students first. Scott will be greatly missed, and his impact on our schools and community and the legacy he has left behind will last for years to come."

Willowbrook Principal Dan

See SUPERINTENDENT, Page 5



CHRIS FOX PHOTOS Rock Valley Publishing

Holiday photos with Santa

The Villa Park dogs who attended last week's "Pictures with Santa Paws" event at the Depot at Cortesi Veterans Memorial Park included 3-year-old Phillip (above). His owner, Jo McCarthy of Villa Park, was one of the village residents who brought her dog in for a photo with Santa. Another photo shows 7-year-old Liddy, (left) who attended the event with her owner—Lisa Bodnar of Villa Park.





Leave it to the media to make comparisons between those who've died from COVID to those who've died in battle serving our country. The latest such comparison is that COVID-19 deaths have surpassed 292,000, or more than all the U.S. battlefield deaths in World War II. Around 655,000 Americans died from heart disease last year, with another 600,000 dying from cancer. Do we ever compare deaths from heart disease and cancer to the number of battlefield deaths in World War II? No, we don't. As sad and tragic as all these COVID deaths are, why do

the media put their deaths ahead of anyone who dies from heart disease or cancer or any other disease? The media are a disgrace.

We shall see how our suburban legislators are looking out for us when it comes time to vote on an income tax increase. I read in a newspaper that Speaker Madigan plans to support it, so my hunch is his minions will follow suit. It couldn't come at a worse time, when many people are out of work, laid off or have had their hours cut. DuPage County is going to impose a gas tax increase in 2021, when many of the people living or working here who front lines and/or have to physically go to work can least afford it. Why would we majority lower- and middle-income voters shoot ourselves in the foot at the polls over the so-called Fair Tax, only to have our own taxes raised? The message is loud and clear. We don't trust the government with our money.

I am in favor of women's reproductive health, but when that gets defined as an abortion on demand because having a baby is inconvenient, that is not what I call reproductive health. A pregnancy causing a life-threatening condition does fit the description. I won't judge others for their choices, but don't want my tax dollars to pay for abortion on demand. For example, I would not object to my tax dollars going toward paying for a nose job to correct a deviated septum, but for cosmetic purposes alone? No way. Read about Kermit Gosnell, or watch the "Independent Lens" episode about minority and poor women in prison who were involuntarily sterilized for the good of their "reproductive health."

So, *Time* magazine put Biden and Harris together to come up their Person of the Year. Okay, let's see here. Now, I guess somebody will say that Trump was named Person of the Year. And, that's true (in 2016). But, this past October, a law enforcement magazine, *Blue*, named him their Man of the Year in thanks for the support he has given them, even before becoming president. Seems to me that means more than giving somebody a Nobel Peace Prize before they even did anything like Barack Obama. I guess we should expect that, given that the media is so-o-o highly not biased.

Did you ever notice how the media gives glowing coverage to newly elected females when they are Democrats? Isn't this refreshing ... it's the year of the woman, etc. Newly

elected Republican women never get the same treatment. The trend is the same with women in a presidential administration. If they're Republicans, there's no glowing coverage, and it's fine to criticize them. If they're Democrats, they're praised, and any criticism of them is deemed sexist.

The country patiently waits for the COVID-19 vaccine. I don't agree with the media coverage of where the vaccine is made, who ships it, how it is shipped, how it is packaged, where it is stored and video of the inside of the warehouses. Call me paranoid: This is a major event. Are there organized crime, third-world militias or other criminal entities who will attack and take the vaccine shipments for ransom or use in their country? What kind of riots, protests and disturbances will take place arguing over the priority of who gets the vaccine first? Like the COVID-19 testing that went to celebrities and sports stars before everyday citizens. Let's hope status and money doesn't play a role in who gets vaccinated first. Health care workers, senior citizens and first-responders should be the priority for all of the U.S. Let us all be patient and respectful as this process plays out.

Democrats like to describe Trump as a dictator, but it's the Democrat governors like Pritzker who are obsessed with dictatorial behavior. They have no problem issuing endless emergency declarations and stay-at-home orders. They're also eager to close schools, churches and restaurants. The only thing Democrats seem eager to allow is rioting.

The United States of America is the best country in the world. I believe in free and fair elections—not recounts, which never change, but we need ballot integrity. Nobody has the resources or connections to truly verify every vote. Not sure what happened in this election. Midnight ballot dumps, all for Biden, citizens giving affidavits of irregularity with the ballot count, etc. Biden will be our next president, but I have a lot of questions over how it happened. If this was reversed, the media would be going absolutely crazy. The media now calls for unity and moving forward. After Trump was elected why didn't they do that? The media is supposed to be an independent arbiter of the facts. The media is now in bed with the Democratic Party; that is unbelievable. Let's hope we can move forward and get this fixed and work together as one. God help us all and our wallets if the Democrats take

Rock Valley Publishing - Thursday, Dec. 17, 2020 • 5VP the majority in the Senate.

After eight or nine months, I think the conclusion can be said that this whole COVID-19 is a Democrat-controlled hoax by the globalists to destroy certain wage businesses and to prop up an and empower loyal businesses to this political party. The harassment of the mask is also a neurotic and eccentric habit of the Democrat Party as they seek to be a one-party socialist state. Capitalism is under attack by the dark forces of a medical industrial complex and un-democratic socialist internationalists. It seems masks do nothing to stop the spread.

Thanks to the media's nonstop reporting of how many new cases of COVID-19 there are every day, how many deaths every day, or which coach or player or actor or actress or politician has tested positive for the virus, is it any wonder why people are freaked out? I routinely see people driving alone, yet wearing masks. I also notice people out walking or jogging alone. There's not a single human being within 500 yards of them, yet they wear a mask. It's as if this virus is the bubonic plague or the Ebola virus. Keep up the good work, media! You've trained the sheeple well.

Villa Park K-9 officer now wearing bulletproof/stab-resistant vest

Donation provides potentially life-saving gear to German shepherd

STAFF REPORT

The Villa Park Police Department's K-9 officer recently received some valuable protective gear.

Luke, a German shepherd who joined the department earlier this year, now wears a bulletproof and stab-resistant vest while on duty. Vested Interest in K9s, a 501(c)(3) non-profit charity, provided the vest, which Luke has been wearing for the last few weeks.

Luke's handler, Villa Park Police Officer Matt Rol vel Rul, applied for a grant with Vested Interest in K9s to obtain the protective vest, which has a five-year warranty and an estimated value of between \$1,750 to \$2,300. A Waukegan resident, Elizabeth Ohanian, sponsored Luke's vest, which is embroidered with the words, "Born to Love-Trained to Serve-Loyal Always."

Since its inception in 2009, Vested Interest in K9s has donated more than 4,100 K-9 ballistic vests to law enforcement agencies in all 50 states. The organization has also provided about 1,300 opioid reversal NAR-CAN kids, more than \$67,000 in K-9 medical first-aid kits, over \$150,000 in K-9 medical insurance premiums and three Chevy Tahoe patrol vehicles for a K-9 unit.

All of Vested Interest in K9s' programs are made possible with funds raised through contributions, grants and fundraising events.

The charity's program for the protective vests is open to U.S. dogs who are at least 20 months old and actively employed and certified with a law enforcement or related agency. K-9s with expired vests are also eli-

gible to receive vests from the Massachusetts-based charity.

Luke has been working for the Villa Park Police Department since June. He is Villa Park's first K-9 officer since Inoe—a Belgian Malinois—retired in 2015.

A donation from Ken Witkowski, a retired part-time Villa Park officer, allowed the department to purchase Luke and pay for his training.

In addition to working with Rol vel Rul, Luke lives with the officer. Rol vel Rul has been a full-time officer in Villa Park since 2013. He

joined the department as a part-time officer in 2010.

Luke was born in Mexico. According to his birth certificate, he is nearly 3 years old. Rol vel Rul recently noted that Luke acts much younger than his age.

Luke is trained to detect narcotics, including cocaine and heroin. He is also trained to assist in building searches, human searches and article searches.

For more information about Vested Interest in K9s, visit its website at www.vik9s.org.



SUBMITTED PHOTO Rock Valley Publishing

Luke, a German shepherd who serves as the Villa Park Police Department's K-9 officer, recently received a donation of a bulletproof and stab-resistant vest to wear while on duty. Luke is pictured with his handler—Villa Park Police Officer Matt Rol vel Rul. Luke joined the department earlier this year. Rol vel Rul applied for a grant for the protective vest. Vested Interest in K9s—a non-profit organization that has donated more than 4,100 vests to law enforcement agencies in all 50 states, provided Luke's vest. Elizabeth Ohanian of Waukegan sponsored Luke's vest, which features the words, "Born to Love-Trained to Serve-Loyal Always."

CHRIS FOX FILE PHOTO
Rock Valley Publishing

District 88 Superintendent Scott Helton passed away on Thursday, Dec. 10. According to a statement released Friday by District 88 Board of Education President Donna Craft Cain, Helton suffered a stroke in late October. Helton became the district's superintendent in the summer of 2012. Before that, he spent over a decade as the principal of Addison Trail High School. District 88 includes two schools—Addison Trail and Willowbrook high schools. The file photo shows Helton at Willowbrook's 2018 commencement ceremony.

Superintendent

(Continued from page 4)

Krause praised Helton in a series of Twitter posts on Saturday.

"Missing, honoring and celebrating the man and my friend who helped us all remember to be great even when we were good, that we all stand on the shoulders of giants, and our successes will always be journeys, not destinations," stated Krause in a portion of his online comments. "Thoughts and prayers to the entire Helton family and all who knew and loved Scott."

Female kickers are the norm at Willowbrook

By JOSHUA WELGE

jwelge@shawmedia.com

When Zoe Ericson sees Sarah Fuller's success, she thinks of herself.

Ericson, a sophomore at the College of DuPage studying nursing, played soccer her whole life and in high school at Willowbrook her first three years. Her senior year, before graduating early, she tried football.

Fuller, as Ericson well knows, recently made history. A goalkeeper on Vanderbilt's SEC championship soccer team, she became the first female to appear in a Power Five football game when she delivered the second-half kickoff Nov. 28 against Missouri.

"I thought it was cool; I kind of had that similar story," said Ericson, who will play for COD's soccer team this spring. "She is breaking down these barriers we never thought we would see. It's exciting to think that in 10 to 15 years this hopefully will be normal."

At Willowbrook, in fact, female kickers are the new normal.

Since 2016, when Betty-Ann Garrett got into a couple of games as the backup, it is all Willowbrook has known.

Garrett went on to become the West Suburban Gold Kicker of the year in 2017 as a senior, then passed the torch to Ericson in 2018. Last year, it was Izzy Manning, who kept it going as an all-conference kicker — as a sophomore — for a Willowbrook team that reached the state semifinals for the first time since 1975.

"At this point, it's become the norm. I hope it's something that sticks and continues," Willowbrook coach Nick Hildreth said. "We are the second most diverse school in Illinois. I always feel our team picture is something I love to look at. It's a snapshot of our building. Those girls are a valuable part of our program."

Manning, whose older brother Max plays center for Willowbrook, grew up going to Warriors' football games. She watched her brother's practices when she was



Shaw Media file photo

Willowbrook's Zoe Ericson kicks an extra point against Addison Trail during the 2018 season.

younger and wanted to play herself.

She joined the Sacred Heart School team in Lombard in seventh grade and played cornerback and receiver in addition to kicking. When Hildreth saw her kicking at Madison Meadows Park, he asked whether she was going out for the team at Willowbrook.

Manning as a freshman came in and kicked for Willowbrook in its first-round playoff game when Ericson wasn't able to be there. She kicked five extra points, making all five, and the rest is history.

"I was kind of anxious being a freshman and playing in a playoff game, but the guys were so nice and very accepting," Manning said. "We had a perfect regular season [in 2019], went far in the playoffs. You can't ask for anything more."

Soccer is Manning's first love, but she also plays basketball. With no football this fall, she tried tennis.

Manning was 55 for 57 on extra points in 2019 and made her only field-goal attempt, from 26 yards.

"She plays highly competitive basketball and soccer; the success we have had with multisport athletes when put in high-pressure competitive situations, I think it benefits them in all areas," Hildreth said.

These days, Garrett, who is a junior at Montana State studying wildlife and habitat rangeland ecology, scratches her competitive itch skiing and snowboarding.

She had to overcome her mom's skepticism to get on the football field at Willowbrook.

Garrett had plans to play football in a youth league in second grade, but her mom didn't think it would be a good fit and signed her up for cheerleading instead. Garrett still has a photo of her cheerleading that year with a frown on her face.

"I tortured myself, missing soccer season to cheer," Garrett said. "When you're watching someone do what you want to do, it's even more painful. Sometimes you have to show people that you can do it."

By the time Garrett got to high school, she was playing hardcore competitive soccer

and knocked a girl out at one point.

"I was like, 'I need to do something more physical,'" said Garrett, who also competed in basketball and track at Willowbrook. "Granted, I didn't get to play on the field, but as a kicker you still get that adrenaline."

She and her mom met Hildreth at a freshman function, and he assured them he could easily turn Garrett into a football player.

Garrett started out as the Freshman B kicker and got her big break junior year when Willowbrook's starter hurt his collarbone before a first-round game against Quincy. Her first-ever field-goal attempt bounced off the crossbar, a memory forever ingrained in Garrett.

She later pinned Quincy inside its 10-yard line with a kickoff, the defense got a turnover and Willowbrook went on to its first playoff win since 1990.

"Quincy, they were not happy to be playing against a girl. When I missed a field goal, they were like, 'That's what you get for playing a

guys' sport,'" Garrett said. "I showed those boys who said that. My senior year I was practically perfect on kicks."

Garrett is happy for Fuller's football moment, but she doesn't think Vanderbilt did it the right way. She felt they should have gone with a girl with a football background.

She recalled conversations with college coaches who wouldn't respond to her overtures about playing when they realized she was a girl. She emailed with one coach for weeks, but when she showed up to visit, he was nowhere to be found.

"Coaches need to realize that girls can be just as badass as guy kickers," Garrett said.

Ericson meshed seamlessly with the guys on Willowbrook's football team. She'd played with guys her whole life as one of the stronger players on her club soccer team. Knowing that she was graduating early at Willowbrook and couldn't play spring soccer, she decided to stay involved by playing football.

Although her first field-goal attempt hit the crossbar and the second was wide left, but Ericson remembered the third, her first make.

"It's such an adrenaline rush, and the atmosphere was crazy," Ericson said. "Just playing was a great experience. I knew a lot of the guys on the football team, and it was really easy to get along with them. The guys were so supportive, giving me pointers, and the coaches were awesome working with my club soccer schedule."

Ericson said she was inspired by Garrett breaking the mold and paving the way for her, and she is proud that Manning will carry on the tradition.

That kind of success is personal for Hildreth, too, whose daughter just turned 7 this week.

"She only knows and remembers our kickers being female. That's a big deal," Hildreth said. "My son is 8, and he has only known and seen that. It's not even a thing to them. That's really where I would like it to get to someday, when it's not even a story when a girl plays football."