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EPA dismisses concerns over sewer repair timeline

BY LEXI CORTES
acortes@bnd.com

Residents who have advocated for years for solutions to broken city infrastructure that causes sewage to spill from pipes and flood homes and

yards say they now worry they will not live to see the work completed.

The city and environmental protection agencies have officially agreed on a plan to service the aging sewer system, despite pushback from the community. Residents have called the repair

timeline “unreasonably long.” They say it fails to fully address the problems by excluding projects related to flooding, which causes sewers to fill with rainwater and overflow, among other criticisms.

U.S. District Judge David W. Dugan of the Southern District

of Illinois recently approved a settlement agreement the agencies negotiated with Cahokia Heights as part of federal litigation over illegal sewage discharges. The approval comes about a year after the plan was announced and the community was given a chance to comment.

Residents voiced concerns that it could take the city more than two decades to complete the repairs under the agreement, based on estimates they obtained from an environmental engineering firm.

The agreement, known as a consent decree, includes some firm deadlines over the next decade. But the end date for other work is undefined, pending further investigation, planning and government approval.

Meanwhile, sewage spills will continue while repairs are underway, which the city has ac-

SEE EPA, 2A



A standing-room-only crowd of about 300 people packed The Mill community center in Granite City on Thursday night. The city's Planning Commission meeting turned into a public forum on data centers.

Granite City residents pack forum on data center proposal

BY TERI MADDOX
tmaddox@bnd.com

A standing-room-only crowd of nearly 300 people packed The Mill community center in Granite City last week to get information on a controversial proposal to allow a tech company to build a data center.

Opinions were plentiful and divided. Trade union leaders spoke in favor of the facility, touting it as a job creator and economic development tool. Other residents expressed concerns about utility costs, environmental impacts and transparency.

Several speakers questioned whether the project was a

“done deal,” noting that city officials appeared to have been laying groundwork without public input. One suggested placing a referendum on the ballot.

Chris Hankins, business manager and financial secretary for International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 309 in Collinsville, praised those in

attendance for asking thoughtful questions and listening to differing viewpoints respectfully.

“Everybody here wants the same thing,” he said. “We want to see Granite City prosper again.”

Hankins said data centers

SEE RESIDENTS, 3A

Voters to decide on \$75M Fairview Heights unified school

BY MADISON LAMMERT
mlammert@bnd.com

Voters in school District 105 will decide this spring whether to authorize \$75.1 million in bonds to build a new, unified school, replacing Pontiac Junior High and William Holliday Elementary—two aging buildings district officials say have safety and infrastructure problems.

If approved in the March 17 primary election, the bond issuance would pay for a new school in Fairview Heights that is ADA-compliant and includes secure entrances and modern instructional spaces such as science labs, according to the referendum language.

Superintendent Brian Arteberry said he expects that, if approved, the bond issuance would impact property taxes payable next year. The estimated increase would raise the annual tax bill for a home valued at \$200,000 by approximately \$855—or about \$18 per week—according to the district's most recent estimates.

Pontiac Junior High is nearly 50 years old, and William Holliday Elementary is more than 65 years old. Both buildings have undergone multiple additions. Arteberry said their electrical, plumbing, ventilation, roofing, and accessibility features are aging — many of which are considered Health/Life Safety violations that the district is required by the state to fix.

The schools also face crowded classrooms and cafeterias,

SEE VOTERS, 5A

Former mayor remembered as architect of Fairview Heights' growth

BY JENNIFER GREEN
jgreen@bnd.com

George A. Lanxon, a foundational figure in the establishment and growth of Fairview Heights, died Sunday, Feb. 8, at age 93.

Known for his instrumental role in shaping the city and its police department, Lanxon served as Fairview Heights' second mayor from 1979 to 1995, overseeing a period of significant community development.

Mayor Mark Kupsy called

Lanxon's passing “a sad moment” for the city, noting the deep impact Lanxon had on Fairview Heights. He said the former mayor had a “medical event” in December and was in a long-term care facility when he died.

Kupsy met Lanxon as a teen-



George A. Lanxon

ager and later served under him as an alderman. He described Lanxon as “a great guy” who was “instrumental during a key growth period of our city.” He also

recalled Lanxon's signature habit of wearing white shoes from Easter through Labor Day.

Lanxon's leadership extended beyond his mayoral term. He was an original member and later chairman of the city's Board of Fire and Police Commissioners.

Fairview Heights Police Chief Steve Johnson said Lanxon had “such intuition about hiring the right officers” and was great at reading people. He was “sharp” and would keep candidates on their toes with his questions.

“He really is that guy everyone wished they knew,” Johnson said.

COMPASSIONATE LEADER AND ROLE MODEL

Former Alderman Scott Rich remembered Lanxon as a compassionate leader with high standards, particularly for the

SEE MAYOR, 5A



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