

Across the River

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Raises approved for incoming elected officials

BY TERRA TEMPLE | THE METROPOLIS PLANET
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After a lot of math and discussion, Massac County commissioners set salaries for office holders being elected on the Nov. 5 ballot. The special-called meeting was held Tuesday, May 7.

At its April 9 meeting, Massac County State's Attorney Josh Stratemeyer informed commissioners that the setting of salaries for the upcoming elected officials — assessor, circuit clerk, commissioner and coroner — needs to be completed 180 days prior to the election, or around May 9. Stratemeyer noted that salaries cannot be changed once an elected official has taken office.

During Tuesday's meeting, Stratemeyer emphasized "the setting of salaries is not for any particular person, you're setting them for the office."

For the six-year term of county commission-

er, a percentage raise of 6-6-6-4-4 over the term was approved, increasing the salary each Dec. 1 starting in 2024 through 2029 from \$13,677 to \$17,287 over the six years.

For the four-year term of county coroner, a percentage raise of 6-6-4-4 over the term was approved, increasing the salary each Dec. 1 starting in 2024 through 2027 from \$17,829 to \$20,441 over the four years. The coroner also receives a \$6,500 annual stipend by the Illinois Department of Revenue out of the Personal Property Tax Replacement Fund.

For the four-year term of circuit clerk, a percentage raise of 6-6-4-4 over the term was approved, increasing the salary each Dec. 1 starting in 2024 through 2027 from \$65,681 to \$75,303 over the four years. The circuit clerk also receives a \$7,600 annual stipend.

The discussion arose for the supervisor of

assessments' salary. November will be Massac County's first election for the office. A referendum on the November 2022 General Election ballot passed 4,051 to 565 to make the office an elected position rather than being appointed by the Massac County Commission.

Noting the pay for the position was raised 4% in January, commissioner Jayson Farmer proposed the starting salary be \$62,250 with a percentage raise of 6-4-4 over the remainder of four-year term. Vice chairman Jimmy Burnham stated the raise should be the same as the other offices and the salary begin at its current rate.

Farmer said he contacted the supervisors of assessments in Union and Johnson counties. They said they receive \$66,800 and \$65,000 respectively. He did not ask if that included a stipend.

Stratemeyer noted again "the setting of salary is for an elected

office and this is the first time this position has ever come up to be elected. It's good to look at what other counties are paying any position, but keep in mind you may be talking a little bit of apples and oranges with some of these. When the county board appoints someone, you have the ability to look at credentials and past experience and approve the person you're hiring for that position. An elected officer may not have that — they could have a great deal of experience and credentials or very little. You take all of that into account when setting a salary. This is first time this has ever been an elected position in Massac County, so you're starting from scratch from that standpoint."

Following the discussion, the commission voted 2-1 with Burnham voting no to starting the supervisor of assessments' salary at \$62,498 on Dec. 1, 2024, with a percentage raise of 6-4-4

over the remainder of term, starting each Dec. 1 in 2025 through 2027, increasing the salary from \$62,498 to \$71,654 over the four years.

Additionally, the newly elected supervisor of assessments who has presented a Certified Assessing Evaluator Certificate by the International Association of Assessing Officers will receive a \$500 annual stipend by the Illinois Department of Revenue out of the Personal Property Tax Replacement Fund.

Also, the newly elected supervisor of assessments can petition the Illinois Department of Revenue for consideration to receive an additional \$3,000 annual compensation based on performance. The compensation would be paid out of funds appropriated by the Illinois Department of Revenue out of the Personal Property Tax Replacement Fund.

While the state's attorney is also on the

Nov. 5 ballot, that salary is set by the state.

The second item on Tuesday's special-called meeting agenda was the memorandums of understanding and contract for professional services with Southern 5 Regional Planning District & Development Commission pertaining to the Energy Transition Community Grant.

Commission chair Jeff Brugger said he would be meeting with Southern Five Executive Director Tiffany George, who is administrating the grant for the county, and Kristy Stephenson, who is the dean of career and technology programs at Shawnee Community College, on Wednesday, May 8.

Commissioners decided to table the memorandums and the contract to their next meeting in order to get questions answered at the May 8 meeting.

The commission will hold its regular meeting at 8:45 a.m. Tuesday, May 14.

Boys and Girls Clubs of Southern Illinois working to reopen

BY TAYLOR BRYAN | THE SUN
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CARBONDALE, Ill. — Efforts to reopen the Boys and Girls Clubs of Southern Illinois are underway, and community members said it's a resource they need.

The effort comes almost a year after both of the clubs' locations closed — in Carbondale and in Marion.

The clubs closed in July for multiple reasons, but club board vice chairman Cordy Love said a major factor was a dip in donations that affected operational funding.

The Boys and Girls Clubs of Southern Illinois gave parents peace of mind, because their kids had a safe place to go after school. Tony Penn's oldest daughter, Alaiyah, was one of them.

"For one, there's not a lot to do, do you know? I mean, unless your parents have you involved in sports stuff, that's how you can interact with other kids, but there are kids that don't like sports and they need some-



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The Boys and Girls Clubs of Southern Illinois closed in July. Organizers are raising money in an effort to reopen in Carbondale and Marion.

thing to do," Penn said.

"It's always good to play with other kids, getting used to being around other kids," he said. "I guess since COVID everything's been so sheltered, and it's kind of forced everybody into their own little corner. They need to get out more and experience that."

Love said that's exactly what folks with the

Boys and Girls Clubs of Southern Illinois are trying to do as they work to reopen. As part of those efforts, they've started the Blue Door Reopen Campaign.

"So we're calling people like, 'Hey, I know you haven't heard from us in a while, but hey, if you're interested in, you know, donating those things, really, that's our first

stage right there.' " Love said. "We're also working on grants, so I think the challenging part with the grants is that for state and federal, they are reimbursable, so you have to pay the money out first before we can get it, but we have no money to pay out first."

He said so far they've raised around \$63,000, but they need more to



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Boys and Girls Clubs of Southern Illinois Board Vice Chair Cordy Love said the board is raising money in an effort to reopen. He said the initial fundraising goal is \$200,000.

reopen.

"\$200,000 will get us started, you know, because we can hire a CEO and get some things in place. You know, for that, we've already identified a site that we're going to use for the Carbondale location, so we're really excited about that," Love said.

Penn said when they do reopen, his youngest daughter will attend.

"For sure, I would definitely get her involved in it, just because she likes

to tumble jump. You know, girls, you know, they like to dance and do all kinds of stuff, so yeah, that would be great to have her involved in that," he said.

Love said they're looking to reopen by the fall, but it depends on the amount of donations received by then.

Love also said the volunteer board is the primary force behind the efforts to reopen.

The Boys and Girls Clubs of Southern Illinois currently have no staff.

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