

Time is a circus, always packing up and moving away.
— Ben Hecht

NEWS-STAR

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Does 60660 have the worst mail service in the city?

Short staffed, remaining workers can't keep up despite 80-90 hour work weeks

Residents of Rogers Park and Edgewater are now wondering if the businesses and residents within the 60660 Zip Code have the worst U.S. Mail service in the city?

Social media posts and backyard conversations many times these days revolve around asking when the last time was anyone had mail delivery?

This newspaper has over the years heard the title of 'Worst Post Office in the City' passed around on the North Side, from 60614 [Lincoln Park] to 60640 [Uptown], and 60625 [Lincoln Square].

Based on an informal survey by this newspaper, it seems that due to short-staffing and perhaps an outbreak of COVID-19, 60660 gets that honor today. And some 60660 customers say it is a title



Postal customers stand in line to turn in the yellow forms that may allow them to pick up their waylaid mail sometime later in the week.

Photo by Carol Beer

they have held for several years now.

Off the record conversations with postal clerks reveal that the 60660 branch is now one month behind in package delivery.

Many of those in 60660 now

claim to have not had mail delivery in weeks. The lucky ones say they get mail delivery service one or two times a week; while others have taken to going to the post office

WORST see p. 12

Police district staffing plunges as citywide units grow — with questionable results

BY CWBCHICAGO

The evening of Nov. 22, officers in one of Chicago's largest police districts worked their entire shift without having a single sergeant on the streets to supervise them.

And cops who worked the next shift in the same district also patrolled without any sergeants supervising.

The lack of oversight was not a scheduling SNAFU, according to two sources. The district simply doesn't have enough sergeants to cover all of the shifts, they said.

After hearing about that — and confirming the situation by reviewing schedules from the station house — we took a look at CPD's staffing numbers and found something incredible.

Since CPD Supt. David Brown took office April 2, the department has significantly reduced staffing at every single police district across the city, including its most violent districts. In fact, the five police districts with the most homicides this year have lost 18% of their assigned cops under Brown, according to Chicago's Office of the Inspector General (OIG).

The backbone of the department

Just last week, Brown hailed officers in the North Side's Lincoln District for taking another illegal gun off the street. "Patrol is the backbone of the department," he said. "[Street] stops like this lead to the removal of dangerous criminals from the streets of Chicago."

Yet, under his leadership, 17% fewer officers are assigned to district patrol today than when he took office. The Lincoln District that he singled out for praise has lost 15% of its cops.

The Harrison District, which is leading the city in homicides this year, has lost 14% of its beat cops since April. Englewood, with the second-highest murder count, lost 17% of its front-line officers. The third-worst district, Gresham, has lost 22%.

Every district across the city has lost more than 10% of its officers since April, except Far Northwest Side's Jefferson Park (16th) District, which has lost six percent.

Exacerbating the districts' staffing problems: CPD brass, still shellshocked from waves of looting this year, continue to reassign

resources from districts across the city to babysit the downtown area.

New units, limited results

In total, there are 1,376 fewer officers assigned to districts now than in April. Where have the cops gone?

CPD brass, still shellshocked from waves of looting this year, continue to reassign resources from districts across the city to babysit the downtown area.

According to OIG, the department lost 354 of them to retirements and other separations. CPD's five detective divisions have gained about 79 investigators.

But most of the rest appear to have gone to citywide teams that Brown created when he redesigned the department in July.

A whopping 745 officers have been sent to the department's Community Safety Team (CST),

POLICE see p. 12

Man accused of shooting at cops was acquitted of gun charge last summer

BY CWBCHICAGO

Attempted murder charges were filed Nov. 29 against a reputed gang member who allegedly fired shots at a Chicago police officer who approached him in Rogers Park this weekend. Court records show a judge found the man — who has several large gang-related tattoos on his face and neck — not guilty of being a felon in possession of a firearm in July 2019.

Chicago cops were in full uniform when they saw Gerardo Jasso, 35, drinking on the public way in the 6200 block of N. Artesian around 3:15 p.m. Nov. 28, prosecutors said. The officers reportedly recognized Jasso as a Latin King gang member from the neighborhood and approached him for a conversation.

Jasso ran into an alley while holding a firearm with an extended ammunition magazine, prosecutors said. According to the state's allegations, the cops ordered him to drop the gun, but he continued running, then turned and fired shots at officers who were chasing him. Officers returned fire. No one was injured in the shoot-out.

The officers' body-worn cameras and private surveillance systems captured footage of the entire incident, prosecutors said.

About three minutes later, police found Jasso hiding under a porch after a resident directed them to his hiding spot, according to prosecutors. Officers searched the path of the foot pursuit and

found a 9-millimeter handgun under a bush.

Jasso admitted to possessing a firearm and to firing the gun, prosecutors said. He allegedly claimed that he was trying to scare off the person who was chasing him.



Gerardo Jasso

Prosecutors charged Jasso with attempt first-degree murder, unlawful use of a weapon by a felon, and aggravated unlawful use of a weapon. He has five felony convictions, all of which are driving-related. He also has a warrant for DUI in Kenosha, WI, prosecutors said.

Judge Susana Ortiz ordered Jasso held without bail.

According to court records, on May 28, 2018, Chicago police accused Jasso of having a gun after they approached him for urinating on the street about four blocks from where Saturday's shoot-out occurred.

Prosecutors charged him with being a felon in possession of a firearm, and a grand jury later returned a true bill accusing him of six felony gun charges, records show.

Jasso took the case to a bench trial before Judge Timothy Chambers in July 2019. Chambers found him not guilty on all counts, according to court documents.

Senior LIVING, See page 6

Woman and service dog found dead after Edgewater apartment fire

A fire broke out Nov. 24 in an Edgewater beach apartment complex that took the lives of both a woman and her service dog.

The Cook County Medical Examiner's office identified the woman as Linda Collins. Police said that first responders received a call at 9:19 p.m. about a fire in a eight-story building at 5220 N. Kenmore. When firefighters entered the apartment they found both a 58-year-old woman and

her service dog unresponsive on the living room floor. Both were pronounced dead at the scene.

Police say the blaze started on the kitchen stove in the seventh floor apartment. It was quickly extinguished by 10 p.m.

According to authorities, the fire was contained to the one apartment, although there was water damage to several surrounding units. No other injuries or displacements were reported.



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Boeuf Bourguignon during our version of the Blitz



By Thomas J. O'Gorman

Lying awake Sunday at 3:30 a.m. with a great Boeuf Bourguignon recipe rattling around in my head, I was thinking of the small details so loved by the French.

I reached for my laptop and went to Netflix, dialing up the newly released episodes of "The Crown," binge-watching the first five episodes of series four.

There, all warm and cozy, on a chilly, wet, windy day outside, I was where I needed to be, with some homemade chocolate chip cookies within arms reach.

Warning: There are no secrets to give away in this series of The Crown if you're a newspaper reader over 50-years-old. All the trials and tribulations of the House of Windsor unfolded before our eyes in real time. From the assassination of Lord Mountbatten to the fall of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

This family, however, is to be pitied. For all their power, they are the saddest and most dysfunctional folk since the Ewings of Dallas.

Still, we watch The Crown for the settings, the grand houses, the characterizations and the opportunity for them to act it all out in front of us.

Biggest surprise? I liked Mrs. Thatcher better than any of the royals.

So that's how my December began, feeling very sad for Charles and Diana, and constantly tweaking my recipe for the best Boeuf Bourguignon for Sunday dinner.

But, I'm terrified. The passage of the seasons has been too quick. Relentlessly speedy in its pursuit of the pandemic lockdown,

or whatever you call it. Our quarantine hurts.

We're in the midst of our own blitz here.

Brits quickly adapted to nightly air raids and bombs from above in World War II. The familiar tube stop, as it were, a bomb shelter. Windows taped to reduce the danger of flying, shattered glass during the bombings. All forms of lighting merged into a nighttime blackout hiding cities

and towns from airborne identity. That's how the civilian population very quickly adapted to the threat to human life, finding other ways to live.

In the midst of our current pandemic blitz, ordinary life as we know it has been altered. Changed irrevocably for the moment with less adventures begun. Fewer plans for family holiday dinners to be fulfilled, less neighborly visits able to be made. Diminished efforts extended to finish things neatly. Or in an attempt to shake the pandemic doldrums, the insistence that further steps be taken to tidy all things up. Struggling with less attention to detail. Ensuring closer needs be met, or attempting to stay faithful to certain historically favored traditions.

It might appear that we have coalesced with the COVID-19 virus. But that's not the whole story. In truth, despite the conflicts of time and place, we work the tactics of solution and make the cherished opportunities for survival happen.

Traveling to the doctor, I drove east on Monroe St. to Michigan Ave. from Halsted St. That's a healthy swath of urban streetscape. Right through the heart of the Loop. To my shock, I barely saw any humans walking anywhere. No Chicagoans out and about their business at 10 a.m. on a Monday. No one even walking near the headquarters of Chase



Milk delivery during the Blitz in London.

Bank or in the plaza eyeballing Marc Chagall's "The Four Seasons."

The Loop was a ghost town. Emptiness a haunting spectral.

Such reality checks are everywhere.

We're all trying to absorb all of this out of that urban emptiness as we dig into our mayoral "30-day stay at home advisory," attempting to fit into context just what the next holiday will be like.

Using a large brush stroke, people who assembled in large

groups from different households contravened the orders from on high for Thanksgiving, are quite possibly becoming the cause of further spreading of more than holiday cheer. Reunited family members might as well be kin to Typhoid Mary. Some period of special quarantine is certainly then a must.

People who insist on traveling to share a holiday meal, sadly, must be viewed with a cautious medical scrutiny. Sentimentality shouldn't trump intelligent caution.

We all hear people giving ponderous explanations or second-guessing the Center for Disease Control. I wouldn't take aspirin instructions from most of these folk. And a green bean casserole isn't worth the shattering destruction of your respiratory system.

Turkey-based tryptophan is no vaccine for potentially heart-stopping issues of the global pandemic.

I had to cease binge-watching The Crown for a chance at balancing my harmony out of self-defense. Putting the Boeuf Bourguignon together was another story. Reviving my spirit, so delicious. I used a chuck roast that I cut into large chunks. Be sure to caramelize the beef well. Sprinkle some sugar on the chunks. Then one thinly sliced red onion, 12 mushrooms, four stalks of rosemary, a big fist full of chopped parsley, two tablespoons of paprika, one teaspoon of Cayenne, five carrots, one bay leaf, one large tablespoon Herb de Provence, sea salt, fresh ground pepper, one bottle good red wine, (saving 8 oz. for the final cooking) 16 oz. beef stock and a later drop of water if needed. Make sure it simmers

for four hours on low heat. Serve with small-ish baked potatoes. Just as soon as it's ready to be served add eight oz. red wine and stir. Ready to eat.

LUDWIG AT 250: Long the cherished delight of the classical world, there is a strange modernity to the music of Ludwig van Beethoven. His triumphant expressions of romantic humanism restore the wounds of

a weary world and celebrate the grand achievements of man at his most full functioning in the turmoil and mayhem of the 19th century. Few musicians have ever reached the vast popularity of LVB. His origins in the Germanic tradition of Teutonic poetic intuition provided him with the capacity for invention and hard work, producing a seemingly endless monument of musical expressions from piano virtuosity to operatic



Ludwig van Beethoven

endeavorment. And the middle spread thick with classical Germanic modulated bombast and lyrical emotional song. His musical world is as strongly alive as it was before his 1827 death. Retaining the title of most beloved composer of all time. Happy 250th birth-

day Maestro Beethoven. Relax and take a break.

CHICAGO CITY COUNCIL: Aldermen voting to raise your property taxes with auto rollover and indexing for inflation were **Pat Dowell** (3rd), **Leslie Hairston** (5th), **Roderick Sawyer** (6th), **Michelle Harris** (8th), **Susan Sadlowski Garza** (10th), **George Cardenas** (12th), **David Moore** (17th), **Derrick Curtis** (18th), **Howard Brookins** (21st), **Michael Scott** (24th), **Walter Burnett Jr.** (27th), **Jason Ervin** (28th), **Chris Taliaferro** (29th), **Ariel Reboyras** (30th), **Scott Waguespack** (32nd), **Carrie Austin** (34th), **Gilbert Villegas** (36th), **Emma Mitts** (37th), **Nick Sposato** (38th), **Michele Smith** (43rd), and **Harry Osterman** (48th). **Mayor Lori Lightfoot** then thanked the aldermen that "stepped up today" to vote yes.

CITY CLUB: Do the latest federal indictments signal the death knell for Chicago's City Club? Unable to meet for lunch as usual. Employees now radioactive. And suspicions abounding, it doesn't look good for its survival. But as a former author/speaker at two of their lunches I can attest what a valuable resource it's been to the literary and political life of well-read Chicago. Past President **Jay Doherty's** social and political skills made it a crammed-to-the-rafters event. I join Jay's friends across Chicago hoping his recent

indictment will come to no great mischief.

MISERICORDIA: "Share in the Spirit of Misericordia," co-hosted by Corboy & Demetrio CFO **Marcy O'Keeffe Twardak** was a huge success. Next year's Shop, Sip and Splurge fundraiser at Misericordia, Heart of Mercy, will be the 10th Anniversary.

LOVE THE NEW HAT: Chicago's very own **Cardinal designate Wilton Gregory** of Washington DC at the Vatican received conferral of his red hat last Saturday at St. Peter's.



Patricia Treacy with President-elect Joe Biden.

INAUGURATION 2021: **Joseph Biden**, whose Irish cousins inhabit the small stunning farm country of Ireland's County Louth, has asked famed Irish classical violinist, **Patricia Treacy**, also from county Louth, to play at his upcoming inaugural festivities. Toes will be tapping and feet will be jiggling as another Irishman inhabits the White House who is well known by his Irish relations. A country taking its place on a front burner once more. That's good news

BLITZ see p. 10

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Is Cook County headed for 'catastrophic' wave of 2021 evictions, foreclosures?

Cook County officials say that there is a reckoning coming once the federal and state eviction and foreclosure moratorium is lifted at the end of December.

Therefore, they just announced a program that will initially provide \$1 million to limit the expected avalanche of evictions and foreclosures residents face.

County Board President Toni Preckwinkle this week unveiled "Cook County Legal Aid for Housing and Debt," according to Crain's.

In June, Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart predicted that the county would be flooded with 250,000 eviction and foreclosure cases if the moratorium was not extended. The deadline was extended, and now the federal moratorium ends on Dec. 31.

On Nov. 13, Gov. J.B. Pritzker announced another 30-day extension of the state's moratorium on

evictions. So just as winter sets in, struggling renters and homeowners may find themselves without a place to live.

According to a recent LendingTree / U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse survey, Illinois is ranked 10th among states where renters have fallen the most behind on payments.

The survey shows that 19.7% of Illinois renters are behind on payments, while 24.4% of Illinois renters doubt they'll be able to cover next month's rent. In total, renters in Illinois now owe over \$414,422,940 in unpaid back rent.

Preckwinkle said the wave of evictions and foreclosures will hit especially hard "the most vulnerable among us, Black and brown residents." She added, "This is unacceptable."

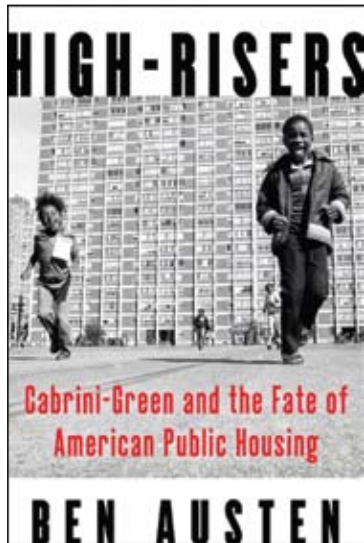
Looking ahead at what could become a massive surge in both

evictions and foreclosures in 2021, Cook County officials are rolling out a program designed to mitigate its effects and keep people in their homes where possible.

Moratoriums on evictions and foreclosures have prevented most people who've lost income during the pandemic from being displaced from their homes, but when those protections expire, a rush to the courts could be "catastrophic for Cook County renters and homeowners," Toni Preckwinkle, president of the Cook County Board, said.

Preckwinkle unveiled an initiative called Cook County Legal Aid for Housing and Debt, or CLAAHD, a countywide effort to help people deal with eviction, foreclosure, tax debt and property deed issues. The initial funding is \$1 million from the county's share of CARES Act funding.

Cabrini-Green focus of Dec. 8 virtual discussion



Authors Ben Austen and Audrey Petty will be hosting a discussion on the fate of public housing in America 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 8, during a virtual Zoom meeting, hosted by The Lincoln Park Community Research Initiative [LPCRI] partners.

The talk will utilize materials

on the Cabrini Green housing complex from the Special Collections and Archives [SPCA] in DePaul Univ.'s John T. Richardson Library. The archives collect and preserves documents and artifacts on the history of the Lincoln Park community.

Austen's book "High-Risers: Cabrini-Green and the Fate of American Public Housing," is a sweeping exploration of race, class, popular culture, and politics in modern America that considers what went wrong in our nation's effort to provide affordable housing to the poor—and what we can learn from those mistakes.

Austen is a local Chicago writer. His book was named one of the best books of 2018 by Booklist, Mother Jones and the public libraries of Chicago and St. Louis.

Petty is a fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction writer and

Collecting Lincoln Park's historical materials

The LPCRI partners with SPCA in the John T. Richardson Library, 2350 N. Kenmore, Room 314, to collect and preserve documents and artifacts on the history of the Lincoln Park community.

The collection includes local newspapers and newsletters, home records, written or photographic, records of historic preservation or home restoration, community organization memorabilia, event photographs and other memorabilia and artifacts from significant businesses with a history in Lincoln Park

For more information, or to make donations, call 312-362-8100 or write to cgr@depaul.edu.

educator. Petty has taught in the fields of African American literature and creative writing.

Shared cost sidewalk program opens Jan. 11

The city's Shared Cost Sidewalk Program is a popular voluntary program in which property owners share the cost of sidewalk repair with the City. This program, provides low cost sidewalk repairs and ease of participation.

The cost per square foot charged to property owners is well below what a private contractor would charge. Senior citizens and persons with disabilities may qualify for a further discounted rate.

Applications will be taken on

a first-come, first-served basis starting at 6 a.m. Jan. 11, 2021. The number of participants is based on availability of funds. The program typically reaches capacity quickly, so apply early. Applications will only be accepted through the City's 311 system by calling 311 or through the City's service request website 311.chicago.gov. The property owner's contact information and the property address are required at the time of request.

Master Planned Development webinar Dec. 8

The city is hosting a public webinar 6 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 8, on the proposed changes to their Development Manual. They hope to create an improved review and approval procedure for large scale development proposals, known as Master Planned Development, or "Master PDs."

The draft documents describing the proposed Master PD review process are available for viewing

on the Chicago Plan Commission webpage. City Hall will provide an overview of the proposed changes, and then include an opportunity for public comments and questions.

Registration is now open on Zoom. Members of the public can submit questions ahead of time through email by Sunday, Dec. 6 to dpd@cityofchicago.org.

Gas bill payment assistance available

People's Gas customers who may be struggling to pay their natural gas bills have an options for help. The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program provides financial assistance to help customers with limited incomes pay their energy bills.

Grants are also available

through the People's Gas Share the Warmth program.

The community and Economic Development Assoc. manages both programs and is taking applications by phone. To see if you are eligible or to apply, call 800-571-2332.

School supply drive

The 18th District is collecting school supplies for students learning at home this year.

Accepted items include pens and pencils, erasers, glue sticks, highlighters, art supplies, notebooks, calculators, rulers and

protractors, hand sanitizer, and binders.

Donations will be accepted until Dec. 31, and be dropped off at the 18th District Station, 1160 N. Larrabee St. For more information call 312-742- 5778.

Science museum virtual art workshop Dec. 5

The Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum will be hosting a virtual seasonal nature card making 2 p.m. Saturday Dec. 5.

This wishing to may join scientific illustrator, Alex Boersma, for a seasonal card making workshop for the whole family. Utilizing specimens from the Nature Museum's very own preserved collections Boersma will guide kids and parents in designing beautiful "pocket purse" holiday cards featuring winter animals.

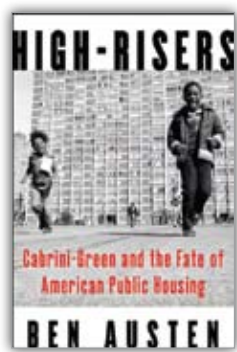
The workshop is designed for families with kids of all ages. Children may need assistance from adults with folding.

To register visit <https://naturemuseum.org/>.



FALL PROGRAM

WEBINAR:
DECEMBER 8TH
7:00pm – 8:00pm



For questions leave a message at 312.362.8100

CABRINI-GREEN, LINCOLN PARK'S PUBLIC-HOUSING NEIGHBOR; a discussion with Ben Austen, author of *High-Risers*

Please join authors Ben Austen and Audrey Petty, as they discuss *High-Risers: Cabrini-Green and the Fate of American Public Housing*, Ben Austen's book, which is a sweeping exploration of race, class, popular culture, and politics in modern America that brilliantly considers what went wrong in our nation's effort to provide affordable housing to the poor —and what we can learn from those mistakes.

IN PARTNERSHIP FOR ADVANCED PURCHASE OF THE BOOK:

Seminary Coop: <https://www.semcoop.com/high-risers-0>

Unabridged: https://www.unabridgedbookstore.com/DePaul_LPCRI_HighRisers

ONLINE REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED:

<http://go.depaul.edu/LPCRI>

Holiday toy drive

The 18th District Police Station is hosting its 30th Annual Toy Drive this Christmas. They are accepting new, unwrapped toys until Dec. 12.

Donations can be dropped off

at the station, 1160 N. Larrabee St.

For more information call the 18th District CAPS Office at 312-742-5778.

Bring toys to Mario's Table

The North Dearborn Assoc. [NDA] is hosting its 27th annual Joy of Toys event on Saturday, Dec. 5, at Mario's Table, 21 W. Goethe. Joy of Toys provides Christmas gifts to children in need.

Neighbors can participate by dropping off a gift at Mario's Table Saturday between noon and 4 p.m., or by making a tax-deductible donation to the NDA to help

purchase gifts.

This year's beneficiaries are the George Manierre Elementary School and the Catherine Ferguson Parent Center. Donated toys should be for ages 3 through 11. They can be wrapped or unwrapped gifts, but wrapped gifts should identify if they're for boys or girls.

For more information visit www.dearbornwalk.com/.

Virtual seminar Dec. 10 offers advice on cats and dogs' oral health

The Uptown Chamber of Commerce and Magnolia Veterinary Clinic, 4600 N. Magnolia Ave., will be hosting a free virtual webinar 7 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 10, titled "The Tooth About Cats and

Dogs" as a part of the chamber's Ask an Expert series.

The seminar will feature Dr. Vaishali Joshi who will offer a brief presentation about basic oral care for your cats and dogs, followed by an open Q&A for your general pet questions.

Dr. Joshi graduated from the Univ. of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine in 2010. She works at her practice Wagnolia Veterinary Clinic in the Uptown neighborhood. Her professional interests include dermatology, behavioral medicine, dentistry, geriatric medicine and infectious disease.

For more information call 773-654-1539. To reserve a spot in the seminar write to greg@exploreprtowntown.org.

Donate your old unused canes, walkers

Swedish Covenant Hospital is seeking donations of gently used walkers, canes, tub benches, commodes, shower chairs and wheelchairs. Donations will be given to patients in need. For more information call 773-878-8200, ext 5727 to schedule drop off. Documentation for tax deductions upon request.

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Is casino and pot tax better than property tax hike?



The Home Front

by Don DeBat

For property owners in Chicago's wealthy neighborhoods—from the Gold Coast and Old Town to Lincoln Park and Lakeview—the outlook for future hefty real estate tax increases appears to be etched in stone.

In 2021, Mayor Lori Lightfoot's 2021 pandemic budget will include a \$93.9 million property tax hike as part of a \$1.6 billion real estate tax levy.

The increase was approved by a tight City Council 28-22 vote, with aldermen representing more affluent neighborhoods opposing the unpopular measure.

Lightfoot's revenue plan also relies on a .03¢ gas-tax hike, and aggressively issuing \$35 tickets to drivers caught zooming past speed cameras at just 6 to 10 miles an hour over the limit.

In addition, the plan calls for restructuring \$1.7 billion worth of city debt for the second time. The refinance will save \$501 million of interest payments alone in 2021 to help defray an unprecedented \$1.2 billion budget shortfall.

The real estate tax hike also includes \$34 million linked to a rise in the consumer-price index so it will grow larger every year. The ordinance additionally requires property owners to be doomed to either an annual property-tax increase of 5%—or an increase based on the consumer price index, whichever is lesser.

The Lightfoot administration has assured the annual increases will be approved by the City Council every year.

Lightfoot has argued the "modest" 1.3% real estate tax increase to homeowners is necessary. A bungalow owner with a property valued at \$250,000 will see a tax-bill increase of \$56 dollars. But more expensive homes could see increases of hundreds of dollars.

Ald. Brian Hopkins [2nd], who represents the Near North and Northwest Sides, including the af-

fluent Gold Coast, voted against the tax hike, saying he couldn't increase taxes on residents during the pandemic.

"They want us to fight against property taxes," he said. "They want to know that if we're going to ask them to pay more every year that we've exhausted all other possible options. We have not done that."

Meanwhile, progressive Cook County Assessor Fritz Kaegi, currently is sending "COVID-19 assessment adjustment letters" to thousands of Chicago property owners, noting that the pandemic

topped \$33 million, reported the Illinois Dept. of Financial and Professional Regulation, which licenses marijuana dispensaries in the state. Recreational marijuana sales generated a record \$75 million across the state during October, up nearly \$8 million from the previous month.

Where's the casino?

A future revenue stream Lightfoot should pursue is the source of another "Sin Tax"—the launch of an immense Chicago gambling casino.

Lightfoot recently asked casino operators and real estate developers to submit plans on how they would build and run the casino. The request came after lawmakers in Springfield changed the casino tax structure and passed a pile of chips to the gaming industry.

The cash-strapped mayor also should launch a temporary casino while a permanent one is under construction. The obvious downtown location should be Lakeside Center—the original McCormick Place East—which could raise millions in gaming tax dollars for the city as early as 2021.

Construction sources say the building originally was designed and wired decades ago for a future casino and there is plenty of nearby parking. Earlier this year some \$15-million in upgrades were pumped into Lakeside Center to convert it to an emergency hospital for up to 2,500 COVID-19 patients.

Gaming experts have estimated the casino would generate up to \$6.6 billion in annual revenue when our tourism and convention business recovers, with direct tax revenue of \$3 billion to \$4 billion to the city and state. All this new revenue would help lead Illinois and Chicago back to fiscal stability.

Experts say a ready-to-open downtown gaming palace would rapidly kick-start lost convention and tourist business that was killed by the pandemic.

Once the virus crisis is cured with new vaccines, spin-off revenue from the casino could flow to the nearly bankrupt hotels, restaurants, museums and boarded-up Michigan Ave. shops.

An estimated 25% of Chicago's population are casino gamers or video poker players, and experts say they are eager to line up for the action and the fun of downtown gambling, although a great deal of gaming today has moved to digital platforms, accessible by smart phone.

For more housing news, visit www.dondebat.biz. Don DeBat is co-author of "Escaping Condo Jail," the ultimate survival guide for condominium living. Visit www.escapingcondojail.com.



More expensive homes could see property tax increases of hundreds of dollars.

A future revenue stream Mayor Lightfoot should pursue is the source of another "Sin Tax"—the launch of an immense Chicago gambling casino.

has caused a "significant economic downturn, and lower property values" depending on the property's type and location.

Lightfoot's budget plan also offered concessions that avoided laying off more than 350 city workers. Now, the city will borrow \$15 million against the tax revenues of future cannabis sales, although the borrowing could be averted if a new round of federal stimulus funds happens in 2021.

Marijuana a pot of gold

If there is a relatively new pot of revenue gold to tap, it likely is pot itself. The pot business in Illinois recently surpassed the \$100-million threshold in total sales for the first time.

In addition to recreational sales, medical marijuana sales recently



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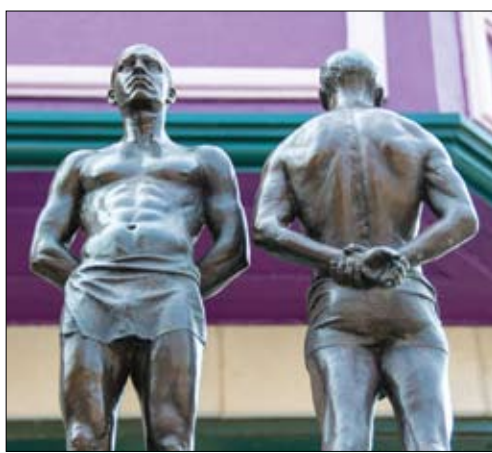
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Lincoln Park art effort has spread city-wide

Sculptures have been installed across the city again this year as part of the 2020 Chicago Sculpture Exhibit [CSE].

CSE is an Illinois not-for-profit corporation founded in 2001 by then-Ald. Vi Daley [43rd]. The "Lincoln Park Community Art Initiative" was created to beautify the Lincoln Park neighborhood in a new way. The first show was mounted in 2002 with eight sculptures that were on display from May through October.

The show continued to grow every year and has earned many accolades. In 2008, the show nearly doubled when Ald. Tom

Tunney [44th] brought the Lakeview neighborhoods into the show.

Following the 10 year anniversary of the show, additional neighborhoods joined and the name was changed to reflect a growing interest in sculpture throughout the city, as the Chicago Sculpture Exhibit.

Those who wish to participate in the CSE program in the future may visit www.chicagosculpture-exhibit.org/ to learn how to participate.

Here is a list of all of this year's sculpture artists and the locations of their works that can be found on the North Side:

John Adduci, 3325 N. Halsted
 John Bannon, 2155 N. Racine
 Jacob Burmood, 1743 N. Leavitt
 Patricia Corredor, 2751 N. Inner Lake Shore Dr.
 Samuel Ezra Fisch, 3423 N. Southport
 Jim Gallucci, 1604 W. Cortland St.
 Ted Sitting Crow Garner, 1923 N. Western Ave.
 Maureen Bergquist Gray, 1047 W. Irving Park Rd.
 Maureen Bergquist Gray, 3400 N. Elaine Place
 Peter Gray, 2400 N. Halsted
 James Havens, 1601 N. Orchard
 Jack Howard-Potter, 410 W.

Chicago
 Terrence Karpowicz, 1171 W. Belden
 Ray Katz, 1486 N. Milwaukee Ave.
 Jorge Leyva, 3401 N. Elaine Pl.
 Jorge Leyva, 1307 N. State St.
 Tess Little, 1425 N. Damen Ave.
 Michael Angelo Magnotta, 1449 N. Wells
 Joey Manson, 2600 N. Sheffield
 Bill McGrath, 3456 N. Elaine Place
 Jennifer Meyer, 3840 N. Southport
 Ruth Aizuss Migdal, 2293 N. Milwaukee
 Sunghee Min, 1922 W. Montrose

Sunghee Min, 3804 N. Seminary
 Judd Nelson, 3906 N. Sheridan
 J. Christopher Newman, 111 E. Wacker Dr.
 Benjamin Pierce, 1825 W. North Ave.
 Nathan Pierce, 855 W. Aldine
 Pamela Reithmeier, 1835 W. North Ave.
 Craig Snyder, 1858 N. Mohawk
 Eric Stein, 1701 W. North Ave.
 Fisher Stolz, 1956 W. Division
 Christopher Thomson, 734 W. Sheridan
 Jason Verbeek, 140 W. LaSalle Dr.
 Jaci Willis, 3000 N. Halsted
 Michael Young, 3131 N. Clark St.

Illinois borrows another \$2B from Fed, past-due bills projected to explode to \$33B by 2026

BY ANN SAPHIR AND KAREN PIEROG

The state of Illinois will borrow another \$2 billion from the U.S. Federal Reserve to plug the fiscal hole the pandemic has blown in its budget, bringing to \$3.2 billion its total borrowings under the U.S. central bank's emergency lending program.

"Today we have notified the Federal Reserve of our intent to borrow only \$2 billion," Gov. J.B. Pritzker said in a Nov. 25 news conference. The amount is less than half the \$5 billion authorized by the state's General Assembly earlier in the year.

"Our intent is to return it as early as possible," Pritzker said. The state can take up to three years to repay the new debt. Illinois was the first eligible borrower to take advantage of the \$500 billion Municipal Liquidity Facility program in early June.

The Fed's municipal lending facility is one of several pandemic lending programs set up by the central bank with money from Congress.

Last week Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin asked the Fed to return unused funds from those facilities, effectively pulling the plug on them as of Dec. 31.

Though the Fed's municipal

borrowing facility has had only one other taker - New York's Metropolitan Transit Authority - the central bank says the creation of the facility itself helped grease credit markets and made it easier for local and state governments to find funding from private lenders.

Illinois borrowed its first slug of \$1.2 billion from the Fed in June.

Pritzker said he was reluctant to borrow all the money he had authorization for, given the fiscal pain it would cause to pay it back.

While Illinois Policy claims that the state's backlog of unpaid bills stands at \$16.37 billion as of Oct. 31, according to the Illinois State Comptroller's Office, the state has a backlog of unpaid bills of nearly \$7 billion, not including

the \$3.2 billion in short-term borrowing from the Fed.

The state must tread cautiously with any borrowing as its ratings are one notch away from junk status.

Gov. Pritzker's long-term fiscal plans suffered a setback when voters rejected a constitutional amendment on the Nov. 3 ballot

BORROWS see p. 10

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Get outside during winter, it's good for you

Winter can be tough on people in the best of times, but it is particularly challenging during a pandemic.

Despite the City of Chicago's efforts to close off outdoor parks throughout much of 2020, the outdoors – including our yards, parks, and sports fields – were critical for buoying our mental well-being, physical health and enabling us to safely connect with others.

With the benefit of hindsight, we now know that being outside does not really increase your risk for catching a coronavirus.

For a decade the environmental movement has advocated the importance of managed landscapes and other green space in urban areas as critical to human health and happiness, particularly for those who have pets at home who like to get out.

“No one enjoys being outside as much as the family dog, though we all gained a new appreciation for our yards and community parks over the last year as we used the outdoors to get away from our screens and connect with one another and nature,” says Kris Kiser, Presi-

dent of the TurfMutt Foundation and The Outdoor Power Equipment Institute, which has done environmental research on more than 70 million children, educators and families since 2009. “Getting outside in the winter takes a little more preparation, but there is no reason to abandon it. There are many reasons why it is a good idea to continue going outside throughout the winter.” That includes shoveling snow, doing some winter landscaping, cutting wood for fires or just walking with people and pets. Or go ice skating, play some hockey, ski or even ride a bike if the streets are clear.

As the saying goes, there's no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing choices. Here are some reasons why you should bundle up in moisture-wicking layers, coat, hat, gloves and boots to get outside for your health and well-being.

Exposure to natural light – even in the shorter days of winter – raises levels of serotonin, the body's “happy chemical” elevates moods. Sunlight is also a good way



Getting outside in the winter takes a little more preparation, but there is no reason to abandon it.

to get a natural dose of vitamin D, which is good for your bones and immune system.

Researchers at the Univ. of Michigan conducted a study that revealed walking in a natural setting versus an urban one improved recall ability by nearly 20%.

Unplugging from your computer, smartphone and television is important even when it's cold out and can be accomplished by simply going outside. Epidemiologists agree outside is still the safest place

to gather. Add a patio heater or fire pit to your backyard to make it even cozier.

Activity boosts immunity. According to Medline Plus, exercise helps decrease your risk for heart disease, maintains bone health and can help flush bacteria out of the lungs and airways.

Being outside in the wintertime requires your body to work harder to keep you warm. Consequently, you burn more calories. Engage in a friendly snowball fight with your kids or take a walk with Fido to the

park to rev up your metabolism and have a little fun along the way.

It doesn't take long to reap nature's benefits. A recent study concluded that spending just 20 minutes in a natural setting reduces the level of cortisol, the stress hormone.

Taking care of your yard in the wintertime is a good way to log some time outside and it helps prepare it for spring.



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Presented by Amy Matthews, Dementia Consultant



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A new approach to fitness at The Clare



(L) Resident Laurel Blau is coached during a personal training session. (R) Resident Frank Caravette stretches with a Clare instructor.

During warmer months residents ML Karth, Anne Kern, Vivien Lee, Steve Molinari and Jack Jennings participated in Tai Chi in the Park, sponsored by The Clare.

Wellness and fitness are crucial components of the overall resident lifestyle at The Clare. So, when in-person group classes were canceled and the Fitness Center and Pool closed in early March in response to COVID-19, keeping residents active was of paramount concern.

With each restriction implemented, The Clare's fitness team never wavered. They stepped up to the challenge, creating innovative ways to keep residents engaged and moving.

"Once COVID-19 hit, we started to figure out what we can do and change to make sure our residents did not miss a beat," Fitness Manager Emily Buxton says. "We took maybe three days off, and then we were right back into a routine."



Resident ML Karth attends an in-person socially-distanced exercise class.

Early COVID Challenges

The first step was reinstating a regular fitness schedule. Thanks to The Clare's in-house channel, Emily began teaching live in front of a camera, and residents tuned in daily to follow along from the comfort and safety of their apartments. They could check out sanitized equipment to use for their workouts, as well.

"We wanted to make sure that we're offering the same caliber of classes that we were before," Emily says.

Since the onset of the pandemic, residents Jack Jennings and Steve Molinari have tuned in to the fitness classes from the comfort of their apartment. They appreciate the variety of exercises and stretches, as well as the set schedule they can follow.

"We look forward to it as the start of our day," Steve says. "We call it 'Emily at 9,' and it really grounds us."

Resident Frank Caravette also regularly attends the fitness classes via his television, and he especially appreciates the convenience. He keeps up with a personal trainer twice a week, along with physical therapy, but he took up the classes amid the pandemic when the Fitness Center closed initially.

"If I don't exercise, I slow down," Frank says. "The exercise becomes important for that reason."

Given that Emily would usually interact with and check in on residents as they took her classes or went to the Fitness Center, another important step was figuring out how to engage with residents. She delivered handouts with exercises and promoted games like Healthy Habits BINGO, where she would call out a square at the end of each class to gauge how active residents were.

Most important, though, was simply connecting.

"We made bi-weekly phone calls to every single resident to ask them how they were doing and if they needed anything, even if it wasn't fitness-related," Emily says. "Many of the residents were lonely, and there were times where we have had to be that voice of encouragement, saying, 'We will get through this. Just hang tight. Whatever you need, we are here to support you.'"

The first few weeks were the hardest, by far, Emily says. But creativity and dedication drove engagement. Throughout the month of May, she celebrated Themed Fridays, in which she would dress up for different decades and teach a dance as part of that day's class. She distributed flower growing kits to give residents something to take care of while they also took care of themselves. And she promoted challenges that encouraged residents to be competitive with each other and with themselves.

"We did a sit-to-stand challenge, for example, and we had more participation than we ever have in previous years," Emily says. "You won't find the programs we offer outside of The Clare."

Reopening The Clare

In recent months, The Clare has slowly loosened certain restrictions put in place in the early days of COVID-19. Small groups of residents can attend in-person classes, which are still broadcast through The Clare's in-house channel, as well. Masks are required, and participants are encouraged to use their own exercise equipment. Pleasant Chicago weather has allowed residents to enjoy the likes of Tai Chi in the park, too.

Resident ML Karth has been an avid participant in fitness classes since they restarted, joining daily strength and cardio sessions as well as weekly Tai Chi, now available for small groups indoors. The offerings are wonderful, she says, and they're keeping her moving despite these difficult times.

"Otherwise, I'd sit like a log!" she jokes. The Fitness Center and Pool have also reopened with rules and regulations in place. Only four people are allowed in the Fitness Center at a time, and just one person can exercise in the Pool at a time. In both locations, frequent sanitation occurs, and reservations must be made in order to

take advantage of the amenities.

"Residents are appreciative of these protocols, because they know that if we have COVID-19 cases, everything can go backwards," Emily says.

Personal training has continued throughout the pandemic, typically taking place one-on-one in resident apartments and now in the Fitness Center, as well. Over the months, the number of residents partaking in personal training has increased significantly as they sought out new ways to get active.

Resident Laurel Blau, for example, started personal training with The Clare at the end of March. Now, she spends three afternoons in the Pool and two afternoons in the Fitness Center in an effort to maintain her health.

"I think exercise is the most important

thing you can do to maintain wellness," Laurel says.

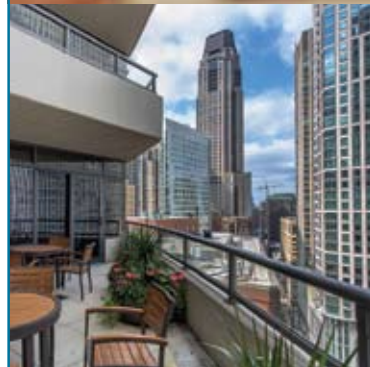
Everything has been an adjustment, and flexibility has been key in providing residents with wellness and fitness programming throughout these unprecedented times. Overall, residents of The Clare have continued to reap the benefits of an on-site fitness team, all while remaining healthy and safe.

"I could not speak any more highly about what has happened here at The Clare to make sure that our residents are able to live as fully as pre-COVID," Emily says. "We have done everything we possibly can to keep our residents safe, and we will continue to do that as long as necessary."



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Police Beat...

Man stabbed during drug-related fight on Loop CTA platform

A 37-year-old man is in fair condition after he received a stab wound during a drug-related fight on a CTA Red Line platform Nov. 26, police said. A suspect is in custody.

Police and EMS responded to the State-Lake station around 2:44 a.m. to handle reports of a person stabbed on the subway platform.

CPD said two men who were with a group of people began arguing and one of the men pulled out a knife and stabbed the other man in his chest. Responding officers took the alleged attacker into custody for questioning.

The victim was taken to Northwestern Memorial Hospital for treatment.

Rogers Park man arrested for firing gun — on same day his parole ended

Sunday truly was the best of times and the worst of times for Sherwin Flowers.

It was the day his parole for narcotics and weapons charges ended.

It was also the day that he got arrested and charged with firing a handgun in Rogers Park.

The latest arrest is the third time he's been charged with being a felon in possession of a handgun. That doesn't include the time he shot a guy.

During a bond court hearing Monday, prosecutors said Chicago cops who were monitoring a CPD surveillance camera saw Flowers,



Sherwin Flowers

31, pull a gun out of his pocket and shoot at a car after someone inside the vehicle opened fire on him and some companions in the 7600 block of N. Bosworth earlier this month.

According to the state's allegations, the POD camera recorded video of Flowers firing three shots at the car before he ran away. Cops immediately recognized him because they had contact with him in the past, prosecutors said.

On Sunday, police were again watching surveillance cameras when they saw Flowers driving his 2018 Infiniti in Rogers Park. Street cops pulled him over, confirmed his identity, and arrested him for the Nov. 3 shooting.

He's now charged with Class X felony armed habitual criminal.

In April 2019, Flowers pleaded guilty to three separate narcotics charges and being a felon in possession of a weapon in 2017. He received a 30-month sentence. But, after getting credit for time spent in jail and a 50% good behavior sentence reduction, he got out of prison seven months later. On Sunday, his parole ended.

At the time of the 2017 case, Flowers was on parole for a 2015 charge of being a felon in possession of a weapon, according to state records. And in 2006, he received a 10-year sentence for aggravated battery with a firearm.

On Monday, Judge Susana Ortiz ordered him held in lieu of \$100,000 bail and ordered him to go on electronic monitoring if he can post a

10% deposit bond. His private attorney said Flowers worked as a food service supervisor at Wrigley Field, although he hasn't been working lately.

Man gets 4 years for robbing 12-year-old; Another gets 7 years for robbing 14-year-old



Austin Corrado Juliano Petrov

Two men who separately robbed young victims on the city's North Side last year are heading to prison after striking plea deals with prosecutors.

Juliano Petrov, 20, pleaded guilty to robbing a 14-year-old boy at gunpoint in the 2600 block of W. Farragut on Aug. 1, 2019. Prosecutors said Petrov walked up to the boy, complimented his gold chain, and then pulled out a gun to rob the teen.

But, the boy ran away, and Petrov dashed into a nearby gangway.

When the victim met with police, he vividly recalled Petrov's distinctive facial tattoos, according to CPD records. Cops searched the area and spotted Petrov walking out of a gangway in the 2600 block of W. Foster. The boy identified him for police.

Last week, Petrov pleaded guilty to armed robbery, and Judge Aleksandra Gillespie sentenced him to seven years in prison.

Meanwhile, a Rogers Park man has been sentenced to four years for robbing a 12-year-old of his bike.

Austin Corrado was accused of pushing the boy off his bike in West Ridge and pedaling away with it on June 1, 2019. According to prosecutors' allegations, Corrado remained at large for a couple of months and spent some of that time burglarizing homes.

In one case, he allegedly burglarized a Rogers Park residence of a MacBook and gaming system. On another occasion, he kicked in the front door of a West Ridge home and stole a computer, tablet, and other items, police said.

Detectives tracked Corrado down through video surveillance and records from a pawn shop where he sold some of the allegedly stolen property.

He has now pleaded guilty to robbery and two burglary counts. A judge sentenced him to concurrent four-year terms for the burglaries and a consecutive four-year sentence for robbing the 12-year-old. He's scheduled to be paroled in Jan. 2023.

Attackers batter, try to pull woman from her car in North Center

Police are investigating yet another carjacking attempt on the North Side. The latest incident unfolded around 10:30 p.m. Nov. 25 in North Center — about three blocks from where a woman was carjacked the night before.

In this case, a vehicle pulled up next to a 28-year-old woman as she finished parking her car on the 3600 block of N. Bell. Four or five men exited the other car, and one of them ordered the woman to get out of her vehicle, according to Officer Jessica Rocco, a CPD spokesperson.

When the woman failed to comply, the offender battered her and tried to pull her out of the car, Rocco said. The victim began honking her horn, and the offenders fled the scene when the neighbors started to investigate the commotion.

Rocco said the victim suffered a cut and bruising to her lip and hand, but no medical attention was needed at

the time. The woman said the would-be carjackers were Black males in their mid- to late teens who arrived in a small SUV.

On Nov. 24, two men threw a 52-year-old woman to the ground and carjacked her at gunpoint as she unloaded groceries at her home in the 3700 block of N. Hoynes around 5:08 p.m. Those carjackers got away with the victim's gray 2017 Jeep Renegade, CPD spokesperson Karie James said.

At least six vehicular hijackings have been reported in the Lakeview-based Town Hall Police District last week.

In addition to Lakeview, Town Hall officers patrol North Center and parts of Uptown, Lincoln Square, and Lincoln Park.

Official CPD records, which are embargoed for a week before being made public, show 32 carjackings in Town Hall through November 15 — four times the number seen in 2019.

Citywide, carjacking cases are up 125% compared to last year. This week, a police spokesperson told WGN that widespread use of masks during COVID-19 and the police department's policy against vehicle pursuits are likely contributing to the rise.

Woman gets 3 years for shooting acquaintance in Uptown

An Auburn Gresham woman has been sentenced to three years in prison for shooting an acquaintance on an Uptown street in April 2019. But, after getting credit for time spent in jail before sentencing and Illinois' standard 50% "good behavior" sentence reduction, she did not spend any time in prison, according to state records.

Naomi Turner, 41, got out of a vehicle and shot a 30-year-old woman in the 5000 block of N. Winthrop at 8:42 p.m. April 28, 2019, prosecutors alleged. The victim was shot in the leg, and Turner fled in a black SUV. Turner and the victim knew each other, police said at the time.



Naomi Turner

The victim flagged down police and reportedly identified Turner as the shooter. Cops caught up with Turner a couple of days later.

Records show Turner has pleaded guilty to one count of aggravated battery with a deadly weapon in exchange for the three-year sentence.

According to Illinois Dept. of Corrections records, Turner reported to the Logan Correctional Center earlier this month and was paroled on the same day. She will be discharged from parole next November.

Local troublemaker eyed in Boystown fire

A well-known neighborhood menace is suspected of setting a dumpster fire in Boystown Nov. 23 near locations where two other suspicious fires have been reported recently. The blaze broke out behind Sherwin-Williams, 3311 N. Halsted, around 10:30 p.m.

On Oct. 25, a charity donation box on the store's parking lot was also set on fire, although police never filed a report in that case. Cops have not yet linked Monday's suspect with the earlier fire or with a third suspicious blaze that was set in the area recently.

The fire department and police responded to Monday's fire after 911 callers saw it spreading to nearby wires and the building shared by Sherwin-Williams and Out of The Closet, a popular resale shop. The buildings were not damaged, according to police.

Witnesses told police they saw the local troublemaker lingering in the alley around the time of the fire

She delivered their dinner — then she took their packages

We've seen plenty of package theft schemes, but none like this.

An Uptown resident who ordered delivery from a local sandwich shop buzzed the food runner in. Then, she and an accomplice hauled away the building's package shipments, photos show.

According to an email from building management, the restaurant used a Postmates driver to deliver the customer's sandwiches around 9 p.m. Nov. 14.

Surveillance camera footage shows the food runner being buzzed in with food delivery in her hand. The same camera shows her walking out with two packages. She then let another guy into the building and he leaves with boxes, too, the manager says.

"No one else was buzzed in a half-hour before or after her entry," according to the email to building residents.

The restaurant was told about the incident "and was asked to pass this information on to Postmates, who hopefully will take the appropriate action," a manager wrote.

The building's manager included some advice for residents to follow as they gear up for a holiday package delivery surge: Don't leave packages in the lobby overnight ("One that was stolen was there for four days," the manager said.) Ask a neighbor to pick



Surveillance images show the perpetrator walking in with a food delivery and walking out with an armload of packages.

up packages if you are not available. Drop off a neighbor's package at their door, and meet food delivery people at the front door.

"Package theft is a crime of opportunity," the email concluded. "Let's not give criminals an opportunity."

and then saw him walk away after the fire started. The suspect, a 32-year-old Hispanic man, was wearing a big puffy coat and was seen walking northbound in the alley after the fire started. We are not identifying the man by name because he has not been charged with a crime.

Police records show he has been arrested more than 20 times in recent years for theft, battery, trespassing, and other less serious crimes.

A clothing donation box that sat on the Sherwin-Williams parking lot burned in a suspicious fire at 8:30 p.m. on Oct. 25. But police did not file a report because they could not identify anyone as a "victim" of that case, records show.

On Oct. 31, someone set fire to the floors of a condominium that was undergoing renovations in the 700 block of W. Cornelia, according to CPD records. The offender broke a window to get inside. Police categorized the crime as criminal damage to property.

Lakeview woman carjacked

A Lakeview woman was carjacked at gunpoint outside her home Nov. 23, police said. Now, investigators want to know if the vehicle was later used in a Logan Square robbery and a Bucktown shooting. No arrests have been made.

The victim, age 25, told police that she had just parked and was walking to her home when a gunman approached her from behind in the 1400 block of W. Wolfram around 6:18 p.m., according to Officer Ronald Westbrook, a CPD spokesperson.

She said the carjacker put a gun to her back, demanded her keys, and then took her phone and wallet. He drove away southbound on Southport in her red 2017 Audi A3, Westbrook said.

The woman was unable to provide a good description of the man since he was behind her, but she did see him wearing a black skull cap and black hoodie, according to Westbrook.

Late Monday night armed robbers used a red Audi during a hold-up in the 2200 block of N. Sacramento in Logan Square, according to a police report. Shortly after midnight Tuesday, a Bucktown man was shot during

a possible robbery attempt behind his home in the 1800 block of N. Marshfield. A witness reported seeing a red Audi speeding from the scene.

Man carjacks truck, goes on hour-long North Side robbery spree

An armed man carjacked a four-door pickup truck on the North Side and then went on an hour-long robbery spree Nov. 23 through Rogers Park, West Ridge, Edgewater, and Lincoln Square, according to CPD reports. At least six robberies were reported in under an hour that investigators suspect were committed by the same man. He remains at large.

It all started around 4:30 p.m. when the offender pulled out a chrome handgun and took a man's silver Ford F-150 pick-up truck near Central Park and Ainslie in Albany Park. According to a police report, the offender pointed a gun to the victim's head and drove away with the distinctive-looking truck, which has an extended cab, four doors, and a huge Chicago Cubs logo on the passenger door.

Less than 15 minutes later, multiple 911 callers in West Ridge reported that a man in a silver Ford truck with a Cubs sticker stuck a gun out of his window, asked them what gang they're in, and shouted "King Love," a slogan affiliated with Latin King gang members.

Then, the robberies started: At 5 p.m., a man driving the Ford truck robbed a woman of her purse at gunpoint in the 2000 block of West Balmoral in Lincoln Square's Bowmanville neighborhood. Around 5:10 p.m., a bicyclist was robbed at gunpoint of his bike and wallet near the intersection of Hollywood and Ridge in Edgewater. The offender threw the victim's bike into the bed of the pick-up truck and sped away.

Moments later, two victims walked into the Rogers Park Police District station to report that a man in a pickup truck robbed them at gunpoint in West Ridge. One vic-

CTA seeks “reckless conduct” suspect after man’s struck by train



BY CWBCHICAGO

CTA security workers have found surveillance images of a suspect who allegedly fought with another man on the Jackson Red Line platform — until a train struck the other man on Nov. 27.

Chicago police initially said the victim was hit by an oncoming train after the other man pushed him during an altercation on the platform around 7:21 p.m. The injured man’s leg became pinned beneath the train, and he was dragged for a short distance,

but he survived. An ambulance transported him to Northwestern Memorial Hospital in serious condition.

However, a “lookout bulletin” distributed within the CTA and CPD’s transit unit Saturday said investigators reviewed surveillance video and saw “two persons engaging in a wrestling fistfight which results in one of the persons falling” into the train’s path.

The bulletin, which includes three surveillance images of the man who was not injured, says he is suspected of “reckless conduct.”

POLICE BEAT from p. 8

tim was targeted on the 6400 block of N. Seeley and the other in the 2100 block of W. Devon.

At 5:20 p.m., an Amazon delivery driver told police that a man took several packages from his truck at gunpoint in the 1400 block of W. Olive in Edgewater. The offender put the packages into a pick-up truck and sped the wrong way down the street, according to the driver.

The victims described the offender as a Hispanic man in his late teens to late 20s. He’s about 5’-8” tall, thin, clean-shaven, has short hair, and wore a light-colored shirt or jacket.

No injuries were reported. Chicago police detectives are investigating the crime spree.

Woman gets two years for series of CTA Red Line attacks

A woman who was accused of committing three separate attacks on the Red Line during a surge of violence aboard the CTA train system earlier this year has reached a plea deal with prosecutors.

Tatyona Davis, 20, was accused of three separate attacks in under a week while she was already on a recognizance bond for allegedly robbing a Wicker Park grocery store and another recognizance bond for shoplifting.

Police arrested Davis on Feb. 24 after she allegedly pepper-sprayed a woman who told her to stop throwing food at another passenger on a Red Line train near the State-Chicago CTA station.

While she was in custody, investigators learned that prosecutors recently approved charges against her in two earlier attacks.

In one case, Davis was accused of pepper-spraying and trying to rob a 20-year-old woman on an escalator at the Clark-Division Red Line CTA station Feb. 23. The victim told police someone came up behind her on an escalator, sprayed her with pepper spray, and tried to steal her bag. During the attack, the offender began screaming for help to confuse witnesses into thinking that she was the victim, police said.

The offender then pulled out a “long, shiny object” and stabbed the woman in her chest, causing a puncture wound, and ran out of the station, according to police.

An ambulance transported the victim to Northwestern Memorial Hospital in good condition. Police searched for the offender but came up empty-handed.

Davis was also charged with battering and trying to rob a woman on an escalator Feb. 21 at a Loop Red Line station.

That victim, age 25, told police she saw two women “being rowdy” on the train shortly before she exited at the Lake station. As the woman went up the escalator, she felt someone in her pocket and turned around to see the



Multiple mugshots of Tatyona Davis for multiple crimes.

two “rowdy” females immediately behind her. The women turned around and ran down the “up” escalator with the victim’s phone.

She chased after the two offenders, yelling at them to drop her phone. They did. And one of them pepper-sprayed her and punched her in the face two times when she tried to pick it up, according to police. The victim declined medical attention.

At the time of the alleged Red Line attacks, Davis was free on two separate recognizance bonds for other pending criminal cases:

In one case, prosecutors alleged that Davis displayed a kitchen knife and pepper-spray while lunging at an employee Feb. 9 who tried to prevent her from shoplifting a bottle of Jack Daniel’s at Jewel-Osco, 1341 N. Paulina.

Police said they recovered a 6” kitchen knife, a 3” paring knife, and pepper-spray from Davis during her arrest.

In the other, a Target employee detained Davis after she allegedly stole \$789 worth of clothing Jan. 14 from a store at 2650 N. Clark St.

While the value of the allegedly stolen merchandise is more than twice Illinois’ \$300 felony threshold, prosecutors refused to file felony charges, police said.

Davis has cleared all of the matters up by pleading guilty to two counts of aggravated battery in a public place. She received a pair of two-year sen-

tences to be served concurrently.

After receiving credit for the time she spent in jail before sentencing and the state’s standard 50% reduction for good behavior, she is scheduled to be paroled on Feb. 19, according to Illinois Dept. of Corrections records.

Five in custody after carjacking attempt outside Loop hotel

Chicago police said four 16-year-old boys and a 15-year-old girl attempted a carjacking outside Loop hotel Nov. 23. Prosecutors charged each of them with felony attempted vehicular hijacking. One of the males is also charged with felony aggravated battery with a deadly weapon. The other three males are also charged with misdemeanor battery.

Five juveniles beat and threatened to shoot a driver during a carjacking attempt outside a Loop hotel Monday evening.

The victim, a 32-year-old visitor from Las Vegas, was attacked as he sat in his 2020 Dodge Challenger rental car with a passenger outside Hotel Allegro 171 W. Randolph, around 5:14 p.m.

Four juvenile males and a juvenile female opened his front door and one of the offenders pointed a handgun at the driver’s chest, police said. They then struck him in the head and chest while demanding his car.

But the victim fought back and refused to give up the vehicle. All five offenders then got into his car and



Artist Nate Baranowski.

3D chalk art walking tour of Howard St.

Now through Dec. 31, those so inclined may take a self-guided walking tour of the 3D chalk art on Howard St.

The 3D art was created by Nate Baranowski in storefront windows in Rogers Park.

Tour walkers can start on the west end at Ridge or the east end at Sheridan. Along the way, tour

members can taste a wide array of global cuisines, shop at independently owned retailers and explore on of the North Side’s unique community.

The estimated total walk time: 30 minutes. For more information visit www.howardstreetchicago.com

began choking, hitting, and biting the driver, according to a CPD statement.

When the man’s passenger intervened, the group punched him in the face repeatedly. Passersby yelled for police and the offenders ran from the scene.

Cops found the group on the 100 block of W. Lake and took them all into custody. Police said the gun appears to be a BB gun or replica firearm. Neither victim required medical attention.

Old Town hold-up linked to series of armed robberies

Armed robbers who’ve pulled off a series of hold-ups downtown and in Lincoln Park struck again in Old Town, according to an alert from Area Three detectives. The hold-up crew fired shots during one daylight robbery near the Magnificent Mile earlier this

month.

In an update to their previous warning about the robbery team, Chicago police say the offenders committed a robbery on the morning of Nov. 22, at the BP service station, 1647 N. LaSalle, around 3:38 a.m. The cashier told police that a man brandished a gun, robbed her of the register money, and then fled southbound on Clark St.

She said the offender was a slim Black male who stood about 5’-9” tall and wore a black hoodie with a blue and white mask. He reportedly flashed a silver pistol.

Police previously linked three robberies to the crime pattern: on Nov. 9, a 29-year-old man was walking in the 700 block of N. Rush when someone tried to take his shopping bag around 2:15 p.m., police said. The offender

POLICE BEAT see p. 10

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Letter to the Editor

Physical, not 'social' distancing

"Social distancing" is a phrase we are all hearing these days due to the threat of sharing a virus. It is intended to remind people not to get too close so as to reduce the spread of infection.

While it is important to do all we can to reduce the spread of infections, it is nevertheless an unfortunate and inaccurate concept and wording.

Today, the last thing people need, especially considering COVID-19's impact, is to be distant from one another. On the contrary, this is a time in history when people more than ever must experience and create social closeness, while maintaining as much "physical" distancing as we can to be safe.

Socially we need each other, while still maintaining optimal physical distance if we hope to reduce our chances of catching or spreading a virus.

So let us be as close as we can be socially while maintaining 6' of physical distance from each other. Stay connected, socially to one another, as we now need each other more than ever.

Leon Hoffman, Lakeview East

BORROWS from p. 5

that would have allowed the state to move to a graduated income tax rate from the current flat rate. Gov. Pritzker was seeking to raise about \$3.1 billion in new tax revenue by increasing rates on top earners.

"I am very reluctant to saddle our state with that large of amount of short-term debt," he said of the decision not to tap the full \$5 billion in authority. "I believe it would irresponsible to borrow that entire amount given the persistent fiscal pain it would cause over the next three years as we would struggle to repay that entire amount."

Illinois is expected to post deficits of between \$4.2 billion and \$4.8 billion annually over the next five years unless the fiscal 2021 gap is closed with structural fixes. That red ink would be piled on to the existing backlog of unpaid bills.

In the absence of any fixes, the state's bill backlog could grow to \$10.2 billion by the close of fiscal 2021 (on June 30, 2021), \$15 billion in fiscal 2022, \$19.6 billion in fiscal 2023, \$24.5 billion in fiscal 2024, \$29 billion in fiscal 2025, and \$33.2 billion in fiscal 2026.



Rich Daniels

BLITZ from p. 2

as the nation faces fresh issues raised with Brexit.

ALTRUISM DELIVERED: Teresa Nelson Buescher and son, Chicago actor Nate Buescher have hearts full of love and gratitude to their amazing group of friends who helped them accomplish some great holiday food distribution. They made and delivered 270 meals to those in need. Now those are great friends.

YULE BAR: Candace Jordan reporting Santa Baby Bar is now completely decorated at 3505 N. Clark, indoor/outdoor, over-the-top Christmas decor with three levels of gram-worthy experiences!

FORE: Congrats to Marie Claire De Bortoli, the sweet mom of Ralph Lauren Bar & Grill's Flavia Magdalin, on her nomination for top 50 golf instructors in the U.S.A.

SERVICE CLUB: Candace Jordan reports The Service Club of Chicago has scored two wins recently with the re-election of Sherrill Bodine as president and, drumroll please, the nonprofit's Phantom Gala reported gross revenue of \$365,000, a record gala amount in recent years (and virtual at that). A double win for Chicago's philanthropic community. All of these proceeds will go to SC's Philanthropic Grantees in 2021. Congrats to co-chairs Mary Lasky, Tina Weller, Mary Claire Scorsone Moll and Kristine Zielbauer Kinder on a job very well done.

TUBE TALK: Rich Daniels shows what the well-dressed music director is wearing on set these days at 20th Century Fox TV/Disney/NBC. His "Ordinary Joe" starring Jimmy Wolk is keeping Rich, Jeff Morrow and Christine Day very busy. Watch for the show sometime next year.

UNDERCOVER: Bondgirl Diane O'Connell, recuperating in her wheelchair, guarded by Chicago's finest, Patrolmen Carlos Castillo and Kevin Bennett, while keeping warm under the new Gibson's shawl blanket.



Mary Lasky, Tina Weller, Mary Claire Scorsone Moll and Kristine Zielbauer Kinder.



Thad and Hattie Wong.

TRIANGLE NEWS: Tavern on Rush has gone to great lengths to construct an elaborate system of outdoor dining that should allow it to stay open during the latest Lockdown predictions with the use of heavy duty climate adapted heaters. Frequent diner, Shelley Howard, has examined the buildout and declared that it should stand up to all Mother Nature throws our way. But he's willing to double up in the long john department to keep things operational. "We will survive."

WHO'S WHERE: Thad Wong dining with his beautiful 16-year-old birthday girl, daughter, Hattie Wong... Michael Dolan at Death Valley National Park, Furnace Creek, CA... Hector Gustavo Cardenas is with Marius Morkvenas at La Roma Condesa in Mexico City, that's one metropolis that never disappoints... Janet Owen taking a break, lunching on the rooftop of Women's Athletic Club.

BEFORE LOCKDOWN: Last night before lockdown at Gibsons Bar & Steakhouse, chanteuse Barb Bailey was with galpal Mary Ann Goeing, a beautiful night, opting to be seated in the bar. We support our treasured restaurants and bars during this time of COVID lockdowns.

READERS HAVE THEIR SAY: Lucia Adams: "Bravo to the last "hard copy" social columnist in Chicago."

Lauren Lein Cavanaugh: "A feast for all senses— reading this tasty work of mouth-watering artful words."

Bobbi Panter: "Thank you so much, Tom, for your brilliant writing. It is so much fun to read and I look forward to it. I never know what path you will take us down."

Paul Hansen: "The wonderful

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Carlos Castillo, Diane O'Connell and Kevin Bennett.



Janet Owen



Sherrill Bodine

wordsmith talks turkey, Thanksgiving, Chicago comings-and-gosings in still another great Skyline column, always funny, touching, revealing, nostalgic and prophetic all at once."

Hansen Connery Murray Heritage: "Every word, every time, is divine."

Barb Bailey: "I loved reading about how you were preparing a full Thanksgiving dinner for yourself. Until I read your column I wasn't going to cook for myself. Now - COVID move over - I am going to prepare some of my favorite recipes - for my own Thanksgiving. Thank you for motivating me. Otherwise, I would have had a pretty bleak holiday."

Sugar Rautbord: "Completely fabulous column. Especially

the preface for your new book ... Gourmet Dining for One, or Five-Star Meals in the Age of COVID."

Wanda Wright: "Vivid, tasty, satisfying. What wonderful storytelling, thank you for this delicious slice of conversations and happy stories we all sorely miss!"

Do not be afraid of death. Be afraid of the half-lived life.

-- Laird Hamilton

tog515@gmail.com

POLICE BEAT from p. 9

displayed a handgun and then fired three shots toward the victim, who fell to the ground. He was not seriously injured. Police said the victim declined medical attention.

The robber fled from the scene eastbound in a silver Ford Explorer with the man's property. Police believe the Explorer had been recently stolen from a car dealership.

Then, on Nov. 12, a 31-year-old man was walking just east of Chicago and

State streets when a small gray or silver SUV stopped in front of him around 12:20 p.m., said CPD spokesperson Kellie Bartoli. Two of the vehicle's occupants got out, displayed a gun, and took the man's valuables, Bartoli said. They then got back into the SUV and fled westbound on Chicago Avenue. The victim was not injured.

The next day, a group of three people was robbed at gunpoint by three offenders in Lincoln Park, police said. The victims — a pair of 22-year-old men and a 23-year-old woman

— were on a sidewalk in the 2200 block of N. Halsted when the robbers walked up and displayed a handgun around 10:39 p.m., according to CPD spokesperson Officer Michael Carroll.

The suspects are two to three Black males who stand 5'-8" to 6-feet tall, weigh 160 to 200 lbs, and are between 25- and 40-years-old. Anyone with information about the crimes can contact Area Three detectives at 312-744-8263 regarding case P20-3-209.

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WORST from p. 1

face themselves to line up to try and collect their own mail.

Only, once they arrive at the post office at 1723 W. Devon Ave., they usually find long lines out the door, at times discovering that there is only one clerk on duty working the main customer counter. And there are no line monitors to explain what lines to get into or how one might retrieve missing mail or waylaid packages.

"I went to the post office [Friday] and the line went out the door east to the next side street, and I didn't see any social distancing," said Carol Beer, a senior citizen who lives on N. Clark St. "I'll be going back Monday again to try and get my mail, but it's going to be cold out. What's their motto... 'Neither snow nor rain, cold or gloom of night,'... I guess that now applies to the customers coming in to collect their undelivered mail?"

And while some people are being given their mail when going to pick it up themselves, others are getting the run around.

Thomas Potter of Edgewater says that he went to the 60660 post office last week to

report that he had not received mail in over eight days, hoping to pick up his mail. The clerk returned and handed him a piece of paper asking for name, address, phone, and email. Potter was asked to fill it out, return it, and to "expect a call in two days and [then you] can pick up the mail" when they call. "Fingers crossed I get a call..."

Beer filled out the paperwork Nov. 30, hoping to get back in line and collect her mail Dec. 1.

Meg Reile of Edgewater West said she talked to her local carrier who told her that COVID-19 has hit the branch hard and that "they are focusing on packages and priority mail." And as a result "they don't have enough workers to cover the routes." She said that those that are able to work are now working 80 to 90 hours a week. The local carrier told Reile that she has no idea when this situation is going to improve for 60660.

People have been complaining about this particular branch for years. And it appears that even contacting local Congressional leaders does no good. North Side Congressmen have from time to time made

public statements of claiming to get something done, but service just tails off again as their attention turns away.

After years of complaints, in February U.S. Postal Service officials met with

"I'll be going back Monday again to try and get my mail, but it's going to be cold out. What's their motto... 'Neither snow nor rain, cold or gloom of night,'... I guess that now applies to the customers coming in to collect their undelivered mail?," said Edgewater resident Carol Beer.

residents in the 60660 Zip Code to discuss their concerns with local mail service and ways to solve the problem. The meeting was called by U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky [9th] and aldermen Harry Osterman [48th], Debra Silverstein [50th] and Maria Hadden [49th], whose offices have been flooded with constituent complaints about poor mail service.

"My office has heard from a lot of constituents about serious mail delivery problems in Rogers Park, Edgewater, and West Rogers Park. My staff and I are work-

ing hard to get the post office to fix this ASAP," said Schakowsky.

And after the February intervention, neighbors say service did improve for a while, and a public audit company was hired to call those who complained to see if things had improved. But by the middle of Summer the service returned to being bad, and now this Fall, it is worse than ever.

In February Schakowsky said that the "underlying message here is that change is needed and it's needed now. [Problems] happen over and over again. They happen uniquely in this community. USPS needs to solve the problem."

Well it appears they haven't.

If the USPS initially increased clerk and carrier staffing at 60660, and held performance audits on the local mail service as they claimed in February, they are no longer doing that today. And now some neighbors, like John Lyrla of Edgewater, have just given up. "This has been going on for many years. [It's] not just a recent development. I believe it is a hopeless situation. The bureaucrats are winning the war!"

POLICE from p. 1

which "[participates] in community service projects such as food drives, prayer circles, peace marches and other neighborhood events with block clubs, churches and the residents most affected by crime" while also responding to "crime hot spots," the Chicago Tribune reported in July.

Another 283 cops have been assigned to Brown's Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT). That group was designed to handle protests and looters. Or, as its commander told the Tribune in July, it "[protects] the residents and the visitors that come to the downtown area or any area in the city that are here to peacefully express their views or enjoy a ballgame or a festival," according to its leader, Cmdr. Michael Pigott.

While there have not been any ballgames or festivals for the CIRT to handle, its ranks have also grown beyond its initial 250-person headcount.

CPD's "summer mobile" anti-violence unit picked up 140 officers.

Despite consuming about 10% of the department's frontline patrol officers, CPD's new anti-violence units have had limited success.

Carjacking reports are up 125% compared to last year. November's murder count will be about 50% higher than last

November, according to records maintained by the independent crime state site HeyJackass. This month's death toll will also exceed homicide counts seen in the Novembers of 2013, 2014, 2015, 2017, and 2018, too, according to the site.

Districts shorted

Second City Cop, a blog that focuses on Chicago policing matters, has recently posted schedules from short-staffed districts across the city.

Carjacking reports are up 125% compared to last year. November's murder count will be about 50% higher than last November.

And police officers who patrolled the Lakeview-based Town Hall Police 19th District on the evening of Nov. 29 didn't have any sergeants in the field to support and supervise them, according to a copy of the district schedule provided to this reporter.

There was one sergeant on duty. But he was taken off the street to sit at the station's front desk.

According to the schedule, the next shift in that district, which patrolled from late in the evening to early Monday morning, also had no sergeants in the field. Well, that's not 100% accurate. The district did have one sergeant in the field — but the department assigned him and his tactical team to sit on

a Magnificent Mile street corner to scare looters rather than patrol their assigned district where robberies and carjackings are up nearly 150% in recent weeks.

Asked about the lack of supervision in Town Hall, one of the city's largest and most populated districts, a CPD spokesperson said, "the Chicago Police Dept. has specific policies and procedures in place to ensure proper manpower and supervisors throughout the city. For the safety of our officers, CPD does not comment on specific deployment plans or tactical decisions."

About three hours before the department issued that statement, Brown tweeted a video, saying the department "will remain committed to not just meeting, but exceeding the consent decree requirements for as long as it takes."

One of the consent decree's major provisions calls on the CPD to have one sergeant supervise every 10 officers.

An unhappy alderman

In 2015, Lakeview Ald. Tom Tunney [44th] voted in favor of a major property tax increase after he said he received assurances that the Town Hall Police District would receive 35 more police officers, to a total of at least 366 cops.

Tunney began sending copies of the district's monthly staffing numbers to his constituents in a weekly email. The last

time he did that was on June 19, when Town Hall had 391 officers.

Since then, the district's manpower has fallen every month to its current strength of 329 officers, according to OIG. That's far below the 366-cop minimum that was promised in exchange for Tunney's property tax vote five years ago.

Tunney hasn't forgotten.

He voted against the city's 2020 budget and another property tax increase Nov. 24. That afternoon, he explained his "no" vote.

Deep into his explanation, Tunney concedes that the 2015 manpower promise has been broken.

"I was very public with the fact that my [2015] vote was to ensure more police resources in the 44th Ward and, in order to provide our families with a competitive, high quality, neighborhood high school, \$25 million in capital investments for Lake View High School," Tunney wrote. "The investments in Lake View High School were made and the police resources came, but have once again been reduced as the new police superintendent has prioritized citywide units as opposed to district policing and beat integrity."

There's no word on why Tunney stopped sending monthly manpower updates to constituents at the exact moment when the decreases began.

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