

Activists demand a closer look at TIFs to deal with COVID-19 crisis

Demand mayor use funds to plug growing budget holes

BY JIM VAIL

As the City of Chicago tries to deal with one of its worst financial crises ever, some activists are demanding that the mayor take money from the controversial Tax Increment Financing [TIF] fund and use it to battle the coronavirus epidemic - and try to plug the holes opening up in their own crashing bottom line.

"We are calling for the complete elimination of TIFs from the Chicago development portfolio and the releasing of the remaining \$1.2 billion in property taxes sitting in the TIF funds for emergency COVID-19 services and support immediately," said Tom Tresser, founder of the CivicLab which has analyzed the TIF program and has tried to educate the public at numerous meetings and speaking engagements across the city.

TIF critics and tax payers have described the program as a slush fund that syphons off property

tax revenue for the mayor to use to subsidize wealthy developments at the expense of the poorer neighborhoods and the various other public taxing bodies who draw their revenue from property taxes. Those other taxing bodies - like public schools, parks, libraries, streets and sanitation - must then transfer their funding needs over a smaller and smaller pool of properties not located in TIF districts.

In short, every dollar removed from the property tax rolls and transferred into a TIF fund is a de facto property tax increase on properties not located in a TIF zone.

Tresser also sees a racial component to the TIF districts. "TIFs have harmed Black communities especially hard over the decades, so it's fitting that they be eliminated (and) the funds remaining in those accounts be used to save lives now," he said.

The CivicLab sent a letter to city officials that calls on City Hall to fund a batch of income needs, some of which are not really in the city's bailiwick; rather the responsibility of the county, state and federal governments.

Those demands include that all workers would receive guaranteed four-week full salary if they are sick with COVID-19 or are staying at home to care for sick families; a halt on rent, evictions, mortgages, student loan payments, foreclosures and property taxes until six months after the stay at home order is lifted.

Tresser is also demanding that the state lift the rent control ban as an emergency order by the governor. Other demands include no shut off or late fees of utilities be added until the stay at home order is ended; free public transit; free COVID-19 testing and treatment; hire 1,000 public health workers; reopen the mental health clinics that City Hall had previously closed; provide protective gear to all workers dealing with COVID-19 cases and begin door to door screening and testing where needed.

While no cost calculations were offered, Tresser claims that these demands can be paid for if the mayor reinstates the head tax on all businesses with more than 50 employees, and uses the \$1.2

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Photo courtesy Nanamac47

Horse-drawn carriage rides downtown on the way out

Legislation being brought before City Council today will call for the official end to horse-drawn carriage rides being offered in downtown streets after Jan. 1 of 2021.

The effort was lead by Ald. Brendan Reilly [42nd] who has spent more than a decade trying to regulate the industry out of business. He says that over the last 10 years, the city has issued hundreds of violations to horse carriage companies.

The new set of ordinances, on the agenda and expected to be

voted on today, will require that the Commissioner of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection "shall not issue any new or renewal horse-drawn carriage licenses; provided, however that any such license in effect as of the effective date of this ordinance shall remain in effect until January 1, 2021."

The new code provisions, applicable to horse-drawn carriages, shall continue to apply in full force and be in effect to horse-

RIDES see p. 8

Coronavirus scams surging, experts predict more

Stimulus checks will create another tidal wave of fraud, authorities warn

BY BRETT CHASE

Better Government Association

As opportunists and scam artists look to make a quick buck off the COVID-19 pandemic, hundreds of Chicagoans are inundating City Hall with complaints: \$80 toilet paper, \$50 hand sanitizer bottles and \$15 jugs of vinegar.

And while price gouging is the most prevalent complaint, experts are sounding the alarm on bogus cures, fake deals on protective gear and con artists posing as government officials.

"This is the worst I've seen, and I've been doing this for 32 years," said Steve Bernas, CEO of Better Business Bureau [BBB] of Chicago and Northern Illinois. "I've never seen a calamity that would affect so many."

Through April 13, the Federal Trade Commission fielded more than 540 fraud complaints related to the outbreak in Illinois. The Illinois attorney general's office has reported handling almost 1,300 price-gouging reports.

And in Chicago, city officials have issued two civil citations for price gouging out of more than 400 complaints filed in March through mid-April, according to a spokesman for the city's business affairs department. In 2019, there were only two complaints of price gouging the entire year, he said.

The department has three investigators and one attorney working the avalanche of cases, and two additional city investigators were temporarily assigned in March to handle the demand, said Isaac Reichman, a spokesman for the city's Dept. of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection.

City Hall received nine price gouging accusations last month from customers of Dearborn Wholesale's two locations, one at a West Garfield Park warehouse, which is open to the public, and the other on 79th Street, which serves retailers.

Dearborn Wholesale officials didn't respond to repeated calls and messages seeking comment. Most of the complaints made to the city accused the wholesaler of overcharging for toilet paper and bleach, records show.

Reichman said city inspectors went to Dearborn Wholesale's West Garfield Park location after

the complaints in mid-March but there was no toilet paper in stock, and investigators found no violations.

"When we visited, there was no evidence of price gouging since they were out of stock of toilet paper," Reichman said. "We also follow up with complainants when we receive complaints to look for proof of price gouging, so these investigations are still ongoing."

The BGA obtained a city database of 286 complaints through the end of March that listed complaints across the city. The city received an additional 129 complaints in April throughout the city, Reichman said.

Price gouging citations can carry fines from \$500 to \$10,000.

Chicago residents with coronavirus-related complaints should call the city's 311 line to ensure their issues are directed to the appropriate authorities, Reichman said.

Throughout the state, Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul's office is also working through hundreds of additional complaints, but has not yet brought any civil charges, a spokeswoman said.

SCAMS see p. 8

Proposed rent-payment grace period to be debated today

The current economic shutdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic just got worse... for North Side landlords.

On Monday Ald. Matt Martin [47th] introduced new legislation in City hall and in a twitter post that would give renters who lost income during the coronavirus outbreak a 12-month grace period to pay their rent.

The proposed ordinance may be acted upon at today's City Council meeting, which will be held virtually. It demands that the Illinois Statehouse and Gov. JB Pritzker enact new rent controls and similar payment deferments for mortgage holders, among other relief efforts.

In 1997, Springfield enacted the Rent Control Preemption Act, that prohibits municipalities from enacting, maintaining or enforcing measures that control the amount of rent charged for leasing a residential property.

For the last couple years, housing activists have been actively calling for rent control legislation in Chicago, only to be stymied by that state law. But a group of alderman now want to revisit the issue after tens of thousands

of workers in Chicago suddenly found themselves unemployed by a government-enforced economic shutdown in response to the current pandemic.

The proposal also asks the governor to help secure a commitment from non-federal mortgage lenders to offer "mortgage forbearance" for at least three months to mortgage-holders who have lost income due to coronavirus. A similar program already exists for those who have mortgages with Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the federally backed mortgage programs. The proposal did not address any concept of postponing property tax payments that for many home-owners far exceeds the amounts they pay each month for their mortgages.

Ald. Martin's proposal reportedly has the support of 21 of his aldermanic colleagues.

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What will we remember of the pandemic?



By Thomas J. O'Gorman

I was no fan of Ronald Reagan, even though the '80s really belonged to him. I was a South Side Democrat of refinement and reason.

Emotionally I was still dealing with the loss of Bobby Kennedy in those days. All that political promise was hard to let go. Such a tremendous sense of unfulfilled hope.

But the '80s offered a powerful sense of comfort and balance to me. To everyone I suspect. Just listen to any one of your favorite tunes from the era. Instant tranquility. The smell of a future still promise-filled. Youth. Sun tans and swimming pools, great cars, skinny waists, good shoes, sail boats on Lake Michigan and early Ralph Lauren.

An older generation still with us.

Lunch at R.J. Grunt's, dinner at Gordon's. Turtle Soup from Binyon's and a Fannie May on every corner. Chicago gets a woman mayor, Prince Charles and Diana wed. No Starbucks, no cellphones, no terrorists. Everyone cheered as the Iron Curtain came down and the Soviet

Union was dismantled, aided by a Polish Pope who set off to meet the world.

No wonder things were so comfortable. They were.

No way we could have envisioned the way the planet would unfold. The 21st Century is not turning out as I had hoped.

We were planning for attacks from Afghanistan, Iran and outer space; not from an illness right out of the Middle Ages. Our pandemic lockdown is the visible inheritance of the century so far, it would appear. George Orwell, move over.

A New York real estate mogul in the White House. Chicago streets empty as Old Tucson. Schools closed. Churches and synagogues shuttered, Passover and Easter celebrated in anxiety, and the Pope alone in St. Peter's Square on Good Friday.

McCormick Place transformed into a field hospital like this was Verdun on the lake. The Queen addressing her people for only the fourth time in her long reign. A second generation Cuomo galvanizing the public, as the body count rises and morgues are built faster than new homes.

Everyone you know out of a job like it's 1929. The "L's" are vacant, with the homeless moving to the subway. Showers installed for them under viaducts. While the bourgeoisie order dinner from curb side pick-up restaurants, once home to the fashionable and elite.

Events of historic and noble purpose postponed or canceled, and the Kennedy family pursued by even more heartbreaking tragedy and tears.

We couldn't be anymore startled than if Prohibition were re-established. (Wait, did the mayor just shut down liquor stores too?)

So who could blame us for listening to Tears for Fears, Survivor, George Michaels, Depeche Mode or Flashdance with Irene Cara. While we make Lockdown burgers or Nona's eggplant parmigiana. If there was ever a time when we needed the comforting

food and drink of a gentle era, it is now.

Maybe grandma's famous chicken and dumplings is just what we need cooped up at home.

The soft warmth of an '80s hit can bring an instant soothing of the jitters or anxiety attacks. Perhaps the taste of a Brandy Alexander is just the thing to remind you of a more calm era of existence, as we attempt to find some kind of clarity in the thousands of daily details about the pandemic's statistics... how many sick and dead?

We worry about people from whom we are separated. People more vulnerable. Loved ones alone. Isolated by time and travel. It is becoming clear, though, that across the country people are really trying to stay connected by phone and social media to people who need to know they are loved.

Chicagoans are outstanding at reaching out to say a word of reassurance to others. Relatives. Neighbors. People down the street. Such human contact is essential, we have learned, in keeping people optimistic and conscious of their own value to others.

So make a list of people you can call. Helping others to understand what's going on is vital to surviving the pandemic and the isolation and social distance it has brought.

That's the way people always used to live. Neighbors stuck their nose in your business. Your suffering. Your loneliness. Your isolation. Good neighbors knew how important human contact was. Your voice. Your conversation. Your interest in what's going on with others lifts the level of health and stability. Check up on your facebook friends. Especially

the ones who are less outgoing, more reserved or less well.

We don't have a vaccine capable of wiping out the Corona Virus yet, but we do have the human ability to expand the well-being of others. We have the ability to lessen the stranglehold of the disease by our courtesy and concern. By our ability to chase the fears from the hearts of others.

Perhaps the challenge that we are offered in this time of pandemic is really being shaped by our own personal capacity to reach out to others in concrete, practical ways. Suggest some programs on television that would help others spend their day. Maybe a strong dose of Jane Austen is just what they need. Or some show about food. The Royals. Sherlock Holmes. Or help them find a way to



Glenn Beckert

pray, attend Mass, or celebrate their religious traditions on all the cable and youtube sites.

You do not have to confine yourself exclusively to '80s nostalgia to get through the Lockdown.

Late the other night I found the full cast of the television show "The Nanny," off the air more than 20 years, stage a reading of the show's very first episode. Fran Drescher, who starred in and produced the show, led them in a "zoom" production. All 12 of the actors were in different locations. But they were connected via the internet, face to face, to create their ensemble

production. It was hilarious. Silly. Very 1990s orientated. But a big lift of the spirit.

The pandemic will end. What, then, will we remember of it? The deaths, the pain of isolation, the financial disaster?

Many certainties questioned?

Perhaps we will glimpse it as a moment of greatness for this era of civilization. When people felt the pain of others and did all they could to nurture hope in others by their sense of sensitive intrusion into the living of others. With time for a prayer, poem, recipe or a laugh.

A BASEBALL LEGEND: Former Chicago Cubs manager **Jim Frey** died last week at 88. He was essential in the Cub's most memorable moments of the 1980s taking them to their first playoff appearance in nearly 40 years. He lifted all Chicago when the Cubs took their first National League East division title in 1984. They won another division title in 1989. His years with the ball club were golden. He had Chicago style. And will live deep in Chicago lore.

FINAL STRIKE OUT: Former Cubs second baseman **Glenn Beckert** has died at 79. He played nine season with the Cubs, from 1965 to 1973. Named to the National League All Star team four times, he won a Golden Glove in

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Former Lerner Newspapers delivery girl fights for nurses' rights



Heart
of the
'Hood

by Felicia Dechter

BY FELICIA DECHTER AND
DORIS CARROLL

Once upon a time, Doris Carroll was a Lerner Newspapers delivery girl, waking up at 4 a.m. to help her brother get out the morning's Booster newspapers. Now, 50 years later, Carroll is on the pages of the newspaper she once delivered, thanks to the fact that she "fights like hell," for nurses in Illinois, and nationwide.

Carroll, who has been pushing for legislation for nurse to patient ratio, is a graduate of Blaine Elementary and Lake View High schools. She graduated from Univ. of Illinois College of Nursing in 1983 with honors and a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. She holds two certifications -- in Ambulatory Nursing and as a Certified Clinical Research Coordinator.

For the last five years, Carroll has been the Chief Union Steward for the Illinois Nurses Assoc. at the former Univ. of Illinois Hospital and Health Sciences, now called UI Health, 1740 W. Taylor St. Additionally, she is the vice-president of the Illinois Nurses Assoc. [INA], the Nurses Union and a vice president of the Illinois AFL-CIO. And as if that isn't enough, Carroll is also a founding member of NursesTakeDC, a nationwide grassroots movement of nurses supporting federal legislation for Safe Patient Limits. (Each year, they put on a Conference/Rally in Washington, DC. This year's event was cancelled due to COVID-19).

Her passion is all of this union and political activity -- to give back to the nursing profession. There is a dire need to unionize and pass Safe Patient Limits, she said.

We salute and thank Carroll, and every other nurse and health care hero out there helping to keep us alive. Read what she has to say and weep. I did.

"I'm a registered nurse. As I write this I can't believe it's been close to 37 years now. I still work full-time as a charge nurse, in an academic ambulatory care clinic affiliated with a Chicago hospital. The clinic serves two very different practices: Infectious Diseases and Primary Care for adults and children.

"I'm not a "frontline" nurse. But I'm in a battle along with the frontline nurses I represent everyday as their Chief Union Steward. I share that responsibility with another nurse who works in the ER. I have a team of nurses who volunteer our time to represent our 1,400 nurses. We are in a nurses union, the INA.



(Left) Doris Carroll in 2017, when a planned strike at UI Health was called off after the nurses won on their issues of concern. They celebrated with a party. Carroll said that nurse to patient ratios were not part of that particular strike, but they will definitely be an issue in an upcoming strike this September. (Right) In Washington in 2016 with Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky, a sponsor of HR 2581.



"It is a battle now more than before. Before COVID-19 [C-19]. I think our lives now will be framed as "Before C-19." As in 9/11. This will change all of us. Maybe not everyone will be touched by the loss of family or friend, but for nurses— we see death everyday. And we have lost nurses, our sister and brother nurses, to C-19.

"In the early days of C-19 I cried. By myself and with nurse friends. It's stressful and difficult to express it. I have to be in charge, a leader, be calm, show strength and keep nurses unified to work together for similar purposes. The anxiety and the insomnia about whether we can stay strong together as a team. Who will fall sick? Who will die? Who is responsible? Why did it have to happen this way? Why didn't we have enough Personal Protection Equipment [PPE]? The numerous texts, phone calls, emails, everyday for weeks now. Wow. It's been a month now.

"I see my nurses struggle with the daily fear of not having enough PPE. Or not enough nurse techs. Or not enough clerks to take a call from the family. Or house-keeping to clean rooms. And then nurses saying some were refusing to enter those rooms with C-19 patients. That was really tough to hear. It reminded me of the days

when HIV was raging across the country. And many refused to care for our positive patients. HIV and C-19.

"Do not fear I tell myself. Be strong. Remember who you are, and why you get up everyday to come to work. I do it for my nurses. And my patients. They are not really mine you know. But it feels good to say it. Because without my nurses, then I cannot care for my patients. They are my backbone. My strength. And we are in this fight together.

"I'm crying now. Hadn't done that in several weeks. I cry because of the unknown. But as the tears dry I will promise this: My nurses will not have died in vain.

"I know who is responsible for the lack of planning and lack of PPE to protect my nurses from C-19. The lack of science that the CDC uses by telling us last year N95s (masks) are single use and now tell us to wear it for multiple shifts. When caring for multiple patients. The lack of enough PPE and transparency from hospital administration. They prefer to keep us obedient and dutiful, working shift after shift, never questioning their policies and protocols.

"As in the policy of taking double the patients we usually care for. When before C-19 it still was

too much. When before C-19, no hospital nor nursing administrator believed too many patients was a problem—except for the evidence-based research that said it was. Only now they say every hospital is doing it because of C-19, as if that is evidenced-based and safe for our patients. It isn't. It's not. And it's dangerous.

"Hospital administrators are not generally healthcare workers so maybe you could argue they just don't understand. But they do understand profits. And they've been working that over the years. Profits over people. Now it's profit over PPE too.

"But nursing administrators DO know. Have they forgotten or what? Don't care? I believe in my heart they do care. They have just been too long from the bedside of a patient and no longer understand the responsibilities and difficulties that bedside nurses experience. Or they're pressured by hospital administration to comply

and be indifferent to nurses. I do know, even though I work in a clinic now. Yes, I am busy in my practice of two specialties. But it's not like what the bedside nurse experiences. Never.

"My promise is that nurses will not die in vain while caring for their patients. I will show you how difficult nurses work to keep you alive, with the fear for their own lives and that of their loved ones, hidden from you. I will show you the strength it takes to move nurses to make positive change to make a law to protect you—and them. From caring for too many patients. Because when we do, you suffer -- from more infections, falls, heart attacks and yes, death. I will show you how nurses will rise up—after C-19.

"Because now is not the time. We are here for you now. You can count on us. I promise. But don't forget about nurses and our fight for safe staffing. Don't forget when my nurses were there for you. Holding your hand. Hugging you. Wiping away your tears. When your family couldn't because of C-19.

"Make sure you tell your legislators to pass this legislation for Safe Patient Limits—HR 2581(federal) and HB 2604 (state). We will need you then. More than ever. Fight for nurses like we fight for you. For safe staffing. For safe care. I promise I will."

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Police Beat...

Three more Red Line muggers arrested

Charges have been filed in yet another recent robbery on the CTA's downtown subway system. It's the latest in a string of successful police investigations as Loop train attacks staged a resurgence during April.

Police arrested Ein Julian, age 18, at the Jackson Red Line CTA station around 2:20 p.m. April 10 after they



Ein Julian

recognized him as one of the offenders who mugged a CTA passenger on a Red Line train near the same station, according to court records.

The victim, age 25, told police three teenagers attacked him on a northbound train between the Roosevelt and Jackson stations around 12:15 a.m. on Apr. 9.

One offender pushed him into the wall of the train and took valuables from his pockets while another struck the victim and the primary offender punched the victim in the face, according to a CPD spokesperson.

Julian is charged with felony robbery. Judge Mary Marubio released him on a recognizance bond and ordered him to go on electronic monitoring.

Police arrested two juveniles Wednesday in connection with the case. The boys, ages 13 and 14, are each charged with felony robbery. No further information is available about them because they are minors.

CTA-related robberies and violent attacks were headline news in Chicago earlier this year, but the number of incidents dropped sharply as COVID-19 precautions kept many people at home in the second half of March.

However, robberies, batteries, and a high-profile murder have been reported as crime steadily returned to the train lines.

Prison time for man let out on 'affordable bail'

An Edgewater man has been sentenced to four prison terms for robbing three women in Lakeview — and then grabbing a woman on the street after a judge released him on affordable bail.

Judge William O'Brien sentenced Dajuan Oliver to terms of four years for aggravated robbery; three years for robbery; two years for attempted robbery; and two years for aggravated battery in a public place. After receiving Illinois' standard 50% sentence reduction for anticipated good behavior, 217 days credit for time served while awaiting trial, and concurrent sentencing for some of the charges, Oliver will

be paroled on June 16, 2022.

Oliver threatened to punch a woman in the face Sept. 2, 2018, as she walked her dog on the 2600 block of N. Orchard. He took the victim's wallet, phone, jacket, and keys, then fled.

Fifteen minutes later, he reached into his waistband to indicate that he had a gun as he robbed a woman of cash and her passport on the 600 block of W. Arlington.

And at 6:55 a.m., he again implied that he had a gun as he robbed a woman on the 900 block of W. George.

Police arrested Oliver a short time later when an officer pulled him over for a traffic violation and noticed property belonging to the robbery victims in Oliver's car, according to prosecutors.

Incredibly, Oliver went home after posting an affordable bail bond of just \$3,000.

Last July, while out on bail, Oliver approached a 32-year-old Lakeview woman from behind in the 2900 block of N. Mildred and grabbed her buttocks, police said. When the woman jumped away, Oliver "began approaching [her] in an aggressive manner until [she] screamed," officers said in a report, "at which time he fled southbound on Mildred."

Prosecutors charged Oliver with felony aggravated battery in a public place and violation of bail bond in the latest case. Judge Sandra Ortiz ordered him held without bail.

Gunmen rob three, sexually assault woman in crime spree

Two armed men robbed three victims and sexually assaulted one during a lightning-fast crime spree in Lakeview and Uptown April 17, according to police. No arrests have been made.

At 5:05 a.m., the offenders forced a 30-year-old woman and a 27-year-old man to lie on the ground while holding them at gunpoint on the 500 block of W. Cornelia.

The men then took the victims' valuables and one of the offenders sexually assaulted the female and struck her in the face, said Police Officer Anthony Spicuzza of CPD's Office of News Affairs.

Both offenders then got into a dark-colored vehicle and sped away eastbound on Cornelia.

Around the same time, the same two men approached a 35-year-old man as he smoked a cigarette in the 4800 block of N. Sheridan and robbed him of his wallet and keys, police said. They struck the man in his head with the gun, stole his nearby vehicle, and fled.

Taken was a silver 2014 Toyota Camry bearing a license plate that begins with Z2638.

Police said the robbers are two black men between 30- and 35-years-old. One stands 5'-9" to 6'-1" tall and weighs 150-200 lbs. The other is about 5'-9" tall and 235 lbs. Both wore surgical-type masks and may have been driving a Chevy Malibu.



Dajuan Oliver

CTA train system beleaguered by violent young thugs

Over the course of one week this month, a 16-year-old girl was either involved in or on the scene of a robbery, a shooting, and a murder on the CTA's Red Line train system, according to prosecutors and a police department source.

The girl serves as a common thread connecting a series of crimes on the beleaguered CTA train system, which is seeing significant numbers of violent incidents even as ridership has plunged.

Her story is not unique but demonstrates the level of mayhem that an individual or small group can create on the city's transit system. Earlier this year, a 19-year-old woman was charged with committing multiple violent crimes on the Red Line, including two that were allegedly carried out less than a week after she was shot inside a CTA pedestrian tunnel downtown.

Police also arrested the 16-year-old girl after she allegedly fought with a CTA security guard on the Red Line train near Belmont on April 9. The guard, who was illegally carrying a gun while on patrol, has also been charged in the case.

Anyone with information about the crimes can contact Area North detectives at 312-744-8263 about cases JD210682 and JD210684.

Death while "wrestling" was homicide, medical examiner says

The death of an Uptown woman who reportedly died while "wrestling" with a man 23-years her younger last month has been ruled a homicide by the Cook County Medical Examiner.

Police responded to the woman's apartment on the 900 block of W. Carmen around 11:30 a.m. on March 7 after a man reported Laura Lonigro was unresponsive and appeared dead.

Officers administered CPR to Lonigro until fire department personnel arrived. She was pronounced dead at Weiss Hospital a short time later.

The 28-year-old man who called 911 told police that he and Lonigro, age 51, were wrestling when she lost consciousness and died, police said. He was taken in for questioning, but detectives released him the next day while they awaited autopsy results.

Now, the medical examiner has ruled Lonigro's death to be a homicide with the primary cause of death being hypertensive and atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease. "Stress due to physical altercation, obesity, and combined drug toxicity" contributed to her death, officials said.

The police investigation continues.

Death at Boystown bathhouse was natural; "environmental heat stress" a factor

The Cook County Medical Examiner has determined that a man who was found unresponsive in a Boystown bathhouse last month died from natural causes with "environmental heat stress" contributing to his death, according to official records.

Donald Fraser, 55, was found unconscious around 8:55 p.m. on March 6 inside Steamworks, 3246 N. Halsted, police said. He was pronounced dead at Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center less than an hour later.

Fraser's death was caused by atherosclerotic coronary artery disease, the medical examiner said. Obesity and heat stress are listed as secondary causes of death. The long-running bathhouse features a large steam room and hot tub area.

Two days after Fraser's death, Marcus Z. Loveless, 53, was pronounced dead at Illinois Masonic less than an hour after he also collapsed at Steamworks, according to medical examiner

records. Shortly after she was arrested, investigators recognized the girl as one of three people who attacked and tried to rob a 59-year-old man at the Roosevelt Red Line station on April 2.

She and two men allegedly pushed the victim onto the Red Line tracks as they tried to take his bag, according to police. The victim was treated at Mercy Hospital for facial bleeding and an injured hand. All three offenders ran from the scene. Still not charged in the crime are two men.

Five days later the girl was on the scene when two men battered a former Marine on the Jackson Red Line platform and then pushed the man between two cars of a departing train. The train dragged 29-year-old Mamadou Balde to his death.

Police used CTA surveillance video to identify the attackers and trace their movements — along with the girl's — after the killing.

Prosecutors last week charged Ryan Munn, 18, and Fajour Hodges, 19, with Balde's death. The girl was not directly involved in the attack.

In another example of the resiliency some alleged Red Line troublemakers can exhibit, on Feb. 17 a gunman

opened fire on a crowd of people in

a CTA pedestrian tunnel that connects the Red and Blue Line train systems at Jackson. One man was killed. Another was gravely wounded. And a 19-year-old woman was shot in the leg, according to police.

Four days later — while still recovering from the gunshot wound — the woman allegedly pepper-sprayed a CTA passenger, stole her phone, and punched the victim in the face at the Lake St. Red Line station.

Police eventually caught up with her on Feb. 24 following a disturbance at the Chicago-State Red Line station. At the time, she was free on a recognizance bond for allegedly robbing a Jewel-Osco in Wicker Park and another recognizance bond for shoplifting in Lincoln Park. She is currently being held without bail.

Update: Weapons charge filed in Wrigleyville incident

A man who got out of prison less than a month ago for illegal firearm possession is back in custody — charged with illegally possessing another firearm when he allegedly stole a woman's car in Wrigleyville on April 18.

A 41-year-old woman told police she left her car running while she made a delivery on the 3800 block



Devin Williams

of N. Sheffield shortly after 7 a.m. She reported that a man who had a gun got into the vehicle and drove away. The victim's car crashed near Addison and Racine streets a few minutes later. Police officers who quickly accessed a CPD surveillance camera feed spotted a man running from the crashed vehicle and broadcast a description of the man to cops in the field.

Devin Williams, 21, was taken into custody by officers who saw him walking near the intersection of Southport Ave. and Irving Park Rd., a CPD spokesperson said. Officers reported seeing Williams throw a handgun over a fence during a brief foot chase that preceded his arrest. A gun and a separate ammunition magazine were recovered by police, but neither item was loaded, prosecutors said.

Williams is charged with unlawful use of a weapon by a felon. Judge Arthur Willis set bail at \$25,000. Willis also ordered him held without bail at the request of the Illinois Department of Corrections.

State records show Williams was released from Stateville Correctional Center on March 27, where he was sent to serve a four-year prison term for a 2018 charge of unlawful use of a weapon by a felon.

Boy, 15, charged with armed robbery on Loop CTA platform

A 15-year-old boy is charged with robbing a woman at the Clark-Lake Blue Line station while he brandished a realistic-looking BB gun this week.

Police officers conducting a routine patrol of the CTA station April 16 came upon a 21-year-old woman who reported that she had just been robbed by a masked gunman.

The victim said she was on the Blue Line platform when the offender approached her, pulled out a gun, and demanded her valuables around 9:30 p.m. He then ran from the station, she said.

Cops searched the area and found the robber walking on the 100 block of W. Lake a few minutes later. He was carrying a BB gun that closely resembles a standard firearm, police said.

Prosecutors charged the boy with felony aggravated robbery.

The hold-up is the latest in a string of violent incidents reported on the downtown CTA lines this month. Police have made arrests in many of the cases.

Shot fired, no one injured during apparent robbery attempt in Lincoln Park

At least one shot was fired April 16 during an apparent robbery or carjacking attempt in Lincoln Park.

A 23-year-old man and a 24-year-old woman told police they were inside a Nissan Maxima on the 800 block of W. Dickens when a man knocked on one of the car's windows with a handgun just after midnight, according to a CPD spokesperson. The victims reported that the gunman was accompanied by two other men and all of the offenders were wearing masks.

Police said the gunman fired a shot at the vehicle when the victims sped from the scene. One of the car's windows was shattered, the spokesperson said, but neither victim was injured.

Officers found a spent shell casing on Dickens between Fremont and Dayton streets.

Area Central detectives are investigating.

— Compiled by CWBChicago.com

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Why not create temporary housing at McCormick Place?



The Home Front

by Don DeBat

“Never waste a good crisis,” said former Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel.

In the spirit of that quote, after the coronavirus is brought under control, why not transform the temporary hospital in the Old McCormick Place building into a free housing and rehabilitation center for the city’s displaced and financially disadvantaged homeless?

As of April 12, 2,772 hospital beds were filled by COVID patients in Illinois, while another 11,366 beds were open and available. The state projects Illinois resource needs for beds peaked last week. In all, Illinois is expected to have 4,883 more hospital beds than the state’s projected needs. Those numbers do not include the 2,250 new beds in McCormick Place. So that space may no longer need to be used as an emer-



Once the pandemic passes, let’s turn those 2,250 new hospital beds at McCormick Place into homeless housing.

gency over-flow field hospital.

Now is time to deal with the city’s homeless problem. In Jan. 2019, Chicago had 5,290 homeless individuals, down from 5,450 the year before, reported the Dept. of Family and Support Services.

In 2019, some 4,030 homeless resided in some type of shelter, while 1,260 were unsheltered or taking refuge in tents or places not meant for habitation. By contrast in 2018, of the total 5,450 homeless, 4,093 were sheltered and 1,357 were not.

With Illinois now well north of 200,000 new unemployment claims, and with thousands of apartment tenants unable to pay their rent, it is likely that the num-

ber of homeless people will grow dramatically this year.

So, when the virus crisis is under control, why not utilize this \$15-million temporary hospital facility as a safety net for the homeless, instead of dismantling it and waiting for a plan to transform it into a future casino? The facility is ready to accept 2,250 coronavirus patients, according to Mayor Lori Lightfoot.

Union tradesmen and women worked around the clock to install 100 new water lines, 1,000 electrical outlets and lines, and more than 100 data lines to supply an electronic records system to accept and monitor patients. FEMA paid for the work, and the Army

Corp of Engineers supervised construction.

Look at the positives for reusing the facility as temporary free housing for the homeless:

- Federal dollars already have been spent to install beds and wall partitions. Just add private footlockers for personal belongings.
- Wiring for electrical outlets, lighting, heat and air conditioning is installed and is up and running.
- Nice ceramic-tiled, multi-stall bathrooms already exist.
- A finishing touch could be installing room numbers—so residents can get mail—and adding street signs, such as “Freedom Way,” “Hope Blvd.,” and “Lightfoot Ave.,” along the rows of temporary housing units.

All the city needs to add is a soup kitchen and a menu from the Pacific Garden Mission on S. State St.

While we’re at it, why not create the Mayor Lori Lightfoot “HOPE University”—a job, computer and literacy training center—in the building?

The temporary housing facility also will create jobs for food preparation, security, janitorial

HOUSING *see p. 6*

City tax collections delayed to June 1

Chicago city tax collectors are offering relief for a beleaguered business community forced to shut down operations due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Tax payment due dates for local taxpayers are being deferred by an additional 30 days.

Tax payment remittances for the months of February, March and April 2020 are not due until June 1. The extension adds to an earlier extension of tax payments for businesses which previously ended in April.

Retail and commercial businesses are still expected to collect sales taxes from customers, but the remittance of restaurant, hotel accommodations, bottled water, checkout bag, ground transportation, parking and amusement taxes are being deferred until June 1.

No City Sticker Tickets

Ticket enforcement on compliance-related violations, including City Stickers and Residential Parking Permits, will be suspended until April 30. City Hall will also be waiving late fees and back charges on City Stickers during this time.

The Office of the City Clerk will be waiving late fees and back charges on City Stickers from March 19 to April 30 for residents whose stickers were up for renewal. These dates may be extended should the Office of the City Clerk be closed past April 30. For more information write to ezbuy@cityofchicago.org.

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Local restaurants serve up lawsuits for denied COVID interruption coverage claims

BY JONATHAN BILYK
Cook County Record

A Wisconsin-based business insurance company has found itself at the center of an opening salvo of lawsuits brought by the owners of restaurants, whose doors and businesses have been slammed shut by state closure orders as part of the effort to combat the COVID-19 outbreak.

Since late March at least three lawsuits have been lodged in Chicago courts against Society Insurance, accusing the insurer of wrongly failing to honor business interruption claims filed by the owners of local restaurants who have remained closed since the middle of March, under an executive order by Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker.

Most recently, Society was sued by the owners of the Maillard Tavern, 494 N. Milwaukee Ave. In the lawsuit filed in Cook County Circuit Court on April 14 by attorneys from the firm of Romanucci & Blandin, owners Tony Priolo and Ciro Longobardo said they are seeking a judgment from the court forcing the insurance company to honor the insurer’s alleged obligations to the Maillard Tavern “during their time of need.”

Also facing off with Society Insurance are the owners of the New 400 Theater in Rogers Park, 6746 N. Sheridan Rd.

The lawsuit was announced in a release from the Romanucci firm, along with their partners Rutter & Rusin LLC and Spangenberg Shibley & Liber LLP, each of Ohio.

According to the release, the firms are partnering to introduce a spate of similar litigation against insurers who are allegedly routinely refusing business interruption claims brought by restaurant owners who have been forced to close by government order amid the COVID-19 shutdown.

“Clearly, restaurant owners sustained deep and devastating financial losses through no fault of their own; rather, they are complying with the state of Illinois’ order to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus,” said Antonio Romanucci.

According to the suit, because COVID-19 is a human pathogen that can physically contaminate surfaces, its presence or potential presence in the restaurant is a “physical loss” of the property during the pandemic, which the restaurant said triggers coverage in the policy.

In addition, the policy includes coverage for loss of access to the building because of orders from a civic authority, such as the governor’s shut-down orders, according to the complaint. The suit is seeking a declaration of coverage, but is not making any claim of bad faith or for other damages, the attorneys said in the release.

“Clearly, restaurant owners sustained deep and devastating financial losses through no fault of their own; rather, they are complying with the state of Illinois’ order to slow the spread of

the COVID-19 virus,” said Antonio Romanucci, of Romanucci & Blandin in the release. “In an effort to protect their businesses, including their employees, from a situation like this, our plaintiff did the responsible thing in months and years gone by, and procured business interruption insurance that included a provision for losses incurred due to a ‘necessary suspension’ of their operations due to a government order.”

In the release, the The Maillard Tavern owners said: “We have lost our livelihoods and our ability to pay our valued employees, our vendors and our rent. As responsible business owners, we paid our business insurance premiums but have been denied the benefits of that policy when we need it most.”

“This problem is not just about our company, this is an industry-wide problem that could crush our economy and community if all of the restaurants, retailers and others businesses lose the safety net we depended on from insurance.”

The Maillard lawsuit follows similar separate actions lodged in Chicago federal court in late March by a group of restaurant and movie theater owners.

On March 27, Society Insurance was sued by a group of plaintiffs, including the owners of the Big Onion Tavern Group; McBride’s; Headquarters Beercade; Legacy Hospitality, which operates the Welcome Back Lounge, The Vig and The Whale, all in Chicago; among other establishments.

And on March 31, the owners of Chicago’s iconic Billy Goat Tavern

also sued Society Insurance.

All complaints asserted Society and other insurers are denying “nearly every claim” for business interruption coverage, as a result of the restaurant and theater closures mandated in Illinois and elsewhere as part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Billy Goat is represented by the Duncan Law Group LLC, of Chicago.

Big Onion, Legacy and their co-plaintiffs are represented by the firm of King & Spalding LLC, of Chicago and Atlanta.

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Share your pandemic stories with history museum

The Chicago History Museum [CHM], 1601 N. Clark St., has launched an online program called “In This Together” which is a community-based initiative to collect digital records that capture personal experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The museum is seeking diaries, journals, oral histories, images, recordings, and similar materials that may be essential for documenting the pandemic history as they provide context for what an event or era was like for everyday people experiencing it and preserve stories for future generations.

“Now more than ever, [we are] committed to sharing Chicago’s stories, and [we want] to shine a light on our shared experiences during this critical time in our history,” said Gary T. Johnson, president of the CHM. “History is in the making, and we encourage all Chicagoans to share their stories and continue to lean on our community for support as we navigate through the unknown together.”

The museum is inviting residents to contribute any digital records—such as photographs, audio/video recordings, and journal entries—that document a COVID-19 experience and tell a story about the community during the pandemic. A selection will become part of the permanent collection. Contributors will have the option to remain anonymous, for more information call 312-642-4600.

HOUSING from p. 5

services and teaching at the job training center.

If the disadvantaged and homeless choose not to attend classes at HOPE (Homeless Opportunity for People’s Education) University, give them a free CTA pass for transportation to their favorite panhandling location.

A veteran union tradesman who has worked setting up conventions at Old McCormick Place estimates the building is used about 10 to 20 times a year for conventions. The temporary housing facility would be used year-round, and it would save lives keeping homeless people warm and fed in winter.

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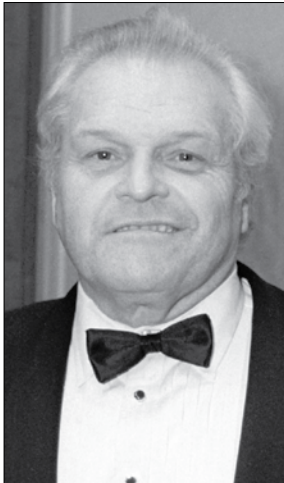


Maestro Stanley Paul with Shelly Howard.

REMEMBER from p. 2

1968. He was a gentleman and a friend to Chicagoans, rightly proud of his record for minimum strike outs. Peace to him.

PEACE AND PRIDE: **Elvis Costello** penned a long eulogy on Facebook to Chicago’s great Folk musician and hero **John Prine** upon his tragic death from the Coronavirus. A small part of his words is worth sharing. “Perhaps it was his resilience that makes accepting John’s passing more difficult. He had repeatedly shown such strength and courage in overcoming the challenges of illness. He was so loved by **Fiona** and his family and all of his friends, admirers and listeners that it was easy to believe that he would be returned to us; to laugh as he read all of those many quotations from his lyrics that acquaintances, strangers and his longest-lived pals have been sharing in these last days. They tell us that a world with John Prine in it has been much better than the poorer one in which we now dwell.”



Brian Dennehy. Photo © Linda Matlow, PIXINTL

WOMEN OF REAL POWER: Congratulations to two of this column’s biggest fans who made it in Chicago Magazine’s 50 most powerful women in Chicago. Both Cook County powerhouses. Cook County Treasurer **Maria Pappas** and Cook County Board member **Bridget Gainer**.

LONG DAY’S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT: **Brian Dennehy**, 81, died April 15. The actor had a decades long relationship with the Goodman Theatre and director **Robert Falls**. Dennehy once said “Chicago is the best city in America. Chicagoans are very lucky to live here.”

SAD HAWKS: The team’s 2020 13th annual fan convention July 24-26 has been cancelled.



Vonita Reescer and Rochelle Trotter from Easter past.

DON’T FORGET: Victory Gardens Theater announced the cancellation of “Right To Be Forgotten” by **Sharyn Rothstein**, directed by **Devon de Mayo**. It was the planned conclusion of the theater’s 45th Season.

METRA: Local CTA and Metra commuter trains have lost most of their ridership due to Coronavirus.

LORI LOCKDOWN: According to the memes all over social media, **Mayor Lori Lightfoot** is always watching. Good thing Lightfoot has a sense of humor. No worries, humor is a great way to get her Lockdown order reinforced with a laugh.

LOCKDOWNAPALOOZA: The fate of the summer music extravaganza is being deliberated. Chances are it could be canceled in light of the deterioration of regular everyday life.

LOCKDOWN PENMANSHIP: **Jim Kinney** has a brilliant idea during Lockdown. He writes, “Join me in a project. Get out all the stationery from the drawers. Now is the time to sit down and send real mail to friends instead of tweets and emails. It is fun to receive something in the mail other than bills! Don’t tell me you don’t have time. These can’t be hacked and will be

a memory of this historic time.” Let’s get this off the ground.

LOCKDOWN SOCIETY: **Laura Olsavsky** hearing duty’s call and sewing medical grade face masks for a local hospital while hubby **Michael** plays the trombone ... **Myra** and **John Reilly** have been using their Lockdown to create great meals, but one night just took a breather and called for a Lou Malnati’s pizza ... writer **Sherrill Bodine** and husband, **John Bodine**, have gone Scandinavian, deciding on Day 32 of sheltering in place to order a “Christmas Table” from Swedish Bistro Tre Kronos Chicago. ... author **Marc Joseph Sievers** off to the grocery store in his new Dior face mask, an exclusive purchase to enhance safety as well as fashion...

Cynthia Olson greeting friends below from the safety of her residence high above N. State Pkwy... good idea. Fashionista **Sylvia Wilczynska** has been busy filling orders for face masks at Sylvia Designs that are made with triple layers of cottons: Egyptian, bamboo and blend, all wash-

Rogers Park Township Real Estate For Sale

Real Estate For Sale

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS COUNTY DEPARTMENT - CHANCERY DIVISION U.S. BANK NATIONAL ASSOCIATION AS TRUSTEE FOR JPMORGAN MORTGAGE ACQUISITION TRUST 2006-CH1, ASSET BACKED PASS-THROUGH CERTIFICATES, SERIES 2006-CH1; Plaintiff, vs. SONIA E. AGUILAR AKA SONIA E. GONZALEZ AKA SONIA E. GONZALEZ AGUILAR; JOSE V. AGUILAR; Defendants, 19 CH 2689

NOTICE OF SALE PUBLIC NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to a Judgment of Foreclosure and Sale entered in the above entitled cause Intercounty Judicial Sales Corporation will on Wednesday, May 27, 2020 at the hour of 11 a.m. in their office at 120 West Madison Street, Suite 718A, Chicago, Illinois, sell at public auction to the highest bidder for cash, as set forth below, the following described mortgaged real estate: P.I.N. 11-31-414-004-0000. Commonly known as 1759 West Albion Ave., Chicago, IL 60626.

The mortgaged real estate is improved with a single family residence. If the subject mortgaged real estate is a unit of a common interest community, the purchaser of the unit other than a mortgagee shall pay the assessments required by subsection (g-1) of Section 18.5 of the Condominium Property Act.

Sale terms: 10% down by certified funds, balance, by certified funds, within 24 hours. No refunds. The property will NOT be open for inspection.

For information call Mr. Anthony Porto at Plaintiff’s Attorney, Kluever & Platt, L.L.C., 150 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60601. (312) 236-0077. SPS000053-19FC1 INTERCOUNTY JUDICIAL SALES CORPORATION intercountyjudicialsales.com 13150057

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able... we’ve got to be the stylish “mask” city in America... lovely **Vonita Reescer** and **Rochelle Trotter** in their Easter bonnets, reminding us of past years when elegance took priority before pandemic ... Maestro **Stanley Paul** and Old Town’s **Shelley Howard** remind us the only way to get through Lockdown is, you know, “Hear no evil; Speak, no evil, etc...” Christie’s **Steven Zick** is teaching his parrot French, très bonne... artist **Adam Scott Umbach** in his Brooklyn studio creating a wonderful new series of “Butterflies,” on gold leaf surfaces... the eminent architect **Lucien LaGrange** is spending his time creating wondrous French dishes at home that are quite authentic.

The truth is incontrovertible. Malice may attack it, ignorance may deride it, but in the end, there it is.

— **Winston Churchill**

tog515@gmail.com

North Township Real Estate For Sale

Real Estate For Sale

222222
151515

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS COUNTY DEPARTMENT - CHANCERY DIVISION BAYVIEW LOAN SERVICING, LLC; Plaintiff, vs. CHICAGO TITLE LAND TRUST COMPANY, AS SUCCESSOR TRUSTEE TO LASALLE BANK NATIONAL ASSOCIATION, AS SUCCESSOR TRUSTEE TO AMERICAN NATIONAL BANK & TRUST COMPANY OF CHICAGO AS TRUSTEE UNDER A TRUST AGREEMENT DATED APRIL 16, 1984 AND KNOWN AS TRUST NUMBER 60669; STREETERVILLE CENTER CONDOMINIUM ASSOCIATION; BANKFINANCIAL, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION AS S/I/I TO SUCCESS NATIONAL BANK; JOHN MARKAY; UNKNOWN BENEFICIARIES OF CHICAGO LAND TRUST COMPANY, AS TRUSTEE TO LASALLE BANK NATIONAL ASSOCIATION, AS SUCCESSOR TRUSTEE TO AMERICAN NATIONAL BANK & TRUST COMPANY OF CHICAGO, AS TRUSTEE UNDER A TRUST AGREEMENT DATED APRIL 16, 1984 AND KNOWN AS TRUST NUMBER 60669; UNKNOWN BENEFICIARIES OF CHICAGO TITLE LAND TRUST COMPANY, AS TRUSTEE UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF A CERTAIN TRUST AGREEMENT DATED JANUARY 26, 2011 AND KNOWN AS TRUST NUMBER 8002356492; CHICAGO TITLE LAND TRUST COMPANY AS TRUSTEE UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF A CERTAIN TRUST AGREEMENT DATED JANUARY 26, 2011 AND KNOWN AS TRUST NUMBER 8002356492; UNKNOWN OWNERS AND NON RECORD CLAIMANTS; Defendants, 19 CH 11378

NOTICE OF SALE PUBLIC NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to a Judgment of Foreclosure and Sale entered in the above entitled cause Intercounty Judicial Sales Corporation will on Tuesday, May 19, 2020 at the hour of 11 a.m. in their office at 120 West Madison Street, Suite 718A, Chicago, Illinois, sell at public auction to the highest bidder for cash, as set forth below, the following described mortgaged real estate: P.I.N. 17-10-203-027-1009 and 17-10-203-027-1010. Commonly known as 233 East Erie Street, Units 909 & 910, Chicago, IL 60611.

The mortgaged real estate is improved with a condominium residence. The purchaser of the unit other than a mortgagee shall pay the assessments and the legal fees required by subdivisions (g)(1) and (g)(4) of Section 9 of the Condominium Property Act.

Sale terms: 10% down by certified funds, balance, by certified funds, within 24 hours. No refunds. The property will NOT be open for inspection.

For information call Law Clerk at Plaintiff’s Attorney, The Wirbicki Law Group, 33 West Monroe Street, Chicago, Illinois 60603. (312) 360-9455. W19-0527 INTERCOUNTY JUDICIAL SALES CORPORATION intercountyjudicialsales.com 13149851

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Remote Patient Monitoring Program

Governor JB Pritzker has announced the Remote Patient Monitoring Program to serve Illinoisans who may have COVID-19 infections that don't require hospitalization. This telehealth program is designed to care for the majority of COVID-19 patients whose symptoms are mild enough that they can recover from home. Patients will receive daily virtual visits by healthcare workers and be delivered wellness kits which include items like thermometers, blood pressure cuffs, pulse oximeters, and alcohol wipes.

The Remote Patient Monitoring Program is available to all Illinoisans regardless of healthcare coverage. This will reduce barriers to care in all communities across our state, especially those most at risk during this pandemic. Also, by helping those with more mild cases recover safely at home, we will prevent our hospitals from becoming overwhelmed while also limiting the spread of the virus.

Three regional providers now offer these remote services. To access this virtual care, please contact the provider in your area:

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TIFS from p. 1

billion public dollars remaining in TIF accounts. But history indicates that raising taxes on employers during a major economic downturn would only exacerbate unemployment and slow any recovery. That is the very argument Gov. Pritzker will be facing this Fall when state residents will vote on his proposal to raise income taxes.

While Mayor Lori Lightfoot campaigned against two controversial TIF programs - the Lincoln Yards in Lincoln Park and Project 78 in the South Loop, she reversed course late in the election and said she would not oppose subsidizing these two mega developments once she took office. Those two projects are projected to take in \$2.4 billion in TIF funds. Chicago has 163 TIF districts, which collected \$841 million in 2018.

The mayor has vowed to reform the TIF program, however, she has still earned the wrath of TIF reform activists. The Grassroots Collaborative, a left wing coalition of

11 community activists groups and labor unions opposed to using TIF dollars to help fund private development, said they had "high expectations" but now think Mayor Lightfoot is following the precedence of former Mayor Rahm Emanuel. They have sued the city claiming the program is racist.

The TIFs have transferred millions of property tax dollars to private development projects, while the city's finances continue to struggle due primarily to their high level of unfunded pension liabilities and high debt load. Add to that the poor credit rating for Chicago and Illinois and it's a bad mix where any new borrowing will come at a very high interest rate during a borrowing environment where the Federal rate is near zero. Just last Friday, Fitch Ratings downgraded the state of Illinois' Issuer Default Rating to 'BBB-' from 'BBB.' Fitch also downgraded Illinois Sports Facilities Authority sports facilities bonds, and Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority expansion project bonds to 'BB+' from

'BBB-.' Fitch anticipates reviewing ratings within the next two weeks for Chicago's bonds that may also result in a downgrade and outlook revision.

And with the current health crisis forcing people out of their jobs, things are only getting worse.

Just as Mayor Emanuel had promised to increase transparency and oversight of the city's TIF dollars, so has Mayor Lightfoot. But critics claim the TIFs are by nature inequitable because they can best generate future revenue when situated near wealthy areas of the city.

Those critics say the mayor's promises of transparency appear to be a cover to set up even more projects like Lincoln Yards going forward. She recently formed a committee to reform TIFs, claiming there will be a robust community process. But those same TIF district's critics think that not enough representatives who are opposed to the concept were invited to join the committee.

A similar situation can be found in

Lincoln Square, where Ald. Matt Martin [47th] was offering community input into a proposed affordable housing project at Leland and Lincoln avenues to only those he knew would support the project. The proposal, now sidelined, had area businesses fearful that they could lose a critical commercial parking lot, claiming they had not been informed, but only found out through leaks by city hall staffers. For perhaps six months in 2019-20 the project was kept mostly secret from the majority of the 47th Ward. The community was told they could offer their input only at a time after a deal would already have been approved in City Hall, giving people a voice in the decision only after a deal was already done. It was a scheme many local residents perceived as an effort to remove any opposition from the decision-making process.

According to Tresser, TIFs are racist and structurally unfair and cannot be reformed. In October, 2019 the CivicLab issued a detailed argument for the abolition of TIFs.

SCAMS from p. 1

"We are focused on assisting residents through this crisis by stopping any unlawful price gouging right away," spokeswoman Tori Joseph said in a statement. "To that end, we are contacting businesses directly, requesting evidence to show that price increases are justified, and getting businesses to agree to change their conduct."

She said the office "will not hesitate" to address egregious and unlawful conduct through the courts when necessary, but so far "we are pleased that businesses have been cooperative."

Government and other consumer fraud experts said they are bracing for another, even more intense, wave of scams as individuals and businesses receive federal stimulus checks from the \$2.2 trillion federal stimulus package recently signed into law by President Donald Trump.

"This money is going to be a particularly desirable target for those who are motivated to commit fraud," said Kelly Frailing, a disaster-related fraud researcher and an associate professor of criminology and justice at Loyola University New Orleans.

She said local officials typically are overburdened during such a crisis so what little policing there is on these types of crimes likely will be handled by federal authorities.

"I suspect most of the attention on fraud from law enforcement is at the federal level, as lower level agencies simply don't have the luxury to focus on this crime," Frailing said.

Already, federal and local officials are fielding hundreds of complaints of fraudulent sales offers, identity theft, fake charities and other scams as crooks look to take

advantage of distracted authorities and a vulnerable and frightened public.

Nationally, the FTC said there have been more than 17,000 fraud complaints for a loss of \$13 million, and a median loss of \$568 through Monday.

"We saw a lot of scams develop very quickly related to COVID-19," said Todd Kossow, director of the FTC's Midwest Region based in Chicago.

Among the most prevalent are calls or emails claiming to be from Medicare, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other government bodies. These scammers may ask for Medicare, Social Security or credit card numbers with the phony promise of a coronavirus prevention kit or a vaccine, he said.

"We know there are no vaccines," Kossow said.

The FTC and the U.S. Food and Drug Admin. have also mailed warning letters to companies purporting to treat or ward off the virus, including a Missouri-based company tied to disgraced televangelist Jim Bakker, who used his television show to hock a silver "solution" that he claimed would rid a patient of COVID-19.

Kossow said his office is coordinating efforts with numerous state and federal agencies and organizations, from the FBI to the BBB.

Bernas, of the BBB, said his office is seeing a broad range of complaints, including a south suburban lawn company warning mosquitoes will carry the virus and robo-calls stating air-duct cleaning will protect families from COVID-19. The lawn care company issued a public apology, he said.

"We're early into this," Bernas said. "Many people don't realize they're getting scammed yet."

Other experts told the BGA that 90% of scams go unreported, and the elderly — a prime target for fraud — are particularly reticent to admit they were bamboozled, usually out of embarrassment.

Seniors are highly anxious about becoming sick and scammers know it, said Terri Worman, associate state director for advocacy and outreach at the AARP in Illinois.

"They are doing texts, they're doing phone calls, they're doing emails," Worman said. "A vaccine, a treatment, a cure for COVID-19. Great deals on getting masks. 'Just give me your credit card right now and I can send you enough masks to get you through this.' Seniors are really scared about going out and they are looking for masks."

Ald. Byron Sigcho-Lopez [25th] said he's concerned about the lasting effects of scams.

"At a time when we should be doing wellness checks on seniors, the fraudulent calls unfortunately make our jobs harder," he said, adding that he's personally taken

a handful of fraud and price gouging complaints.

Jean Bohnhoff, 66, of Effingham was incensed to have two scam operations call within one week. Bohnhoff, a former director of the Illinois Department on Aging, is familiar with scams targeting the elderly.

"I said 'how dare you go against the older, vulnerable adults,'" said Jean Bohnhoff.

For one call, she immediately confronted the person on the phone who said her government check related to COVID-19 was ready. For the other, she played along, drawing out the scam pitch, even giving the fraudster a fake account number.

When the scam artist called back for a correct account number, Bohnhoff said she let the person have it.

"I said 'how dare you go against the older, vulnerable adults.'"

RIDES from p. 1

drawn carriage licenses and operations in existence on the effective date of this ordinance, "until all such licenses terminate, through expiration, rescission or revocation."

Ald. Reilly suggested the operators relocate their carriage ride services to Grant Park but the offer was turned down. At present, there are only three companies and 10 licenses still operating in Chicago. That's down from 60 licenses at the industry's peak.

A multi-year campaign to save the

horse-drawn carriage industry seems to have failed due to lobbying by groups like Chicago Alliance for Animals and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, or PETA. After issuing a total of only three violations to carriage operators in 2015 and 2016, the city started ratcheting up harassment issuing several hundred citations a year starting in 2017, according to data provided by BACP.

Most of the violations were for working horses for more than six hours in a 24-hour period, or for operating during prohibited hours, including those between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. on weekdays.

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