

HAPPY LABOR DAY! Labor Day, the first Monday in September, is a creation of the labor movement and is dedicated to the social and economic achievements of American workers. It constitutes a yearly national tribute to the contributions workers have made to the strength, prosperity, and well-being of our country.



GAZEBO EXPRESS

YOUR COMMUNITY NEWS AND EVENT SOURCE FOR THE TOWN OF HIGHLAND • SEPTEMBER 2011

TOWN BUDGET SHRINKS

State-mandated changes in revenues and expenses are expected to drain the dollars available to operate the town by more than \$200,000 in 2012.

That tally does not account for increased costs for big-ticket items, such as fuel or utilities, or a proposal to strip franchise fees from local communities. Franchise fees bolster Highland coffers by \$280,000 to \$300,000 per year. The General Assembly left the issue in a summer study committee with the notion that it could be brought to a vote and become effective in 2012.

“We are as challenged as we have ever been in regards to the budget,” Clerk-Treasurer Michael Griffin said. “Council President Brian Novak and I have written letters to our state legislators as well as the members of the committee to express opposition to the proposed loss of franchise fees. This is an issue we will be keeping a close eye on.”

Councilman Mark Herak agrees these are challenging times for municipal government, made even more so by the state-imposed property tax freeze, which was employed as a

FINDING THE CUTS

The impact if Insurance increases by 10 percent and employee retirement increases by 2 percent.

General Fund Departments

Office of the Clerk-Treasurer	\$5,267
Fire Department	\$1,793
Police Department	\$77,114
Building & Inspection Department	\$5,231
Sanitation	\$20,686
Total	\$110,894

General Fund Departments

Parks and Recreation Fund	\$25,669
Redevelopment General Fund	\$1,656
Sanitary District Operating Fund	\$1,185
Total to all Units	139,404

punishment to all units of government in Lake County.

The council has given each department head the responsibility for cutting their individual budgets by 12 percent – to make up for increasing healthcare and retirement costs. Department heads may have to sharpen their pencils again if health insurance increases by more than what has been projected. ☺

BUSINESS REBOUNDS AS CLINE REOPENS

It's a late summer Saturday and shoppers eager for juicy heirloom tomatoes, crunchy pickles, fresh-picked corn and uber-sweet watermelons are once again flocking to Scheeringa's Highland farmstand.

It's been the better part of two growing seasons since reconstruction of Cline Avenue began, closing chunks of the only road that takes motorists to the family farm.

The road was substantially complete in mid-August with a few items awaiting completion.

Barbara Scheeringa was thrilled to see the road fully reopen to traffic. “Every day, we

get people coming in who didn't realize the project was finished,” she said.

Highland Public Works Director John Bach said traffic has been moving smoothly on the roadway, even more so since the timing of the traffic signal at Wirth and Cline was reconfigured. And, when final costs are tallied, he said the joint project with Griffith is expected to be \$200,000 under budget.

“The major function of the construction was to rebuild the bridge over the Cady Marsh,” Bach said. “We saved money because we closed the road for several weeks.” ☺

INDIANAPOLIS ROADWORK

Lane restrictions on Indianapolis Boulevard between Ridge Road and the Little Calumet River are expected to be in place by early September.

The restrictions will allow crews to work on a new \$10.4 million bridge that will straighten and reduce the height of the structure.

“Construction is beginning first on the western lanes, which is why we need to move traffic to one lane in each direction,” Public Works Director John Bach said. “Work has already begun to clear the right-of-way on the west side of structure. They won't put the lane restrictions in place until they absolutely have to.”

SERVICE ROAD TRAFFIC

The Service Road that connects Kennedy to Cline avenues just south of the Borman Expressway at the Little Calumet River has been reopened to traffic. The road, which also provides the only access to Oxbow Park, was closed to prepare the former Highlands Apartments site for construction.

FINANCIAL EXCELLENCE

For the 15th year in a row, Highland and Clerk-Treasurer Michael Griffin have received the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada.

The financial award – the highest form of recognition in governmental accounting and financial reporting – recognizes the town's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report.

“I sincerely believe the CAFR offers heightened standard of disclosure to the people of Highland,” Griffin said. “(It) can lower costs of capital acquisition by the unit, support grant applications and sometimes assist in lowering costs for insurance. I hope this work is seen as evidence of our transparency and professionalism.”

CLERK-TREASURER JOINS NORTH AMERICAN BOARD

Clerk-Treasurer Michael Griffin has been elected by his peers to the Board of Directors of the Association of Public Treasurers of the United States and Canada.

Griffin, who has been the town's clerk-treasurer since 1992, will help advise the organization, which was formed to, "provide quality treasury management education and training, professional certification, peer interaction and professional connection opportunities for public treasury and financial officials."

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NEWS TIP? STORY IDEA?

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ARTISTIC MURAL RESURRECTED UNDER RIDGE ROAD OVERPASS

The angel fish, octopuses even the feisty barracuda are once again swimming under the Ridge.

Forty feet long and 10 feet high, the mural was drawn and painted by local artists in 2004. It was taken down while work was underway on the Ridge Road overpass.

Packed away at the Public Works Garage, the mural was nearly forgotten until the Centennial Committee began talking and planning to rehang the giant painting exactly where it had been before – protected under the Ridge Road bridge deck on the west side of Kennedy Avenue.

"We had gotten calls from people asking where the mural was," explained Mary Luptak, director of the Highland Chamber of Commerce and a member of the Centennial



DID YOU KNOW? The decidedly fishy mural helped finance the rebuilding of the Gazebo in Main Square Park. Individuals purchased fish on the mural to help with the \$800,000 cost of improvements.

Committee. "We went down and cleaned it and paid to have it put back up. It's nice to see it back up. It's a beautiful piece of public art that is intrinsically Highland's."

HIGHLAND RESIDENT'S GENEROUS DONATIONS BENEFIT LOCAL FAMILIES

Highland is a community known for its warm hearts and down-home generosity.

Just ask Patti Darnell. Or Colleen Aguirre. Or the Crandol family.

In each case, there has been a need the community at-large has stepped in to fill.

For Aguirre, it was the donation of crate after crate of items for Operation Save Our Soldiers. The donated toiletries, games, even flea collars were shipped to soldiers in Iraq.

For the Crandol's, it has been an outpouring of support that began with Highland Youth Softball as fellow players are collectively wrapping their arms around 16-year-old Katie. The baseball standout at Andean is battling an aggressive brain cancer.

For Darnell, it was an outpouring of support and donations to help the family pay medical bills that continue to mount as Dave Darnell battles his second bout of brain cancer.

"There was a benefit for Dave in June at St. James church. More than 2,000 people showed up to support us," Patti Darnell says.

BENEFIT FOR KATIE CRANDOL

Katie Crandol, the 16-year-old Andean High School student and Highland Youth Softball standout, is battling an aggressive brain cancer.

WHEN: 5 to 9 p.m. Thursday, **Sept. 22**

WHERE: Jean Shepherd Community Center, 3031 J.F. Mahoney Drive, Hammond

TICKETS: \$10

NOTE: Donations are also being accepted at People's Bank-KFC Benefit fund. Donated items for a raffle are also being sought.

INFO: For information or to make a donation, call Michelle Fajman at (219) 662-8253.

"There were so many others who couldn't make it but who sent contributions and cards and letters of support."

Darnell says the family will never forget the outpouring of prayers and help they received when they needed it the most.

"We are so grateful for everything people have done," she says. "I can never say enough thank yous or tell people often enough how much their caring means to us."

BACK-TO-SCHOOL TRAFFIC SAFETY

School is back in session and, with it, heightened activity in and around the town's six public and two private schools. Police Chief Pete Hojnicky is cautioning motorists to be extra-cautious.

"We get used to summer driving when school is not in session," Hojnicky said. "We have small windows of time in the mornings and afternoons when we have large numbers of children who are out and about. They may not always be watching as well as they should. It is our job, as adults, to watch out for them and to be defensive drivers."

Compounding the potential danger is the shorter days and position of the sun, which is due west this time of year. Brilliant sunsets have the potential to impair visibility and make it more difficult to see traffic lights and pedestrians crossing the road.

Here are some tips for motorists, students and walkers to stay safe.

MOTORISTS SHOULD:

- Stop for flashing lights and stop signs on a school bus, regardless of which direction you are headed;
- Keep an eye on children at bus stops;
- Watch for children who may dart across the street.

STUDENTS SHOULD:

- Stand back from the road when waiting for your bus;
- Look both ways if you have to cross the street after getting off the bus;
- Sit still on the bus so the driver can pay attention to the road.

WALKERS SHOULD:

- Allow extra time;
- Walk with a buddy;
- Be aware of your surroundings;
- Get to a safe place if you see anything or anyone suspicious;
- Attempt to get a vehicle or physical description of a suspect;
- Report suspicious behavior to a principal, teacher or trusted adult;
- Never accept a ride from strangers;
- Let a parent or trusted adult know the route you will be taking and when you plan on being home.

BY THE NUMBERS ...

- Pedestrians account for 30 percent of all traffic fatalities involving children under the age of 15.
- 22% of children ages 5-9 who were killed in traffic crashes were pedestrians.
- 19 percent of children involved in traffic fatalities under age 16 were pedestrians.
- 45% of all pedestrian fatalities involving children under age 16 were killed between 3 and 7 p.m.

SOURCE: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration



VETERANS MEMORIAL RIDE

The Annual Victory for Veterans Memorial Ride, which honors our service men and women, is a procession-style motorcycle ride that begins and ends at Wicker Memorial Park. In its 12th year, the event features entertainment, a beer garden, concessions and vendor booths.

WHEN: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. **Sept. 25**

WHERE: Wicker Memorial Park-
FEE: \$20 individuals, \$30 couples

REGISTRATION: Begins onsite at 9 a.m. the morning of the event and includes the motorcycle ride, lunch, entertainment and souvenir pin.

INFO: Please call (219) 932-2530 to confirm your reservation or request a vendor registration form. A \$100 donation to the "Wicker Park Memorial Fund" should accompany every vendor registration.

FREE MUSIC DOWNLOADS

Being a Lake County Public Library cardholder has some new advantages that go way beyond books and videos. Thousands of songs from the Sony Music catalog are now available for free download. Your library account must be in good standing and free of fines. Download limit is three songs per week.

INFO: Simply visit www.lakeco.lib.in.us and scroll down to Freegal Music to get started.

BLOOD PRESSURE CHECK

No Health Insurance? High Deductible? Healthchek offers affordable blood work. Profile includes metabolic panel, lipid panel and complete blood count.

WHEN: 9 to 10 a.m. Saturday, **Sept. 10**

WHERE: Lincoln Center

COST: \$45

NOTE: Fasting recommended, drink lots of water, take medications as directed.

INFO: Call (219) 322-7041 to schedule your blood profile appointment.

CRIME WATCH MEETING

Anthony Balbo will discuss the growing problem of online sexual predators at the next Crime Watch meeting. Balbo is working with Highland Police to develop and implement a district-wide Child Predator Program.

WHEN: 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, **Sept. 14**

WHERE: Highland Public Library

INFO: Call Officer Shawn Anderson at the Police Department, (219) 838-3184.

MIDWEST ZEST FEST

The Midwest Zest Fest has it all ... free admission, free parking, fun carnival rides, your favorite festival food, arts & crafts, live music, a 5K Race, and the crowning of a king and queen. And if that's not enough, stop at the Sour Note Karaoke Bar in the Beer Tent to whet your whistle and sing a tune. It's three days and over five acres packed full of fun!

WHEN: 4 to 11 p.m. Friday, **Sept. 9**; noon to 11 p.m. Saturday, **Sept. 10**; noon to 7 p.m. Sunday, **Sept. 11**

WHERE: Main Square Park

INFO: Visit www.midwestzestfest.com for details and schedule of events.

MIDDLE SCHOOL DANCE

Parks and Recreation will host a dance – featuring a DJ – for middle school students in 7th and 8th grades.

WHEN: 7 to 9 p.m. Friday, **Sept. 9**

WHERE: Lincoln Center

FEE: \$5 at the door

NOTE: Participants must show a school ID with photo or a parent must show their photo ID with Highland residency. No participants will be admitted after 7:30 p.m. Parents should pick up their children at 9 p.m. The Highland Middle School dress code will be enforced.

INFO: Visit www.highlandparks.org or call (219) 838-0114.

MEXICAN INDEPENDENCE DAY

Celebrate Mexican Independence Day with Visions of Santana. Grab a lawn chair and your favorite bug spray and head to the park.

WHERE: Wicker Park Gazebo

DOORS OPEN: 7 p.m. **Sept. 15**

SHOWTIME: 7:30 to 10:30 p.m.

ADMISSION: \$5

AGES: 21 and over

INFO: Call (219) 838-3420 or visit www.wickermemorialpark.com

SPACE EXPLORERS PROGRAM

This program promotes critical thinking through active reading, effective writing and inquisitive learning. Join us for the challenges, hands-on experiments and missions to explore and solve.

WHEN: Tuesday/Thursdays, **Sept. 20 - Oct. 13**

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: Sept. 10

WHERE: Lincoln Center

FULL-SESSION FEE: \$35/\$38 materials included

DAILY DROP-IN FEE: \$15/\$18 materials included

JUNIOR ASTRONAUTS: Ages 5 through 7 will meet from 4 to 4:45 p.m.

DISCOVERY ASTRONAUTS: Ages 8 and 9 will meet from 5 to 5:45 p.m.

APOLLO ASTRONAUTS: Ages 10 through 12 will meet from 6 to 6:45 p.m.

INFO: Visit www.highlandparks.org

SEPT 11 *Memorial ceremony*

MAIN SQUARE PARK

A 9/11 memorial ceremony will be held noon Sept. 11 at the Main Square Park Gazebo. The ceremony will last about an hour and conclude with the Nationwide Moment of Remembrance at 1 p.m. Mini American flags will be distributed to the audience for their participation in the event. Afterward, the Midwest Zest Fest will continue with a special 9/11 tribute performance by the Highland Community Band.

HOW CAN YOU PARTICIPATE?

The Highland Chamber of Commerce is seeking organizations interested in participating in the event as well as families of 9/11 with a Highland connection. Some examples of how residents and organizations may contribute to this ceremony are: Making a short presentation, prayer, or poem; flag dedication; posting the colors; showing up in uniform; or presenting a special ceremony by your organization honoring the fallen heroes of our country and victims of 9/11.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Call the Chamber at (219) 923-3666 or visit www.midwestzestfest.com.

FALL ARTS & CRAFTS FAIR

The best in arts and crafts will be showcased at this annual fall show. The two-day event features jewelry, ceramics, fiber arts, soy candles, hand bags, home decor and more.

WHERE: Lincoln Center

DOORS OPEN: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, **Oct. 1** and 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday, **Oct. 2**

ADMISSION: Free

INFO: Visit www.highlandparks.org or call (219) 838-0114.

BIDDY BOWLING

Biddy Bowling is a noninstructional five-week program for boys and girls ages 4 to 11. Join us for a game of bumper bowling each week!

WHEN: 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Saturdays,

Oct. 8 - Nov. 5

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: Oct. 4 or until filled

WHERE: Plaza Lanes, 8101 Kennedy Ave.

FEE: \$35/\$38

INFO: Visit www.highlandparks.org or call (219) 838-0114.