



Official Newspaper of Record for the City of Belleville
& the Charter Township of Van Buren

152 Main Street • Suite 9 • Belleville, MI 48111 • 734.699.9020
bellevilleindependent.com • editor@bellevilleareanews.org



BELLEVILLE - AREA INDEPENDENT

VOL. 32.38

Serving the communities of Belleville, Sumpter & Van Buren

FREE

Thursday, September 17, 2026

Sumpter Board Hires New Finance Director

Emily Flesch

Independent Reporter

The Sumpter Township Board of Trustees approved Lisa Stanfield for the position of Finance Director at their regular meeting on Sept. 8.

Stanfield comes to the position with both administrative and municipal finance experience, having served as a Deputy Clerk and Accounting Clerk for Ypsilanti Township. Additionally, she worked as an election clerk, was designated as Ypsilanti Township's representative to the Washtenaw Regional Resource Management Authority (WRRMA) in 2019.

The finance director role includes a base salary of \$90,000 per year with standard staff benefits and DC pension, contingent upon the successful completion of the required background and drug screening. Transition and training support will be provided by Maynard Costerian.

The township has been operating without a finance director since this spring.

In other business at the Tuesday night meeting, the board:

- Approved listing of the fire department's reserve Engine 51 for sale, as it is rarely utilized and still within its NFPA service life. It is appraised between \$110,000 and \$175,000;

- Tabled a proposed \$3,600 update to the township's website, to include a "Subscribe for Updates" feature and revised content flow. The board plans to clarify expectations with the vendor before proceeding, as the original contract was entered into by the previous township manager without legal review;

SEE HIRES ON PAGE 5

911 Remembered



PHOTO | ELENA MANALP

The Van Buren Community Players presented a dramatic staged reading of 110 Stories by Sarah Tuft, presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Playscripts. We also heard interviews with Van Buren Township first responders, and the Lakeside Singers filled the theater with patriotic music.

Unanimous vote stalls rezoning

Wav(erly)ng Goodbye

Emily Flesch

Independent Reporter

The Sept. 9 regular meeting of the Van Buren Township Planning Commission drew a much larger crowd than usual. Extra chairs were brought into the Board Room to accommodate those attending the public hearing regarding an application to conditionally rezone the former Harbor Club golf course property.

Pepper Pike Capital Partners submitted a request for the property (parcel V-25-83-077-99-0002-002) to be rezoned from R-1B-Single-Family Residential to

RM-Multiple-Family Residential with conditions.

Pepper Pike initially proposed 277 multi-family units and 92 single-family homes. Facing backlash from residents, it withdrew its original application and submitted the scaled-back, conditional request for only 93 single-family homes.

Despite the developer's changes, public opposition remained strong. More than twenty residents stepped up to the podium and another 13 submitted letters urging the commission to deny the request.

SEE REZONING ON PAGE 10

Belleville District Library to Launch New User App

Sabrina Martell

Special to the Independent

Staff member Lindsay Lore announced the Belleville Area District Library's plans to implement a new user app at the library board's regular meeting held on Tuesday, Sept. 8.

Lore, the Circulation Department Head at the library, was invited to the board meeting by Library Director Mary Jo Suchy to present the new app project to the board during the Director's Report. Once available to the public, this app will offer patrons access to their library records directly on their phones. The library staff will not know the full functionality of the app until the implementation process is complete, but according to Lore, users will likely have the opportunity to view their current borrows and holds, as well as check out books using their library card linked to the app.

An implementation specialist from The Library Corporation will work alongside Lore and Library Assistant Director Hilary Savage to develop the app. Together, they will tailor The Library Corporation's standard app TLC Go! to fit the specific needs and programming of the Belleville Area District Library. Lore stated that other libraries with their own TLC Go!-based apps, such as the Milford Public Library, also offer patrons a look at their library's newest items.

Another potential feature of the app is ISBN scanning, which allows users to check a book's availability at the library by scanning its ISBN code. "So if you're at a bookstore and are like 'oh this looks

SEE LAUNCH ON PAGE 8

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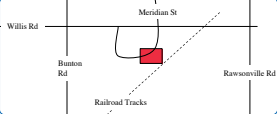
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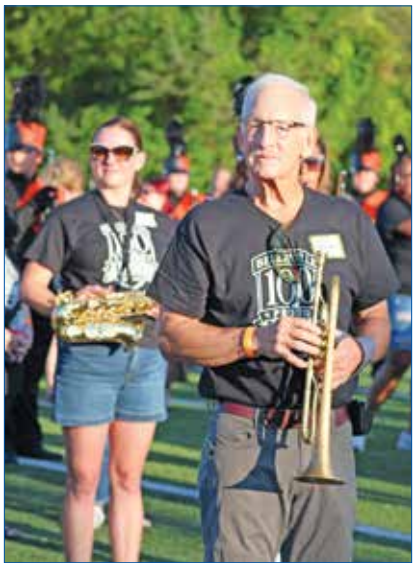
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PAGE THREE



ARIAL PHOTOS COURTESY | JAKE YOUNG • BAND PHOTO | BLAIR TEMPLE • ALUMNI BAND PHOTOS COURTESY | DARLENE GERICK

Past and present came together Sept. 11 as Belleville High School’s marching band marked its 100th anniversary. More than 380 alumni returned for the celebration, with more than 200 joining current band members on the field for a special performance celebrating a century of music, memories and Belleville tradition.

OPINION

From the Editor

Michigan Says Sad Goodbye to Several Print Newspapers

In my Aug. 20 column, I wrote about how much both editor emeritus Rosemary Oztman and your current editor love newspapers.

So it was with great sadness that I read a report Sept. 2 the news MLive Media



Sarah Rigg
Managing Editor

Group will stop production of printed editions of its eight newspaper editions, switching to digital-only.

The Michigan news organization will print and home-deliver its final printed editions on Sunday, Dec. 6.

MLive's eight titles are: The Ann Arbor News, The Bay City Times, The Flint Journal, The Grand Rapids Press, Jackson Citizen Patriot, Kalamazoo Gazette, Muskegon Chronicle and The Saginaw News.

That list contains two different papers I've written for, so that was a sad announcement to me.

I have mentioned before that I've been a journalist since I worked on my high school newspaper, but my first really big byline was in the Kalamazoo Gazette.

I was a technical writing instructor for Western Michigan University in the late 1990s, but I had no benefits and it didn't really pay that well. My supervisor knew I was in need of more money and introduced me to a contact of hers at the Gazette, and I began writing for their

home and garden sections, on things like new fads in holiday decorations, or the difference between stick-built homes and modular ones.

Those articles proved I could write and helped me win another freelance assignment for an weekly entertainment publication in the area that has since ceased publication.

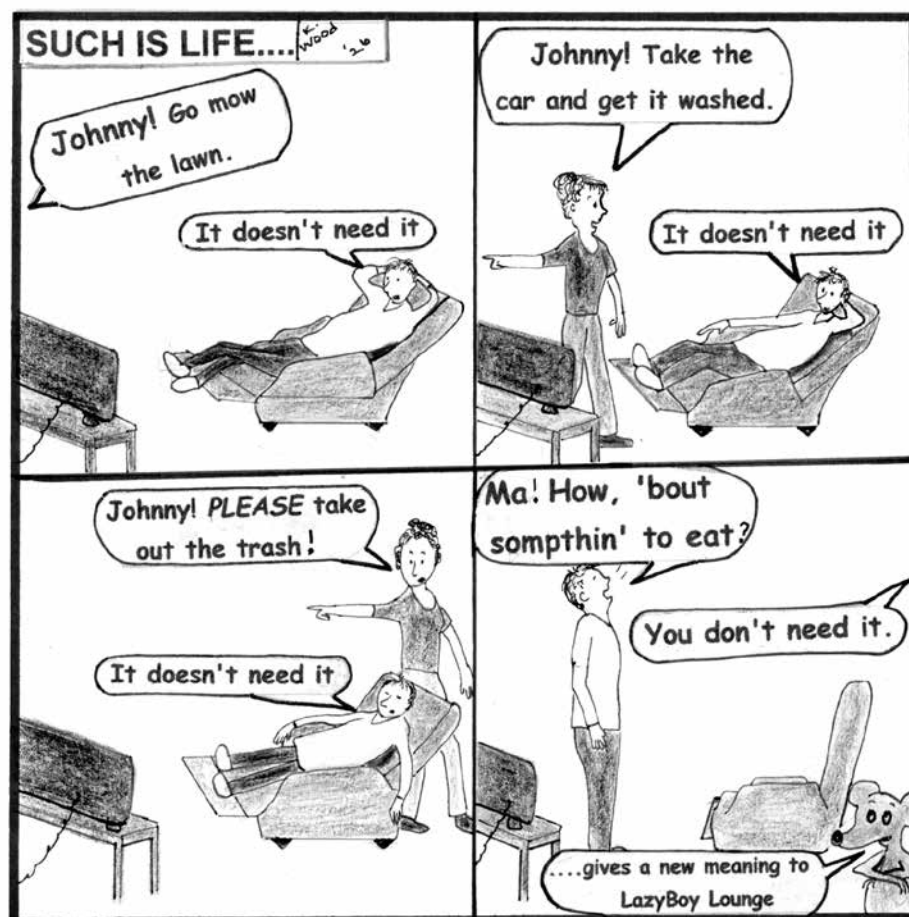
I took my writing samples from those two jobs with me when I moved to south-east Michigan and ultimately used them to get a job as a reporter covering Belleville for The View from 1999-2004.

After that, I worked a few different jobs in media and communication, and then began freelancing full-time in 2009. In those early years, Mlive.com was one of the papers I reported for. I wrote some regular features that only appeared online, but I also had bylines in the print edition, primarily writing about business but also about local faith communities and food as well.

Mlive.com will be fine, I'm sure. They're the online news site with the fourth highest traffic in the entire United States. But it's still been tough to watch print papers go under.

More than ever, I am so grateful that Belleville, Van Buren, and Sumpter residents support the print issue of The Belleville Area Independent. I have heard over and over again from readers how much they love having a paper they can hold in their hands or how important a print edition is to someone's father or grandmother who isn't online and so doesn't have access to online news sites.

Here's to many more years of getting your Belleville area news "hot off the press."



We'd like to extend our gratitude to the Belleville Rotary Club and the Cozadd Foundation! Thanks to a generous grant, printing costs for The Belleville Area Independent are covered for the rest of 2026 and well into 2027.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

At the **Belleville Area Independent**, we welcome letters to the editor on almost any topic, but especially anything local. Feel free to email **editor@bellevilleareanews.org**. We also accept written letters by postal mail at **152 Main St. Suite 9**.

Please try to keep letters short and to the point, preferably no more than 600-700 words. The editor reserves the right to trim longer letters in such a way that the edit doesn't distort the sender's original meaning. We do not publish anonymous letters.

BELLEVILLE - AREA INDEPENDENT

152 Main Street • Suite 9 • Belleville, MI 48111

PHONE: 734.699.9020 • Fax 734.699.8962

bellevilleindependent.com • editor@bellevilleareanews.org

Editor: Sarah A. Rigg

Advertising Manager: Janet Millard

Production Manager: Blair Temple

Office Manager: Yvette Gorecki

Editorial Cartoonist: Kathryn Wood

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- Educate the public and improve sharing local information in the Belleville, MI area community through a free newspaper;
- Promote civic engagement and knowledge among the citizens of the Belleville, MI area;
- Support local schools, churches, and non-profit institutions by raising awareness of their activities in the local community; and
- Provide a newspaper of record for local municipal bodies.

This paper is available free at sites throughout the community. To get the Independent delivered by mail, cost is \$55 per year for postage, Outside of Michigan - \$60 per year, outside of the USA - call. Also available free to download on our website.

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HIRES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

- Agreed to seek bids for senior resident snow removal using Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, with sealed bids due by noon on Oct. 12;
- Approved a Q1 budget amendment, noting that another adjustment may be required if the Martinsville pump station

repair was not transferred from previous budget cycles;

Heard Chief Eric Luke thank eight neighboring police departments and the Michigan State Police Aviation Unit, citing their helicopter and FLIR thermal imaging system specifically, for assistance in apprehending four armed suspects following a home invasion overnight Aug. 28 to 29.

Before adjourning, the board entered into closed session to discuss ongoing negotiations with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) and review an opinion letter from the township attorney.

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Letters to the Editor

MORE LETTERS ON PAGE 6

VBT Recall Committee Seeks Signatures for Petitions

At this moment in history, the world may feel out of control.

Locally, we can’t currently stop the Hyperscale Data Center. We might not be able to stop the BESS (Battery Energy Storage System). But we can remove the cause of these developments* by signing a petition that does not automatically unseat the Board, but allows all 26,000 registered voters the chance to pick new representatives in May. And by May, enough information will be revealed that I am positive you will be elated that we have gone through all the work to give you the freedom to choose a fresh start. Citizens may not agree on every decision made, but a majority of the business owners, landlord reps, and residents we have spoken to agree: new leadership is desperately needed.

In the country, the cost of living is accelerating. Food is unpredictable. Folks are making decisions every day on your behalf with disregard for logic or care for future generations, or even current generations for that matter, and it can leave us with an Alice-in-Wonderland, free-falling sensation. But there’s a saying that has travelled the world with me that came from my time at BHS when I was a mere softball pitcher: “control the controllables.”

Which, to me, means when something is going wrong, stop. Think about just one thing you can do to change your current trajectory in a positive way and do it.

I wasn’t much different then than I am now. I overthought everything, obsessed over details, and didn’t understand the hierarchy to keep my mouth shut when someone “superior” to me told me what to do. I asked questions when, socially, I should have just accepted the directions as is.

Everything I did wrong on that softball field is likely resulting in where we are today with this recall.

I asked too many questions, I didn’t accept the results and I took action.

You see, this recall is the one thing we can control. It is our “controllable.”

I implore you to please converse with your neighbors when you see them at the mailbox, Meijer, the gas station, hair salons, and more. Many don’t know how their township is changing, and it’s not right that discussions of such impactful developments are being suppressed. People are too exhausted from working-to-live to look around in the world until it’s too late—by design, I may add, by those that are living-to-work.

So, would you please help me in “controlling our controllables” and allow me to assist in delivering your signatures to the

Wayne County Elections Office on behalf of the recall committee when we have successfully collected all 3,401+ valid signatures?

To do that, it’s going to take about 5 minutes of your time to sign and thoroughly fill out all 6 petitions for each board member, as well as the time it takes to drive to 50300 Bogg Rd., Van Buren Twp., on Sunday, Sept. 27, from 11–6 p.m. and participate in our first drive-through event! (More events to come, but I know many of you are eager!)

If you’d like to volunteer, next Wednesday, the 23rd of September, we will host a meeting on the 2nd floor of the Belleville Area District Library for volunteers. If you can’t make it but still would like to volunteer, please show up to any of our events, and I assure you, we will find you a job!

Updates on future events will be posted in the Independent and in the Facebook group Stop Data Centers 48111.

I look forward to meeting each of you and catching up with familiar faces.

Jenn Smith
VBT Recall Committee Member

• *At the March 2026 Board of Trustees meeting in Huron Twp., Chris Girdwood, CEO of Detroit Regional Aerotropolis, whom the Township pays about \$30k/year, said, “As acting economic director ... for example, in Van Buren Township, they wanted a data center, so we went after it.”*

Reader’s Encounter With ICE Leads to More Concerns

To the editor:

It has been a number of weeks now since I wrote about I.C.E.’s raid at our house on August 2, 2026. I.C.E. tricked us and grabbed our foster son. I.C.E. deported him to Africa, finally displacing him in Cameroon – despite his compliance with all immigration requirements and never having any interaction with the police.

During this seizure by I.C.E., they produced no warrant, no order for deportation and lied to the courts. During the raid, my wife called Van Buren PD to supply protection for our safety, that of our neighbors, and for our son. After “checking” with someone (?) she was told by the dispatcher that no police from VBPD would appear if I.C.E. was involved in anyway. We asked for protection; we did not ask them to interfere with I.C.E.

My last letter to the Independent (8/28/26) asked for disclosure of who it was who directed our police not to get involved with I.C.E. for any reason -- to date, no answer to the question! It has been published that the City of Taylor

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

Letters to the Editor

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

cooperates with I.C.E., checking immigration status and contacting them when interacting with individuals during routine enforcement activities. The Dearborn Police Department has a strict, written policy prohibiting officers from cooperating with federal immigration enforcement or asking individuals about their legal status. And, my questions remain: What and where has the policy of VBPD been published? WHO gave that order in Van Buren Township?

There is another, much more menacing aspect to I.C.E. which we should all be concerned about -- it involves Election Day. Seemingly, random I.C.E. raids across the nation are not random at all. They are a dress rehearsal for election day. This administration is capable of ordering I.C.E. to confiscate ballots and seize voting machines whenever and wherever they discern they will lose. The easiest targets for this to happen will be cities, towns, villages and townships whose police are forbidden to intervene with I.C.E.

Recently, Robert Deniro ran a political ad which shows him seated in an easy chair speaking to the camera. He says forcefully, "This is my country. And I want it back." Well, so do I. So should we all!

Michael J. Callahan,
Circuit Court Judge,
retired (31 years of service)

All are Invited to
Candidate Meet & Greet
Sept. 24

Greetings Southwestern Wayne County Voters:

Please join us, the Southwestern Wayne [County] Democratic Club at our

2026 Candidate Meet and Greet, Thursday, Sept. 24, 2026, at 6 p.m.PM in the Sheldon/Otisville Room at the Van Buren Township Hall (46425 Tyler Rd, Van Buren Township).

This is a fantastic opportunity to meet face-to-face with many of the candidates and learn about their platforms and vision for our community.

You will have the chance to ask questions and get to know them personally.

We encourage all registered voters to attend this important event. Your participation is crucial in ensuring that we elect the best possible candidates to represent our community. Light refreshments will be provided.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Sincerely,
Debbie Chamberlain
Correspondence Secretary
Southwestern Wayne [County]
Democratic Club

Belleville Area Council
for the Arts Changes
Date of Annual Art Show

Dear Editor,

The Belleville Area Council for the Arts has changed the date of the 17th Annual Community Art Show to Oct. 23-25 at the Belleville Yacht Club. BACA is "Calling All Artists" to participate this year. Cash prizes will be awarded for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place in six categories, including 2D, 3D/Fiber Art, Photography, Children Ages 6-12 and Teens Ages 13-17.

A new category has been added this year, "Seeing America 250 Years." Artwork in this category can be any imaginative interpretation of America's 250 th Anniversary, not necessarily limited to patriotic entries.

Artists are invited to submit up to three

pieces of art designed in the past two years. Applications are available on the BACA website: www.bacaart.org or at the Belleville Library or Sumpter Media Center.

Community Art 48111 Banners have been placed on 70 light poles in the City of Belleville, featuring children's art (K-12) from the Van Buren Schools Art Show in May and images of winning artwork from last year's Community Art Show.

BACA is pleased to accept funding for this year's art show and banner project from a Wayne County Business and Community Impact Grant through County Commissioner, Allen Wilson.

Other BACA programs have been funded by the county's impact grant, including partial funding of the Missoula Children's Theater, Music Lakeside's Summer Music Series, and The Lakeside Singers.

BACA congratulates Senior Scholarship Award recipients, Allie Horchem for her excellence in the visual arts and Braylon Hubbard for his distinction in the performing arts. Both Allie and Braylon will receive \$1,000 toward their education at

Washtenaw Community College.
Elaine Gutierrez

Food Closet Garage Sale
a Big Success

To the editor:

On Saturday, Sept. 12, the BFUMC Men's Club and Emergency Food Closet held a garage sale in the church parking lot. 43 volunteers worked from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. setting up, unloading and arranging items, tearing down, and cleaning up. \$2,729 was donated to the Emergency Food Closet.

Thanks to everyone who donated, volunteered, and shopped! This is a blessing and will fill many, many bags with food!

Marilyn Wood - coordinator
Emergency Food Closet

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Obituaries



Bryan Killingbeck

BRYAN KILLINGBECK
(April 20, 1940 - September 7, 2026)

Bryan Killingbeck was born on April 20, 1940, in Romulus, Michigan. He was one of seven children from the union of Edgar F. Killingbeck and Edah Emma (Schmiede) Killingbeck.

Bryan received BS and MS degrees from Eastern Michigan University and worked on his doctorate degree at the University of Michigan, where he served as the president of the Phi Delta Kappa fraternity for many years.

Bryan devoted his entire professional life of fifty-three years to teaching. After having taught in many school districts, he fell in love with De La Salle Collegiate High School.

The Brothers of the Christian Schools and their method of teaching attracted Bryan, and he spent the last thirty-five years of teaching at the all-boys Catholic High School, now located in Warren, Michigan. During that time, "Mr. K" endeared himself to thousands of boys as he helped them grow into young men. He received many honors and accolades for his dedicated work at the school. Some of his accomplishments include setting up and maintaining the school archives, publishing the Pilot Yearbook for thirty-three years, being named Teacher of the Year by the Christian Brothers of New Providence (now DENA), and leading as the Science Department Chair and School Photographer.

Bryan was also an active member at Saint Anthony Catholic Church in Belleville, where he served as a member of the Fathers Club and Ushers Club for many years.

Bryan Killingbeck, a life-long resident of Romulus, and the last of seven children, passed away on Monday, September 7, 2026, at Trinity Health Ann Arbor Hospital. His passing was preceded by six siblings: Walter B. (Bella) Killingbeck, Edgar Allen Killingbeck, Mary Lou (Fred) Stabenaw, William Killingbeck, Nancy Lee (Bill) Moore, and Michael Killingbeck.

To cherish his memory, he leaves two sisters-in-law: Barbara (Plungis) Killingbeck and Barbara (Germain) Killingbeck; a niece and nephew; four great-nieces; one great-nephew; and one great-great niece and one great-great nephew.

Friends may gather from 2:00pm until 6:00pm on Sunday; September 13, 2026, at Merkle Funeral Service, Romulus; 36885 Goddard Road, Romulus, Mich.

He will lie in state from 9:00am until 10:00am on Monday, September 14, 2026, at St. Anthony Catholic Church; 409 West Columbia Avenue, Belleville, Michigan 48111. A Mass of the Resurrection will take place at St. Anthony's at 10:00am. Burial will take place at Romulus Memorial Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to De La Salle Collegiate High School Scholarship Fund De La Collegiate, 14600 Common Road, Warren, MI 48088. Online guests may leave words of inspiration and comfort or share a photo by visiting www.merklefs.com.

RICHARD LEMOYNE
(August 20, 1936 - August 31, 2026)

Richard Charles LeMoyné, age 90, of Novi, Mich., formerly of Livonia, Mich., passed away Monday, August 31, 2026. He was born August 20, 1936, son of Roy Waters & Frances Browning (Canode) LeMoyné.

He is survived by two sons: Robert (Mayumi) LeMoyné of Running Springs, California, and Craig (Katie) LeMoyné of Toronto, Ontario.

Richard was preceded in death by his parents and his wife Sara Lee (Potter) LeMoyne.

The memorial is Friday, Sept. 18 at 11 a.m. at Trinity Episcopal Church, with Rev. George "Chip" Dischinger officiating, interment in Hillside Cemetery, arrangements by David C. Brown Funeral Home.



**Gloria Jean
Kauffman**

GLORIA JEAN KAUFFMAN
(August 4, 1947 – August 6, 2026)

Gloria Jean Kauffman went home to be with the Lord on Thursday, August 6, 2026.

Gloria was born August 4, 1947. She enjoyed the outdoors: mushroom hunting, campfires, boating, and swimming.

A burial service will be held October 3, 2026 at 1:30 p.m. at Otswego Cemetery. A buffet dinner will be at Gobblers in Waters, Mich. following her burial.

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BELLEVILLE-AREA
INDEPENDENT

LAUNCH

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

good', you can scan the back barcode and see if the library has it," said Lore. Cardholders with the Belleville Area District Library will also have the ability to use the library card on their app to check out books at other The Library Network-member libraries without the need to have their physical library card on them.

"We try to make it as easy for people as it should be," said Library Director Suchy.

Since the project is in its early stages, the library staff do not know yet when the app will be ready. "It's going to take a little bit," Lore said when asked by board member Dan Fleming. "It depends on how often we are able to meet for our implementation meetings. I imagine there would be several

before we're ready to go live with it."

The first implementation meeting for this new app will take place the week of Sept. 14.

In other business at the 40-minute meeting, the board:

- Approved resolutions authorizing the library to levy its three tax millages on its December 2026 tax bill;
- Heard Suchy report the library current has more revenue than budgeted for and spent less than budgeted for in the 2026 fiscal year;



- Listened to Suchy's debrief of the tornado warning on Thursday, Sept. 3, which took place the same day as Belleville High School's first home football game of the year. Because of the game and the library's reintroduction of its "Game Day Game Day" program for the occasion, teens

were visiting the library at the time of the warning, and they had to take cover under library desks;

• Heard Suchy announce the library is hosting a presentation on Pewabic pottery, titled "Pewabic, Detroit's Pottery" on Thursday, Sept. 17;

• Learned the library is replacing their self-check machines and self-check print release machines, which will cost around \$32,000;

• Acknowledged the 20th anniversary of Belleville's African American Literature Book Group, and commended the Independent article "Belleville's African American Book Club Marks 20 Years" by Emily Flesch, highlighting the milestone;

• Heard Board member Cichewicz's summer gardening updates. Cichewicz said that she thinks she picked another 12 quarts of beans on the day of the meeting, in addition to the roughly thirty quarts she already had canned.



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BELLEVILLE-AREA
INDEPENDENT

LOCAL SPORTS



PHOTOS | BLAIR TEMPLE

Trenton Foley powers his way into the endzone in the first quarter to tie the game 7-7 against rival Fordson. He also scored the winning touchdown with 29 seconds left in the game to seal the victory.

Tigers Roar Back Against Fordson

Belleville rallies from a 21-14 halftime deficit to stun rival Tractors, 26-21, with 29 seconds remaining



Tigers cheerleaders kept the Belleville crowd fired up throughout the game.

Twenty-nine seconds. Four yards. One rivalry game hanging in the balance. That was all that stood between Belleville and a comeback victory over rival Dearborn Fordson Friday night.

Down 21-14 at halftime, both teams went scoreless in the third quarter before the Tigers took over with 11:22 remaining in the game. Belleville put together a 12-play drive that chewed nearly six minutes off the clock, with Trenton Foley breaking loose for runs of 17 and 19 yards and Kendall Franklin connecting with Charles Britton III for 10 yards

Franklin eventually scored from 1 yard out to pull the Tigers within 21-20. The extra point was missed, leaving Belleville still trailing by a point.

Then came the final drive. With 2:12 remaining, the Tigers took possession at their own 37-yard line. On the third play, Franklin connected with Britton III for 27 yards, putting Belleville at the Fordson 26. Trevor Falconer followed with a 14-yard run to the 12, and two plays later Franklin's quarterback keeper moved the Tigers to the 4-yard line.

This time, Foley finished the job. He took the handoff and powered up the middle for a 4-yard touchdown with 29 seconds remaining, giving Belleville a 26-21 lead. The extra point was missed again, leaving Fordson one final opportunity.

The Tigers' defense finished the job, stopping Fordson after the kickoff and sealing a dramatic comeback victory.

For Belleville, the win was more than just a rivalry victory. It was the Tigers' first conference game of the season and came after losses to a nonconference opponent in the opener and Howell in a Week 2 crossover matchup.

At 0-2 entering the night, Belleville needed something to change. Against Fordson, it did.

And on a night when the Belleville Marching Band was celebrating 100 years, the Tigers gave the home crowd another reason to make some noise.

The Tigers (1-2) will look to carry the momentum into their next game when they travel to Canton Friday, Sept. 17 to take on the Salem Rocks (2-1) in a KLAAs division matchup.



Stewart B. Gotts
Independent Reporter



Senior quarterback Kendall Franklin directed a 12-play, 6 minute drive in the 4th quarter to cut the Tractors lead to 21-20.

REZONING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Residents cited a range of concerns, including increased traffic on Beckley Road, environmental impacts on local lakes, loss of wildlife habitats for protected species and plants, decreased property values and the effect increased population density may have on emergency response times. Many emphasized that they had purchased their property with the understanding that the area would remain permanent green-space.

Legal concerns were raised after resident Andrew Winnie spent months visiting the Wayne County Records Department and filing Freedom of Information Act requests regarding the parcel. Winnie's research indicated that the original property developer entered into covenants requiring that the land remain a permanent green-space in order to secure initial zoning approval. The township has been unable to find documentation confirming or denying these claims.

Commissioner Jeremy Jahr noted that there was no decision on the agenda as the commission is adamant it needs time following a public hearing to consider all feedback rather than voting the same night. However, given the overwhelming opposition and no one except the developer speaking in favor, Jahr felt that the issue did require immediate deliberation.



Commissioner Medina Atchinson stated that she "would like to oppose this project completely," which was met with cheers from the crowd. Commissioner Jackson Pahle noted that they are absolutely not opposed to housing, but without proper legal documentation, he did not see how they could move forward in support of this project.

Discussion continued with Commissioner Bernard Grant expressing that he didn't know why they were even considering the application if there was an original agreement and covenant in place.

Commissioner Sherry Budd thanked Andrew Winnie for providing the commission with his found documentation and mentioned a specific item that stated there were to be no motor vehicles or roads on the parcel, pointing out that it would be very difficult to have a housing complex

Andrew Winnie presents documents he uncovered while researching the former Harbor Club golf course property. His findings raised questions about covenants requiring the land to remain permanent greenspace.

or anything else there.

The commission voted unanimously to deny the request on the grounds that the rezoning did not meet the intended purpose of the zone. Specifically, that the proposal failed to meet "mixed-use" RM district intent, that providing only single-family homes would essentially act as an illegal use variance for an R-1 district, and that Beckley Road does not meet RM infrastructure requirements.

Following the vote, the meeting took a brief recess as celebrating residents filed into the hall.

When the meeting resumed, the commission:

- Approved a request by applicant Timothy Shammas to amend the final site plan for Metro Party Store at 41001 E. Huron River Drive, removing a planned screening wall and replacing it with wavygreen-belt landscaping;
- Discussed strategies to improve enforcement of ordinance violations.
- Van Buren Township residents wishing to report an ordinance violation can fill out an Ordinance Violation Form online at vbtmi.gov (under Public Safety) or call Public Safety dispatch at 734-699-8930.

VBPS Infrastructure & Operations Take Spotlight During Board of Ed Meeting

Sarah Rigg
Managing Editor

A number items related to buildings and operations dominated the Sept. 14 meeting of the Van Buren Public Schools Board of Education.

The board voted unanimously to approve a package of bids on work for the district's new operations building, which is funded by a bond passed by voters. That package was reviewed during the board's Aug. 24 meeting.

The former Haggerty elementary school was demolished earlier in August to make way for new construction.

Plante Moran Realpoint, serving as the District's Owner's Representative, worked with district administration and the project team to review the bids and provide recommendations regarding the award of construction contracts.

This first package of bids covers structural concrete, earthwork, and mechanical and electrical engineering. The total for this set of work is just over \$7.8 million.

SEE MEETING ON PAGE 13

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Q&A with Sumpter Police Chief Eric Luke

Luke: Police Millage This Autumn Must Pass

Chief warns loss of millage funding could mean staffing cuts, reduced coverage or the end of the department

Emily Flesch

Independent Reporter

A millage issue on the ballot in August meant to renew millages to fund the Sumpter Police Department failed, taking away the major source of funding for the township's police department. The township will put a 5-mil proposal on the ballot in November. Below is a conversation with Sumpter Township Police Chief Eric Luke about the police budget and the proposed millage.

INDEPENDENT: Can you talk a little about how the police budget is set? What is the process?

LUKE: The police department budget is set through an annual planning and approval process led by the PD command staff, then submitted to and finalized by the township board before the start of each fiscal year on April 1.

We first assess our fixed personnel costs - salaries, payroll taxes, workers' comp, etc., which account for approximately 80% of our budget.

We then assess our other operational costs, such as vehicles, fuel, operating supplies, contracted services, prosecuting attorney fees, vehicle and property insurance, communications, utilities, building repair/maintenance, equipment repair/maintenance, vehicle repair maintenance, and animal shelter expenses, to name a few, eating into the remaining 20% of the budget.

Lastly, we assess our need to replace aging equipment and our desire to add new equipment types and technologies to make our operations more responsive, productive, and efficient.

INDEPENDENT: How much is budgeted for the police department operations? Where does the money come from?

LUKE: For Fiscal Year 2026/27, the police department was budgeted at \$3,593,155, with approximately \$1.4 million of that coming from the now-expired police protection millage. The rest is made up almost entirely of landfill royalties, which negatively impacts other unfunded programs and services that rely on landfill royalty funds to supplement their operating budgets, such as parks and rec, assessing, seniors, DPW, facility maintenance, cemetery upkeep, and general services.

Costs have risen drastically over the past five years, as we all know in our personal lives. It's been even more pronounced, however, in the costs that the police department incurs.

This is the township's first request for a Police Millage increase in 15 years. Although our police department's budget is



the third lowest in Wayne County, current operations are unsustainable without a voter-approved millage increase from 3 to 5 mills to address the financial shortfall resulting from rising costs and declining revenues.

INDEPENDENT: Why do you think the millage renewal wasn't approved by voters? Specifically, what are you hearing directly from the public on the topic?

LUKE: I believe it came down to "tax fatigue," which I've heard from many people. I do not believe this was in any way a vote of no confidence in the Sumpter Township Police Department, as we've always had strong support from our residents.

There does, however, seem to be some confusion among voters regarding the distribution of property taxes. Some residents have expressed concern, stating, "I pay enough property taxes; Sumpter Township shouldn't need a millage for anything." Unfortunately, that isn't the reality in Wayne County. Wayne County property taxes do not fund the daily operations of Sumpter Township, including police, fire services, senior programs, the building department, the water and sewer department, parks, or any other township services.

Instead, your Wayne County property taxes fund operations for Wayne County, the sheriff's department, local schools, county road maintenance, and other regional millages such as those for Metroparks, WCCCD, RESA, the Detroit Zoo, and SMART. The only property tax revenue that remains entirely within Sumpter Township and funds services in our community is from local millages, specifically those for police and fire services.

INDEPENDENT: Why are you putting a millage on the ballot again in the fall, and how are you hoping to clarify the issue to increase the chances of it passing this

“It is not hyperbole to say this could mean the end of the police department.”

Eric Luke,
Sumpter Township Police Chief

time?

LUKE: We have no choice. With the expiration of our two millages last year, we will have no millage funding after this calendar year, which accounts for over 40% of our budget. Since 80% of the police department's budget is allocated to personnel costs, this will severely limit our ability to provide even minimal police protection, resulting in dangerously low staffing levels, unanswered calls, and potentially no police coverage during the night shift. Ultimately, this could lead to the complete dissolution of the police department.

We are working to inform our residents about the rising costs and declining revenues we are facing.

We do not have excess resources within the police department that we can cut to alleviate the situation. Again, we have the third-lowest budget in Wayne County. While we are budgeted for 18 officers, a recent retirement has left us with only 17.

INDEPENDENT: What are the consequences if the millages aren't renewed? What other sources of money are an option?

LUKE: There are no alternative funding sources available to cover the loss of our millage funding.

INDEPENDENT: Wasn't the millage proposal earlier this year split into two parts, one for one mill and one for two mills, for a total of three? Why are you asking for five now?

LUKE: The three mill levy spread over the two millage questions prior to this year or up until last year, both expired. So the township board, because of increasing costs and decreasing revenue, mostly from the landfill, decided that in order to stay with our head above water, they could not go for the three mills anymore. They had to increase it to a five mill question.

INDEPENDENT: Don't some com-

munities get by with just coverage from the county sheriff, without having a local police department?

LUKE: In Wayne County, you have Macomb, Oakland, Washtenaw, Monroe, especially Oakland and Macomb who will contract with the sheriff's department. And whatever that (contract) sum is, it's not cheap.

And then you have Augusta Township. Back when I was working the road, years ago, they did contract out with the county, but then there was some kind of dispute. They got rid of the county, so they rely completely on the state police, and I'm not down on the state police, but they don't have the Ypsi post anymore over on Whittaker like they used to, so they're coming from far away. So it's not uncommon for us to get called by Washtenaw County Dispatch, saying, "Hey, can you go to Talladay Road wherever we're having a domestic or some kind of situation, and can you stand by and hold the scene until the troopers show up. Yeah, and that could be an hour.

INDEPENDENT: You mentioned that you thought the reason for the failure of the millage this summer was tax fatigue and not that the people don't trust the police department.

LUKE: For the most part, people here they want their own police department because when you don't have your own police department, and you even if you're able to contract out, you lose that local control (by the board of trustees). Or like the way some people were coming to the board and voicing their displeasure with our proposed Flock cameras. So, the people that show up and have a concern and voice their concern at a public meeting here at the township, their voice wouldn't be heard by anybody.

INDEPENDENT: Has the police department looked at doing some cost cutting?

LUKE: We have we've taken steps to cut costs over the years. But in 2012, we were still seeing the lingering effects of the bad economy in 2008, 2009, and 2010. So we decided that, even though it wasn't popular, we would shutter our dispatch center, which was here, and contract out for dispatch and lodging with Huron Township, which saved about \$100,000 a year, and that's continued to work out well. But just so you know, we do look for cost savings.

Somebody online said all you need is a chief and four officers. I'm sorry. How do I respond to somebody who thinks that for

SEE LUKE ON PAGE 18



PHOTO COURTESY OF I PAM POLLARD

Hay There, Tractor Supply!

11 riders from a local horse boarding barn owned by Paul & Pam Pollard..Rail Acres Equestrian Facility joined together on the evening of Labor Day and rode down to the newly opened Tractor Supply Store celebrating this much appreciated convenience of having this wonderful store so close to their barn.

BIRTHDAYS

- Sept. 17 – Gayl Parr

Sept. 17 – Susan Sell

Sept. 19 – Gary Fulton

Sept. 19 – Wendy Deming Clark

Sept. 19 – Mary Deming Ban

Sept. 20 – Stephanie Priess
- Sept. 21 – Reg Ion

Sept. 21 – Emily Grace Riemer

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ORPHAN OF THE WEEK



MEET ABEL

A Gentle Soul Who Has Learned to Trust

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In fact, Abel is often the first to greet people when they walk in. He's eager to say hello, and once you start giving him attention, he completely melts into it. He especially loves his favorite wet food in the mornings, which is definitely still the way to his heart!

Abel is looking for a home where his new family will continue to give him the love and affection he has learned to enjoy. If you're looking for a sweet companion who will happily greet you and melt in your hands when you give him attention, Abel may be your perfect match.

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Belleville City Council Ponders Assessment of City Catch Basins

HANNAH BORDERS
SPECIAL TO THE INDEPENDENT

Belleville City Council reviewed a resolution for the authorization of the city’s engineering firm, Hennessey Engineers Inc. to conduct an assessment of all catch basins in the city at their regular meeting on Sept. 8, 2026.

The resolution will authorize Hennessey Engineering Inc. to use their expertise to conduct an inspection of catch basins throughout the city and document their conditions. After the inspection, Hennessey Engineering Inc. will provide the city with the information they gather regarding the condition of the catch basins and recommend maintenance or improvements.

The assessment is said to help the city in planning and prioritizing future maintenance and improve stormwater collection

infrastructure throughout Belleville.

The assessment will not exceed the cost of \$16,500. Funding will come from the city’s road budget.

In other business at the 59-minute meeting, the council:

- Heard a presentation from Valerie Bonner, executive director of SOOAR, on “You Matter Belleville” walk event that will happen on Saturday, Sept. 12, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Participants will walk from the library to Horizon Park and sign a banner to raise mental health awareness;
- Heard a presentation from Cathy Boatin of Friends of Michigan Animal Rescue about collecting donations at five points on Saturday, Oct 10, 2026 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.;
- Reviewed Lakefront Ordinance that requires property owners along Belleville Lake to display uniform reflective address plates facing the water to assist first responders in locating emergencies;
- Approved resolution declaring a city-owned 1997 fire engine as surplus, authorizing its trade-in for the purchase of a used light-duty rescue vehicle;
- Approved resolution declaring a city-owned 2006 heavy rescue vehicle as surplus, authorizing the City Manager to receive sealed bids for the sale and disposal of the vehicle;
- Heard City Manager Brady Peck thank city staff for responding to the storm that happened on Thursday, Sept. 3, 2026. Peck recognized the power outages caused by the storm and that the city is working with DTE to hopefully identify a cause for frequent outages on the East side of the city;
- Heard Councilmember Julie Kissel thank city staff and Fire Chief John Thiede. Kissel acknowledged the fall leaf pick

up notice and reminded attendees of the upcoming planning commission meeting;

- Heard Mayor Pro Tem Kelly Bates comment that she appreciates communication during the storm and looks forward to working with DTE. Reminded the council of the upcoming 25th anniversary of 9/11 and thanked first responders who responded to the attacks;
- Heard that Mayor Ken Voight respects retired first responders and remind the council of the physical issues and PTSD that first responders face as result of their heroic efforts. Voight looks forward to You Matter Belleville and city-wide garage sale. He proposed holding an open house for the new City Hall and Police Department building during Harvest Fest on Saturday, Oct. 10, 2026.

The meeting adjourned at 7:29 PM. All council members were present.

MEETING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

A representative from Plante Moran Realpoint also presented a second package of bids during the Sept. 14 meeting, for information only. These covered most the additional construction needs from doors

Plante Moran Realpoint, serving as the District’s Owner’s Representative, worked with district administration and the project team to review the bids and provide recommendations regarding the award of construction contracts.

and flooring to heat and moisture protection, masonry, and concrete. Only one bid was received for landscaping and it was far above what the board had set aside, so the landscaping design will be tweaked and the district will ask for bids on landscaping again in the future.

Award recommendation number two totals just over \$9.5 million. The total project award is \$17,366,746. The project is currently on time and slightly under budget by about \$230,000.

Granger expects construction to begin in October, with completion targeted for December 2027. A ground-breaking ceremony will take place at the site of the operations building on the morning of Sept. 28.

The board is set to vote on the second bid recommendation at its Sept. 28 meeting.

In other news from the Sept. 14 meeting of the board of education, trustees:

- Approved electric bus charging equipment, software, warranty, commissioning, and support services totaling \$484,031.60, funded primarily through grant dollars.
- Approved a recommendation to

choose InterTech PSI for roof consulting services for two schools at \$75,850, including contingency.

- Heard district staff reported ongoing paraeducator recruitment. Staff said hiring paraeducators is a top priority and there have been interviews every day since school was back in session.
- Discussed having school board meeting take place at various locations around the school district. The board will soon release a schedule of which schools they will meet at over the course of the 2026-2027 school year.
- Went into a closed session to discuss a student discipline matter. The student was reinstated with conditions.
- Also during the closed session considered and approved a set of Emergency Operating Procedures.

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Van Buren Township Zoning Board Okays Variance for Pool

Sarah Rigg
Managing Editor

During its Sept. 8 meeting, Van Buren Township's Zoning Board of Appeals approved a request for two variances for property owner Tony Gioutsos for an in-ground pool.

The variances both involved the township's requirements for fences around

pools. Township ordinances require that pool fences not be built within the front yard or corner lot side yard, but the pool fence for this location will be in the front yard.

The other variance regarded how far the fence extended into the front yard setback. The proposed fence would only be eight inches from the front property line, encroaching into the minimum front

yard setback of 30 feet. Instead, the variance requests that the setback be 29 feet 4 inches.

Part of the reason the variance was requested is that the lot is an odd shape, not square or rectangular. A report from McKenna, a firm that provides professional planning, zoning, and building department services for Van Buren Township, noted that because of the odd shape of the

lot, adhering to zoning requirements for the fencing would be "infeasible."

Both variances were approved unanimously.

In other news from the ZBA, members approved minutes from the March meeting of the ZBA which only lasted three minutes because there was no new or old business to consider.

INDEPENDENT CLASSIFIED ADS

AUCTION NOTICE

STALLION TOWING AUCTION – Thursday, September 17 at 11 a.m. 221 North Lincoln St. Ypsilanti. 1997 GMC Sonoma 1GTCS19X4V8507215 starting bid \$700. 2011 Chevrolet Equinox 2CNFLEEC2B6349023 starting bid \$800. 2010 Ford Expedition 1FMJK2A50AEB60755 starting bid \$1,000. 2004 Mercury Grand Marquis 2MEFM-74W04X618334 starting bid \$900.

9/17

GARAGE/YARD SALE

HUGE GARAGE SALE on Friday, Saturday, & Sunday, September 18, 19, & 20 at 8471 Belleville Rd. from 9am – 5pm

9/17

HOARDERS HOARD – SEMI-TRUCK SALE. New & gently used vintage items. Glass, crafts, clothes, 100 + pairs of shoes. 4 seasons. Something for everyone and every room. Come by and let's make a deal! 17500 Sumpter, Saturday, and Sunday 19 & 20, 9am – 4pm.

9/17

PUBLISHER'S NOTICE:

All real estate advertising in this newspaper is subject to the Fair Housing Act which makes it illegal to advertise "any preference, limitation or discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status or national origin, or an intention, to make any such preference, limitation or discrimination." Familial status includes children under the age of 18 living with parents or legal custodians, pregnant women and people securing custody of children under 18.

This newspaper will not knowingly accept any advertising for real estate which is in violation of the law. Our readers are hereby informed that all dwellings advertised in this newspaper are available on an equal opportunity basis. To complain of discrimination call HUD toll-free at 1-800-669-9777. The toll-free telephone number for the hearing impaired is 1-800-927-9275.



Notice to Advertisers:

The Belleville-Area Independent will not be liable for failure to publish an ad as requested or for more than one incorrect insertion of an advertisement. In the event of any error or omission in printing or publication of an advertisement, you must notify us within five days of publication or on the date of insertion, if an ad is scheduled as part of a package, so there is time to correct subsequent publications. The Independent's liability shall be limited to an adjustment for the cost of the space occupied by the error with a maximum liability being cancellation of the cost of the first incorrect advertisement or republication of the corrected advertisement. Under no circumstances shall the Independent be liable for consequential damages of any kind.

Notice to Advertisers – private gun sales:

It is the responsibility of both the classified seller and buyer to ensure they understand all laws applicable to private gun sales in Michigan. The Belleville-Area Independent is not responsible for the legal compliance of classified buyers and sellers.

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9/24

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Musings



Janet Millard
Advertising Director

Okay people, let's get your calendar filled up. There are always so many things to do in the three communities.

~~~~~

We have published a classified ad looking for a church group or groups to help fix lunches for the 3rd Monday distribution to the homeless in Detroit, and the person needing help didn't get any response. I find this unusual since normally when groups are asked to help, many step forward. So, if church groups, community groups or even individuals are willing to help, please call (734) 740-8761 for more information.

~~~~~

The fall election is heating up, and the Southeastern Democrats

have scheduled a Meet the Candidates on Sept. 24. Information is running in Things to Do and here is your chance to ask those questions that need answers.

~~~~~

Friends of Michigan Animals Rescue are holding their annual FMAR Community Day on Sept. 19 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Another great family event for you and the kids. Flyers are all over town so you should already have it on your calendar. See their reminder ad in the paper today.

~~~~~

Sumpter Parks & Recreation have scheduled an October Jam for Saturday, Oct. 3 at 4 p.m. It will be in the Pavillion by the Community Center with a free concert, lots to do for the littles & adults, and fireworks too. Add that in your things to do on the 3rd.

~~~~~

The Belleville Area Council for the Arts is "Calling All Artists" to

participate in their 17th Annual Community Art Show, taking place on Oct. 23-25 at the BYC. Artists of all ages are invited to enter up to 3 pieces of art designed within the last two years. Cash prizes will be awarded in six categories. The NEW category this year will be: Seeing America 250 Years, with a \$250 first prize. Entries in this category need not be limited to patriotic portrayal. Applications are available at the Belleville Library, Sumpter Media Center and on-line at [www.bacaart.org](http://www.bacaart.org). See the ad in today's paper for more information and the DATE CHANGE.

~~~~~

Well, our mighty Tigers pulled it out of the bag, and although it was tight, they sent Dearborn Fordson packing with a final score of BHS 26 vs. DHS 21. This Friday, we travel to Canton and will remind Salem High School who runs this show. Onward and Upward, Tigers!

Things to do in the Belleville Area

■ **Thursday, Sept. 17** – Zion Well instructors host sunset yoga at the Michigan Flight Museum's Roush Aeronautics Center, 7-8 p.m., \$35 per person. Repeats Oct. 15 and Nov. 19.

■ **Thursday, Sept. 17** – Free concert by Nathan Sweet in Harris Park, 6-8 p.m. Bring lawn chairs and blankets and visit the ice cream truck while Nathan plays your favorite tunes on his guitar.

■ **Thursday, Sept. 17** – WCCCD hosts a free fall concert series on Thursday evenings from 6:30-8 p.m. at 9555 Haggerty Rd. Tonight: Steel Drum Band. Friday, Sept. 18 – Last Eagle Riders Steak Fry for 2026, \$22 per meal, 4 p.m. until gone, at the Fraternal Order of Eagles Van Buren Post 3996 on Beck Road. Includes a 50/50 raffle.

■ **Friday, Sept. 18** – Bowling Fundraiser Benefiting Michigan Against Atomic Waste, at Lodge Lanes. Check-in at 6 p.m., bowling at 6:30 p.m. \$25 per person, includes two games and shoes. Raffle baskets, 50/50 raffle, cash bar. Proceeds benefit Michigan Against Atomic Waste, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

■ **Saturday, Sept. 19** – Wings & Whiskey. An evening of whiskey tasting, education, and entertainment at the Michigan Flight Museum after hours. \$50.

■ **Sunday, Sept. 20** – Angel Food Catering's annual Craft Show, Corn & Cider Fest, noon-5 p.m. at 44850 N. Interstate 94 Service Dr. Food, vendors, free and ticketed events, including pony rides.

■ **Monday, Sept. 21** – Farmers Market, 4-7:30 p.m., and Main Street Auto Show, 5-8 p.m. in downtown Belleville.

■ **Monday, Sept. 21** – Open play Mahjong at the Crafted Beanery, check-in at 9 a.m., play at 10 a.m. \$5 admission includes entry into drawing for a door prize. Repeats Monday, Sept. 28.

■ **Thursday, Sept. 24** – The Southwestern Wayne County Democratic Club hosts a Candidate Meet and Greet in the Sheldon/Otisville Room, Van Buren Township Hall, 46425 Tyler Road, Van Buren Township, 6-8 p.m.

■ **Thursday, Sept. 24** – WCCCD hosts a free fall concert series on Thursday evenings from 6:30-8 p.m. at 9555 Haggerty Rd. Tonight: Lonesome Skeleton Band.

■ **Thursday, Sept. 24** – Belleville Area Museum lecture, 6 p.m., free pizza at 5:30 p.m., 405 Main St. Tonight's topic is Rawsonville: The Making of a Ghost Town by Dave Booher.

■ **Friday, Sept. 25** – Movie on the Plaza, activities at 7 p.m., movie at dusk, Van Buren Township community center plaza. Free. Featured movie TBA.

■ **Friday, Sept. 25, Saturday, Sept. 26, and Sunday, Sept. 27** – St. Aloysius Church White Elephant Garage Sale, 37200 Neville St., Romulus. 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Friday and Saturday, noon-4 p.m. Sunday. Household items, toys, and more. 734-941-5056.

■ **Saturday, Sept. 26** – The Future of Comedy Show, 8 p.m., \$25. VFW Post 78 in Romulus, 39270 W. Huron Dr. Proceeds support building fund.

■ **Monday, Sept. 28** – Farmers Market, 4-7:30 p.m., and Main Street Auto Show, 5-8 p.m. in downtown Belleville.

■ **Monday, Sept. 28** – Open play Mahjong at the Crafted Beanery, check-in at 9 a.m., play at 10 a.m. \$5 admission includes entry into drawing for a door prize.

■ **Saturday, Oct. 3** – Craft & Vendor Show, 10 a.m.-8 p.m., VFW Post 78 in Romulus, 39270 W. Huron Dr. The first event of this kind at the VFW, featuring local artists & crafters. Limited spaces still available; email pmmapourmeart@gmail.com by Sept. 9.

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BELLEVILLE - AREA
INDEPENDENT

Belleville Banners Carry Powerful Message: ‘You Matter’

Emily Flesch
Independent Reporter

The purple and teal lamppost banners lining Main Street communicate an important message to community members: YOU MATTER. Spearheaded by the Belleville-based nonprofit organization SOOAR (Strategies to Overcome Obstacles and Avoid Recidivism), this local campaign is part of a nationwide effort to end stigma surrounding mental health and connect residents with life-saving resources.

SOOAR was established in 2005 and focuses on prevention, harm reduction and life skills development. Community outreach is integral to their mission as they seek to empower marginalized individuals, such as those facing housing instability or substance use, in Metro Detroit.

In 2020, SOOAR launched the community outreach team Boots on the Ground (BOG) when they partnered with the Detroit Wayne Integrated Health Network and became the first organization outside of Detroit authorized to operate a syringe



PHOTO | EMILY FLESCH
Valerie Kelly-Bonner with a banner.

service program. The BOG team meets people in real time wherever they are to provide essential supplies and support.

SOOAR believes that consistent, ongoing outreach helps to build trust in the community, based on the principle “nothing for them without them.”

Through this close work with the community, the need for spiritual support alongside harm reduction led to the creation of Called 2 Care Ministries, SOOAR’s faith-based extension. Called 2 Care travels to where help is needed and offers spiritual support, encouragement and prayer, often in locations where it was not previously available.

Founder and Executive Director of SOOAR Valerie Kelley-Bonner stated that SOOAR felt driven to launch the You Matter campaign because there are “a lot of people suffering in silence [who] need to know they are not alone, especially in suicidal ideation.”

On Saturday, Sept. 12, SOOAR and the Belleville DDA, with support from community partners Tornado Pizza and Atwater Street Tacos, hosted the You Matter Belleville Community Wellness Event, described as “a day of hope, connection, resources and community,” to remind

everyone that their lives have value. Taking place on Fourth Street in front of the Belleville-Area District Library from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., the event featured multiple speakers, musical performances, art displays, a community resource table and a “You Matter 48111” banner for participants to sign that will later be displayed at different locations in the city. There was also a Suicide Awareness Walk from the library to the Harper’s Wings of Hope memorial for a shared moment of silence. Everyone was encouraged to wear purple to show their care and support.

More information about SOOAR can be found at sooar-nonprofit.org or by calling (734) 697-9511. Participants were also encouraged to consider joining SOOAR’s Suicide Survivor and Grief Support Group.

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. You are not alone. Call or text 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org to reach the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. Services are free, confidential, and available 24/7.

Upcoming Meetings

- **Monday, Sept. 21** – Belleville City Council, 6:30 p.m.; also, the Sumpter Township regular Parks & Recreation meeting, 6 p.m.
■ **Tuesday, Sept. 22** – Sumpter Township Board of Trustees, 6 p.m. Also, Van Buren DDA board meeting, 3 p.m.
■ **Wednesday, Sept. 23** – Van Buren Township Planning Commission, 5:30 p.m.
■ **Monday, Sept. 28** – Van Buren Public Schools Board of Education, 7 p.m., BHS Commons
■ **Monday, Oct. 5** – Belleville City Council, 6:30 p.m.
■ **Tuesday, Oct. 6** – Van Buren Township

- Board of Trustees, 6 p.m., with 5 p.m. work/study as needed
■ **Thursday, Oct. 8** - Keystone Academy school board, 5 p.m. Also, Sumpter Township Planning Commission, 6 p.m. Also, Belleville Planning Commission, 6:30 p.m.
■ **Monday, Oct. 12** – Van Buren Public Schools Board of Education, 7 p.m., BHS Commons
■ **Tuesday, Oct. 13** – Sumpter Township Board of Trustees, 6 p.m. Also, Belleville Area District Library Board, 7:30 p.m.
■ **Wednesday, Oct. 14** – Van Buren Township Planning Commission, 5:30 p.m.
■ **Monday, Oct. 19** – Belleville City Council, 6:30 p.m.
■ **Tuesday, Oct. 20** – Van Buren Township Board of Trustees, 6 p.m., with 5 p.m. work/study as needed.
■ **Wednesday, Oct. 21** – Belleville DDA board meeting, 6 p.m.

Keystone Academy (Y5-8)
47925 Bemis Rd
Belleville, MI 48111-9760
KeystoneAcademy.org
734-697-9470

OPEN ENROLLMENT NOTICE
Open enrollment for the Keystone academic school year ends on 2/26/2027 at 5 pm. Applications can be obtained at the school or by calling 866-NHA-ENROLL. Should the number of applications received during open enrollment exceed available seats, a random-selection drawing will be held via live stream on 3/4/2027 at 11:30 am.
Applications received after open enrollment will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis for remaining open seats. Waiting lists will be formed accordingly.

NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATORY POLICY AS TO STUDENTS
National Heritage Academies does not discriminate against or limit the admission of any student on any unlawful basis, including on the basis of ethnicity, national origin, color, need for special education services, sex, gender, disability, intellectual ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, athletic ability, race, creed, gender, national origin, religion or ancestry. A school may not require any action by a student or family (such as an admissions test, interview, essay, attendance at an information session, etc.) in order for an applicant to either receive or submit an application for admission to that school.

Belleville Police Department Vehicle Auction

First auction is at J&T Crova, on Wednesday 9/23/26, at 10:00 am. The following vehicles will be up for auction:

2013 Dodge AVenger	1C3CDZAB9DN729777
2011 Chevrolet Silverado 1500	1GCRKSE39BZ431046
2025 Ford Bronco Sport	3FMCR9BN1SRF03499

The second auction is at Great Lakes Towing, on Wednesday 9/23/26, at 10:00 am. The following vehicles will be up for auction:

2010 Ford Escape	1FMCU9DG2AKC55733
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LUKE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

36 square miles and 12,500 approximate people, you need a chief and four officers. Do you understand how scheduling works?

INDEPENDENT:I’m trying to imagine how you’re going to sort of be a police presence at any kind of big like community event with chief or four officers, for instance.

LUKE: Running a police department has always been difficult, but in 2026, it’s much more so. There are many more layers that you have to prove that you’re doing the right thing. I’m very proud that we are one of only I believe it’s 104 departments statewide out of 500 and some to be accredited through MLEAC. To me, that’s huge.

INDEPENDENT: What does that stand for?

LUKE: Michigan Law Enforcement Accreditation Commission. It’s underneath the Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police. And we were one of only 104 police departments to go through that process. It took us three years. This is a no joke pro-

cess, and now we’ve been accredited since early last year, and every three years we have to go through the process to show our proofs and to become reaccredited.

It indicates that we are following best practices in law enforcement. I’m very proud of that.

INDEPENDENT:You mentioned that you really need 18 officers but have been running the department for some time with 17. What effect does that have?

LUKE: People don’t realize it’s just not the officers working the road. I mean, the cases we’ve had lately, the bigger cases, the homicide, the verdict we got, which was to me it was just almost surreal.

We secured a conviction with obviously, along with the prosecutor’s office downtown, on a homicide, right? That was reported as a suicide, and it turned out to be a homicide. And we secured that, helped secure that jury conviction. Then 11 days later, the rug is pulled out from us, and we lose our millage funding. And that was just like a slap in the face.

But most people don’t realize you have road patrol that has to go out there and actually respond to the runs, and then you have to have detectives that then take that

case. So you have to have your detectives, and then you have to have command staff because there is so much that has to be done in terms of reporting and supervision that you can’t just have four officers and a chief.

So we are not bloated. We don’t have extra officers sitting in the corner waiting for something to happen. We need those 18 officers. Even though we’ve been getting by with 17, there’s a little bit of hardship every once in a while with that. So, we don’t have a bunch of officers we don’t need. We don’t go out and buy equipment that we don’t need. We’re just trying to keep our head above water with the rising costs, and that’s why the township asked for this.

INDEPENDENT: Can you give us some specific numbers?

LUKE: Some people will say just cut your budget, tighten your belt. Okay, and that that’s great. We do that when we can, right? But, 80% of our budget is personnel costs, and the other 20 is operating costs.

If we slashed all of our operating cost, which obviously is impossible, right? You have to have vehicles, you have to have lights, you have to have other things, tires

on your vehicles, you have to have fuel, you have to have all. If we slashed 100% of our operating cost, I would still have need to lay off four and a half officers. No operating cost. Four and a half officers would be gone because of the loss of that funding.

If I was able to do half of operating costs, which is still hardcore, we’d have to cut 6.6 officers. So look at a 25% cut, which hard to do, but let’s say you’re really bare to the bone, right? 25% cutting of operating costs would mean laying off over seven and a half officers. I can’t budget cut my way out of that.

It is not hyperbole to say this could mean the end of the police department. I can’t put officers out there, one of them in a township of 12,500 people, and say, “Go do your job.” It’s dangerous,.

The incident two or three weeks ago showed that. The male homeowner, I saw a post on one of the local pages that said he was he’s sure that if we hadn’t shown up as quickly as we did, that they would all be dead.

We were there very quickly. If there’s no police department here, what happens to those people?

Belleville Police Dispatch Log

Sunday, August 23:

Sunday, September 6:
1024 Assist fire dept, Brain St
1112 Malicious destruction, Village Park
1458 Assist fire dept, E Huron River Dr
2048 Assist fire dept, N Aberdeen Ct
2117 Alarm intrusion, Owen St

Monday, September 7:

1107 Welfare check, High St
1247 Alarm intrusion, Owen St
1624 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Main St
1931 Neighbor troub, Henry St
2237 Welfare check, Belle Villa Blvd

Tuesday, September 8:

(missing time stamp) Repossession, Belle Villa Blvd
0528 Family trouble, Belle Villa Blvd
2336 Assist fire dept, W Columbia Ave

Wednesday, September 9:

0150 Assist fire dept, Sumpter Rd
1435 Mental subj, San Carlos St
1803 Juvenile compl, Belle Villa Blvd
1825 Welfare check, High St
1920 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Main St
2255 Assist citizen, Sumpter Rd

Thursday, September 10:

0837 Repossession, E Davis St
0950 Civil matter, Sumpter Rd
1050 Assist other dept, W Columbia Ave
1256 Follow up by officer, Santa Clara St
1301 Mental subj, San Carlos St
1440 Vehicle lockout, Main St
1522 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, E Columbia Ave
1552 Mental subj, San Carlos St
1632 Pp pda, Main St
1945 Alarm intrusion, W Thornhill Ct
2022 Noise complaint, Santa Clara St

Friday, September 11:

0436 Noise complaint, Belle Villa Blvd
1021 Vehicle lockout, W Columbia Ave
1100 Animal complaint, Capistrano Ct
1216 Parking complaint, N Liberty St
1750 911 welfare check, Main St

1918 Animal complaint, W Wabash Ave
1918 Harassment call, High St
2133 Road hazard, Sumpter Rd
2149 Assist fire dept, Main St
2247 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Victorian Ln
2312 Assist citizen, W Columbia Ave

Saturday, September 12 (partial):

0804 Alarm intrusion, E Huron River Dr
1017 Alarm intrusion, Madelon St
1100 Family trouble, Estrada Dr
2055 Welfare check, South St/E Wabash Ave

These logs also contained 60 traffic stops, 7 property checks, and 1 misc. complaint.

Sunday, September 6:

0332 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Wheatgrass Ln

Van Buren Twp. Police Dispatch Log

Ln
1011 Family trouble, W Huron River Dr
1024 Welfare check, Country Ln
1044 Threat, Belleville Rd
1120 Fraud, Belleville Rd
(missing time stamp) 911 welfare check, S I-94 Service Dr
1224 Larceny, Country Ln
1430 Civil matter, Parkwood Dr
1608 Animal complaint, Belleville Rd
1811 Lost property/child, Belleville Rd
1855 Civil matter, Colony Ln
1855 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Belleville Rd
1946 Leaving the scene property damage accident, Haggerty Rd/Bemis Rd
2046 Domestic, Chester Ct
2115 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Chatsworth Dr
2139 Assist other dept, Parkwood Dr
2219 Alarm intrusion, Van Born Rd
2250 Animal complaint, Colonial Rd
2313 Noise complaint, Liberty Ln
2321 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Sumpter Rd
2326 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Cedar St
2340 Domestic, Belleville Rd
2345 Threat, Sylvia Dr

Monday, September 7:

0014 Welfare check, S I-94 Service Dr
0025 Alarm intrusion, Van Born Rd
0031 Family trouble, Sylvia Dr
0232 Warrant arrest, Rawsonville Road
0759 Domestic, S I-94 Service Dr
1021 Larceny from auto, Van Buren St
1238 Juvenile compl, Maple Dr
1342 Larceny from auto, Hamilton St
1406 Family trouble, Parkwood Dr
1417 Alarm intrusion, Van Born Rd
1547 Alarm intrusion, Rolan Meadows Dr
1556 Juvenile compl, Quirk Rd
1701 Welfare check, S Ponderosa Trl
1815 Welfare check, S I-94 Service Dr
1820 Alarm intrusion, Sonrisa St
1844 Operating while intox, Michigan Ave/Denton Rd
1910 Family trouble, Country Ln
2024 Civil matter, Rolan Meadows Dr
2051 Fireworks, Denton Rd
(missing time stamp) Noise complaint, Winding Pond Dr/Sunset Pond Cir
2058 Larceny from auto, Village Green Ln
2110 Animal complaint, N I-94 Service Drive
2216 Welfare check, Village Center Dr
2343 Civil matter, E Schooner Dr

Tuesday, September 8:

0154 Family trouble, Belleville Rd
0410 Animal complaint, Westlake Cir
0657 Animal complaint, Bog Rd/Farm Rd
0836 Property damage accident, Ecorse Rd/Kirkridge Park Dr
0915 Welfare check, McBride Ave
1106 Property damage accident, Belleville Rd/S I-94 Service Dr
1133 Welfare check, Bog Rd
1205 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Lilac Ln/Harmony Ln
1329 Civil matter, Rawsonville Rd
(missing time stamp) Repossession, Haggerty Rd
(missing time stamp) Bank detail-VB only, Belleville
1440 Domestic, Parkwood Dr
(missing time stamp) Private property impound, Oak Ln
1531 Civil matter, W Huron River Dr
1648 Shooting, Bemis Rd
(missing time stamp) Private property impound, Oak Ln
1813 Family trouble, Winding Pond Dr
(missing time stamp) Property damage accident, Rawsonville Rd/S I-94 Service Dr

1845 Juvenile compl, Oak Blvd
1920 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, W Huron River Dr
2023 Alarm intrusion, Stratford Dr
2153 Welfare check, Park Estates Dr
2238 Mental subj, Maurice Dr

Wednesday, September 9:

0514 Welfare check, Ecorse Rd
0708 Property damage accident, Haggerty Rd
0755 Family trouble, Locust Dr
0757 Family trouble, Freedom Way
0852 Property damage accident, S I-275/Ecorse I-275 Ramp S
0916 Welfare check, Sylvia Dr
0926 Welfare check, Bemis Rd/Lohr Rd
(missing time stamp) Personal injury accident, N I-275/Ecorse
1000 Assist fire dept, McBride
1018 Ordinance violation, Gilmore St
1034 Civil matter, S Bellridge Dr
(missing time stamp) Repossession, Jackson St
1217 Alarm intrusion, Morton Taylor Rd
1242 Ordinance violation, Belleville Rd
1309 Threat, S Sadie Ln
1338 Larceny, Arcadia Ct
1356 Assist fire dept, Tyler Rd
1409 Ordinance violation, Edwards St
(missing time stamp) Warrant arrest, Tyler Rd
1426 Motorist assist, Belleville Rd/E I-94
1459 Juvenile compl, Quirk Rd
1504 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Belleville
(missing time stamp) Repossession, Lake Point Blvd
1910 Shooting, Oak Ln
1930 911 welfare check, Rawsonville Rd
1955 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Van Buren St
2352 Disorderly, Pond Bluff Dr

Thursday, September 10:

0002 Noise complaint, Van Buren St
0014 Overdose-Van Buren, Christina Ln
0017 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Haggerty Rd
0237 Mental subj, Brandi Dr
0324 Alarm intrusion, Belleville Rd
0418 Motorist assist, Ecorse Rd/Belleville Rd
0638 Alarm intrusion, Winding Pond Dr
0834 Ordinance violation, W Walden Dr
0845 Ordinance violation, Vista Dr
0942 Civil matter, Sumpter Rd
1100 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Montague Ave

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COMMUNITY'S SAFETY

✓ VOTE YES NOV 3

With the police millage expired, our department is operating with a 42% budget reduction.

This catastrophic loss of revenue jeopardizes the jobs of the officers who protect our neighborhoods. To avoid severe staffing cuts and maintain our standard of service, we must restore this vital funding.

EVERY OFFICER
COUNTS

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✓ YES

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VOTE YES ON THE POLICE MILLAGE NOVEMBER 3RD

SUMPTER TOWNSHIP
POLICE

15 YEARS
SINCE LAST TAX INCREASE

1200 Assist fire dept, Lake Villa Dr
1202 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Belleville Rd
1400 Ordinance violation, Revere Dr
1454 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Rawsonville Rd
1459 Property damage accident, Belleville Rd/N I-94 Service Dr
1501 Animal complaint, Lighthouse Dr
1532 Animal complaint, Birch Dr
1609 Alarm intrusion, Alva Dr
1625 Assist fire dept, Parkwood Dr
1647 Assist other dept, Haggerty Rd/Tyler Rd
1703 Larceny from auto, Denton Rd
1730 Personal injury accident, E I-94/N Belleville I-94 Ramp E
1913 Domestic, Savage Rd
1949 Malicious destruction, S Ponderosa Trl
2106 Noise complaint, Laguna Dr
2129 Larceny, Belleville Rd
2220 Warrant arrest, Haggerty Rd
(missing time stamp) Repossession, Outer Dr

Friday, September 11:
0159 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Marina Cv
0206 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Marina Cv
0503 911 welfare check, Bemis Rd
0747 Animal complaint, Elwell Rd/Bemis Rd
0811 Property damage accident, N I-94 Service Dr/Haggerty Rd
0818 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Denton Rd/Michigan Ave
0923 Unauthorized driving away of automobile, Rawsonville Rd
0951 Animal complaint, Amanda Dr
1039 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Beckley Rd/Denton Rd
1039 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Hardwood Dr/Cottonwood Dr
1158 Assist other dept, Belle Pointe Dr
1227 Civil matter, S I-94 Service Dr
1250 Traffic offense, Denton Rd
1308 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Sadie Ln/Ecorse Rd
1321 Leaving the scene property damage accident, Hannan Rd
1349 Fraud, Harmony Ln
1605 Animal complaint, Rolan Meadows Dr
1614 Road hazard, Mission Pointe
1828 Property damage accident, Tyler Rd/Belleville Rd
1916 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, S Sadie Ln
1953 Domestic, Belleville Rd/Tyler Rd
2121 Welfare check, Mida Dr
2220 Vehicle lockout, Belleville Rd
2305 Disorderly, Tyler Rd

Saturday, September 12 (partial):
0047 Parking complaint, Bayshore
0056 Welfare check, Quirk Rd/S I-94 Service Dr
0152 Family trouble, E Huron River Dr
0838 Property damage accident, Tyler Rd/Belleville Rd
0905 Vehicle lockout, Lighthouse Dr
1205 Retail fraud, Belleville Rd
1215 Animal complaint, W Huron River Dr
1419 Juvenile compl, Bemis Rd/Bak Rd
1427 Assault & battery, Belleville Rd

1453 Family trouble, Edwards Rd
1702 Retail fraud, Belleville Rd
1759 Domestic, S I-94 Service Dr
1833 Welfare check, Purple Sage Ct
1843 Larceny, Country Ln
1939 Traffic offense, Robson Rd/Belleville Rd
2020 Retail fraud, Belleville Rd
2021 Retail fraud, Belleville Rd
2151 Alarm intrusion, N Cumberland Dr
2325 Civil matter, Harmony Ln

These logs also contained 117 traffic stops, 1 property check, and 1 misc. complaint.

Sumpter Police
Dispatch Log

Sunday, September 6:
0022 Assist fire dept, Wilmot Rd/Weimer Dr
0030 Noise complaint, Sumpter Rd
0030 Suspicious vehicle, Sherwood Rd
0551 Traffic complaint/hazard, Clark Rd
0817 Damage to property report, Oakville Waltz Rd
1023 Property damage accident, California Dr/Washington St
1054 Assist fire dept, Willis Rd
1113 Suspicious person, Knollwood Dr
1210 911 hangup, Nevada St
1337 Alarm, Willis Rd
1428 Traffic complaint/hazard, Magnolia Dr
1434 911 hangup, Kozma Rd
1510 Suspicious circumstance, Willis Rd
1554 Family trouble, Timberlane Dr
1650 Suspicious circumstance, Carleton West Rd
1825 Follow-up investigation, Colorado St
2036 Noise complaint, Judd Rd
2147 Assist fire dept, Virginia St

Monday, September 7:
0202 Motorist assist, Rawsonville Rd/Willis Rd
1113 Civil matter, Mulberry Dr
1119 Family trouble, Colorado St
1141 Assist other agency, Willis Rd/Rawsonville Rd
1156 911 hangup, Clark Rd
1244 Assist fire dept, Willow Rd
1255 Animal complaint, Elwell Rd
1338 Civil matter, Judd Rd
1344 Suspicious circumstance, Martinsville Rd
1349 911 hangup, Carleton West Rd/Wear Rd
1516 Traffic complaint/hazard, Sumpter Rd
1544 Alarm, Oakville Waltz Rd
1721 Civil matter, Judd Rd
1947 911 hangup, Rustic Ln

Tuesday, September 8:
1119 Follow-up investigation, Sherwood Rd
1139 911 hangup, Bemis Rd
1159 Citizen assist, Sherwood Rd
1222 Follow-up investigation, Willis Rd
1405 Assist fire dept, Willis Rd
1453 Civil matter, Martinsville Rd
1751 Neighbor dispute, Virginia
1840 Juvenile matter, Willis Rd
1927 Assist fire dept, Washington St
2300 Noise complaint, Karr Rd

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