

Counterpoint: Illinois' Budget Crisis

Structural reform - not tax increases - needed in Illinois government

Though delayed, the General Assembly finally approved a budget in mid July that allowed Illinois to avoid a shutdown of state government. It was, admittedly, not an ideal solution. However, it will provide the revenue necessary to keep core government services and programs operating, without further burdening



Radogno

citizens with a tax increase. It will also give the Democrat majorities time to come to the realization that Republicans are serious about the need for structural reform in state government. We must get our economy back on track, put the brakes on government spending, evaluate programs and enact reforms that restore citizens' faith in their government.

The Senate Republican Caucus also believes strongly that it is inappropriate to even discuss tax increases at a time when our economy teeters on the brink of disaster. Individuals and businesses alike cannot afford to pay more into a broken down system.

For now, the budget impasse is behind us, but lawmakers have more work to do. We need to join together to address the problems. The reality is that the state does not have the revenue necessary to cover its obligations. While some may blame this on the national recession, the fact is that Illinois' budget deficit is a spending problem - created by the state's Democrat leadership over the past six years.

Illinois has been living beyond its means, expanding and creating programs without the revenue to sustain the growth long-term, and the national recession only exacerbated what was a very serious problem.

For years, Senate Republicans have tried to advance solutions. But our ideas to reign in state spending, reinvent state government and grow our economy were ignored or rejected. It took a near collapse of state government to get their attention.

Responsible spending cuts are an important step. I support the creation of a Sunshine commission that will begin the difficult task of evaluating state programs - and making recommendations on what has outlived its usefulness to taxpayers. While it's often tempting to many of my colleagues, government cannot provide everything for everyone.

Reforms are also critical. Changes in the state's Medicaid system - which takes more than one-quarter of the state's operating budget - are a prime example. At our request, national experts have offered recommendations on how Illinois can improve its quality of care and save taxpayers money. The proposals include a moratorium on new programs, phasing in a managed care system, verifying eligibility and limiting the state's ability to push overdue medical bills into the next year. While not law yet, I am hopeful that our recommendations will be given a fair review by the governor's Medicaid Task Force, which plans to have its recommendations prepared for the fall veto session.

We are also awaiting the recommendations of the Pensions Task Force, created by House Joint Resolution

45. By bringing public employee unions, state officials and pension experts together, I am hoping we can bring about reforms that stabilize the state-funded pensions system and make it more affordable.

An Economic Recovery Commission is also beginning its review of our anti-jobs climate in Illinois. We need to become more jobs-friendly with policies and practices that encourage job growth and development in Illinois. The passage of a comprehensive infrastructure program this session should also go along way toward improving our economic picture. Progress can finally be made on the backlog of infrastructure projects - and some 400,000 jobs will be created or retained in the next few years. Coupled with federal stimulus programs, the Illinois economy will surely see a sorely-needed boost.

As a long-time supporter of ethics reform in Illinois, I am joining the major reform groups in the continued push for real campaign finance reform. We need to change the culture of corruption in Illinois. We were successful in passing changes to the state's procurement laws - closing the door on "pay-to-play." But we can certainly do better than the loophole-laden "campaign finance reform" measure

that was approved over the objections of reform-minded legislators and organizations this year.

However, nothing is more critical to achieving real, systemic reform of Illinois government than ending the partisan political gerrymandering of Illinois legislative districts. Simply put, we need to replace the outdated process we use for drawing legislative district maps in Illinois. The current system allows legislative boundaries to be drawn by those in office, for those in office. An Illinois Reform Commission proposal to allow an independent expert to draw the boundaries should be considered by the General Assembly after a round of public hearings this summer. With citizens' support and encouragement, we can reform the system.

The Fiscal Year 2010 budget passed in July was not a permanent solution. Some will argue it builds pressure for tax increases. I believe the pressure will build for change...changes that not only improve the state's efficiency and use of taxpayer dollars, but show the people of Illinois that state government is working for the taxpayers - not political insiders and special interests.

State Rep. Christine Radogno, R-Lemont, is the Illinois Senate Republican Leader.

IBJ Business News

Lewis & Clark gets national nursing grant

Lewis and Clark Community College's Nurse-Managed Center for Healthcare and Education in Godfrey has been awarded a continuance grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration. The \$882,639 grant will provide funding for the next three years as part of HRSA's Nurse Practice and Retention Program.

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Spotlight on Southwestern Illinois Architecture

O'Fallon Township High School Milburn Campus, O'Fallon (Wm. B. Ittner Architects)

By KATE GENO

The O'Fallon Township High School Milburn Campus is a new freshman-only campus designed by Wm. B. Ittner Architects. The 166,500-square-foot school will open for the upcoming 2009/2010 school year and will provide more space for the increasing number of high school students in the O'Fallon School District. Holland Construction Services Inc. was the general contractor on the project.

Ittner's design for the school, says project manager Steve Raskin, includes two 2-story academic wings that consist of 12 classrooms per wing and a total of four corridors. Each corridor is painted a different color for easier navigation. The classrooms include technology-oriented labs and wireless connectivity for laptop computers.

An instructional media center is connected to the academic wing and is intended for school-wide use, Raskin says. The media center contains computer workstations, a student lounge and a quiet study area. Glass walls surround the space so the staff can easily observe the students. A separate entry to the center



was designed for community functions that are held after school hours.

Security is a major focus for the school, according to Raskin, and access control was an important part of the design. All buses will pick up and drop off students at the front entry of the school and students must enter through the front doors into the lobby. The attendance office and a security kiosk are located next to the lobby to monitor all visitors.

A multi-purpose room/cafeteria is



situated off the main lobby and has a capacity of 2,000 students. In addition to the cafeteria, there is an exterior dining area for students to eat outdoors.

The school's practice gym is regulation size and includes bleachers and unique floor-to-ceiling graphics such as tiger paws and a large "O" for O'Fallon. Motivational quotes are also inscribed on the interior walls. These graphic elements are continued throughout the whole complex.

The main lobby of the school features digital wall graphics that outline the history of O'Fallon and the school district. Artwork that displays the school in context with the O'Fallon community is located outside the library and the cafeteria.

According to Raskin, the school's most creative space is a 19,000-square-foot auditorium that seats 740 people and contains a full stage and orchestra. It will be used by the school and the community. Ittner designed the space to be a learning environment for students who want to be involved in the technical side of productions. Students will be able to operate equipment and learn about technical elements such as lights and sound. It will be the preeminent auditorium in the O'Fallon community for stage productions, says Raskin.

Ittner designed the school to expand as the student population grows. More classrooms and a gymnasium can be easily added when the need arises.



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George named to CRB board

Bev George, broker owner of Bev George & Associates in Glen Carbon and past president of the Greater Gateway Association of Realtors, has been elected to the national CRB board of directors.

The Certified Real Estate Brokerage Manager designation is awarded by the Council of Real Estate Brokerage Managers to realtors who have completed the council's advanced educational and professional requirements.

SIU approves Alton dental school testing site

The Southern Illinois University Board of Trustees has given budget and project approval to a proposed testing facility at the SIU School of Dental Medicine in Alton. The estimated cost of the project is \$585,000, to be funded with a grant from the state of Illinois' Capital Development Board, donations, equipment use fees and local university operating funds. The proposed project will renovate 3,300 square feet in the basement of the dental school's science building to become a testing facility. Dental school administrators say the renovation is needed for administration of paper and computer-based examinations in a secure environment.

Sitton Consulting changes name

Belleville-based Sitton Consulting Group has changed its name to Sitton Construction Group.

Spotlight on Southwestern Illinois Architecture

Amelia V. Carriel Junior High School, O'Fallon (FGM Architects Inc.)

By KATE GENO

FGM Architects Inc. designed the new Amelia V. Carriel Junior High School located on Seven Hills Road in O'Fallon. The 130,000-square-foot school will accommodate sixth, seventh and eighth-grade students to ease the population of other schools in the O'Fallon School District.

The design was based on the school's concept of engaging the "mind, body and spirit" in the learning process, says project manager D. Gregory Brown. The "mind" constitutes the classrooms, the "body" incorporates fitness and health education and the "spirit" comprises the arts, music, and drama. FGM worked closely with the district administration, teachers and staff on the planning and design process. The result of this collaboration, Brown says, is a lively, colorful and inviting environment for kids.

The school consists of three 2-story classroom wings or houses, each dedicated to a different grade level. Each wing features seven classrooms, two science rooms, one computer room and a teacher resource area. A commons area

is positioned between each wing to be used for team teaching, special projects and the presentation of student work. The wings are painted different colors so the students can easily identify each grade.

Shared spaces include art and science rooms, a gymnasium and a media center. The media center contains the school library and a communications lab where students can access computers, as well as video and sound technology programs. Brown says an outdoor patio connects to the media center and an outdoor courtyard connects to the art rooms to integrate indoor and outdoor teaching spaces.

A full kitchen and a cafeterium are also included in the layout. The cafeterium is designed with three-tiered seating and contains a black box stage. It can double as a dining area and a performance setting for both the school and the community. Depending on the type of event, the cafeterium can seat up to 600 people.

The school is currently designed for 900 students, says Brown, and can easily expand to accommodate up to 1,200 students. Core spaces such as the art and



science rooms, media center, cafeterium and restrooms are planned for expansion.

As with all FGM projects, sustainability is a key element of the plan. Natural light is used throughout the building. FGM incorporated as many windows as possible - not only to maximize the usage of daylight, but also to showcase the views of the scenic

woodlands that surround the school, says Brown. The windows are also intended to inspire the use of outdoor teaching areas.

Unique architectural elements used in the building include stone "fins" with areas of glass set behind them. These stone structures are angled to stop direct sunlight and allow reflected natural light to enter the building.

Granite City Cinema, Granite City (Trivers Associates)



By LAURA REED

Trivers Associates has made a name for itself as experts in revitalization and master planning for urban areas after having had a hand in the revitalization of several downtown St. Louis properties. It was the company's level of experience in urban planning that drew the city of Granite City to Trivers Associates when beginning the revitalization process of its urban core.

The partnership between the city of Granite City and Trivers Associates started with discussions on how to reuse the YMCA building that has been sitting vacant for many years. Discussions of converting the YMCA building into a movie theater led planners to recognize that the building couldn't accommodate a multi-screen format, which both parties agree is the formula necessary for a sustainable theater business.

Liking the idea of a movie theater in the downtown area and how it might serve as a catalyst for future development, planners began to look for an alternate site and found one down the street from City Hall on Niedringhaus Avenue. The home to then-derelect apartments, the site was cleared and ground was broken in July 2009 at the future site of the new 3-screen, \$3.6 million theater. The 13,600-square-foot, 500-seat Granite City Cinema will include a larger theater to accommodate 3-D showings and two additional

screening rooms. Construction of Granite City Cinema is expected to be complete in April 2010.

According to Amy Tongay, project architect at Trivers Associates, the city wanted the building to be very user-friendly for people with physical challenges and will include listening devices and subtitles for those with hearing impairments. Tongay says the city wanted to mimic many of the same architectural characteristics of the downtown area in the building design but took creative liberties when choosing to incorporate a steel frame and accents into the design as homage to the Granite City's history as a steel town.

Modeling the theater after St. Louis' popular Moolah Temple Theater & Lounge, Harmon Mosley was called in to provide his creative expertise in boutique theater operations. Mosley will operate the theater under the city of Granite City's ownership.

Tongay says that the owner of Trivers Associates - Andy Trivers - has been doing urban revitalization for more than 30 years, so much that the company's name has become synonymous with adaptive reuse. The company has also completed several other projects in Southwestern Illinois - including an exterior upgrade at Gateway Regional Medical Center in Granite City and several projects for Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

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National Great Rivers Research and Education Center Confluence Field Station, Alton (AAIC Inc.)

By KATE GENO

The National Great Rivers Research and Education Center's new Confluence Field Station is due to open in November in Alton. The station is located near the confluence of the Mississippi, Missouri and Illinois rivers. It will function as a laboratory for studying the rivers, as well as an educational site for the public.

The 30,000-square-foot facility, designed by AAIC Inc., is a model of green construction. Officials are seeking gold level LEED certification on the project. According to Barbara Anderson, senior project manager, the building will appear to have risen from the earth with a green vegetative roof and grass-embedded paving. The walls will be constructed of dry stack natural stone found locally to emulate the surrounding bluffs in the Alton area.

Sustainable design elements abound throughout this facility. The use of natural daylight will be maximized with a skylight system known as Solatubes. This system functions through photo sensors that detect sunlight in a room and reduce artificial light accordingly. In addition, a solar

thermal system will capture the energy of the sun to heat water.

Electricity will be generated by a hybrid system composed of wind turbines and hydro-kinetic turbines powered by the river current, according to Anderson. This system is the first to be used in the United States.

The facility will have no connection to the public sanitary sewer. All wastewater will be treated on site. Rainwater from the vegetative roof and grey water from wash basins and drains will be collected and recycled for non-potable uses, including irrigation. River water will be pumped through the laboratories and will be reused as a cooling agent for the HVAC system.

The design also incorporates sophisticated mesocosms, Anderson says, large concrete channels that contain flowing water pumped directly from the river. Researchers can conduct experiments using the water and life in the mesocosms. Once the water has been studied, it will be treated, used to cool the HVAC equipment and then returned to the river.

Anderson says the interior will consist of renewable and recycled materials, plant



and water features and a confluence map etched into the floor of the lobby. The layout will include administration areas, conference rooms, offices and classrooms. Wet and dry laboratories will be built for research purposes. A garage facility will house boats and trucks. A visitor wing includes hotel rooms for researchers, professors and dignitaries.

The original plans were expanded to allow for public use of the building, according to Anderson. An interactive display will be located in the lobby to explain the research that is conducted as well as the facility's sustainable design processes. Educational ponds will be located in front of the station for visitors and school groups to explore.

Godfrey United Methodist Church, Godfrey (EWR Architects)



By KATE GENO

Godfrey United Methodist Church, located on Airport Road in Godfrey, is a new 20,000-square-foot church complex that was occupied in April and designed by EWR Architects.

According to project manager Bill Hustedde, the architectural design is mostly contemporary with traditional touches placed throughout the building. The idea was to make it new and fresh for the congregation, while keeping familiar elements that people expect to see in a church. In the sanctuary, pendant-style lighting fixtures hang from rods affixed to the ceiling and shine up and down for direct and indirect lighting. A window wall contains detailed and delineated features with unique proportions that make it visually interesting. The building contains a lot of open space, 45-degree angles and varying roof types.

As the congregation members enter the church, they walk into a vestibule and a small waiting area. To the left of the vestibule is the nave and sanctuary which seats up to 300 people. The nave also serves as a multi-purpose room for church functions, according to Hustedde. Further to the left are the administration and pastoral offices, along with a classroom wing. This wing contains 10 classrooms, a library and a nursery. A full kitchen and restrooms are also included in the layout.

The interior is designed in earth tone colors of brown and gray, with muted purple as an accent color. Classroom doors are recessed out of the hallway and the accent doors are painted different colors to distinguish one classroom from the next.

The church building was built with exterior insulated finishing system (EIFS) panels and brick. A unique exterior detail is a lighted fabric canopy colonnade that leads to the entrance doors and is illuminated at night. An additional outdoor feature is a small reflecting pond that can be seen from the nave windows. The pond is also used for water retention purposes.

Hustedde says this is the first of four planned building phases for the church complex. Godfrey United Methodist hopes to expand in the future with a multi-purpose room/gymnasium, six more classrooms and an enlarged nave and sanctuary to accommodate over 500 people. It also hopes to build a prayer garden and a tower on church grounds. The design for the tower will feature a cross mounted on top, opaque glass and stone elements and interior lights for illumination.

EWR Architects and the church board collaborated on the design and worked closely together on the ideas for the building, says Hustedde. The general contractor on the project was Malone Building Solutions.

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Answer Midwest gets national excellence award

Alton-based Answer Midwest is a recipient of its trade association's Award of Excellence for customer service. The Ruby Award of Excellence is given to the tele-service company, which for eight years has passed stringent testing by an independent panel of judges. The company is rated on call handling skills, courtesy, response time, accuracy and overall service to clients.