



February, 2025

Events

February 1 – Glow In The Dark Mini Golf @ 10 AM – 12 PM @ Flewellin Library

February 3 – Yarn Twisters @ 11 AM @ Flewellin Library

February 8 – Story Time @ 10 AM @ Flewellin Library

February 8 – Cards with Kim & Jamie @ 6 PM @ Flewellin Library

February 8¹⁵ – Community Game Night @ 6 PM – 9 PM @ Up Realty (104 W Comanche Ave)

February 10 – Yarn Twisters @ 11 AM @ Flewellin Library

February 12 – Euchre @ 11 AM – 2 PM @ Flewellin Library

February 12 – Village of Shabbona Town Hall @ 7 PM – 9 PM @ 21st Century Room at Indian Creek High School

February 15 – Story Time @ 10 AM @ Flewellin Library

February 15 – Chili Cook Off @ 6 PM – 8:30 PM @ Flewellin Library

February 17 – Yarn Twisters @ 11 AM @ Flewellin Library

February 17 – Library Board Meeting @ 6:30 PM @ Flewellin Library

(Continued on next page)

How the Village of Shabbona Destroyed Downtown

By Kallan Welsh

This is an article which I could've written last year but didn't, for fear of retribution. That fear turned out to be well-placed, and it's shared by most of the property owners downtown, who have confided in me privately their fear of speaking out. Nearly all have attempted to start new businesses in the vacant storefronts and have, in one way or another, been blocked from doing so. Please read the enclosed brochure provided by a group of downtown business owners. This article will go into additional detail about the cases outlined therein.

(Continued on page 4)

Love Your Library Chili Cook-Off

Interested in showing off your culinary skills? We are looking for contestants to enter their tasty chili into the contest. It is FREE to enter your chili into the contest. Contact Melanie Berg at 815-824-2079 or stop in the library to enter into the contest by Feb 10th.

Rules Of Entry:

1. FREE to enter!
2. Contact Melanie at (815)824-2079 by February 10th.
3. Bring your awesome chili in a slow cooker to the library hot and ready to eat by 5:30.
4. Bring a ladle or large serving spoon for serving.
5. Make sure you have a great name for your chili.
6. When you arrive, you will be asked to fill out a card on which you will write your chili's name and level of heat.
7. There will be three awards based on the following categories:
 - Overall Best*: will receive the widely coveted Flewellin Cup
 - Hottest But Still Edible*: will be awarded the Scorched Soon award
 - Best Name*: will receive the Certificate of Literary Deliciousness.
8. The much coveted Flewellin Cup will be a traveling trophy to be passed on (along with bragging rights, of course) to the new winner of the overall best chili each year.

Don't miss this chance to display the Flewellin Memorial Cup in your most prominent spot!

Prefer to judge others? Bring your family to cast votes on the winners. Only \$5 per person

Shabbona Express

Events

(Continued)

February 19 – Elder Care Services & Tech Help @ 12 PM – 2 PM @ Flewellin Library

February 22 – Library Referendum Open House @ 11 AM – 2 PM @ Flewellin Library

February 24 – Yarn Twisters @ 11 AM @ Flewellin Library

February 24 – Village of Shabbona Board Meeting @ 7 PM @ Village Hall (206 S Blackhawk St)

February 26 – Euchre @ 11 AM – 2 PM @ Flewellin Library

First Village of Shabbona Town Hall Scheduled

By Joshua Snyder

The Village of Shabbona has scheduled their first town hall to be held on Wednesday, February 12 @ 7 pm in the 21st Century Room at Indian Creek Highschool (506 S Shabbona Rd, Shabbona).

The meeting is open to the public and will be conducted by members of the community to allow citizens to have a back and forth Q&A and talk about any suggestions or concerns with the Village President and Board of Trustees.

I highly encourage everyone to come and ask questions to learn more about what's in store for the Village.

Flewellin Memorial Library Referendum Sees Last-Minute Boundary Shift

(This is a submission and does not necessarily represent the views of the Shabbona Express nor its writers)

By Save Flewellin Memorial Library

SHABBONA TOWNSHIP – A recent court hearing has altered the boundaries of a proposed Flewellin Memorial Library District just weeks before ballots are finalized, prompting a scramble among election officials, attorneys, and local citizens alike.

Initially, the Flewellin Memorial Library Board aimed to create a district encompassing all of Shabbona Township, along with the incorporated Village of Shabbona. However, when attorneys from the Save Shabbona Library Referendum Committee presented the map to the Honorable Judge Waller, a concerned citizen from the Village of Lee, Mr. William Heimbigner, raised an objection. He pointed out that the original lines would effectively split his village, which straddles Shabbona and Willow Creek townships. In response—and despite objections from the committee's attorneys—the judge ordered the district boundary be adjusted to include the entirety of the Village of Lee. That move now places a very small part of Willow Creek Township within the proposed library district.

This ruling caused last-minute changes to election preparations in Lee County, where officials must accommodate the updated district on the spring ballot. It also leaves the referendum committee with a tight window to revise voter lists and update their informational materials. Yet, calls to Flewellin Memorial Library suggest that most folks in Lee—on both sides of the new boundary—have greeted the adjustment favorably, although a handful remain opposed.

Why the District Matters

The library wants to shift from being formally overseen by the Village of Shabbona to becoming a fully independent district library. This move would free it from any village oversight and allow it to serve more areas—if voters approve. Currently, Flewellin Memorial collects about \$31,000 per year, though it needs at least an absolute minimum of \$42,000 to operate. To cover the difference, the library relies heavily on donations and fundraisers, which the library director and board of trustees say are becoming increasingly unreliable.

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Shabbona Express

April 1st 2025 Election Information

By Joshua Snyder

The Consolidated Election is coming up fast and will be held on April 1, 2025.

Early voting and voting by mail starts on March 7, 2025

This election will be for several different local positions including those for: village, library, township, and board of education.

If you are not yet a registered voter you may get further information at the DeKalb County Clerk's website located at:
<https://dekalbcountyclerkil.gov/registration/>



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Joshua Snyder
Designated Managing Broker
331-222-7697

Village Government News

By Joshua Snyder

At the January board meeting, several citizens addressed the board in support of the Flewellin Library and their upcoming referendum to expand their district. The library asked for the board to make a resolution in support of the referendum and the board voted in favor of the resolution.

The Shabbona Pathway Committee proposed the Village of Shabbona become their sponsoring municipality. Previously, the Shabbona Township was working with them to help apply for and receive grants that are more readily available to government entities and not 501c3 organizations. The board voted to approve sponsoring the project with a vote of 5 to 1.

The Village Engineer, Chastain & Associates, presented the board with a general services agreement for 2025. This is for them to give general advice and counsel for things not covered under the projects they directly oversee.

The Village has an agreement to pay the County Sheriff for regular patrols in town. The board agreed to increase the hourly rate for the patrols to \$80.45 an hour in 2025 and 83.07 an hour in 2026. Going off of the past bills and payrolls for the Village from September 2024 through December, the Sheriff had previously charged a rate of \$69.01 per hour and averaged around 59.6 hours a month.

The board voted to go out to bid on the approximately \$55,000 project to address the Fire Protection District's water runoff and water intrusion issues. After the board voted not to go out to bid during the October board meeting, and the board not motioning to talk about it in December, a single vote flipped in the January meeting making the vote 3 ayes, 2 nos, and 1 abstain.

The board continued its pursuit of requiring vacant building registration for several properties. One of my companies owns one of these buildings that is now being told to register. The building is actively being repaired to open a business in and when asked how it qualifies under the ordinance, the board did not provide any evidence. This is still an ongoing issue and we will report as things unfold.

Shabbona Express

How the Village of Shabbona Destroyed Downtown

(Continued from page 1)

Thrift & Consignment Shop - 103 W Comanche Ave



Before



Current

Josh Snyder purchased this property just before the downtown streetscape project began. After studying the plans for the new parking lot being built next door he tried to request that the parking lot be moved over slightly so cars would be less likely to hit his building. Despite IDOT and the engineer's approval, the Village President protested and tried to force the original plan. To be clear, the parking lot was not negatively affected in any way, and 100% of the planned parking spots were preserved with this modification. In other words, the Village President continued to pursue "his plan" out of spite.

The Village President also threatened to fill in a staircase to the basement of the building with concrete despite the engineer confirming that the stairwell was on Josh's private property and the engineer being willing to design a safe new covering and handrail to block it off until Josh is ready to reopen it and put a business in his basement. The unwillingness of the Village President to even consider working with Josh is a large reason why every downtown building remains empty. If you try to do something you get shut down and threatened.

When Josh tried to comply with the Village's requirement of getting a Certificate of Zoning Compliance before any permits modifying the building can be issued, he was met with unreasonable demands that are not outlined in the ordinance and the village refused to issue one without a lot of fighting over it.

After fighting to even get the chance to fix up his building he decided to present to the board his challenges in hopes that they might realize how difficult they are making it to open a business in town. For his efforts, he was rewarded with a "Stop Work Order" which delayed critical work and caused damage to the property. Now, Josh is being targeted with the "Vacant Buildings Ordinance" which fines property owners for having vacant buildings and imposes additional costs, roadblocks, and paperwork to be sent in for approval by the Village.

To be clear, if not for the meddling by the Village government, this business would be open today. Despite the unnecessary roadblocks, Josh still plans to open the business (and others) in this building as soon as practical.

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Shabbona Express

Flewellin Memorial Library Referendum Sees Last-Minute Boundary Shift

(Continued from page 2)

With almost nothing left over at the end of the fiscal year, there is no extra to put away for maintenance, repairs, technological updates, or even purchasing new and popular titles to add to the collection. By becoming a district with a long-term sustainable levy, the library could tap into a larger pool of grants—especially per-capita funding that might double with an expanded service population. Grantors typically require a stable, long-term funding plan, making district status a more reliable option in the eyes of many.

What Voters Can Expect

Voters will see the following question on the April 1, 2025 ballot:

“Shall a public library district, to be known as the Flewellin Memorial Library District, be established in part of DeKalb County and in part of Lee County and under the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law, may an aggregate extension, not to exceed \$90,000, be made for the 2025 levy year?”

Officials confirm that eligible voters in Lee County can cast their ballots at the Ogle-Lee Fire Station in Steward (311 Main St.), while those on the DeKalb side will vote at Resource Bank in Shabbona (102 S. Indian Rd.).

A Conservative Case for Local Control

Some residents—particularly farmers and those in unincorporated areas—are worried about possible tax increases. However, supporters say that a library district keeps decisions local and transparent, giving everyday citizens a direct say instead of leaving everything to the Village or county. They view libraries as a prime example of small, community-driven governance—funded and run by neighbors rather than distant offices. From researching local rules to hosting public meetings, libraries help ensure transparency around government spending and serve as a check against unnecessary bureaucracy. In other words, they show how public services can be both efficient and truly responsive.

Next Steps and Ways to Learn More

Residents looking for further details can find recordings of previous town halls on the library’s website. The Save Flewellin Memorial Library Committee also invites the public to an open house on February 22nd, complete with refreshments, where they’ll discuss the library’s future plans, the history of Flewellin Memorial, and answer questions about the new boundaries. Organizers hope these events will encourage a broad cross-section of the community—farm families and town residents alike—to participate in shaping the future of this longstanding local institution.

The library board remains hopeful that these changes, though last-minute, will not impede the referendum’s progress. For them, every vote counts—especially in a community where the last attempt at passing a similar measure fell short by a single ballot. If approved, supporters believe the new district will keep Flewellin Memorial thriving as a central hub for everything from reading programs to agricultural resources, thereby benefiting all corners of Shabbona Township, the Village of Lee, and beyond.

How the Village of Shabbona Destroyed Downtown

(Continued from page 4)

The Vacant Buildings Ordinance - Used Improperly and They Know It

The Vacant Buildings Ordinance, passed in 2023, is modeled after a fire safety ordinance, but the Village has been using it as a billy club to target people they dislike. Most of the properties mentioned in this article have been targeted with this ordinance, which fines property owners for noncompliance and requires compliance with additional registrations and regulations. Most of the properties *do not meet the definition of "vacant" as laid out in the ordinance*, and yet the owners are targeted anyway. In fact, I have attached an email below from Village President, Don Goncher, where he acknowledges this fact, and asks the building inspector to "find" violations anyway. Bullying particular individuals under the color of law is absolutely not a proper use of government authority, and I believe the Village President should resign or be removed from office upon this fact alone.

Hardware Hank - 210 W Comanche Ave



The owners of the property, the Hardys, have tried to open multiple different kinds of businesses in the old hardware store. The Village President insisted that prior to opening shop, the owners must obtain a Certificate of Zoning Compliance and/or Certificate of Occupancy. He has also told the owners that the rear portion of their property will be demolished to build a walking path. In many of these cases, the Village/Village President make claims about requirements that don't exist, or which they are misinterpreting. In this case, no Certificate was required, as no major rehabbing or categorical change of use was taking place. The Village government has stacks of rules, most of which have not been read by the President or the Board, which are selectively enforced in order to force their "ideas" onto whomever they want.

The Adjudication Ordinance

The primary motivator for the adjudication ordinance, which was passed last year, was the fact that none of the property owners being targeted by the Vacant Buildings Ordinance complied with the ordinance. For the record, I believe they are legally and morally correct in not doing so. The Village wanted a quicker and cheaper way to obtain judgments on those targeted parties and to force compliance with their ordinance.

(Continued on the next page)

How the Village of Shabbona Destroyed Downtown

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Vacant Property enforcement

Don Goncher <mayorgoncher@gmail.com>

Wed 7/26/2023 5:19 PM

To: John Scholdt <JScholdt@bfccs.org>

Bcc: shabbonaclerk@gmail.com <shabbonaclerk@gmail.com>

Good day John,

On August 4, 2023 the Village of Shabbona will be seeking bids for the \$2,047,991 ITEP/IDOT Streetscape Grant. Wishful thinking would begin the project sometime this fall.

To demonstrate the village's efforts to improve the "Downtown" look the Board would like to coordinate the ITEP project with the application of ordinances focusing on building improvements. The Board believes that through the application of ordinances, vacant and noncompliant building owners will be compelled to improve their properties.

At Mondays Board meeting of 07/24/2023 the Council recognized B&F Construction Code Services Inc. as the "Enforcement Officer" to identify vacant buildings as described in the villages Vacant Building Ordinance. In June of this year, your Property Maintenance Inspector, Peter Himpelmann swept the village and identified potential vacant buildings.

The Board reviewed and discussed the identified buildings. The Board has decided to focus on buildings along Comanche Ave. The Board conferred and agreed that some of the properties may not be "occupied on a regular basis for the usual and customary purpose for which the building is designed".

The Board authorizes B&F to conduct an in-depth inspection of the attached identified properties. Each building inspection report needs to cite all the specific code criteria that cause the building to be determined vacant for the purposes of this ordinance (Vacant Building Registration). Any instance that requires Fire or Police attention shall be noted.

The Board is aware that some of these buildings do not meet the Vacant Building Registration Ordinance, but there are obvious exterior violations of code such as Fire Codes, Property Maintenance Codes etc. please annotate the violation for the address.

Address and PIN:

- 300 E Comanche Ave PIN 1315427001
- 106 E Comanche Ave PIN 1315426005, 1315426003, 1315426006
- 104 S Illini 1315428010, 1315428009
- 103 W Comanche Ave PIN 1315405010
- 115 W Comanche Ave PIN 1315405016
- 117 W Comanche Ave PIN 1315405003
- 102 W Comanche Ave PIN 1315402014
- 104 W Comanche Ave PIN 1315402013
- 106-1/2 W. Comanche Ave PIN 1315402009
- 210 W Comanche Ave PIN 1315402002
- 211 W Comanche Ave PIN 1315404002
- 102 S Nokomis St PIN 1315404001
- 306 W Comanche Ave PIN 1315401011 (garage adjacent to Nokomis Street)
- 402 W Comanche Ave PIN 1315326005
- 406 W Comanche Ave PIN 1315326004, 1315326007, 1315326006
- 502 A/B West Comanche Ave PIN 1315326010

Thanks,

Don

Call if you have questions!

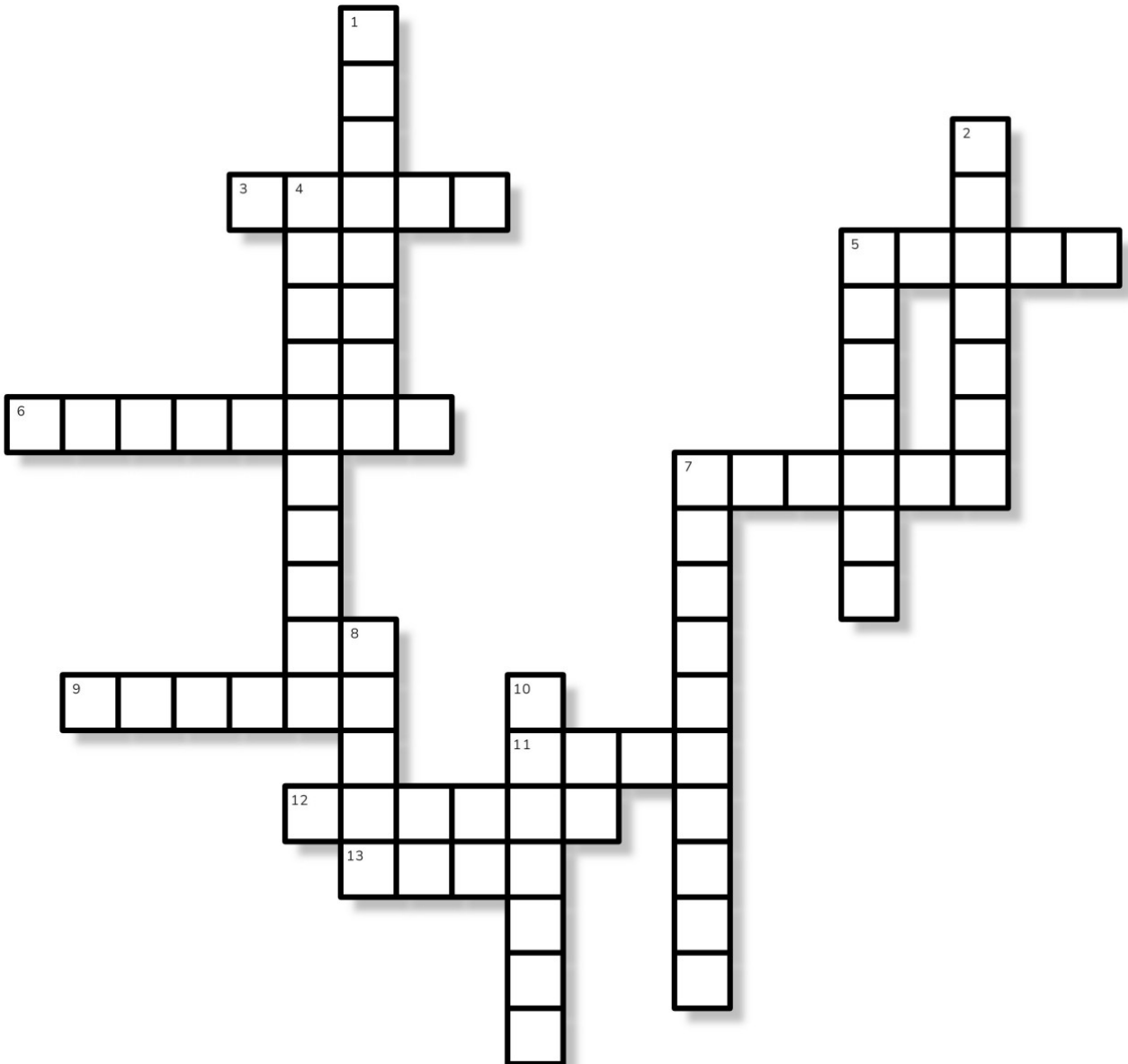
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Across

3. Hold in suspense with anticipation
5. Wetland featuring plants and animals adapted to life in water-saturated soil
6. Big gray animal with trunk
7. Hidden or secret activity
9. A very small piece of something
11. Lacking in moisture, extremely dry
12. to agree to do something
13. Green vegetable with a bitter taste

Down

1. Unknowingly wrong and not accurate
2. A low, protective wall along the edge of a roof
4. To make something larger or more powerful
5. A puzzle to solve
7. Crusty old person who is crabby and grouchy
8. A small stream of water
10. Unpleasant feeling of ill will



Shabbona Express

How the Village of Shabbona Destroyed Downtown

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Car Wash & Coffee Shop - 209 W Comanche Ave



The demands made upon this property by the Village are a perfect example of how the Village views the law as something that exists at their whims. The rules and restrictions cited simply did not exist - but the threat of being targeted by the village government is too much for a small, marginally profitable business in a town of this size to handle. It's worth noting that this building is directly behind the Village President's house; rather than looking out for the health of the village as a whole, he appears to have merely wanted to save himself from dealing with traffic in "his" alley.

The Greenwell Small Engine Repair Shop - 106 ½ W Comanche Ave



The owner of this property wrote an article which was published in the August 2024 Shabbona Express. (A copy is available at www.shabbonaexpress.com) This business has been successfully shut down by the Village, which now intends to demolish the buildings which sit on the property. Official plans have not been released yet, but the Streetscape Project documents appear to envision it as a small park.

The Village tried to claim the property was vacant under the Vacant Buildings Ordinance; I live right next to it, and I can assure you the business was very much active, and the owner of the property pleaded the same.

Furthermore, I was told by a board member *to my face* that the Village had passed ordinances to target and push Barrie Greenwell into selling his property to the Village, which is not only an outrageous abuse of government power, but probably illegal.

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Shabbona Express

How the Village of Shabbona Destroyed Downtown

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The Shabbona Hotel - 104 W Comanche Ave



This property belongs to me. Since publishing the brochure, the Village has completed the renovations of the parking lot next to the Hotel and reduced the available parking spots from approximately 14 to 5 plus a handicap space. This has created a wholly avoidable and unnecessary parking issue for the Hotel, the businesses housed within the Hotel (which include Up Realty, Cuttin' Loose Barbershop, Shabbona Laundry & Vending, *Shabbona Express*, Welsh Systems Computer Services, and Busy Beaver Handyman), and the nearby apartment buildings.

I personally got in touch with board members both publicly and privately and urged them not to destroy the functionality of the parking lot; I was dismissed. Over and over again, the Village government has proven to be wholly disinterested in supporting residents and businesses in town - they are only interested in their own "plans" and self-aggrandizement.

(Continued on the next page)

Computer trouble?

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Shabbona Express

How the Village of Shabbona Destroyed Downtown

(Continued from the previous page)

I never received a response when I inquired about *why* my handicap ramp had to be demolished. After all, I had proven at a public meeting it was not in the way of any planned improvements, and the appointed Village Engineer confirmed that it was built to ADA compliance and indeed not in the way of the planned improvements. I spoke to multiple board members and the Village President about it and received no answer. I fear the answer is *because we don't like you*.

Now the businesses inside the Hotel have no way to serve the handicapped, but at least the handicapped have a single parking space.



The “improvements” the handicap ramp was “in the way of”

Furthermore, the Village has continued to pursue the demolition of my back porch, again, for no cited reason.

Additionally, the Village recently passed a Hotel ordinance. Upon finding out that the Hotel was operating (all the required zoning variances were legally obtained), the Village President sent me a certified letter asking me to comply with the Bed & Breakfast Ordinance. When he figured out that the Bed & Breakfast ordinance (passed in 2020 by the very same Village President) didn't apply to me due to the ordinance's own definitions, the Village began to pursue a new Hotel/Motel Ordinance which would apply to me. Why? “To prepare in case the Indians or anyone else wants to build a hotel downtown,” was the answer I received. Of course, the idea that stacking additional taxes & regulations on a particular industry is actually going to *incentivize* the industry to come to Shabbona as opposed to a surrounding area is, on its face, absurd; the ordinance has the opposite impact and will ensure that no additional lodging will open up within the village limits of Shabbona.

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Shabbona Express

How the Village of Shabbona Destroyed Downtown

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There's only one Hotel in town, and it's the one I've invested heavily into to bring back into shape, as more than just an artifact on the National Register of Historic Places, but an actual functional hotel. So of course, this ordinance, which affects nobody but me, is meant to target me in particular. It increases my local tax rate to 7% (this is in addition to state taxes I am already paying), which is 7x higher than any other general retail business would be paying, and establishes a host of licenses and regulations and inspections for me to comply with.

The list of grievances established in this article and attached brochure are not exhaustive; if you talk to just about any local business in Shabbona they can give you a similar story. Even in the cases where the village did not place a direct roadblock, receiving certified letters from the government making demands and threats is tiresome and has caused a number of individuals to simply give up. I fully believe this article will anger the Village Board and President, and that they will intentionally try to create additional headaches for me.

The Streetscape Project



While billed as a measure to promote business downtown, downtown businesses are quite unhappy with it. I was told by Village Trustees that, prior to finalization, downtown business owners would be asked for input on the plans; this simply did not happen. Instead the project was ramrodded through, and those that dared to give input on the plans were threatened and bullied. A notice was placed on the door of every affected property stating that the project was being paid for by a ~\$2,000,000 grant, and "you're welcome." I have actually written in the past about how it is possible that a project like this makes economic sense; it is certainly conceivable that beautifying downtown results in the increased property values necessary to justify the expenditure. No economic impact analysis was done, however, and the grant cited was incorrect; the grant would only pay for a portion of the project, and the rest would be borne by Shabbona taxpayers. While I'm not opposed to everything the project hoped to achieve, the blatant disregard for the downtown businesses impacted by it is simply not acceptable.

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Shabbona Express

How the Village of Shabbona Destroyed Downtown

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What now?

The impression I get from the behavior of the Village government is that they are disdainful of the small business owners in Shabbona. When Barrie Greenwell spoke publicly to the Village Board, tearfully asking, "What is it you want with my property?" I personally witnessed (along with others) at least one Village Trustee holding back laughter, delighted to bring this man to his knees. They claim to want to see commerce in Shabbona grow, but nothing they have done implies that at all. The Village government has been on a buying spree and had at one time expressed interest in purchasing my property and 103 W Comanche across the street. It's possible that they are looking toward a larger entity to invest in Shabbona, and it isn't clear to me exactly what deals have been made in pursuit of that goal. What is clear to me is that this sort of behavior from the Village government needs to change, and fast.



E-mail

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Interested in writing your own article or have a differing view you'd like to share? E-mail us at editor@shabbonaexpress.com

Shabbona Express

A Letter to the Editor

(This is a submission and does not necessarily represent the views of the Shabbona Express nor its writers)

To the editors of the Shabbona Express,

I would like to address what I feel is a baffling omission in regards to the January 2025 article, "What's in Store for Shabbona?". I agree that 2025 holds a lot of excitement: Across both Shabbona and Lee (where I reside), the expected completion of public developments, significant shifts in the makeup of our villages' governances, and the planned reopening of various businesses, all promise to breathe new life into our communities.

With regards to the omission: One of the most exciting things 2025 looks to have in store is the likely creation of a library district which will envelop all of Shabbona township - essentially, a significant expansion of Flewellin Memorial Library (at no additional tax to existing Village of Shabbona residents, and at an equivalent tax rate for anyone else affected) - which will allow all of Shabbona township to be a part of the library's district, instead of just Village of Shabbona residents.

Such an expansion is long overdue, and much deserved: In the past few years the library has made incredible strides. Whereas before, the library was strictly exclusive to village residents, over the past few years it has allowed non-residents to purchase a library card (and at a great bargain: currently \$75, whereas most libraries in the area charge closer to \$200!). Furthermore, it now offers many programs that everyone - even non-resident non-cardholders - are encouraged to attend. These programs have even caused an interesting phenomenon: Over the past 2 fiscal years, total attendance has doubled - even prompting calls from governing bodies seeking to understand how the library has had so many people come in while it has been operating on a minimum number of hours.

Even in its current state, the library is the pinnacle of government efficiency. Imagine trying to run a business with only \$31K of reliable revenue per year: just pulling that off is a miracle in itself. Furthermore, having a knowledgeable director has allowed the library to obtain numerous grants towards specific needs. (A new emergency exit door is a big one off the top of my head.) As I understand it, there's a ton of other cool things that the library will be able to obtain in grants once the local community is seen as willing to invest in the continued operation of the library: Many people (including, especially, The Potawatomi Nation) have offered crucial amounts of donations and support to the library, but a lot of the grants that would otherwise be available only look at tax revenue, not donations.

I of course realize that this letter is really more of a letter in support of the upcoming referendum to establish the Flewellin Memorial Library District in this part of DeKalb county, as opposed to a complaint about an article's omission... but I am somewhat serious: The hopeful expansion of Shabbona's library is definitely one of the coolest things 2025 could have in store for the continued revitalization of this area, and I sincerely hope that the community takes the time to come out and vote in favor of this referendum on April 1st. Taxes are always annoying, but this very small tax could make-or-break whether or not our communities can survive.

Regards,
William Heimbigner

Shabbona Express

Vote on a New State Flag

By Joshua Snyder

Illinois is holding a contest to help decide on a new state flag. Voting is live as of the writing of this article and ends on February 14. Anyone interested in reviewing the proposed designs or voting on one can do so at:

<https://apps.ilsos.gov/stateflag/>

Further details on the Illinois Flag Commission can be found at:

<https://www.ilsos.gov/special/IFC/home.html>



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7:00 PM - 11:00 PM
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TICKETS \$30 EACH OR \$50 PER COUPLE



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**\$2
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Expires: August 1st, 2025

The Shabbona Hotel

104 W Comanche Ave

- Investors bought the building in March 2023
- The Village President and Village Board decided to start hitting the investors with threats about the handicap ramp and started to issue fines and fees.
- This caused the investors to decide the building isn't worth fighting the village government for and sold it to Kallan Welsh. **Why would anyone invest tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars in a town that is so hostile?**
- Very shortly after purchasing, Kallan received a certified letter in the mail from the Village President claiming he was violating zoning by having a first story residence. This was entirely false, as at the time no one was living there.
- The Village President gave Kallan a list of demands including:
 - The handicap ramp has got to go.
 - The first floor residence requires a zoning variance despite it being used as a residence by a previous owner for decades.
 - He would need a zoning variance to reopen the Shabbona Hotel as a hotel.
 - The parking lot next to you is going to be by permit only and we are not required to provide parking for your businesses.
- Kallan went through the process of obtaining the zoning variances requested, but went public with the treatment he received. In response, the Village President used the Village maintenance department to demolish Kallan's handicap ramp without permission and without reason.
- Despite the proven success Kallan has shown in occupying the formerly vacant building and bringing in traffic to downtown businesses, the Village President continues to harass and do everything he can to prevent Kallan from running his business.

The Vacant Buildings Ordinance

The Village has made it impossible to open a business, and then continuously fines the property owners for having vacant buildings.

Rules for Thee, not for Me or My Friends

- No permits were sought or issued for the Downtown Streetscape Project. Village code requires all building to receive permits and does not exempt a government entity.
- No permits were issued for the library's new door.
- The Fire District had to get a permit for their door project.
- Several permits issued would require a Certificate of Zoning Compliance under Village Code. However, that seems to only be enforced on downtown businesses.
- Village Code 6-1-2 subsection 3 states "All sidewalks shall contain at least four inches (4") of concrete with two (2) continuous three-eighths inch (3/8") reinforcement rods placed two inches (2") deep, eight inches (8") from each edge of the sidewalk."
- Little to no concrete poured for the Downtown Streetscape Project followed this code
- Is it right that the Village President insists on strict adherence to the Village Code for you, but not for himself?

Village Spoke on your Behalf to Give Away Shabbona Lake

- The state passed a bill which transfers ownership of Shabbona Lake State Park from the IL DNR to the Prairie Band Potawatomi
- Village President Don Goncher, with an overwhelming support from the village trustees filed a witness slip indicating that the Village of Shabbona supports this measure when most residents do not
- The debate included the supposed support of the Village, and is likely a key factor in it passing
- Is it right that the Village Government speaks on your behalf, without even consulting you?

Vote for Trustees That Will Represent Your Interests & Work To Bring Shabbona Back

- **April 1, 2025** is the next election to vote in Village Trustees.
- Most of the Village Board have been appointed by the Village President; every one of the existing trustees running for re-election have been appointed by him.
- It's time to get new ideas instead of yes-men

Do you support the Village President & Village Board?

Shabbona's Downtown District Is Being Decimated

- Did you know there are around 5 downtown businesses trying to open in Shabbona? They are being told they can't!
- The Village President and Board actively deter investment by creating roadblocks, fees, fines, and wild threats.
- The Village President has persecuted downtown business owners by trying to remove access to their properties, their driveway aprons, and their storm water drainage with the Streetscape Project.
- The Downtown Streetscape Project has destroyed a large portion of downtown parking.

Please read some of the stories inside about the businesses trying to make downtown better but are being told they can't.

Spending is Out of Control

Shabbona has been spending an average of almost \$1,000,000 per year over the last 10 years. For a town of just over 800 residents!

Whenever spending money comes up at Village Board meetings there is little to no discussion if it's worth spending the money or if they can afford it. Spending just continues to rise with no relief in sight.

Thrift & Consignment Shop

103 W Comanche Ave

- After sitting vacant for decades, Josh Snyder purchased the building and immediately started work to fix up the building.
- The Village President immediately called the building inspectors (B&F) claiming that illegal work was being done to the building despite a valid permit for the masonry repairs that were being done.
- The Village President threatened to fill in a stairwell that provides access to the building's basement. Even after trying to explain that the stairwell was on private property and that Josh has future plans to open a new business or expand into the basement, the Village President was insistent on his way.
- Josh had asked for a slight modification to the parking lot being built next door. The modification simply moved the lot over slightly so cars would be less likely to hit his building. Despite IDOT and the engineer's approval, the Village President protested and tried to force the original plan.
- Josh went public about the threats and bullying from Village President Don Goncher.
- The Village President retaliated against the owner by telling B&F to issue a "Stop Work Order" while roof repairs were being performed, again despite a permit having been pulled for the work.
- The "Stop Work Order" caused a delay of around a month; the whole while rain was gushing into the building and causing further damage.

Hardware Hank

210 W Comanche Ave

- The owners have tried to open multiple different kinds of businesses in the old hardware store.
- The most recent business shot down by the Village President is an indoor flea market and maker space.
- The Village President decided they weren't allowed to open without a Certificate of Zoning Compliance and/or a Certificate of Occupancy.
- A Certificate of Occupancy is only required after new construction or a major rehab.
- The Village President has declared that the rear portion of their building needs to be demolished to make way for a walking path.
- The newest plans are to open a full service salon in 2025 but the owners fear retaliation, unnecessary obstacles, and fees. Especially considering their past experiences.

Gearheads

115 W Comanche Ave

- The old Terry's Pizza was purchased with the intent to open a new bar/restaurant that catered more to motorcyclists.
- The owners were approached by the Village President, who told them that they will never get a liquor license.
- The Village President accused the owners of being in a motorcycle gang and talked about how opposed he was to the idea of having loud motorcycles around.

Carwash

209 W Comanche Ave

- When the current owners of the carwash purchased the business, they were immediately approached by the Village President and told the carwash had to be shut down.
- The Village Attorney had to step in to tell the Village President that he couldn't force the car wash to shut down, or demand the car wash can't use the alley behind it, or that the vacuums had to be removed.

Coffee Shop

209 W Comanche Ave

- Plans were drafted to open a coffee shop in the car wash's building.
- The Village President decided that the building code required an extra bathroom, despite a licensed architect (whose job is to design things to code) saying a second bathroom was not required.
- The added cost of the extra bathroom was too great to justify it so the plans were scrapped.

Is this the most effective way to encourage business and investment?

The Greenwell Small Engine Repair Shop

106 ½ W Comanche Ave

- Tom Greenwell passed away in 2020 and the Village President took it upon himself to call Tom's daughter, who lives out of state, to complain about everything to do with the property and set the stage for a long battle of harassment in order to induce the sale of the property.
- The Village President has been keen on purchasing the property to demolish the buildings and to either expand the parking lot that has been recently built in front of it or to leave empty and maybe put in a bench.
- The Village President believed he could bully the surviving Greenwells into selling at a steep discount. He offered them \$2,500 for the property and to stop the harassment.
- When the Greenwells turned down the low-ball offer, the Village President went on a campaign of passing new ordinances to target the property.
- The Greenwells met and exceeded all of the new maintenance demands the Village President imposed on them. But that wasn't enough. The Village President continues to bully and demand.
- The shop had continued to be operated on an appointment only basis throughout the whole ordeal.
- Despite remaining an active business, the Village President has deemed the building "vacant" under the Vacant Buildings Ordinance and has imposed unreasonable fines.
- As of now, the shop has been closed down pending a sale to the Village.
- The Village President wants to destroy an asset simply because he doesn't like it. (This is a very common recurring theme)