



July, 2025

Events

July 12 – Farmer's Market @ 9 AM – 12 PM @ Purdy Park

July 12 – Community Game Night @ 6 PM – 9 PM @ Up Realty (104 W Comanche Ave)

July 12 – Story Time @ 10 AM @ Purdy Park

July 14 – Yarn Twisters @ 11 AM @ Flewellin Library

July 14 – BST Queen of Hearts @ 7 PM @ R&R Pub

July 15 – Read with Rover @ 10 AM @ Flewellin Library

July 16 – Elder Care Services & Tech Help @ 12 PM – 2 PM @ Flewellin Library

July 19 – Farmer's Market @ 9 AM – 12 PM @ Purdy Park

July 19 – Story Time @ 10 AM @ Purdy Park

July 19 – Cards with Kim & Jamie @ 6 PM @ Flewellin Library

July 19 – Waterman Summerfest @ Lions Park, Waterman

July 21 – Yarn Twisters @ 11 AM @ Flewellin Library

July 21 – BST Queen of Hearts @ 7 PM @ R&R Pub

(Continued on the next page)

Village Government News

By Joshua Snyder

(This article reflects my views as an individual and does not necessarily represent the views of the entire Village Board)

The regular board meeting times & dates have been changed to typically being on the third Thursday of the month starting at 6 PM. That means the next meeting is July 17 @ 6 PM.

The Village had a few meetings in June. Here is a summary:

– June 9: Finance Committee:

- The primary purpose of this meeting was to discuss the appropriations ordinance for Fiscal Year 2026.
- An updated "Employee Purchasing Card & Expenditures Policy" was also proposed and received the recommendation of the committee.

– June 16: Infrastructure Committee:

- The water run-off project at the SFPD's (Shabbona Fire Protection District's) fire barn was discussed, the Fire Chief and the SFPD's trustees were present as well and joined in the conversations.
- The SFPD explained that the previous Village Board members signed an agreement with them to perform this project.
- The Village President expressed concerns about not only the cost of the project but also potential damages to the fire barn's concrete floor. It was explained that water and mud came up through the floor several years ago which could potentially lead to a void under the floor and eventual failure.

(Continued on page 4)



Shabbona Community Church

HOG RAFFLE

Drawing will be held at Summerfest

1st Prize ~ ½ Proccrossed Hog

2nd Prize ~ ½ Processed Hog

Hog will be processed about July 28th

Delivered within 25 miles of Shabbona \$5.00 per ticket
or 5 tickets for \$20.00

Tickets may be purchased by calling
the church office at 815-824-2359

Shabbona Express

Events

(Continued)

July 22 – DeKalb County Farm Bureau
@ 10 AM @ Flewellin Library

July 23 – Euchre @ 11 AM – 2
PM @ Flewellin Library

July 26 – Farmer's Market @ 9 AM –
12 PM @ Purdy Park

July 26 – Shabbona Community
Church 1st Annual Free
Children's Haircut Drive @ 8
AM – 12 PM @ NICE Center
(346 S Countyline Rd, Lee)

July 28 – Yarn Twisters @
11 AM @ Flewellin Library

July 29 – Animals with Rico the Sloth
@ 10 AM @ Purdy Park

Shabbona Community Church will be holding their
1st Annual Free Children's Haircut Drive July 26th at
the NICE Center from 8AM-12PM
We are seeking hairdressers and youth/adult volunteers!
If you are interested in participating in this event
call or text
Gabrielle - 708.369.4401

Do everything in love. ~ 1 Corinthians 16:14



Under the Radar:

How Quiet Book-Keeping and Hasty Politics Engulfed the Shabbona Community Fire Protection District

By William Heimbigner

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

A chief with no paycheck—on paper

When Jon Ritter accepted the job of fire chief for the Shabbona Community Fire Protection District (SCFPD) in May 2022, a FOIA-obtained résumé from the City of DeKalb shows he was hardly a newcomer: he worked as an SCFPD lieutenant from 2009 to 2015 and served as its assistant chief from 2015 until taking the helm—all while concurrently working as a firefighter for the City of DeKalb since 2015. He also brought a complication: Ritter remains a union firefighter covered by an International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) contract that bars outside, paid firefighting work.

Rather than seek a legal workaround or a formal waiver, district officials appear to have settled on a simpler—if riskier—solution: pay the chief “off the books.” On February 11th, 2024, Ritter filed a signed statement with the City of DeKalb affirming that he did not hold any other second job—keeping the under-the-table pay hidden from City of DeKalb oversight.

Ritter's last day as chief was May 31st, 2025, though at the May 12th meeting the board voted to hire him as a “district secretary” beginning June 1st (and was then paid \$650 on June 2nd). As one of his last acts as fire chief, he sent out new MABAS box cards (essentially, “who to call for the biggest

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emergencies” directories) which removed Malta and Somonauk’s Fire Departments. These went into effect the day after his resignation, and though now remedied, briefly rendered the department more vulnerable for the sake of what is believed to be an old grudge. Neither the new chief nor the officers were aware of this change until after it happened.

Spousal pay funneling and prepaid cards

A review of SCFPD general-ledger entries from mid-2022 through mid-2025 reveals a recurring pattern. Instead of a regular chief’s paycheck, the books display occasional lines such as “Wages - Sam/Jon” or itemized splits like “Sam (10) Jon (930),” yet the warrant is always cut entirely to Sam Ritter—a firefighter and the chief’s spouse. Observing only clearly labeled entries, it appears that more than \$5,000 of Jon Ritter’s earnings were quietly funneled through her paychecks. Adding up FOIA’d hours for Sam Ritter, vs her earnings over 3 years, would make it appear as though she was earning over \$300/hr.

Equally murky are at least nine separate purchases of \$500 prepaid debit cards totaling \$4500 from October 2023 to June 2024, signed out by trustee Probst. The district has not produced any receipts nor reconciliation sheets to show how these cards were used. Ritter claimed these were being used temporarily as a poor substitute for a credit card while there was some difficulty updating the authorized users on the district’s credit card, but Ritter himself regularly used a district credit card during this time. Once a district card was eventually issued to Steve Probst in June of 2024, FOIA’d credit card statements show that Probst spent a mere \$567.18 from then through November 2024 on said card.

Even with better accounting now available, questionable purchases persist: The district (by way of Jon Ritter’s card) spent over \$1,000 on restaurants from Nov. 2024 through May 2025; on 11/13/2024 and 12/01/2024. 2 purchases were made from Etsy totaling \$1,338.23; the Fire District provided documents showing that these were custom-made backpacks for the firefighters.

The referendum that almost never was

Money troubles reached daylight this spring. In the April 1st 2025 consolidated election, the district asked voters for a 0.2% property-tax increase to pay for ambulance staffing during business hours/days, when coverage is most difficult to provide. But a series of oversights at DeKalb county resulted in the referendum question being omitted from 2 of the 5 ballot styles. A frantic correction—made the Friday before most early voting polls were set to open—saved the proposal, which passed by fewer than 40 votes across the 908 registered voters in the district.

Rubber-stamp politics at the county level

Each April, the DeKalb County Board renews or replaces dozens of special-district trustees, often in a quick rubber-stamping vote. This year the county chairman placed a new would-be SCFPD trustee, Richard Lockowitz, on the agenda for appointment, quietly ousting incumbent Hank Frazier. The switch died only after a swarm of Fire District officials flooded public comment at the county board’s April 16 meeting.

One of the people who spoke in objection to Lockowitz’s appointment was current Fire trustee Steve Probst, who pointed out the dangers of his appointment creating a situation where 2 of the 3 trustees would also be firefighters: the other trustee-firefighter being Steve himself. It is a valid concern, as it creates numerous conflicts of interest in which the trustee must abstain from voting on matters that primarily affect employees—such as a Command Vehicle Policy adopted Jan 2025, uniform purchase cost sharing arrangements, and many other matters which Probst voted on. (Those upset about hotel tax ordinance repeals may do well to take note.)

Village Government News

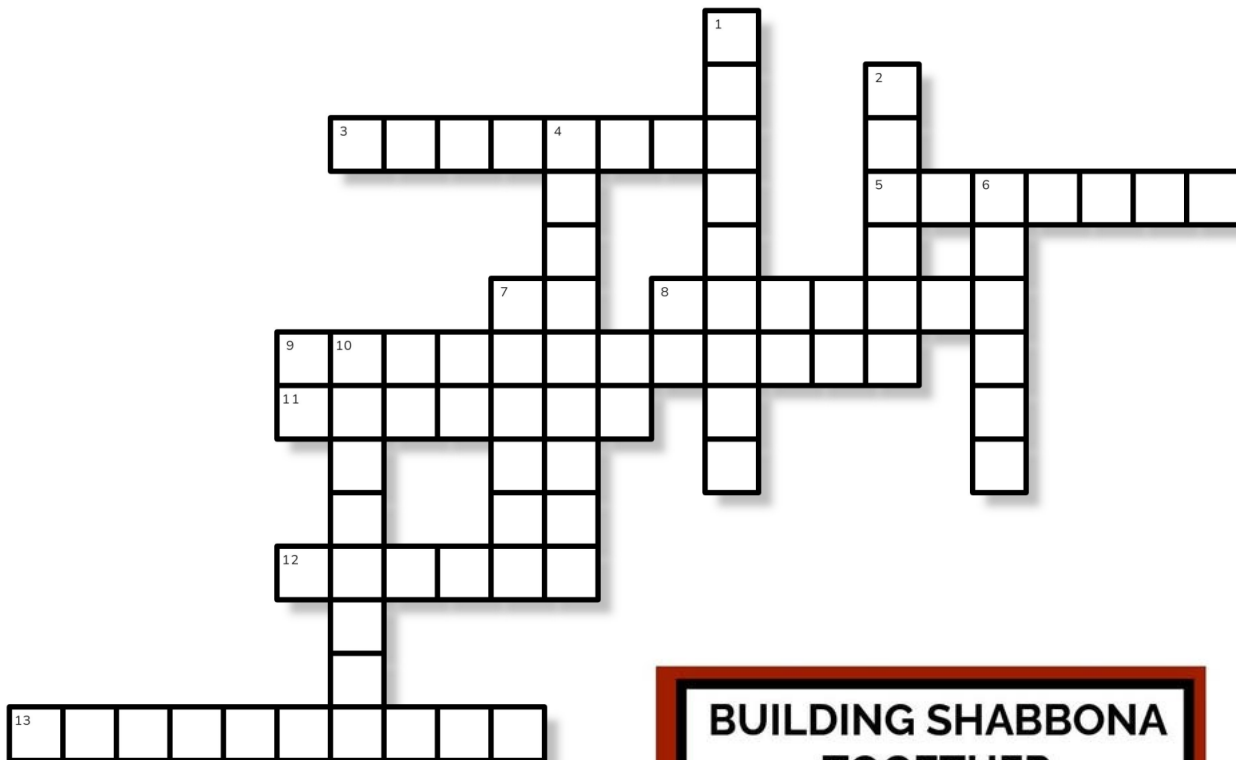
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- The Village Engineer in the June 2, 2025 meeting said that it was his opinion that the project wasn't necessary.
- The SFPD mentioned it would be content with the Village not doing the project but guaranteeing they would replace the floor, should it fail, and cover any other potential damages that may be caused by the way the well house was built.
- As of now, no decisions have been made on how to proceed. The Village will discuss the project with the engineer to explore alternative options, potentially ones that don't involve directional boring, which accounted for over half of the project's cost in the bid.
- The sidewalks project was discussed briefly and a reduced scope of work was presented. This was to focus only on the worst areas and areas where the sidewalks have been removed.
- The Shabbona Fire Protection District presented a draft ordinance they are working on to implement a Knox Box system. A Knox Box is a little safe attached to a building containing a set of keys for the property. It was mentioned that it would be a voluntary program and that people interested would have to order the box through the SFPD to make sure it is compatible with their keying. This is to help provide access in an emergency as opposed to breaking down doors or windows.
- Building Shabbona Together, a 501c3 not-for-profit that has been working towards improving Purdy Park, presented a history of the project and an overview of their plans. The most current plans can be found at <https://www.shabbona-il.com/media/2751> on page 24.

– June 23: Regular Board Meeting:

- The board approved contracting with TruGreen to provide weed control services at the three Village parks in the amount of \$1,011.
- The board approved contracting with All American Door in the amount of \$7,965.60 to replace two overhead doors at the Public Works building.
- The board approved contracting with Kramer Construction to replace the worst sections of the sidewalks around town. The quoted price was \$7,500 and the resolution to accept the project put a cap of \$8,000 on the project.
- Discussion of what to do with the recently cleared out Greenwell property that is located between the North Parking Lot and the Library took place. It was mentioned that the lot was left in a mess and should the Village flatten it out and seed it, put gravel down, or potentially sell it. There weren't any plans in place on how to use the property beyond potential additional parking and a green space, but its suitability for parking was seemingly not explored before the purchase and demolition of the property. For now, no decision was made on what to do with it.
- The ordinance regarding committees was changed to allow for interested citizens to hold a seat on the committees. If you are interested in participating in a committee and having a more formal say in the affairs of the Village please reach out. Members of the public are also always welcome to every meeting and each meeting has a section for public comment.
- The administrative adjudication ordinance was repealed.
- Jeff Jefko and Richard Lockowitz were appointed to fill Frank Ottengheime's seat he relinquished after becoming the acting Village President and Marc Cinnamon's seat he resigned from.

Shabbona Express



Down

1. Associated with national pride
2. Not easily discovered or seen
4. Large, ornate building for worship
6. Wall-mounted light fixture
7. Fastener for papers and fabric
10. a popular breed of dog

Across

3. Person who is not guilty
5. Tempting treat for your sweet tooth
8. Underwater projectile that explodes
9. Repetition of initial consonant sounds
11. Waterfall with a series of drops
12. Decorative Appendage on a Hat or Dress
13. To make something appear larger or more extreme than it really is

**BUILDING SHABBONA
TOGETHER**



RAFFLE

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5 for \$20 (cash only)**

**DRAWINGS every
Monday @ 7pm
at R&R Pub**

tickets may be purchased at R&R Pub – open daily at Noon!

Shabbona Express

Under the Radar:

How Quiet Book-Keeping and Hasty Politics Engulfed the Shabbona Community Fire Protection District

(Continued from page 3)

Two additional trustees and a grass-roots push for an elected board

At the district's board meeting on June 13, SCFPD trustees signaled support for expanding their own board from three to five members. If the board acts at its July 16 meeting, two new trustees will be appointed by the DeKalb county board within 60 days—locking a five-member appointed board in place until at least 2027. Such a change would minimize disruption, especially in the summer months when one trustee may be away on vacation.

Back in May, citizens began circulating petitions to place a binding question on the November 2026 general midterms ballot: should SCFPD trustees be elected, rather than appointed? Under 70 ILCS 705/4a, the measure requires signatures from 10 percent of registered voters in the district—roughly 90 names—by mid-2026. If successfully passed during the 2026 midterms, all 3 (or 5) seats will be open for election during the April 2027 consolidated election.

When this petition was brought up at a board meeting, Trustee Probst requested that the pros/cons of this change be fairly presented. Members of the board particularly expressed concerns with how disinformation/misinformation on social media can impact elections and turn them into a popularity contest; an election would also frustrate the Board's efforts to maintain a curated set of members that can bring a diverse and much-needed array of experiences. The District was contacted for comment regarding this article, but did not provide any response other than clarification regarding Etsy purchases, information from which was added above.

What happens next

The next SCFPD meeting is set for 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, July 16, at 103 E Navaho Ave. Trustees are expected to finalize the five-member expansion and will likely recommend new trustees to be appointed. County board members will then have to decide at a future meeting whether to rubber-stamp the district's recommended appointees—or take a harder look at the books before handing out new seats.

You can review FOIA'd materials, including meeting minutes, the general ledger, bank statements, Jon Ritter's City of DeKalb personnel file and IAFF contract, and more, on the Shabbona Express website [www.shabbonaexpress.com/sfpd-docs]. To submit your own Freedom of Information Act request to SCFPD, you can email the FOIA officer (scfpd2500@gmail.com).

In local government, sunlight is the best disinfectant. For the Shabbona Community Fire Protection District—and the taxpayers who rely on its firefighters—that sunlight starts with showing up on July 16.

Interested in writing an article or sharing your viewpoint? We welcome submissions!

Email us at editor@shabbonaexpress.com

Shabbona Express

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Shabbona Farmers Market



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9:00am - Noon

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viewpoint? We welcome submissions!

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