

College contracts outside IT firm

Prairie State says no union workers affected

By Mike Nolan
Daily Southtown

Prairie State College has contracted with an outside firm to provide information technology services, with some employees in the IT department now working under that company's management, according to the Chicago Heights school.

A 5-year contract with CampusWorks was approved by college trustees at a special meeting March 14.

The contract with the firm is intended "to support the strategic leadership and direction" of the school's IT department, according to the agenda entry for the meeting.

Among the firm's recommendations is that the school hire a chief information officer.

The approval of the contract extends a relationship between Prairie State and CampusWorks, which is a Florida-based IT firm that works with other colleges and universities.

"For the past several months, we have been engaged with CampusWorks for its expertise in providing strategic and operational IT services that would complement the support of our current Information Technology Resources team," Jeri Bingham, college spokeswoman, said.

A copy of the contract was not included as part of the public board agenda packet for the special meeting. A public records request filed by the Southtown seeking a copy of the contract was not immediately fulfilled.

Bingham said the hiring of CampusWorks won't affect any union employees at the school but IT managers "have transitioned to employment with CampusWorks."

"They will remain on-site at PSC as they have in the past, and will continue to report into the CampusWorks leaders currently in place, benefiting from the daily mentoring and expertise," she said.

Two managers in the IT department submitted resignations before the agreement with CampusWorks was approved, Bingham said.

The agreement with CampusWorks will continue to help Prairie State "grow and transform," she said, "with services provided by the firm meeting the IT needs "of our students, faculty and staff"

mnolan@tribpub.com



The largest of the meteorites that landed in March 2003 in the Park Forest area on display at the Adler Planetarium in Chicago, April 28, 2003. On loan from Philip and Brenda Jones of Olympia Fields, the nearly 6 pound meteorite crashed into the Jones' home at more than 200 mph, smashing through the roof, the kitchen ceiling, the kitchen floor and into the basement. CHARLES OSGOOD/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

LANDMARKS

Park Forest meteorites still draw attention, big price tags



Pieces of the meteor that came down in Park Forest are shown in 2003 on a police officers desk at Park Forest Police Department. JOHN SMIERCIAK/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Meteor fell to earth 20 years ago



Paul Eisenberg

As an asteroid caught the world's attention this week, approaching Earth on a trajectory to pass within the moon's orbit, a senior research scientist who specializes in studying rocks from space was preparing to give a presentation on a meteorite strike that happened 20 years ago Sunday.

Steven Simon lived just blocks away when chunks from an ancient asteroid began raining down in Park Forest March 26, 2003, but he didn't connect a prolonged flash of light just before midnight with his chosen field of study right away, in part

because of actual rain. He'd just returned from a village-sponsored trip to a Bulls game when the sky lit up. He figured it was lightning diffused by the cloud cover, and went to bed. A newscast the following morning indicated a meteorite had fallen and it was at the police station. His wife urged him to head over to investigate.

"I thought I'd go down there and there will be a policeman holding a rock scratching his head and it won't be meteorite," Simon recalled.

He talked his way into the police station, where they had a growing collection of rocks, each placed in an evidence bag.

"What do you do when you hear noises in the middle of the night? You call the police," Simon said. "These things hit peoples

Turn to Eisenberg, Page 3

UNIVERSITY PARK MAYORAL RACE

Candidates discuss water, public safety and transparency

By Alexandra Kukulka
Daily Southtown

The three candidates for University Park mayor share a common goal of improving the quality of life for youth and senior citizens that live in the village, but they have different views on how to address lead in water, public safety, finances and transparency.

University Park Mayor Joseph Roudez III, elected in 2019, is being challenged for reelection by two village trustees, Theo Brooks and Sonia Jenkins-Bell.

Roudez said he wants to continue the progress he's accomplished despite a pandemic. A top priority is ensuring older residents have a good quality of life, he said.

Jenkins-Bell, a trustee for four years, said she's noticed a change in the village's trajectory and she wants to directly change that.

A goal is to make sure the

youth are supported.

Brooks, a trustee six years, said he wants to address crime, ensure the village has clean water and create programming for youth and senior citizens.

"I think we are in a defiant moment in our village," Brooks said. "As the mayor, I would have the chance to have a say-so."

Lead

Lead-contaminated water has affected more than 7,000 residents in about 1,500 University

Park homes and businesses. Aqua Illinois, a private utility that supplies the town's water, issued a "do not consume" order June 19, 2019. The company says its "do not consume" guidance stopped that summer.

Jenkins-Bell said Aqua has "gotten away with so much" in the last four years. The affected residents can't drink the water in their homes, she said.

"Aqua needs to be aggressively pursued," Jenkins-Bell said.

Turn to University, Page 2



Roudez



Jenkins-Bell



Brooks

PALOS PARK MAYORAL RACE

Candidates share their plans to increase community engagement

By Alexandra Kukulka
Daily Southtown

The two candidates running for Palos Park mayor have differentiated themselves as a seasoned board member and a candidate with a new vision. Both say they want to increase community engagement, but have different approaches.

Village Board member Nicole Milovich-Walters, a lifelong resident and an attorney, and attorney Ronette McCarthy, who is on the board of The McCord Gallery and Cultural Center in Palos Park and in the Palos Park Women's Club, are seeking to replace Mayor John Mahoney, who isn't seeking reelection.

Milovich-Walters said she'd like to establish a welcome committee made up of community members to help get the

word about businesses, events and organizations. The committee would make brochures with information and talk with residents, particularly new residents, to engage them with the community.

"One of the things that over the years has been challenging is reaching out to people and asking people to get involved, whether it be a board the meets once a month ... a lot of people aren't ready to donate their time that way," Milovich-Walters said. "It does make it challenging, but I think if we engage people from the get-go they'll be more willing to say 'Yeah, I'd love to be a part of that.'"

McCarthy said about half the village's vacancies, which she'd like

Turn to Palos, Page 2

