



Issue 1 Q3 2022

Chamber News

Food Truck Ordinance approved by Litchfield City Council

Written by Jim Timpe, Chamber Board Member

The Litchfield City Council meetings are open to the public and held every other week at City Hall. Typically, business at these meetings is centered primarily on approval of expenditures and discussion of grants and other initiatives. However, over these past few months, the council had the opportunity to also focus on an issue that relates directly to the Chamber of Commerce – business in Litchfield, and in this case, specifically food truck businesses.

The topic was originally brought up around the need for the passage of a food truck ordinance to better manage and control the use of food truck businesses as well as mitigate their impact on brick-and-mortar food service businesses (restaurants). Mayor Dougherty was especially concerned about the impact of these businesses on the long-term integrity of restaurants in the area, the impact on businesses and taxes, as well as health and traffic control concerns. Food truck owners in the area testified several times at council meetings, naming their concerns about the proposed 13-page ordinance and its impact on their businesses.

The Chamber was contacted by a few of our members and asked for our assistance. The Board of Directors discussed how best to assist, and the decision was to give all our members a chance to provide us their voices with a survey. The survey had an astounding return rate of over 50% of our membership! The result was clear. Ninety-eight (98%) percent of all respondents, and eighty-six (86%) percent of our food service members,

were in favor of having food truck businesses in Litchfield. The overwhelming majority felt they should pay an annual fee to do business here, and a large percentage

wanted there to be some distance required from existing food service establishments. There was also strong support from the respondents to permit individual businesses to allow a food truck on their private property for events like fundraisers, colleague boosters, or sales promotions. These results were shared with the council members and a representative spoke about the results at the council meeting to make sure your voices were heard. Our ability to present these survey results sparked debate on the council about the requirements in the ordinance and how to ensure that these businesses can be supported to allow for growth of commerce in the community.

Questions	Notes: 62 respondents, 9% >50 employees, 91% <50 employees			
Do you Support Food Trucks in Litchfield?	98% Yes	2% No		
If Yes, How Far Should they be from a Food Service Establishment?	10% 10 Feet	25% 50 Feet	10% Greater than 150 Feet	55% No Limit
Should Food Trucks be Charged a Fee?	68% Yes	32% No		
If Yes, What Type of Fee?	57% Annual Fee only	29% Per Occasion Fee Only	14% Both Annual and Per Occasion Fees	

Letter from the President, Mike Strubhart

Thank you for all the support you have shown the chamber over the many years. Especially in this year when we made changes in how we operate to support our members. In addition to transitioning from events to service we believe that providing information, news, education, and advocacy are important to our members. Knowing that we are creating a quarterly newsletter, where will continue to provide education to our membership, updates on Chamber business and upcoming events within our business community.

We hope every one of our members is able to take something from this newsletter and we appreciate any feedback to help us be a better chamber for you all.

Introduction to The Next Network

We would like to introduce a new non-profit organization The Next Network founded by Jon Magnuson. Jon provided the Chamber board a brief overview at one of our recent meetings and provided a brief article that we would like to share with our members.

How to Change a Story

We don't always have an opportunity to change someone's story. *The Next Network* is a local non-profit organization that desires to build strategic partnerships with local business owners to

help people change their stories. One of the most powerful resources that you have as a business owner, is employment. Often, however, these resources aren't readily available for individuals with a criminal history or a history of addiction. A recent conversation with a staffing agency revealed that less than 50% of the 100 plus people that walk through their doors each month aren't able to find placement. The main reason for this is the presence of felonies on their records. So, how do we change this story? How can we partner together to help change someone's story? We would love to have a conversation with you about how we can partner together to help change Litchfield's story, one story at a time. Feel free to contact me directly to see how we can work together and make a difference that not only helps someone in need but also our community.

Email: jon@beaconchurch.us



LITCHFIELD COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT UPDATE *Written by Mike Fleming, Education & Advocacy Committee*

School is back in session and off to a good start. We are fortunate to have engaged teachers and dedicated support personnel all under the direction of experienced administrators. An outstanding district is a critical part of economic development in a small community. It makes Litchfield a place where people want to live and do business, thus giving us all success.

LCUSD#12 has taken on several building projects to move our schools forward. While our current buildings have been well maintained they have reached a point where the long-term expense will exceed the cost of replacement. Generally, the life of a building is 60 years. The ones now standing replaced those that had originally been built around the turn of the last century. Changes in technology and security cause the investment to be made for efficiency and a better educational experience.

The new elementary school for grades 2-5 is under construction on State Street and will be open for next school year. This location allowed the district to save money by using existing infrastructure and should be a boom to the downtown area as it brings in more people to the heart of Litchfield.

The district recently had the opportunity to acquire the Living Stones Church building and 3 acres. They were kind in selling the property for a fraction of what it would cost to replace. It now houses the district administrative offices along with the tech department and has a large gather area that will be utilized for numerous events. The north end is leased to the Regional Office of Education for their alternative school program. The large field provides opportunities for sports practice areas as well.

The South-Central Illinois (SCI) Innovation Center will also be ready for the start of next school year. The location is the old Box USA building which is along the road into the LLCC campus. It is owned and operated by our school district and will host students from many districts in Montgomery and Macoupin counties. It will offer technical and vocational training with many programs that will allow students to advance to a community college or an apprentice program to receive a degree or certification. This will be a huge plus for our local area employers looking for well trained, job ready future employees.

A new Early Learning Center is also in the planning process. The center would house Pre-K, Kindergarten and first grade students. The location is on the grounds of the current Madison Park school. This will provide a state-of-the-art facility for the early learners in a beautiful location next to the City's Park.

Colt, Russell & Sihler will become surplus property and the board of education is considering the future of those buildings. The Chamber will have the opportunity to weigh in on potential positive uses that will enhance the neighborhoods and overall, the community. Please feel free to send us your suggestions. The possibility exists that they will be torn down and the land sold at public auction.

Fortunately, the above projects have been financed without any increase in taxes. Bonds were issued when the interest rates were low and are being serviced by existing revenues. State and Federal grant monies are also being utilized for the

Litchfield CUSD Update continued...

buildings. It has been the goal of school management to keep taxes in check as they understand the impact it has to the citizens and businesses in Litchfield.

The high school and middle school campus have had numerous maintenance projects completed this summer. They include resurfacing of the parking lot, tuck pointing of brick walls, and the repainting of Simmons Gym. These investments make a nice environment for all who use them including the out-of-town visitors who are guests in the buildings, attending numinous events held locally each year.

The district was the recipient of a generous donation from the Mary L. Jones Estate. Her sons Don and Larry, both LHS alumni deeded their aunts house and lots on the corner of Scherer and Jefferson to the district for future expansion. This had originally been their grandmother's home who had moved there in the 1950's. They felt giving back was the right thing to do since the local schools had done so much for their family over the years. The house has been vacant for several years and will be torn down soon.

2022 NON-RESIDENTIAL HARDSHIP PROGRAM APPLICATION – Deadline Sept. 30th

Ameren Illinois is committed to empowering the communities we serve through charitable donations and grants such as the Non-residential Hardship Program grant. The 2022 Non-residential Hardship Program provides a one-time credit to small business and non-profit 501(c)(3) organizations that have an active Ameren Illinois electric account and are experiencing a hardship. Qualifying customers will receive this assistance in the form of a one-time credit, up to \$500, applied to their Ameren Illinois electric account. They are now accepting applications on a first-come first-served basis **until September 30, 2022**, or funding has been depleted. You can visit [**www.ameren.com/illinois**](http://www.ameren.com/illinois) and click on the link "Non-Residential Assistance" to download an application.

You can email, fax or mail the completed application to Ameren Illinois, as shown below:

Email: [**AmerenILCredit@ameren.com**](mailto:AmerenILCredit@ameren.com) or Fax: 1.217.424.6496

Mailing Address: Ameren Illinois, Attn: Energy Assistance A-10, PO Box 2543, Decatur, IL 62525

In addition to this grant, Ameren offers many energy savings opportunities through their Energy Efficiency Programs in which you might also qualify.

Visit [**AmerenIllinoisSavings.com**](http://AmerenIllinoisSavings.com) for more information. For questions, please call Ameren Monday through Friday, between 8 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Message from your Chamber Executive Director, Beth Cherry

The Litchfield Chamber of Commerce recognizes and understands the challenges facing our members, and we are working diligently on your behalf. Please know our members are vital to our Litchfield Chamber of Commerce team. Now more than ever, it is crucial to keep your business in the forefront, and your chamber membership is an ideal tool to do just that. You are the voice of business through the Litchfield Chamber of Commerce.

Our mission is "...to improve the overall business climate and quality of life for the Litchfield community." I encourage you to take this time to let me know how I can help you host Business After Hours, grand openings and re-openings, anniversaries, special promotions, etc. Together, with the Chamber of Commerce's support, we will find new paths to reinvigorate your business. If you have experienced successes during the past year, let's discuss ways to continue that momentum. Through business advocacy, civic participation, economic growth, and education, we feel more ready than ever to meet the challenges we will face in the years to come.

We invite members to join our monthly board meetings at the Carnegie building on the 2nd Wednesday of every month. It is always great to have members present to not only to hear up to date information but a chance for you to share news or information directly with the Board.

We are excited to roll out our first newsletter in many years. The issues will be emailed once a quarter with highlighted news and information of what we have been working, local, city, state and federal information that may impact your business as well as including updates from various other key partners in our community.

Thank you for your past commitment and partnership. Together we will tackle the future, continue to serve our business community, and build a strong and vibrant economy. You can reach me by phone at (217) 324-2533, by email at info@litchfieldchamber.com, or by mail at 400 North State St., Litchfield, IL 62056.

Tell Us What you Want to Know More About?

The Advocacy & Education committee was created within the Litchfield Chamber of Commerce to provide news, educational information, and updates to our members. The Chamber sent out a survey to all our members in May of this year and we are working to provide useful and relevant information on the topics you requested. As we continue to add new members as well the needs of our businesses change, we want to hear from you. What information, educational seminars, news would be most useful to you. Feel free to contact the Chamber Executive Director, Beth Cherry and let us know what you want to know more about.

Upcoming Events

September 29 th – Oct 1 st	Skyview Drive In Carnival
October 1 st	Gudgel Ranch Grand Opening
October 13 th	Political Forum at LLCC auditorium
October 20 th	Park District Trunk or Treat
October 29 th	Halloween Parade
November 26 th	Shop Small Saturday
December 10 th	Christmas Parade of Lights

We would like to give a big thank you to the Litchfield Library, City of Litchfield, AMVETS, Litchfield School District, Briar Rose, Skyview Drive In and many more for coming together to organize the upcoming Halloween & Christmas parades.

