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Year in Review: Putting 2014 to rest, after further review

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The Orland Park Prairie

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Bill Jones, Editor

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Another year has come and gone, but not without plenty of interesting stories in Orland Park. And so, as is tradition, we are starting the new year by offering a month-by-month recap of the top stories from the past year in *The Orland Park Prairie* before delving into whatever awaits us in 2015.

JANUARY

More iPads, Apple TVs planned for Orland schools

Orland School District 135 Board of Education trustees voted unanimously to approve a motion Jan. 13 to bring more high-end Apple electronics to technology classrooms throughout the district. Approximately \$125,000 in grants and district funds were set aside for the initiative, which was to bring iPads and Apple TVs to tech classrooms at all 10 schools in the district. The money was to buy the district 230 iPad Minis and 150 Apple TVs.

Two charged in 2013 Orland Park home invasion, shooting

Orland Park police in January charged two Indiana men for their alleged involvement in a home invasion and shooting that reportedly occurred in May 2013 in Orland Park. Warren Lamont Hunter, 31, of the 200 block of Tyler Street in Gary, and Brad Len Kemp, 27, of the 2200 block of Union Street in Lake Station, were each charged with one count of attempted first-degree murder.

FEBRUARY

Orland Park Lions Club celebrates 50 years

More than 100 people gathered Feb. 1 at Orland Chateau to celebrate the Orland Park Lions Club's 50th anniversary.

OPPL votes to keep Internet unfiltered

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After months of controversy over the Orland Park Public Library's unfiltered Internet access, the library's board of trustees Feb. 12 voted at a special meeting to approve a revised policy without the use of filters. The board would end up voting on the matter two more times, after the meeting was challenged for being held on Abraham Lincoln's Birthday.

Mary Ann Ahl resigns from OPPL board

Just days after the Orland Park Public Library Board of Trustees voted unanimously Feb. 12 to appoint Beth Gierach to a vacant seat following the October resignation of Board President Carole Hillman, it found itself short one trustee again, as Trustee Mary Ann Ahl submitted a letter of resignation, citing health reasons. She would later be replaced by Dan Drew.

MARCH

District 135 board approves tech plan

The Orland School District 135 Board of Education voted unanimously March 10 at its regular meeting to approve the purchase of one-to-one technology devices for sixth through eighth grades, as well as iPads for third grade. The initial phase of the district's technology initiative cost \$2.8 million and is expected to cost \$700,000 during each of the next four years, as the fourth- and fifth-graders receive one-to-one iPads and existing devices are regularly replaced.

Allan Kustok found guilty in fatal shooting of wife

Allan Kustok was found guilty March 11 of fatally shooting his wife nearly four years prior inside their home. Jurors deliberated for less than two hours at the Cook County Courthouse for the Fifth Municipal District in Bridgeview before reaching a guilty verdict on the Orland Park resident.

Orland library trustees vote again on policies

The Orland Park Public Library board voted to "ratify and affirm" the actions it took at its Feb. 12 special meeting. An investigation into the February special meeting was still

being conducted by the Illinois Attorney General's Public Access Counselor's Office at the time of the second vote.

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Bullet reportedly strikes Prayer Center of Orland Park

A bullet March 25 reportedly struck the dome of the Prayer Center of Orland Park, 16530 104th Ave. A single shot was fired through the dome during the Fajr, or break-of-dawn prayer.

APRIL

Village Board bans e-cigs in public places

The Orland Park Village Board voted unanimously April 7 to pass an amendment to the Village code to include e-cigarettes in the Village's smoking ban.

MAY

Forest Preserve District of Cook County announces plans for Grassland bike path

The Forest Preserve District of Cook County announced it would be moving forward with plans to build a circular bike trail around the Orland Grassland, a 960-acre site located at 16700 S. LaGrange Road.

AG's office says library board violated OMA

The Orland Park Public Library's Board of Trustees violated the Open Meetings Act at its Jan. 20 public meeting, according to a determination issued by the Office of the Attorney General for the State of Illinois' Public Access Counselor's Office, after it received two Requests for Review alleging the board violated its own rules concerning public comment by prohibiting individuals "from commenting on computer use policies and alleged sexual misconduct at the library" as well as holding "public comment at the end of the meeting rather than at the beginning."

Medical center announced to anchor Main Street Triangle

A University of Chicago Medicine outpatient center was announced for Orland Park's Main Street Triangle as part of a project officials said will generate more than \$18 million in revenue for the Village while creating more than 100 "higher-end" jobs, under

a preliminary agreement approved May 15. The Orland Park Village Board at a special board meeting voted unanimously to approve the motion to sign a Letter of Intent to lease a parcel of land at the northwest corner of 143rd Street and LaGrange Road for a 120,000-square-foot medical facility that Mayor Dan McLaughlin called a “win-win” development that would anchor the Triangle as a midday retail and restaurant hub.

AG’s office says library board violated OMA again

The Orland Park Public Library’s Board of Trustees violated the Open Meetings Act again, this time by holding a special meeting Wednesday, Feb. 12 — a legal holiday in Illinois, according to a determination issued May 19 by the Office of the Attorney General for the State of Illinois’ Public Access Counselor.

Village recognizes Orland Park School as historical landmark

Already considered a local historical landmark by generations of students and teachers, Orland Park School was finally given the official designation during a dedication held May 29. A marker explaining the building’s 92 years of historical significance was unveiled at the school.

JUNE

Knitting Etc. closes after 43 years

For 43 years, Bea Doctor and Knitting Etc. tied Orland Park together like the yarn in her shop. But with her business unraveling, Doctor retired and closed the doors June 28 to the longtime Orland staple.

Two from Orland Park die in boating incident

Two of three individuals who were found dead in the Cal-Sag Channel following a collision between a boat and a towing vessel were identified as Orland Park residents Bob Bielarz and Viengsavnh M. Bielarz.

JULY

Orland Scout creates memorial for Orland’s first Vietnam casualty

U.S. Army Capt. Ronald L. Zinn died July 7, 1965, while fighting overseas, but almost ~~50~~ years later, his memory is still very much alive. Individuals from across the country gathered July 19 at the Village of Orland Park Veterans Center, 15045 West Ave., for the dedication of a memorial garden honoring the legacy of the first Orland Park resident to die while fighting in the Vietnam War.

AUGUST

Longtime Orland restaurant Traverso's celebrates 40th anniversary

Traverso's, 15601 Harlem Ave., celebrated its 40th anniversary Aug. 4 and Aug. 5.

Library approves unfiltered Internet access for third time

The Orland Park Public Library Board of Trustees once again voted against installing filtering software on its adult computers. The vote for a policy revision without filters was approved by a 4-2 vote Aug. 18 during the board's regular monthly meeting. The board did so after a determination handed down Aug. 6 by the Illinois Attorney General's Public Access Counselor's Office concluded the board did not provide enough information at its March meeting, when it voted to "ratify and affirm" several revisions of library policies, violating the Open Meetings Act in the process.

Village officials split 5-2, but vote to keep ban on electric signage

Debate over electric message boards along LaGrange Road continued Aug. 18 during the regular meeting of the Orland Park Village Board. The board voted 5-2 against changing the Village's existing ordinance, which prohibits electronic message boards on any portion of commercial signage.

District 135 schools get digitized

Orland School District 135 purchased nearly 2,000 brand new Apple MacBook Air laptop computers and 700 Apple iPads and distributed them to students on Device Pick-Up Days held Aug. 18-20.

SEPTEMBER

Medical center gets review board approval

The Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board voted unanimously Aug. 27 to approve the University of Chicago Medicine's new ambulatory outpatient health care facility, planned for downtown Orland Park.

Order finally restored in the Orland Grassland

A ribbon cutting held Sept. 6 at the Orland Grassland signified the completion of a five-year, \$7.7 million restoration project on the 960-acre site.

Orland firefighter dies in single-vehicle crash

Orland Fire Protection District firefighter Wesley Peak, 36, of Manteno, reportedly died the morning of Sept. 7 in a single-vehicle crash.

Trustees opt for mandatory disclosure from pet stores

After months of discussions, Orland Park trustees decided the best course of action in trying to prevent the sale of animals from "puppy mills" was an update to the Village Code that requires disclosure from pet store owners, alongside a licensing system for pet shops operating within village boundaries. Trustees voted unanimously Sept. 15 during the Village Board's regular meeting to approve the amendment.

Crystal Tree Golf and Country Club celebrates 25 years

Crystal Tree Golf and Country Club celebrated 25 years Sept. 20 with a black-tie event.

OCTOBER

Orland Park corrections officer charged in smuggling plot

A corrections officer who lived in Orland Park was among six individuals each charged with one count of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute marijuana after he allegedly tried to smuggle marijuana into Cook County Jail in exchange for a bribe. Jason Marek, 29, who lived in Orland Park at the time of the incident, was named in a criminal complaint filed Oct. 20 and unsealed Oct. 21.

Orland man faces felony charges following Bridgeview shooting

Rame R. Joudeh, 41, of 18038 Buckingham Drive in Orland Park, was charged with attempted murder, aggravated battery with a deadly weapon and reckless discharge of

a firearm after he allegedly confronted and shot a 36-year-old Burbank man — who
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Bridgeview police say he reportedly knew — near the Mosque Foundation in
Bridgeview.

Randy's is back on the block

Randy's Meat & Deli re-opened at 9105 151st St. in Orland Park after originally closing in 2011.

DECEMBER

Century-old family business still going strong in Orland Park

The year 2014 marked the 100th year of operation for Orland Park's Roseland Stair Works Inc.

OPPL sees tax levy increase

The Village of Orland Park voted Dec. 1 to officially approve a 12 percent tax levy increase for the Orland Park Public Library. Officials said the increase is an attempt to rectify a budget that has been operating at a deficit for the past few years.

District 135 officials moving forward with full-day kindergarten

The Orland School District 135 Board of Education voted unanimously Dec. 8 to continue pursuit of a full-day kindergarten program and head into the "permitting process," according to board President Joe La Margo.

Police nab fourth suspect in 2013 home invasion

The fourth and final suspect in a 2013 home invasion in Orland Park was apprehended. Jeremy M. Watson, 27 — whose last known address was 261 Roosevelt St. in Gary, Indiana — was apprehended by Indiana University-Northwest Campus police Dec. 10 after he was identified as a passenger in a vehicle that was stopped by police. He reportedly fled the vehicle but was apprehended a short time later. Orland Park charges were pending.

Allan Kustok sentenced to 60 years for murder of wife

Allan Kustok was sentenced Dec. 10 by Cook County Judge John Hynes to a total of 60 years in prison for fatally shooting his wife more than four years ago inside their Orland Park home, according to Cook County State’s Attorney spokesperson Steve Campbell.

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