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## **Deal? No deal at this college**

### **BLACKBURN | Haggling over aid packages is out as school cuts tuition, focuses on selling itself**

January 23, 2008

**BY DAVE NEWBART** Staff Reporter/[dnewbart@suntimes.com](mailto:dnewbart@suntimes.com)

As competition for students heats up among colleges, the savviest of students and parents know they can get a break on skyrocketing tuition costs by haggling with some schools as if they were shopping for a used car.

But such negotiating -- which often involves using competing colleges' offers against each other -- damages the integrity of the process, officials at one Downstate school say.

The process has become so tainted and time-consuming that tiny Blackburn College, in Carlinville about 60 miles south of Springfield, has instituted a no-haggling policy for next fall's incoming class.

#### **'That's no way to get a student'**

By doing so, officials say they can spend more time trying to sell a student on the school's merits and less time clamoring over the bill.

"We were spending all of our time haggling over our price, and we didn't get much time to talk to students and their parents about the wonderful things going on here," said Blackburn President Miriam Pride. The school, with 650 students, offers small classes and a strong liberal arts curriculum, she said.

John Malin, dean of enrollment management, said students approach him in April -- when financial aid is awarded -- with an offer sheet from another school.

They'd say, "If you can match it or beat it, I'll pay my deposit," he said. Often, students who needed aid the least did the most bargaining.

Other schools would tell kids to bring his offer back so that schools could "match it" -- like a coupon for a DVD player.

"Trying to get somebody because we're going to slip you an extra hundred bucks in the financial aid process, that's no way to get a student," he said. "Everybody is doing it ... [but] it's diminishing the integrity and quality in education."

The new policy also features a 15 percent price cut, to \$13,500. Room and board is an additional \$4,155.

#### **Consumer frustration cited**

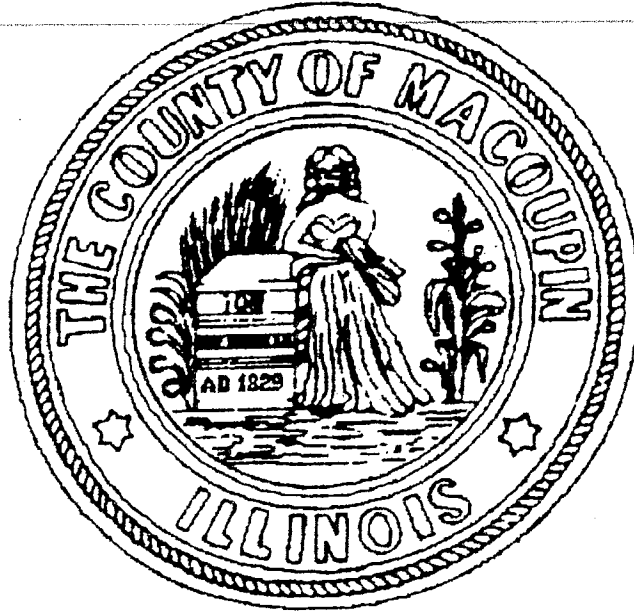
So far, the school has seen a 4 percent increase in applications compared with last year, but officials expect that to grow as more people learn about the new tuition rates.

Any student who qualifies will still be eligible for merit scholarships, which are given with no regard for financial need and are guaranteed if a student meets certain academic criteria, Malin said.

While most public universities do not negotiate price, Dave Tretter, president of the Federation of Independent Illinois Colleges and Universities, could not say how many of his 57 members haggle.

He said Blackburn's new policy comes in response to "frustration on the consumer's part" over complicated aid packages.

"This might be a way to set [Blackburn] apart from everybody else," he said.



**FINANCIAL BLUEPRINT  
FOR  
MACOUPIN COUNTY**

**FISCAL YEAR 2007-2008  
POST MINE CLOSURES**

**MACOUPIN COUNTY BOARD  
CHAIRMAN ANDREW MANAR**

Presented February 13, 2008

“Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress,  
working together is success,” –Henry Ford

The Blueprint can be accessed on the County’s website:  
[www.macoupincountyil.gov](http://www.macoupincountyil.gov)

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Proposal: While many questions remain as to how this new organization will operate, based upon a new concept for our region, the Macoupin County Board should take a step forward and publicly acknowledge its support of the regional concept. The proposed resolution will establish a formal policy that the Macoupin County Board will provide support to the newly created public/private regional economic development organization covering Macoupin, Montgomery, Greene and Jersey Counties. The resolution will also state that the Macoupin County Board believes that the best strategy for job creation and economic development is to partner with both neighboring counties and private business.

See Attachment 2 on page 13 for the proposed language for this County Board resolution.

### GOAL #3

### DEVELOP A NEW STRATEGY FOR EC. DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE COUNTY

#### A New Approach Within Macoupin County

Background: The operations budget for the Economic Development Office is currently \$53,000. Over the course of several years, worthwhile “community development” initiatives have been assigned to the Economic Development Office to administer: grant writing, oversight of the Tourism Fund, Route 66, and website management.

Proposal 1: This proposal would shift economic development activities in Macoupin County away from a county government-only led effort to an effort led by a public/private non-for-profit corporation made up of county and municipal governments, private businesses, and higher education institutions—all working in concert with each other. The Macoupin County Economic Development Corporation could concentrate its efforts on a county-wide job creation and retention plan. In addition to the new collaborative effort within Macoupin County, the Corporation could act as our coordinating agency for the four-county regional economic development organization.

Macoupin County, Illinois	
SALES TAX REVENUE	
FY 00-01	\$2,206,909
FY 01-02	\$2,269,485
FY 02-03	\$2,172,681
FY 03-04	\$2,177,949
FY 04-05	\$2,163,202
FY 05-06	\$1,975,721 ←
FY 06-07	\$1,793,049
FY 07-08	\$ 944,049 ←
	(estimate)

Census Bureau designates Macoupin County in the St. Louis Metro Area - 33% of the County's workforce commutes to St. Louis Region

Effect of Multiple Mine Closures

Macoupin County is fortunate to have numerous individuals from all areas of the County that are good thinkers, action oriented and ready to join together. Understanding there are limits to what government can accomplish on its own, Macoupin County's economic development efforts need to become more competitive. What better way to do this than to harness the skills of the most talented individuals across the County.

While this proposal represents a dramatic change for current practice, the County Board's Economic Development Committee can help facilitate a discussion that involves a new collaborative effort for all areas of Macoupin County.

Macoupin County, Illinois	
ENTERPRISE ZONE ACTIVITY	
The Enterprise Zone, the County's most effective tool to foster economic growth is one of the most aggressive in rural Downstate Illinois and has created \$8 million in new investments and 100 new jobs across the County since 2005.	

Proposal 2: In order to maintain support for community development initiatives centered around tourism, this proposal creates the Macoupin County Tourism Commission whose members are appointed by the County Board.

December 2004 and prior to the closure of the mines, County government has made significant changes to end deficit spending (see above chart).

The three fiscal years prior to the Board reorganization were marked with deficit spending averaging nearly \$300,000 per year. Had that trend of deficit spending gone unchecked and had the Board not made the decision to change course toward fiscal responsibility, the County's reserve fund (which totals approximately \$1.3 million in investments) would be a distant memory. Since the Board reorganization in 2004, not a penny of the county's reserve fund has been spent. These reserves were created over time not to satisfy unnecessary and unbudgeted spending but to provide much needed support during times such those we are facing today.

**Proposal: Increase Revenue by Continuing to Capture New Construction through the Work of Field Assessor/Plat Officer**

In December of 2006, the County Board approved the hiring of a Field Assessor, upon the recommendation of the Countywide Task Force on Assessments, to capture new construction on the tax rolls in townships where there is no township assessor or in townships where assessing isn't taking place. This proposal would increase the responsibilities of the Field Assessor to include the coordination of the subdivision approval process, oversight of the Subdivision Ordinance, enforcement of building permits, contract with townships to assess property, work with and develop the GIS system, and coordinate the formation of multi-township assessing districts where possible. Much of this work has already been accomplished by an Ad-Hoc Committee of Board members. The Macoupin County Board recognized the need to make sure property assessments are as accurate as possible when the Field Assessor position was created in 2005. Most importantly, the County Board recognized that many townships in Macoupin County were not performing assessments on new construction. That trend is starting to be reversed. Costs associated with this could be paid for by increasing the GIS fee.

Macoupin County, Illinois		
GENERAL FUND BUDGET HISTORY		
	<u>GF Expenditures</u>	<u>Deficit /Surplus</u>
FY 01-02	\$6,354,652	-\$200,832
FY 02-03	\$6,591,368	-\$478,656
FY 03-04	\$6,846,064	-\$214,000
FY 04-05	\$7,009,593	+\$56,828
FY 05-06	\$6,972,900	+\$149,815
FY 06-07	\$7,096,649	+\$614,308
FY 07-08	\$7,177,233	TBD

Closure of Crown II and Monterey Mine      Board Reorganization Following 2004 Election

Source: Annual Macoupin County audit performed by Scheffel & Co.CPA

**Proposal: Offer a Health Insurance Benefit for Voluntary Retirement**

Previously discussed by the Finance Committee when exploring options to balance the budget following the closure of the Crown II mine, this proposal would offer an incentive for the voluntary retirement of County employees. The program would be open to all employees that have reached a certain age (to be determined) and are vested in the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF). While many details would have to be determined, the proposal would allow for the County to pay for a portion of health insurance costs for a certain period of time to employees who retire.

Budgetary savings would be achieved by not filling vacancies created by those employees who take advantage of the option. This is not the IMRF "Early Retirement Benefit" allowed for under State statute. This is a creative way to reduce payroll expense while adding

- Use: Make Animal Control Department self sufficient (no longer being funded by the General Fund)
- Revenue Estimate: \$20,000

**Proposal: Review County's Investment Policy / Increase Interest Income**

Under this proposal, the County Board would work with the County Treasurer to develop an investment policy that maximizes interest income on County Funds by using a competitive bid method to determine where county funds should be held and invested.

**Proposal: Circuit Clerk's Office Responsible for Court's Administrative & Clerical Duties**

Retirements have left the Circuit Court without employees whose previous duties included, among others, docket entry and maintenance of the law library. Circuit Clerk Mike Mathis, Presiding Circuit Judge Ken Deihl and the Judicial Services Committee of the County Board have worked together to have these duties administered by the Circuit Clerk's Office. The savings from this proposal brought to the Judicial Services Committee by Circuit Clerk Mathis are estimated at \$40,000 annually.

Macoupin County, Illinois <b>MEASURING THE JOB LOSS</b>
Had Cook County sustained job loss in proportion to the losses that Macoupin County has experienced in the past five months, the number of jobs lost in Cook County would be approximately 65,000.

**Proposal: Reduce the Number of County Board Committees**

Since the re-organization of the Board following the 2004 election, the Board's budget has decreased from \$150,000 in FY 04-05 to \$148,000 in the current FY 07-08. In that same period, the number of Standing Committees of the County Board has decreased from 18 to 13. This proposal would set up a temporary Ad-Hoc Committee of County Board members to develop recommendations to be considered by the full Board on how savings can be achieved by first reducing the number of committees and second, restructuring the duties and responsibilities of each committee. This will have an immediate impact on the budget by reducing expenses in the County Board's appropriation.

*Note: The above proposal will require a change to the Board Rules. Changes to the governing rules of the Macoupin County Board require the support of 2/3rds of the members.*

**Proposal: Advisory Referendum to Reduce the Size of the County Board to 15 Members**

Illinois Statute requires reapportionment of county board districts upon the completion of the decennial census to ensure that districts are substantially equal in population. At the time of reapportionment, county boards may decide to change the number of representatives serving on the Board. This proposal, consistent with Illinois Statute, would place on the November 2008 General Election Ballot (through passage of a Resolution) an advisory question that would reduce the County Board from 27 members to 15 members for the general election in 2012 following the next decennial census.

*55 IL Compiled Statutes 5/2-3002*

*(a) Reapportionment required. By July 1, 1971, and each 10 years thereafter, the county board of each county having a population of less than 3,000,000 inhabitants and the township form of government shall reapportion its county so that each member of the county board represents the same number of inhabitants. In reapportioning its county, the county board shall first determine the size of the county board to be elected, which may consist of not*

Life Insurance: manage all aspects of the County's life insurance fund and research and explore the possibility of the County self-insuring its policy for employees.

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A private company with 150+ employees and a \$7 million budget would have a full time position devoted to managing employee benefits and monitoring their costs; Macoupin County government should as well.

## **BLUEPRINT SUMMARY**

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I hope the proposals contained in this Blueprint present county government with a good starting point on how we can balance our budget by both reducing expenditures, modestly raising new revenues, and find more efficient ways of serving the public.

I also hope that the proposals contained in the Blueprint present all of Macoupin County with a starting point to discuss how we cultivate economic development through countywide and regional collaborative efforts.



**ATTACHMENT 2**

**RESOLUTION FOR FOUR COUNTY PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP**

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Resolution No. \_\_\_\_\_

**Resolution Support for the Four County Public/Private Regional Economic  
Development Organization**

WHEREAS, the Macoupin County Board seeks to further economic development efforts within the borders of Macoupin County; and

WHEREAS, the Macoupin County Board understands that the successful efforts to expand the economy of Macoupin County has a positive impact on its neighboring counties; and

WHEREAS, the Macoupin County Board also understands that the successful efforts of neighboring counties to expand their economies has a positive impact on Macoupin County; and

WHEREAS, the Macoupin County Board seeks to find creative and collaborative ways to compete for jobs in both the Statewide and global economy; and

WHEREAS, the Macoupin County Board recognizes that while it has been successful in recent years using the tools available to create economic growth within the County, a single county, government based economic development program has limitations on what can be accomplished; and

WHEREAS, regional public/private partnership models for economic development have shown to be successful in Downstate Illinois; and

WHEREAS, the most recent success story for a regional public/private partnership is Coles Together, an organization that was instrumental in the effort to secure the FutureGen project near Mattoon, Illinois; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that it is the stated policy of the Macoupin County Board to support the formation of a multi-county, public/private economic development organization whose activities center around job retention and creation.

SIGNED this x<sup>th</sup> day of xxxxxxxxxx, 2008.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Michele A. Zippay  
Macoupin County Clerk

\_\_\_\_\_  
Andrew Manar  
Chairman of the Board

ATTACHMENT 4

LETTER REGARDING 2008 PROPERTY TAX LEVY



ANDREW MANAR  
CHAIRMAN

JULIA WATSON  
VICE CHAIRPERSON

MICHELE A. ZIPPAY  
CLERK

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LARRY LUX  
ROBERT VOJAS

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OLIVER SCHWALLENSTECKER  
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MICHAEL ALLAN ZIPPAY

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RUTH ANN POMATTO  
JIM ZIRKELBACH

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DARRELL BELLM  
FRANCES GOODMAN  
TONY WIGGINS

District 9  
RAYMOND COATNEY  
LYNDAL HERSCHELMAN  
CHRISTOPHER YOWELL

# MACOUPIN COUNTY BOARD

215 SOUTH EAST STREET • P.O. Box 535 • CARLINVILLE, IL 62626 • TELEPHONE 217/854/3341  
FAX 217/854/6015

MEMORANDUM

January 22, 2008

To: Tom Rainhart, County Engineer  
Kent Tarro, MCPHD Administrator  
Doug Kilburg, Mental Health  
Frank J. Schwab, Executive Director IVEDC  
Macoupin Center for the Developmentally Disabled

From: Andrew Manar, Chairman of the Board  
David Thomas, Chairman of the Finance Committee

cc: Members of the Macoupin County Board

Re: Macoupin County Tax Levy

The Finance Committee of the Macoupin County Board is beginning the process of crafting a general fund budget reflective of the loss of approximately \$900,000 in sales tax revenue due to the closure of the Crown II and Monterey mines.

We are exploring all options, including possible changes to allocations contained within the County's property tax levy.

While it would be premature at this time to assume that significant changes will be made to next year's levy, we will make certain that you are kept informed of upcoming Finance Committee meetings that will involve discussions of the property tax levy.

If you should have any questions, please contact one of us.