



BELLEVILLE NEWS-DEMOCRAT

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Columbia man dies after use of Taser

Stun gun fired during struggle

BY BETH HUNDSORFER
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COLUMBIA — A 35-year-old man died Friday five hours after he was struck with a stun gun by police — the second time such a death has occurred this year in the metro-east.

Lyle L. Nelson, 35, of 732 Pins Way in Columbia, died about 4 a.m. at Red Bud Regional Hospital on Friday after he collapsed at the Monroe County Jail in Waterloo.

Columbia Police responded to a 911 call from the Nelson home about 10:39 p.m. Thursday, Columbia Police Chief Joe Edwards said.

Edwards declined to say what the nature of the call was. Three officers arrived at the home.

During a struggle with police, Nelson was hit at least once with a Taser stun gun, Edwards said, but he would not elaborate on how many times police used the stun gun on Nelson.

Nelson was taken to the Columbia Police Department, where he was charged with aggravated battery of a police officer.

Please see TAsER, A2

Belleville eyes bond issue for Y

Construction project does not affect taxes

BY SCOTT WUERZ
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BELLEVILLE — City leaders will consider a bond issue to help the YMCA build a new downtown health center.

City Attorney Robert Sprague told aldermen Monday that it wouldn't cost taxpayers anything to issue the bonds which could help lower finance costs for the new health center.

"The YMCA asked us to issue \$2.2 million worth of bonds," Sprague said. "They will have no effect on the city. We're not liable for them. This is simply a YMCA vehicle to get a better interest rate."

Sprague said the city has the power to issue \$10 million a year in industrial revenue bonds. So far in 2004, the city has only issued about \$7 million worth of the bonds. If it did not use them for the YMCA, it would simply lose the ability to issue the bonds, according to Sprague.

Sprague said the bonds will be sold by West Pointe Bank. A

Please see YMCA, A2

\$110,000,000

Gordon Maag sues two groups behind campaign ads

BY BRIAN BRUEGGEMANN
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EDWARDSVILLE — Gordon Maag wants the groups who tagged him as the poster boy for what's wrong with the court system to pay him for his election losses.

On Monday he sued for \$110 million in Madison County — which last week was again named the nation's No. 1 judicial hellhole. His attorney is Rex Carr, who counts himself among the top 100 personal injury lawyers in the nation.

Maag on Nov. 2 lost both the Illinois Supreme Court race and his

race to be retained as a 5th District Appellate Court judge. His suit seeks \$10 million in actual damages, such as lost wages and benefits, and \$100 million to punish the Illinois Chamber of Commerce and its affiliate, the Illinois Coalition for Jobs, Growth and Prosperity, for a flier he claims cost him his seat on the appeals court.

Carr, of Belleville, said a big judgment is needed to deter the defendants and others from similar activity.

"What they did to Maag through



Maag



Karmeier

absolute, 100 percent, easily proven lies can be done to any judge," Carr said. "Ten million is not going to stop them. You have to get their attention."

"They're an association made up of a lot of big companies," he said.

The flier criticizes Maag, a Democrat from Glen Carbon, as being soft on criminals and a reason employers have left the region.

For example, one paragraph states: "Judge Maag reduced a

Please see MAAG, A2



The Illinois Chamber of Commerce and the Illinois Coalition for Jobs, Growth and Prosperity published this campaign flier against Gordon Maag in the Illinois Supreme Court race.

KERN, ECKERT TAKE ON NEW DUTIES

Former Belleville mayor sworn in by County Board

BY PATRICK J. POWERS
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BELLEVILLE — It's officially time to change the stationery.

Former Belleville Mayor Mark Kern on Monday became the 17th man to be sworn-in as St. Clair County Board chairman, the third man to hold the post this month, during a brief ceremony at the St. Clair County Building.

"I'm honored to be here," Kern said to a room packed with judges, elected county officials, family, friends and other supporters. "The foundations that have been laid by (previous) Chairman John Baricevic ... are great ones. I look forward to moving this county forward."

Kern hinted at a number of "great projects" on the way for Illinois' oldest county and stressed the importance for the chairman and County Board to work together in the coming years. "We're going to have a great team effort," he said.

Fred and Barbara Kern beamed with pride as they applauded their son after the ceremony.

"He's a winner and he's a mensch and that's a great combination," Fred Kern said. "We couldn't be more proud."

Baricevic, who served the last 14 years as County Board chairman, also lauded praise on Kern.

"I think the future's easy," said Baricevic, a Fairview Heights Democrat. "Mark Kern's done a great job for Belleville and as long as he does the same thing for St. Clair County, we'll be in good hands."

The 41-year-old Mark Kern replaces Roy Mosley, an East St. Louis Democrat appointed

Please see KERN, A2



TIM VIZER/News-Democrat



TIM VIZER/News-Democrat

Alderman 'humbled' by new challenge as Belleville mayor

BY SCOTT WUERZ
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BELLEVILLE — Mark Eckert said only one word came to mind when he woke up Monday morning and realized he was about to become the city's new mayor: "Wow."

Eckert was sworn in as the city's top elected official at just after 8 a.m. He took the place of former Mayor Mark Kern, who resigned to become St. Clair County Board Chairman.

"It's very humbling to be here today and stand before you to be sworn in as mayor," Eckert said. "I promise to do my very best. I will work hard and I will listen."

Eckert said it will be tough to fill Kern's shoes.

"Knowing he will be across the street at the courthouse is the only reason I took this thing," Eckert said.

The only time Eckert became emotional is when he talked about his brother, city Zoning, Housing and Public Health Department Supervisor Mike Eckert.

"My brother, Mike, who has been my best friend, has worked for the city 34 years," Eckert said. "It will be a little awkward, I guess, having his baby brother as his boss. But it will be OK."

Monday evening, City Clerk Linda Fields swore in former Belleville West Principal Phil Silsby to fill Eckert's seat as Ward 5 Alderman.

"You'd think that you would have that memorized by now," Eckert joked with Fields as she read the oath of office from a piece of paper. "We've had four new aldermen now in the last six months."

Silsby, who retired in May after 12 years as principal, said he's ready to learn a few new things as an alderman.

Please see ECKERT, A2

Mark Kern, above left, is sworn in as St. Clair County board chairman by Chief Judge Jan Fiss on Monday. Alderman Stan Syzdek, left, shakes Mark Eckert's hand after he was sworn in Monday as Belleville's new mayor.

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