

Chicago Tribune



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BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

Court weighs Hoover release

Gangster Disciples founder challenged by judge in hearing

By Jason Meisner
Chicago Tribune

Infamous Gangster Disciples founder Larry Hoover's first court appearance in decades may have been via video link from a prison more than a thousand miles from Chicago, but the judge's question still hit like a bucket of cold water.

"How many other murders is he responsible for?" U.S. District Judge John Robert Blakey asked Hoover's defense attorney point-blank Thursday, near the end of an hourlong hearing over Hoover's long-shot bid to reverse his life sentence.

"I don't know what the methodology is for determining that," attorney Jennifer Bonjean replied, somewhat taken aback by the unusually blunt query.

"So many we can't count?" Blakey shot back.

After Bonjean said she couldn't "put a number on it," Blakey went a step further and asked if Hoover himself would like to weigh in.

"He probably has the most knowledge of all," the judge said.

Bonjean said she didn't want to put her client on the spot, particularly since she couldn't confer with him in private first. The judge said if she wanted to file anything, to do so before Oct. 7.

The remarkable exchange — which Bonjean later told reporters she felt was "inappropriate" for the judge to instigate — capped a crucial step in Hoover's yearslong quest to win early release under the First Step Act law passed in 2018, which has already led to reduced sentences for several of his co-defendants.

Federal prosecutors have vehemently opposed such a break for Hoover, arguing he did untold damage to communities across Chicago during his reign on the streets. They argued he has continued to

Turn to Hoover, Page 2



The intersection of 19th Street and Ashland Avenue in the Pilsen neighborhood of Chicago. E. JASON WAMBSGANS/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

In Pilsen, a progressive alderman backs a controversial property tax zone expansion he and the mayor believe is necessary to help meet 'critical goals of the community.' But advocates in the rapidly gentrifying neighborhood say such TIF districts freeze much-needed revenue and often amount only to handouts for private developers.

A 685-acre tiff

By A.D. Quig | Chicago Tribune

Signs of local pushback against the property tax zone expansion progressive Ald. Byron Sigcho-Lopez favors are readily apparent in Pilsen in his Southwest Side ward.

There are the purple signs posted along Ashland Avenue that read: "Pilsen no se vende se defiende | No TIF expansion | Pilsen is not for sale." Plastered on the windows of the office of Pilsen Alliance, a grassroots organization Sigcho-Lopez led roughly six years ago, are flyers encouraging passersby to write to their alderman against it.

The sentiment bubbling through the neighborhood puts Sigcho-Lopez, a firebrand City Council ally of Mayor Brandon Johnson, in an uncomfortable spot.

Progressives such as Johnson and Sigcho-Lopez have traditionally railed against tax increment financing districts, which freeze for decades the property tax revenues distributed to schools, parks and other government bodies and instead earmark those funds for projects within the boundaries.

WHERE THE MONEY HAS GONE: Revenue from the current tax district in Pilsen has already helped pay for a new library space, science classrooms and a computer room at Whittier Elementary; a new soccer field for Juarez Community Academy; improvements to the roof, windows and masonry at Perez Elementary; and capital improvements to neighborhood parks and the Paseo Trail.

While TIF proponents say those projects spur economic development, opponents often decry the spending as a handout for private developers, or unnecessary in areas that are already thriving.

Earlier this year, Johnson moved to shift the city away from a reliance on the controversial economic development tool, arguing the revenues trapped in certain neighborhood TIFs should be free to use citywide, especially in historically disinvested areas, or opened back up to other government bodies such as Chicago Public Schools.

Turn to Pilsen, Page 4

Root, root, root for the road team?

Sox fans lose chance to witness history with team's blowout victory

By Peter Breen
Chicago Tribune

Were they all here for the right reasons? Bob Rook, 69, wasn't sure.

Thousands streamed past Rook's information booth toward Guaranteed Rate Field Thursday afternoon to see if the Chicago White Sox would make the history books by breaking a modern-day MLB record with a 121st defeat.

Not a single cloud marred the early autumn sky. Tailgaters lazily sipped beers while their children ran wild around the stadium's parking lots. Waitresses of a nearby restaurant hurriedly set tables, bracing for one final rush of the season.

"This week sucked because people came here hoping that



People stand outside Guaranteed Rate Field before a game between the White Sox and Angels in Chicago on Thursday. Sitting on a record-tying 120 losses, the Sox's next loss would make them the most losing team in modern MLB history. TESS CROWLEY/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

the Sox would lose," said Rook, a Beverly resident and a Sox fan for more than six decades.

But alas, history was not on the fans' side Thursday — or, rather, for those fans who wanted to see the team slide into the history books. The Sox swept the Los Angeles Angels with a 7-0 win in the final matchup of their three-game series this week.

The Chicago White Sox wouldn't be playing at home again until March. The whole reason people go to the ballpark is to

have fun, Rook said, but unfortunately on Thursday, the fun they had in mind was seeing the Sox accumulate the most losses in major league history.

Tommy Jakovich, 66, attended 29 Sox games before Thursday's matchup against the Angels. He saw the team lose 24 times. Jakovich, who was born and raised on the South Side, said he was so much of a Sox fan that he took several Xanax on the day of the

Turn to Sox, Page 5

Fears of 'nightmare' from Helene grow

Florida residents wary of storm surge, winds

By Kate Payne and Heather Hollingsworth
Associated Press

CRAWFORDVILLE, Fla. — Tropical storm force winds began battering Florida on Thursday as Hurricane Helene prepared to make landfall, with forecasters warning that the enormous storm could create a "nightmare" surge along the coast and churn up damaging winds hundreds of miles inland across much of the Southeast.

Helene, which has strengthened to a Category 4 storm, is expected to get even more powerful ahead of its landfall on Florida's northwestern coast. Hurricane and flash flood warnings extend far beyond the coast up into northern Georgia and western

North Carolina.

The storm's wrath was starting to be felt Thursday afternoon, with water lapping over a road on the northern tip of Siesta Key near Sarasota and covering some intersections in St. Pete Beach along Florida's Gulf Coast.

Lumber and other debris from a fire in Cedar Key a week ago was crashing ashore in the rising water.

And winds of 130 mph have already left around 180,000 Florida homes and businesses without power.

Beyond Florida, up to 10 inches of rain have fallen in the North Carolina mountains, with up to 14 more possible before the deluge ends, setting the stage for flooding that forecasters warned could be worse than anything seen in the past century.

With forecasters also warning

Turn to Helene, Page 5

TODAY'S WEATHER High 74 Low 63

Complete Chicagoland forecast on Page 12



Just three games left to stand between Sox and infamy

The White Sox's march toward the most losses in modern major league history will end, either way, this weekend with three games in Detroit against the Tigers. The Tigers, currently fighting for a playoff spot, are 9-1 against the Sox this season, and Chicago needs a sweep to avoid the record.

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