

Chicago Tribune



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TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2024

BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

Ford Heights mayor guilty of embezzling village funds

Griffin not responsible for full amount claimed in prosecutors' case

By Olivia Stevens
Daily Southtown

Ford Heights Mayor Charles Griffin was convicted Monday of stealing village funds, though he was not held accountable for the full \$147,000 prosecutors claimed.

Cook County Judge James Obbish said Griffin is guilty of felony embezzlement of between \$10,000 and \$100,000 of public

funds "for his own personal and economic benefit" from 2014 to 2017, both during and after his first tenure as Ford Heights mayor.

According to Illinois statute, "a person convicted of a felony shall be ineligible to hold an office created by the Constitution of this State until the completion of his sentence."

Griffin was mayor of the village of 1,750 residents from 2009 to 2017, and despite being under federal indictment was elected again to the post in 2021. In the 1980s a study deemed Ford Heights "America's poorest suburb," suffer-

■ Former Ald. Burke reports to prison in Thomson, Ill.
■ Former Portage mayor argues no need for new trial; feds ask for one
Chicagoland, Page 3

ing from financial crises, including one in 2018.

Prosecutors charged Griffin after secret accounts holding \$147,000 in public funds were discovered and reported to authorities by former Mayor Annie Coulter's office shortly after she took office in 2017. Attorneys

Turn to Verdict, Page 4



Ford Heights Mayor Charles Griffin arrives for his bench trial at the Leighton Criminal Court building in Chicago on Monday. Griffin was convicted of embezzling village funds. **ANTONIO PEREZ/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

Israeli strikes kill hundreds in Lebanon

More than 490 die in Israel's deadliest barrage since 2006

By Bassam Hatoum, Melanie Lidman and Bassem Mroue
Associated Press

MARJAYOUN, Lebanon — Israeli strikes on Monday killed more than 490 Lebanese, including more than 90 women and children, Lebanese authorities said, in the deadliest barrage since the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war. The Israeli military warned residents in southern and eastern Lebanon to evacuate ahead of a widening air campaign against Iran-backed Hezbollah.

Thousands of Lebanese fled the south, and the main highway out of the port city of Sidon was jammed with cars heading toward Beirut in the biggest exodus since 2006.

Lebanon's health ministry said the strikes killed 492 people, including 35 children and 58 women, and wounded 1,645 people — a staggering one-day toll for a country still reeling from a deadly attack on communication devices last week.

The death toll far surpassed that of Beirut's devastating port explosion in 2020, when hundreds of tons of ammonium nitrate stored in a warehouse detonated, killing at least 218 people and wounding more than 6,000.

In a recorded message, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu urged Lebanese civilians to heed Israeli calls to evacuate, saying "take this warning seriously."

"Please get out of harm's way now," Netanyahu said. "Once our operation is finished, you can come back safely to your homes."

The Israeli military said Monday evening that it had carried out a targeted strike in

Turn to Strikes, Page 8

Illinois rental assistance restarted

Illinois' new state-funded, court-based rental assistance program for tenants struggling to pay rent and their landlords opened Friday, according to the state. **Business**

Party lines blur in final weeks of campaign

The lines that have long defined each party's policy priorities are blurring as Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump seek to expand their coalitions in the final weeks of a fiercely competitive election. **Nation & World**



ShotSpotter cessation puts residents on edge

'How will the police know where all the shootings are?'

By Nell Salzman and Peter Breen
Chicago Tribune

Claudia Rodriguez said shootings are so frequent in her Chicago Lawn neighborhood that the sound of gunshots doesn't surprise her. Despite the constant fear she and her children live in every day, she found some security in knowing that technology helped police respond to shootings fast, she said.

But on Monday morning, for the first time in years, a shooting near the hair salon where she works wasn't picked up by the gunshot detection system known as ShotSpotter, a controversial mechanism Mayor Brandon Johnson has criticized as inaccurate and too expensive.

It was taken offline at 12:01 a.m. Monday, according to Chicago police Superintendent Larry Snelling. About 40 minutes later, a 32-year-old man was shot after a verbal altercation with another man on

the sidewalk in the 3300 block of West 63rd Street.

It was the first police-reported shooting to not be picked up by the technology. ShotSpotter, widely adopted by the city six years ago, used acoustic sensors mounted on light poles to alert police about the location of suspected gunfire. The software has been consistently praised by police, including Snelling, who credit it for quicker responses to shootings.

Aldermen overwhelmingly voted in favor of keeping the technology system last week, but Mayor Brandon Johnson, who campaigned on ending the city's use of the technology, vetoed it, arguing it doesn't work well enough to justify its cost.

Indeed in 2021, it gained notoriety after a gunshot alert from a street in Little Village sent responding police running after 13-year-old Adam Toledo. An officer fatally shot him during the chase. Monday,

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Above: Claudia Rodriguez cuts hair (client's name withheld upon request) on Monday at Victoria's Beauty Salon in the Chicago Lawn neighborhood in Chicago. **ARMANDO L. SANCHEZ/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

■ ShotSpotter will compete for another Chicago deal as Mayor Brandon Johnson seeks new first-responder technology. **Page 2**

CTU announces 'no confidence' in schools' Martinez

By Sarah Macaraeg
Chicago Tribune

The Chicago Teachers Union continued to ramp up its efforts to oust Chicago Public Schools CEO Pedro Martinez on Monday, announcing in a news release that union representatives at a delegates' meeting last week had unanimously passed a vote of no confidence, "in light of his failures to urgently address the needs confronting the district and embark on the transforma-

tion of our schools."

CTU's announcement comes amid ongoing collective bargaining negotiations and debate over whether the Chicago Board of Education, whose members have the sole power to terminate Martinez, should buck the union's desires and former CTU organizer Mayor Brandon Johnson — in favor of stability in district finances and leadership.

Board members unanimously passed a five-year strategic plan presented by Martinez last week.

CPS did not immediately provide Martinez's response to the CTU's no-confidence vote, nor comment on whether board leaders have ruled out the possibility of terminating his contract early and without cause, which would require he receive a six-month notice and 20-week severance payout, according to the terms of his contract.

Johnson appointed each of the seven board members to terms ending in January. CPS' governing body will then expand to a

board of 21 people, including 10 selected by voters, in newly drawn school districts across the city, during the General Election in November.

Candidates vying for a seat in Districts 6, 9 and 10 weighed in on Martinez's uncertain future, at a forum at Englewood STEM High School on Saturday. Recent weeks have seen around 400 school leaders, and 15 aldermen, voice their support for Martinez,

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TODAY'S WEATHER



High 70 Low 58

Complete Chicagoland forecast on Page 16

\$4.00 city and suburbs and elsewhere
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