By RYAN BENNESSY

Colder weather is finally arriving in St. Joseph, and local social service agencies are making plans to get those in the homeless community out of the elements and into shelter.

A new collaborative plan to provide winter shelter for those in need has been put together by 36 local agencies. Beginning Jan. 4, homeless men and women can go to the Community Missions cold weather shelter at 700 Olive St. A plan for homeless women is pending.

The women’s facility will be provided by the Community Action Partnership of Greater St. Joseph CAPS-JOEL was housing the homeless in an area hotel, and before that, they were staying at the Crossing’s building at 52nd and Eighth St.

United Way of Greater St. Joseph President Tylor Stough will be the point of contact for organizations and individuals that want to support the shelters with things like meals and volunteered time.

The cold weather shelters offer CAPS-JOEL and Community Missions caseworkers time to potentially solve problems that have led to an individual’s homelessness.

“If they enter this emergency shelter and they want more stable housing, hopefully that caseworker, along with all the agencies around the table, will be able to offer them opportunities to something a little more stable so that we won’t see the same 15 or 20 people every single night all season long,” Stough said.

The emergency plan will operate between Jan. 4 and April 30, but the shelters have the opportunity of opening earlier if severe winter conditions arise before or after those dates.

The effort behind helping individuals find housing on the local level is backed by the Continuum of Care Interagency Director of Operations Randy Sharp is a member of that local collaboration.

In November, the Continuum of Care document that includes 13 individuals or families who were homeless in April 2021 said he regards certain rules as “unconstitutional,” referring to provisions that require people to wear face coverings indoors in school under some situations and to stay home if exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19. On Thursday, the district said it has reached out to Education Counselor LLC of Columbia, to weigh the implications of Schmitt’s “cease and desist” letter.

By Marcus Clem

The St. Joseph School District is conducting a review of suspension protocols in consultation with attorneys after a state official threatened to sue the district, but there is little sign local elected officials are inclined to reverse course.

Attorney General Eric Schmitt, in a letter sent to the SJSD and several other school districts last week, said he regards certain rules as “unconstitutional” referring to provisions that require people to wear face coverings indoors in school under some situations and to stay home if exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19. On Thursday, the district said it has reached out to Education Counselor LLC of Columbia, to weigh the implications of Schmitt’s “cease and desist” letter.

LaTanya Williams speaks from her workplace at the Bartlett Center in St. Joseph. She said that the SJSD Board of Education has a responsibility to protect children and stand by them.

The Board of Education met scheduled to meet at 5:30 p.m. Monday, Dec. 20, will “oversee the policy” according to an SJSD statement.

“Our goal is to keep students and staff members safe and healthy and to keep as many students learning in the classroom as possible,” district officials said. “The SJSD School Board has approved COVID-19 mitigation protocols and has consistently reviewed the district’s plans and made decisions in accordance with board policy.

Although they speak only for themselves and can’t individually set the rules, board members Rick Gilmore and LaTonya Williams said Thursday that regardless of what the district does, they have no intention of allowing Schmitt to force that decision. Gilmore, who to date has voted “no” on each expansion of COVID-19 rules the school district has adopted this fall, said Schmitt is simply wrestling in getting involved.

“I think he is overstepping his boundaries,” Gilmore said. “The school board’s responsible for St. Joseph’s school district. And our bylaws tell us we need to follow guidelines according to our local health department. And that’s what we’re doing. So, you know, I think the attorney general’s overstepping his boundaries.”

Lemons said that as a mother of children who attend the district and someone who feels compelled to stand by them, she understands the need to follow guidelines but that she feels the SJSD has no option to stand up for its students.

The SJSD Board to review COVID policies after lawsuit threat

By Morgan Riddle

A St. Joseph man has been charged with second-degree murder in the shooting death of a teen-age boy.

Anthony Williams, 18, from the area of 17-year-old Chance Kelley, according to court documents. Williams entered Oak Ridge Apartments just before 5 p.m. on Nov. 11 where Kelley was seated on a staircase. Williams attempted to 18-year-old charged in the murder of teen

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