

AMAZON + HUNTLEY = 1,000 JOBS

By **KELLI DUNCAN**
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The client behind a large development in Huntley whose identity was kept a secret throughout the entire planning and zoning process with the village was revealed Tuesday to be Amazon, the online shopping behemoth that

employs more than 1 million people in the U.S. and abroad.

After more than three months of suspense, it was announced in a news release Tuesday afternoon that the

large plot of land at 41W368 Freeman Road will be used to build an Amazon receive center, which will bring 1,000 jobs with a starting wage of \$15 an hour and guaranteed benefits for all employees.

“A project of this magnitude will be a catalyst for future growth and will assist in the village’s ongoing efforts to

attract and promote new business development,” Huntley Mayor Chuck Sass said in the release. “We are excited to see what lies ahead as we welcome Amazon to Huntley.”

The new receive center will be used to bring in large orders of product and break them down before shipping them out to Amazon fulfillment cen-

ters, where individual orders are mailed out to consumers, according to the release and statements made by Sass in an interview Tuesday.

“I have nothing against Amazon or any big warehouse distribution center like that,” Sass said. “I don’t shop it, but

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McHENRY COUNTY

Harvard man sentenced to 8 years in prison for Crystal Lake robbery

NORTHWEST HERALD

Joseph D. Hunter, 34, of Harvard was sentenced to eight years in prison in connection with the February 2020 robbery of a gas station in Crystal Lake.

Hunter, who previously had been identified as being from Clinton, Wisconsin, was accused of entering the Circle K at 220 Virginia St., implying to the employee that he was armed and demanding money from the cash register, Crystal Lake police said at the time. He then left the store with the money.

No injuries were reported, according to the Crystal Lake Police Department.

Hunter originally was taken into custody by Harvard police after he was found in possession of a motor vehicle that had been



Joseph D. Hunter, 34, of Harvard

reported stolen to Crystal Lake police in February 2020, Crystal Lake police said in a news release at the time.

Hunter ran from police who tried to make contact with him as he was walking away from the vehicle, according to a news release from the Harvard Police Department issued at the time. Hunter was apprehended a short time later.

The Harvard Police Department thought Hunter matched the description of the Circle K gas station robbery suspect and alerted the Crystal Lake Police Department, according to the release.

Hunter pleaded guilty to robbery where the victim is older than 60, a Class 1 felony, according to a news release Tuesday from the McHenry County State's Attorney's Office.

The case was investigated by the Crystal Lake Police Department and prosecuted by Brian Miller of the McHenry County State's Attorney's Office, according to the release.

• AMAZON

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everybody in my family does and everything. It's amazing that you put an order in and it's there like the next day. ... It's the wave of the future, I guess."

Sass said he feels this Amazon facility will be the key to unlocking a period of swift economic growth in the village, pointing to other potential developers who cited not enough workers in Huntley to patronize their businesses during the day for not moving forward.

Tax dollars generated by the development will be a great thing for local school districts, libraries and other entities supported by taxpayer dollars, Sass said.

"All these taxing bodies are looking for ways to supplement, and hopefully this helps keep them from raising the property taxes," he said.

In a March interview, Sass said he had a feeling it may be Amazon and said Tuesday that he was glad to have his suspicion confirmed. He was notified

mere hours before the information was made public and nearly one month after the Huntley Village Board approved the final development plan, he said.

The idea of approving a new development without knowing the company that would inhabit it would have been unthinkable "back in the day," Sass said in March, but the practice has become increasingly common in recent years.

"It's a different way of thinking about it, but I'm proud that we did it this way," he said then. "You've got to adapt."

Amazon's developer for the project, Chicago-based Venture One Real Estate, began work on the 282-acre Freeman Road property in mid-March, the Northwest Herald reported.

In the coming months, the company plans to construct a 629,186-square-foot distribution center with a 44,186-square-foot office space as well as a parking lot big enough to accommodate more than 1,000 parking spaces for employees and 720 semitrailer parking spaces, according to the de-

velopment plan presented to the village.

The Huntley receive center will bring an estimated 1,000 jobs to the community once it is operational in 2022 and all employees will receive benefits that include "full medical, vision, and dental insurance, as well as a 401(k) plan with a 50% match starting on the first day of employment," according to the news release. Amazon currently employs 35,000 people across the state of Illinois.

Despite these benefits, Amazon has come under fire recently for its treatment of employees and attempts to block workers from unionizing in multiple states, culminating in a closely watched union vote among Amazon workers at a fulfillment center in Bessemer, Alabama.

Sass said he is not concerned about these kinds of reports and said the potential for community backlash is a reality that comes with every big decision made.

On the issue of labor unions, he said "people have a right to organize."

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