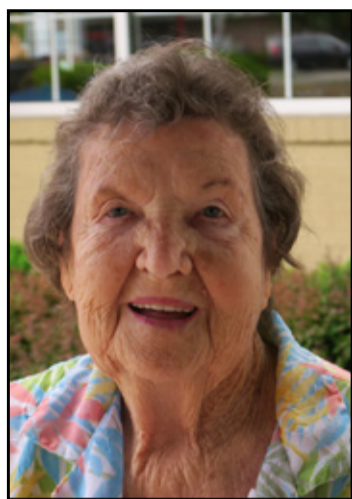


➔ TODAY'S VERSE

Galatians 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.



➔ FACES OF HAMILTON COUNTY

People who call our community their own.

What makes Joanne White smile? "My grandson and great-grandchildren," said the 92-year-old Noblesville woman. She has one son, the late Joe Wilson, and daughter-in-law, Vicki; two grandchildren, Craig Wilson and Angie McCauley; and five great-grandchildren. Andrew, Erin and Lindsay Wilson and Mason and Alexis McCauley. She has worked for The Noblesville Ledger and The Times. "Before that, I was the telephone operator before they went dial," she said. "We were at the corner of Maple and Ninth Street, and there was a long board where we'd plug the cords in for people to ask us for a number. Somebody was there 24-7 ... When Noblesville closed, we went to 40th and Central in Indianapolis, then from there, down to New York (Street) where the nature office was... That didn't last very long, because in '64, I married Eddy White who had White Oldsmobile (on Logan Street in Noblesville)." She said, "It doesn't seem like it's been that long ago, but time really flies." She and her twin brother, Joe Cook, graduated in 1948 from Noblesville High School. "I'm still on the Noblesville Alumni Board for the scholarship committee." She was found during the summer having lunch on the patio at Culver's Restaurant in Noblesville. The former Joanne Cook, she's related to Steve and Matt Cook and every August enjoys the Cook Reunion at Forest Park. She was an election poll worker for more than 12 years at the Hamilton County Government & Judicial Center and some of the precincts, but in 2020 was the first year she didn't work due to the pandemic.

And Another Thing...

1. Spartz Statement

Yesterday, Rep. Victoria Spartz (R-IN) issued the following statement on her vote for Speaker of the House: "We have a constitutional duty to elect the Speaker of the House, but we have to deliberate further as a Republican conference until we have enough votes and stop wasting everyone's time. None of the Republican candidates have this number yet. That's why I voted present after all votes were cast."

2. Crouch Statement

Indiana Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch, who is president of the Indiana Senate and secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development in the state, is also running for governor. Earlier this week, she shared the following statement regarding the 2023 Next Level Agenda:

"As I travel around the state and meet with Hoosiers, the issues that are top of mind - attacking the mental health and addiction crisis, providing affordable high-speed connectivity, strengthening access to exceptional health care, and receiving a superior education - all contribute to quality of life. This legislative agenda will not only lead to our 10th straight balanced budget, it will lead to a better quality of life Hoosiers want and deserve."

The TIMES

Hamilton County's Own Daily Newspaper



NOBLESVILLE, INDIANA

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The Times photo courtesy of Betsy Reason

Betty Gerrard, who played the costumed interpreter role of Betsy Birdwhistle, Kate Bend, and the doctor's Aunt Elizabeth, celebrates her 100th birthday in August 2021 at Forest Park Lodge in Noblesville. She passed away on Friday, Dec. 30, 2022, at age 101.

A Life Well Lived: Conner Prairie's Betty Gerrard, 101, Remembered



BETSY REASON
The Times Editor

Noblesville's Elizabeth Gerrard was known to her friends as "Betty." But she will always be "Betsy Birdwhistle" to so many people who knew her

from Conner Prairie.

Gerrard, who first came to Conner Prairie as a volunteer more than 55 years ago, played many roles during her years as a costumed interpreter there.

"I had all kinds of husbands," Gerrard said. "Sometimes, I was a storekeeper's wife. And the doctor's Aunt Elizabeth who had a successful husband (and who played the piano by ear)." She was also the weaver's wife.

Her favorite character was Kate Bend, mother-in-law of the potter. "She couldn't read or write or cipher. She had a pipe in her mouth and a jug on her hip. I neither smoked or drank but I played that character," Gerrard said. "As Kate, I would go barefoot. How many jobs can you go barefoot?"

She made up Kate and Aunt

Purity, along with her school teacher role, Betsy Birdwhistle.

"I just loved the name 'Birdwhistle.' It was a name that was used in the 1830s, and it was fun for me."

Gerrard said she was 46 years old, "a grown woman," when she came to Conner Prairie to be a volunteer, which later turned into a paid position. "It was a wonderful job. We didn't get paid much But the perks were wonderful. You met people from all over the world," she said. Gerrard, who learned how to cook over an open fire, and how to roast potatoes in ashes, and all kinds of other hands-on skills, retired in 2008 after 42 years.

By now, many of my read-

➔ See BETSY Page A5

Jensen Files for Re-Election

Yesterday, Mayor Chris Jensen formally filed with the Hamilton County Clerk to seek a second term as Mayor of Noblesville.

"I am thrilled to have the opportunity to continue to serve my hometown of Noblesville," said Mayor Jensen.

"As Mayor, I have focused on sustaining the development of our authentic downtown while charting a path for our bright future. Together, Noblesville can continue to focus on protecting our historic downtown while embracing our unique asset of the White River and investing in our brave first responders."

During his time in office, Mayor Jensen has led efforts that have attracted more than

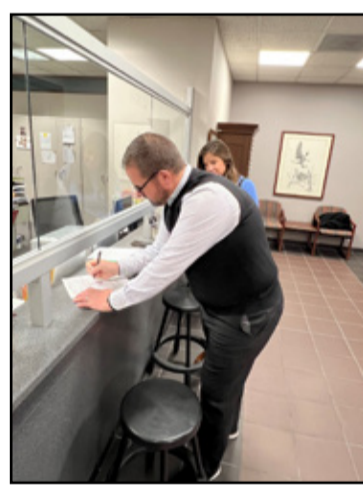


Photo courtesy of Mayor Jensen

At the County Clerk's office yesterday Mayor Chris Jensen fills out his filing form to run for a second term; behind him is his wife, Julie Jensen.

\$1 billion in private investment and has worked to address the

➔ See JENSEN Page A5

Alexander Wins Race for County Council President

Ken Alexander has been elected president of the Hamilton County Council. He replaces Steve Schwartz in the role. Amy Massillamany will serve as Vice President.

Election of officers is an annual practice at the first meeting of each year.

Alexander was elected to the Hamilton County Council in 2018. He represents District 4 which includes Adams, Wash-



Council President Ken Alexander

➔ See COUNTY Page A5

Aaron Smith Wins Race for Council President

Aaron Smith was elected the new president of the Noblesville Common Council following a vote during an organization meeting held Tuesday evening. Darren Peterson was elected as vice president.

"We have a lot of projects coming out of the ground this year and I am excited to work closely with Aaron and the rest of our common council members," said Noblesville Mayor

➔ See COUNCIL Page A5

➔ INSIDE TODAY

- Obituaries.....A2
- Tim Timmons.....A2
- Service Directory.....A3
- Capital Chronicle.....A4
- Classifieds.....A3

➔ TODAY'S HEALTH TIP

Kindness is contagious - surround yourself with giving people. Today's health tip was brought to you by Dr. John Roberts. Be sure to catch his column each week in The Times and online at www.thetimes24-7.com.



➔ HONEST HOOSIER

Yes millennials! Us Boomers walked to school ... uphill ... both ways. But before you completely dismiss us, think about this. We passed school without the help of Google or the Internet!



➔ TODAY'S QUOTE

"It's never too late to become who you want to be. I hope you live a life that you're proud of, and if you find that you're not, I hope you have the strength to start over."

- F. Scott Fitzgerald

➔ TODAY'S JOKE

What do you call a dishonest snowman?
A snowfake!

➔ OBITUARIES

Derrell J. "DJ/Mohawk" Eneyart Jr.
Betty Jean (Beard) Pickett



The Times appreciates all our customers. Today, we'd like to personally thank **STEPHEN CRAIG** for subscribing!



13 WTHR 7 DAY FORECAST

32/39 PLURIM LIGHT SNOW	30/38 CHILLY	28/43 RAINFALL LATE	35/41 WINDY SHOWERS	27/43 SOME SUN	32/45 MOSTLY CLOUDY	28/41 SOME SUN
THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED

⇒ OBITUARIES

Derrell J. "DJ/Mohawk" Enyeart Jr.

July 17, 1964-December 7, 2022

Derrell J. "DJ/Mohawk" Enyeart Jr., 58, of Lapel, passed away on Wednesday, Dec. 7, 2022, at Parkview Regional Health in Fort Wayne.

He was born on July 17, 1964, in Anderson to Derrell J. Enyeart Sr. and Pamela K. Michael.

Mr. Enyeart had worked for and was a member of the Union 120 Laborers. He formerly owned DJ's Concrete Specialists. He was also a member and former president of the Lapel Eagles Aerie 4323. He was a former coach and umpire for Lapel Little League.

Mr. Enyeart enjoyed bowling at Wells Lanes in Elwood. He was an avid IU, Cincinnati Reds, Pacers, and Indianapolis Colts fan. He also enjoyed hunting, fishing, camping, and watching baseball, basketball and high school football.

Survivors include his 2 children Miracle (Austin Moore) Enyeart of Muncie and Mat (Leanne) Collard of Anderson; 3 siblings Ralph (Angie) Enyeart of Colorado, Bill (Rachel) Edgar of Ohio and Suzie Edgar of Ohio; 3 grandchildren Ronan Collard, Joshua Parke and Aubrey Robinson; and several nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents and infant brother Nicholas Lee Enyeart.

Funeral services are scheduled for 4 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 7, 2023, at Hersberger-Bozell Funeral Home, 1010 North Main St. in Lapel. Visitation is scheduled to run from 2-4 p.m. at the funeral home. A celebration of life is scheduled to take place after the services from 5-7 p.m. at the Lapel Eagles.

Memorial contributions may be made to Lapel Little League or the Lapel Eagles Christmas Outreach Program.

Online condolences may be shared at www.hersbergerbozell.com

Betty Jean (Beard) Pickett

November 18, 1928-December 31, 2022

Betty J. (Beard) Pickett, age 94, of Sheridan, Indiana passed away on Saturday, Dec. 31, 2022.

She was born on Nov. 18, 1928, to Glen and Ruth (Ramsey) Beard.

Mrs. Pickett was a graduate of Sheridan High School, class of 1946. She was a member of Six Points Church. She worked at Aero Drapery in Westfield for 15 years. She loved camping, cooking, crafts, gardening and singing in the church choir.

She married Gene Pickett on Aug. 14, 1946; they were married for 64 years.

Survivors include her 3 children Ruth Ann (John) Hines, Eula Jean Walker and Eric (Teresa) Pickett; 6 grandchildren Jason (Joanne) Hines, Jennifer (Cameron) Groce, Erica Walker, Ashley (Zach) Sharp, Jillian Pickett and Brandon (Kaitlyn) Pickett; 4 great-grandsons; 1 great-granddaughter; and sister Mabeth (Martin) Little.

She was preceded in death by her parents and husband Eugene B. Pickett.

Funeral Services are scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 7, 2023, at 1 p.m. at Fisher Family Funeral Services, 508 East Sixth St. in Sheridan. Family and friends are scheduled to gather from 11 a.m. to time of service. Pastor Scott McDermid will be officiating. Burial will follow at Crown View Cemetery.

Memorial donations may be made to Six Points Church, 1545 West 226th St., Sheridan, IN, 46069. Everyone is invited to sign the online guestbook, leave a condolence or share a memory at fisherfunerals.com



TIM TIMMONS
Two Cents

Newspapers attract the oddest people sometimes. I have had people waltz into my office to tell me about the alien spaceship that landed in their field as well as multiple folks who said they had to remain anonymous because they uncovered the JFK conspiracy and their lives were in danger.

Still, last week, topped them all.

A bearded mystery man walked in, did not wait for an invite and promptly sat down. He had the weirdest eyes and a hat that looked like one of those poofy velvet things French painters wore in the 1500s.

He didn't say a word, just stared at me. After an awkward moment, he reached into jacket and handed me a card.

"Michel Notadumas - Teller of Fortunes, Seer of the Future, Prognosticator Extraordinaire . . . Direct from Paris."

And then, in very small print, after the word Paris, it said Illinois.

Inwardly I groaned. It was going to be one of those days.

"OK, Mr. Notadumas," I tried. "What can I do for you?"

He handed me another card.

"I do not speak for I see the future. There is no need for talk."

Alrighty then.

"Well Mr. Notadumas, if you aren't going to talk I'm not sure what I can do for you."

He handed me another card.

"I have a list of six predictions that are going to come true in 2023. If you agree to give me the proper credit I deserve for these, I will share them with you. If you do not agree, I will take them elsewhere."

I should be so lucky.

I sighed. "Tell you what, Mr. Notadumas, how about if you show me your list and if we use it, I will make sure to give you credit."

He handed me a sheet of paper. On it were indeed six predictions. Mind you I am not saying I buy any of these, but a deal's a deal so - straight from Michel Notadumas - here you go.

6. The Indianapolis Colts, fresh off one of the most embarrassing seasons in NFL history, announced they could not reach an agreement with the city of Indianapolis on a new lease at Lucas

Oil Stadium. The team is seeking a new location and approached Noblesville. The city politely said no thank you.

5. A group identified as Working On Keeping Equality - W.O.K.E. - announced that they were starting a national movement to rename Gen. Lew Wallace's epic work, Ben-Hur to Ben-Them. When a journalist pointed out that Hur was simply a name and was even spelled differently than Her, the group replied "pronouns matter."

4. After winning election to the U.S. Senate, Noblesville's Victoria Spartz declared her early candidacy for a presidential run in 2028. Spartz said that after the mess Joe Biden left, America was a lot more like her home country of Ukraine than the vibrant growing land it used to be.

3. Hamilton County, along with Noblesville, Westfield, Fishers and Carmel, announced that every spotlight would be eliminated by 2025 and replaced with a round-about. Former Carmel Mayor Jim Brainard, now the chief loan officer for the World Bank, said he applauded the decision. Sheridan promptly announced it would add two stoplights for fond reminiscing purposes.

2. Hamilton County became the first county in the nation with four cities

over 100,000 population after Westfield and Noblesville topped the mark. Fishers now has more than 150,000 residents, Noblesville is still growing at 110,000. Westfield is just under 102,000 and Carmel is still at 100,001. Coincidentally, the Greyhounds' girls swim team increased its record to 100,000 wins in a row as well.

1. In a surprise move, Cicero, Arcadia, Atlanta and Sheridan are considering a merger and becoming Hamilton County's fifth city. If approved, the new city would take the first letter from each town and name itself CASA. The new city's slogan would be "Mmi Casa, our Casa - and don't you forget it!"

Michel Notadumas left my office. I doubt we ever see him again, but in the very unlikely event any of these predictions come to pass, I would usually ask that you remember you read it here first. This time, not so much.

Two cents, which is about how much Timmons said his columns are worth, appears periodically on Thursdays in The Times. Timmons is the chief executive officer of Sagamore News Media, the company that owns The Noblesville Times. He is also a proud Noblesville High School graduate and can be contacted at ttimmons@thetimes24-7.com.

Here's 6 Predictions for 2023 . . . Sort Of

NPA to Feature 3 Artists of the Month in January

Nickel Plate Arts is featuring three artists of the month in January. The artists of the month include Alice Lee, Bobbi K. Samples, and Caroline Hays, and each of their exhibits will each be featured at a different Nickel Plate Arts showcase location.

STEPHENSON HOUSE: Alice Lee

Alice Lee is a self-taught artist and has taken classes at the Indianapolis Art Center to learn techniques. Lee's exhibit, "Do Art No Matter What," features her creative interests—which are cartoon in nature and geared towards the celebration of everyday activities—in large scale oil paintings and pottery. One particular painting, "Miss Cow," was inspired by 1900s French artist Jean Dubuffet, who coined the term "art brut," which translates to "raw art" and describes graffiti or naïve art that is made outside the academic tradition of fine art. Lee had hopes to make a lady of her cow and describes her own style as organic.

"I want to share my way of seeing human nature," Lee says. "I hope to lift the spirits of the viewer by showing the charm in our everyday activities."

When it comes to her pottery work, Lee wants to maintain her connection with spontaneity; she randomly marks the clay, stretches it, then throws it, letting it land freely on her work surface. The result is a truly unreproducible organic design that she

applies to her vase.

"My pottery is never finished until someone unites it with an object from nature," Lee said.

Her full exhibit can be seen in the Stephenson House Wednesday through Friday from 12-5 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. You can meet Lee during the January First Friday event tomorrow from 6-9 p.m. in the Stephenson House on Nickel Plate Arts campus.

MEYER NAJEM: Bobbi K. Samples

This month, Bobbi Samples's work will make a return to Meyer Najem's 2nd floor gallery. Flowers are a staple of Samples's work, and her style is a definitive one. Her exhibit, "Floral Tour of Bermuda," features strong, bold colors that mirror who Samples is—a bright, bubbly personality who isn't afraid to take a canvas and turn it into a delightful garden.

A recent summer trip to Bermuda is her latest inspiration.

"The island was gorgeous—so many colors of green, from lime to dark to fern, all in one bush," said Samples. "The flowers just captivated me; we had to start taking photos because I knew it would inspire a show."

When inspired, Samples can create an entire exhibit of art in a single month. She scores out her painting, then uses a large brush to create the background. Lights and shadows come next, with her trusty putty knife bringing

in the color and her signature texture. A few coats of a fine oil glaze adds a UV protectant and gives the product perfect high-gloss results.

Samples is no stranger to Nickel Plate Arts, as she is a longtime member of the board and a Gala committee chair. She is also an annual Showcase artist, and her talents and support are seen and felt everywhere the organization has a presence.

Her full exhibit can be seen at Meyer Najem at 11787 Lantern Road in Fishers on the 2nd floor, Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. You can meet Samples at her free public reception on March 4 from 4-7 p.m. in the Meyer Najem 2nd floor gallery.

FOUR DAY RAY: Caroline Hays

Artist Caroline Hays's work demonstrates the layers of history that go into a place. Hays invites the viewer to step into the history of each place in her exhibit, "Read Between the Layers."

Hays graduated from Indiana University as a graphic designer, where she spent time working for the school's newspaper.

"I enjoyed it, but it wasn't exactly what I wanted to do full time," Hays said.

She decided to get her teaching license and began teaching drawing and painting classes at Noblesville High School.

"[I] love witnessing [my] students grow in their

skills and seeing them define their voice as an artist," she said.

Hays's own artwork is inspired by her immense love for history and her family's legacy of travel. Her grandfather—who was a navigator in World War II—would mark the family's travels on maps, which became a big part of Hays's artwork. She developed a mixed media style that is composed of layers of maps, brochures, and other paper-related items that came from the artifacts her grandparents kept to document their travels.

The foundation of her process starts with adhering a map to the surface of the piece. She then builds in layers of shapes inspired by the architecture of the place. Her use of neutral colors works to invoke a sense of nostalgia with the viewer, similar to sepia-toned photographs and aged history books. Gold leaf and splatters are often incorporated to add a final element of human touch, symbolizing the passage of time and communicating a sense of sacredness to the place.

Her full exhibit can be seen at Four Day Ray Brewing at 11671 Lantern Road in Fishers, Sunday and Monday from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., Tuesday through Thursday from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., and Friday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. You can meet Hays at her free public reception on Feb. 20 from 4:30-7:30 p.m. at Four Day Ray.

Carmel Schools Earns \$15K IDEM Grant to Aid Recycling Efforts

Carmel Clay Schools is getting \$15,000 from the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, along with 15 other applicants the agency announced this week.

The grants are available to counties, municipalities, solid waste management districts, schools and nonprofit organizations located in Indiana. Here is the list of recipients and the amounts they were awarded:

- City of Elwood: \$13,620
 - City of Portage: \$72,130
 - City of Valparaiso: \$11,775
 - Crawford County Solid Waste Management District: \$4,946
 - Dubois County Solid Waste Management District: \$2,017
 - Gibson County Solid Waste Management District: \$1,000
 - Hancock County Solid Waste Management District: \$15,300
 - Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana: \$96,600
 - Jay County Solid Waste Management District: \$48,528
 - Lawrenceburg High School: \$12,779
 - Shelby County Recycling District: \$35,531
 - Teachers' Treasures: \$93,137
 - Wabash College: \$34,920
 - Warren County Recycling Center: \$27,600
- "IDEM is proud to work with communities throughout the state toward



increasing recycling opportunities," IDEM Commissioner Brian Rockensuess said.

"The grants are a great way for IDEM to promote recycling and facilitate recycling education in communities statewide."

Altogether, IDEM awarded \$513,593 to 16 applicants. IDEM said that grant funding is intended to create successful, cost-effective programs. Applicants must demonstrate a positive environmental impact within the project service area, an increase in waste diversion because of the project and show the sustainability of the project.

Grants are funded through IDEM's Solid Waste Management Fund. Funds come from the solid waste management fee (IC 13-20-22-1). The fee consists of \$0.50 per ton charge on solid waste for final disposal at Indiana municipal solid waste landfills and incinerators. None of the funding comes from tax dollars.

CPA Announces New Member of Development Team

The Center for the Performing Arts has named Elizabeth Elliott to the new position of Partnership Development Coordinator, responsible for stewarding relationships with the non-profit Center's corporate and community partners and supporters.

An Indianapolis resident, Elliott arrives with experience in marketing at Opera Columbus in Ohio and advancement and sponsorships at Music for All in Indianapolis. She holds a bachelor's degree in Vocal Performance from the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, where she was a Hudson Holland Scholar.

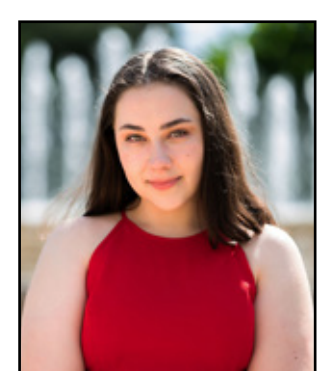
Elliott will work alongside Lindsay Fish, the Center's Director of Partnership Development.

"Elizabeth's prior experience shows a real passion for the arts and an understanding of the importance of our community relationships," Fish said.

"We continually look for ways to be better stewards of our corporate supporters. The addition of Elizabeth enhances our capacity to maintain those connections and exceed expectations."

About the Center for the Performing Arts:

The mission of the nonprofit Center for the Performing Arts is



Elizabeth Elliott

to engage and inspire the Indiana community through enriching arts experiences. Its campus in Carmel, Indiana, includes the 1,500-seat Palladium concert hall, the 500-seat Tarkington proscenium theater and the black-box

Studio Theater.

The Center presents and hosts hundreds of events each year, including the *Center Presents* performance series, featuring the best in classical, jazz, pop, rock, country, comedy and other genres. Educational and experiential programming for all ages includes children's concerts and camps, book clubs, lectures, and classes in music and dance. The Center is home to the affiliated Great American Songbook Foundation and provides space and support services for six resident arts companies.

More information is available at TheCenterPresents.org

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IDDC Launches Grant Programs to Support Public Art & Signage



The Indiana Destination Development Corporation (IDDC) has just launched two new grants – the IN Indiana Public Art Activation Grant and IN Indiana Placemaking Activation Grant – that will give local artists and communities the unique opportunity to create IN Indiana artwork and signage in highly-visible locations throughout the state.

The IN Indiana Placemaking Activation Grant is a matching grant of up to \$25,000 to fund signage and placemaking efforts. The IN Indiana Public Art Activation Grant is a non-matching grant of up to \$10,000 to fund public art projects.

The IDDC plans to allocate up to \$500,000 total between both grants

based on the quality of applications received. Grantees will receive 75% of funding upon award and 25% upon project completion.

These programs follow the success of the initial round of the Public Art Activation Grant program in 2022, which saw IDDC fund over 40 murals and sculptures across the state. You can see those projects at VisitIndiana.com/Murals.

“Indiana is a diverse state that’s full of character, and we plan to showcase that through these works of art,” said Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch.

“Through the public artwork, we will have the opportunity to work together with our local communities to show in our state. From the



Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch

smallest towns to the largest cities, there is something for everyone IN Indiana.”

The IDDC is now accepting applications and the deadline to submit is 4 p.m. on March 17. All applicants will be considered, including but not limited to communities, destination marketing organizations, chambers of commerce and private businesses. Potential public art locations can include anything from exterior walls and alleyways to bridges, barns and more. “This activation aligns

perfectly with the IDDC’s new IN Indiana campaign, which is all about giving tools and a voice to everyone,” said IDDC Secretary and CEO Elaine Bedel.

“This not only enables us to highlight local artists and organizations, but also use the IN Indiana campaign to tie Indiana communities together in a way that adds to the beauty of Indiana’s rural, urban and suburban landscapes.”

Projects will be selected based on the quality of the submitted design, with preference given to locations in high-view areas that create potential for photo opportunities. IDDC intends to include a diverse group of locations and projects, including urban, suburban and rural settings, large and small communities, and locations in different regions of the state.

For more information on guidelines and timelines, go to visitindiana.com/about-iddc/for-industry-partners/awards-grants.

Farmer Sentiment Makes Significant Year-End Rebound

Following a two-month decline and a year of weak sentiment, the Purdue University/CME Group Ag Economy Barometer closed out the year on a more positive note, rallying 24 points in December to a reading of 126. U.S. farmers were more optimistic about both their current situation and expectations for the future.

The Current Conditions Index jumped 37 points to a reading of 135, while the Future Expectations Index increased 18 points to a reading of 122. The Ag Economy Barometer is calculated each month from 400 U.S. agricultural producers’ responses to a telephone survey. This month’s survey was conducted Dec. 5-9.

“The improvement in current sentiment was motivated by producers’ stronger perception of current financial conditions on their farms and could be attributed to producers taking time to estimate their farms’ 2022 income following the completion of the fall harvest,” said James Mintert, the barometer’s principal investigator and director of Purdue University’s Center for Commercial Agriculture.

The Farm Financial Performance Index climbed 18 points to a reading of 109 in December. Notably, this was the only time in 2022 that the index was above 100. The turnaround was driven by a sharp increase in the percentage of producers who expect better performance than last year, which jumped from 23% to 35% of respondents, and is consistent with USDA’s forecast for strong net farm income in 2022.

The Farm Capital Investment Index climbed 9 points this month to 40, the highest reading for the index since February; yet, it remains 9 points lower than a year earlier. Among the nearly three-quarters of respondents who said it was a bad time for large investments, the most commonly cited reason was high prices for farm machinery and new construction (41%), followed by rising interest

rates (28%).

Despite the improvement in farmers’ perceptions of their financial situations, both the short- and long-term farmland value indices continued to drift lower in December. The short-term index fell 5 points to 124, while the long-term index declined 4 points to 140. When examined over the course of the last year, it’s clear that sentiment among producers about farmland values has shifted.

For example, compared to a year ago, the percentage of respondents who expect to see farmland values decline in the upcoming year increased from 6% to 15%, while the percentage expecting to see values rise declined from 59% to 39%.

Among producers who expect farmland values to rise over the next 5 years, just over three-fourths of them said that a combination of nonfarm investor demand and inflation are the main reasons they expect to see values rise.

Looking to the year ahead, the December survey asked producers to compare their expectations for their farm’s financial performance in 2023 to 2022. Producers indicated they expect lower financial performance in 2023 and cited rising costs and narrowing margins as key reasons. Concerns about costs continue to be top of mind for producers.

Nearly half (47%) of crop producers said they expect farmland cash rental rates in 2023 to rise above the previous year. Other top concerns for 2023 include higher input costs (45% of respondents), rising interest rates (22% of respondents) and lower crop or livestock prices (13% of respondents).

The full Ag Economy Barometer report is available online by visiting ag.purdue.edu/commercialag/ageconomybarometer/. The site also offers additional resources – such as past reports, charts and survey methodology – and a form to sign up for monthly barometer email updates and webinars.

NFPA Reminding Homeowners to Remove Their Christmas Trees

One-third (33 percent) of U.S. home fires involving Christmas trees occur in January. With this post-holiday fire hazard in mind, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) strongly encourages everyone to keep the festive memories and remove the hazards by disposing of Christmas trees promptly after the holiday season.

“As much as we all enjoy the look and feel of Christmas trees in our homes, they’re large combustible items that have the potential to result in serious fires,” said Lorraine Carli, vice president of Outreach and Advocacy at.

“The longer Christmas trees remain in homes, the longer they present a risk.”

Carli notes that fresh Christmas trees, which continue to dry out and become more flammable over time, are involved in a much larger share of reported Christmas tree fires than artificial trees.

According to the latest Christmas Tree Fires report from NFPA, 160 home structure fires began



with Christmas trees, resulting in two civilian deaths, 11 civilian injuries, and \$12 million in direct property damage, on average each year between 2016 and 2020. Overall, fires that begin with Christmas trees represent a very small but notable part of the U.S. fire problem, considering that they are generally in use for a short time each year.

To safely dispose of a Christmas tree, NFPA recommends using the local community’s recycling program, if possible; trees should not be put in the garage or left outside. NFPA also offers these tips for safely removing lighting and decorations to ensure that they remain in good condition:

- Use the gripping area on the plug when unplugging electrical decorations. Never pull the cord to unplug any device from an electrical outlet, as this can harm the wire and insulation of the cord, increasing the risk for shock or electrical fire.

- As you pack up light strings, inspect each line for damage, throwing out any sets that have loose connections, broken sockets or cracked or bare wires.

- Wrap each set of lights and put them in individual plastic bags or wrap them around a piece of cardboard.

- Store electrical decorations in a dry place away from children and pets where they will not be damaged by water or dampness.

For more information on home fire safety all winter long, visit “Put a Freeze on Winter Fires,” a winter safety campaign NFPA promotes annually with the U.S. Fire Administration.

About The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA):
The National Fire

Protection Association (NFPA) is a global self-funded nonprofit organization devoted to eliminating death, injury, property, and economic loss due to fire, electrical, and related hazards. The association began its work to solve the fire problem in a young, industrialized nation in 1896 and has since become a global force known for advancing safety worldwide.

NFPA delivers information and knowledge through more than 325 consensus codes and standards, research, training, education, outreach and advocacy; and by partnering with others who share an interest in furthering the NFPA mission. In celebration of its 125th Anniversary, NFPA is hosting a Conference Series and other initiatives that reflect the association’s steadfast commitment to advancing fire and life safety for the next 125 years and beyond.

For more information or to view NFPA codes and standards for free, visit nfpa.org

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Healthcare Costs Top Legislative Priorities

By Whitney Downard

Lawmakers and businesses alike have long denounced Indiana's high healthcare prices but haven't yet penalized any actors. Advocates hope for more in the 2023 session, set to start Monday, with an intense focus on the state's hospitals.

Hoosiers have some of the highest costs in the nation despite its overall low cost of living and below average salaries. The latest report from the RAND Corporation, a nonprofit public policy research organization, found that the Hoosier State's hospital prices are the 7th highest in the country, a slight decrease from previous years.

"(Hospitals) do everything they can to prevent competition but then they want to have the freedom to price (services) any way they want to," said Al Hubbard, the chair of Hoosiers for Affordable Healthcare. "If you don't have competition then you exploit the situation and that's what the hospitals are doing."

Brian Tabor, the president of the Indiana Hospital Association, said that hospitals are committed to doing their part to reduce prices, saying pricing will decrease over time due to new transparency initiatives.

"We are confident that we are headed in the right direction, but we are also at a time where hospitals across the state are facing tremendous financial strain and the wrong policies could have devastating impacts," Tabor said. "There's no question we still need to address affordability for Hoosiers, and hospitals are doing our part. But until all sectors across health care are at the table and there is equal transparency, we aren't going to make long term progress."

Legislators passed a bill in 2020 creating a claims database, establishing a hospital price transparency tool in hopes that Hoosiers could shop around for the best prices. But the needle hasn't moved enough to

generate savings.

"People don't shop around for prices after meeting their deductibles because they view it as free (through their insurance). When people are dealing with a fragile health situation they're not shopping around; they do what their doctor tells them to do," Hubbard said.

Public health funding in jeopardy

Just before the 2022 session, House Speaker Todd Huston and Senate Pro Tem Rodric Bray sent letters to health insurance companies and healthcare systems warning that if the corporations didn't reduce their prices, the General Assembly would.

Indiana University Health, the state's largest healthcare entity, announced shortly after that it would be freezing their prices through 2025, which some decried as a "gimmick" since their costs far outpaced national averages. Speaking on behalf of the state's hospitals, the Indiana Hospital Association (IHA) promised to lower overall healthcare costs but rejected "heavy-handed government intervention."

But hospitals have routinely noted that Hoosiers have some of the worst health outcomes in the country, including higher smoking rates, more diabetes diagnoses and high rates of maternal/ infant mortality. These contribute to the state's higher-than-average healthcare expenditures and need to be addressed, hospitals argue.

Local health programs typically address those issues but haven't been effective due to Indiana's poor public health funding, which ranks 47th in the country. The Governor's Public Health Commission, of which Tabor was a member, reported that Indiana spent just \$45 per person in public health dollars compared to the national average of \$91.

Tabor said hospitals needed stability at this time, not more interventions, to recover following the years of stress that

stretched the healthcare system during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I hope this is a session about investing in health care, not making an already fragile system more vulnerable," Tabor said. "Hospitals, and really the whole health care system, have barely begun to rebuilding from years of stress which stretched our resources beyond belief. We must make sure hospitals and caregivers have the resources they need and reject policies that would destabilize the system in these volatile times."

But Republican leaders drafting the budget seemed skeptical that they could meet the commission's recommended \$243 million annual ask, even though one-third of Indiana's counties spend \$10 or less per resident on public health.

"I found (it) a little bit difficult to swallow," said GOP Senate leader Rodric Bray in November, adding that local departments might not be able to handle so much money at once.

In response, proponents amended their ask, proposing that the state phase in its funding over the biennium and cutting their request in half, to \$120 million, for the 2024 fiscal year.

"We'll have to discuss that because it's ongoing," said Sen. Ryan Mishler, who leads the budget process for the chamber. "That's not a one-time deal, that's ongoing, so we have to really take a hard look at that."

But funding the second year at the full \$243 million would be "tight," Mishler said.

Hospitals under more scrutiny

Sen. Travis Holdman, R-Markle, has a way to pay for public health improvements: shift the cost to hospitals.

Holdman, chair of the Senate Tax and Fiscal Policy Committee, suggested levying a tax or assessment on hospitals and health insurance companies that aren't adequately serving the community. He said the entities, which pay no

taxes, funneled profits in Wall Street investment accounts, accumulating so much in their accounts and reserves that many could operate for over a year without charging anyone.

"What are they doing to return the community benefit that they pledged to provide because of their not-for-profit status?" Holdman said at a December conference. "I would give kudos out to Parkview Hospital in northeast Indiana. They're developing and establishing a grocery store in an area of Fort Wayne that is a food desert."

He said that effort – along with encouraging smoking cessation and reducing maternal and infant mortality rates – would go further in benefiting the community than paying thousands of dollars to name a stadium or local YMCA.

Hospitals have repeatedly been targeted by Ball State University economist Mike Hicks, who highlights the role of monopolies in Indiana's high healthcare costs.

Market researchers confirmed some of Hicks' criticisms this summer, reporting that vertical integration and mergers drove prices upward, increasing per capita healthcare spending by 48% between 2011 and 2020. That study found that Parkview Health, the same entity Holdman praised, had a monopoly in the northeast corner of the state, leading to higher monthly premiums than the rest of the state.

Tabor pushed back on the discussion of monopolies, noting that just two insurance companies control nearly 75% of the Indiana market. Indeed, some mergers between hospitals – which opponents said decreased competition – stabilized vulnerable healthcare entities.

"What's ironic about the discussion of consolidation is that most hospitals that have become part of a health system would not have survived on their own, so we need to be careful that we don't actu-

ally worsen access to care by weakening our Indiana providers," Tabor said.

But Hubbard didn't seem to agree with Tabor, saying decreased competition hurt Hoosier consumers.

"If these were for profits, we'd be going after them. It all has to do with their pricing. And what we discovered, what RAND (studies) discovered, is that the guys which happen to be non-profits are the ones who have exorbitant prices," Hubbard said.

Hubbard said every hospital nationally struggled with staffing in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, in which overworked healthcare left the industry in droves. But Hoosier hospitals still have some of the nation's highest prices, even in a state with a lower-than-average cost of living and earnings potential.

"The easy way to fix this is to pass a law that says you cannot charge above the national average... this is what we did with worker's comp and it worked. We used to be one of the most expensive states in the country and now we're in the middle of the pack," Hubbard said. "If we can't get it done with incentives then we will come back and ask for a hard ceiling."

Focuses outside of hospital prices

Beyond high healthcare costs and public health, the 2023 session will also be the first regular session since the General Assembly passed a near-total abortion ban in the summer. While some conservatives argue that the ban doesn't go far enough – since the law allows exceptions for rape or incest – leaders probably won't pursue amendments due to divisions in their respective caucuses.

But other topics from the abortion ban discussion could re-emerge, including contraceptive access and government support for families – both of which received enhanced funding in a bill designed to accompany the abortion ban.

Rep. Rita Fleming,

D-Jeffersonville, has long pushed to expand contraceptive prescriptions to pharmacies, a more convenient option for many Hoosiers – especially those in areas with shortages of nurses or doctors.

"We know that most abortions occur among women with unintended pregnancies. So if we really want to get at the root issue – if we want to decrease abortions – then it makes sense to decrease unintended pregnancies," Fleming said.

Legislators narrowly rejected an amendment expanding contraceptive access in the special session on a 48-49 vote which included support from several crucial chamber Republicans.

"I do think that there are people on both sides of the aisle who understand that increasing access to birth control... is a great idea. I truly think that regardless of who carries it, that it will pass in the house," Fleming said.

Beyond reproductive healthcare, Fleming said that Indiana needed to increase its number of providers, especially in public health and mental health.

"We need to incentivize providers to work in Indiana and help with these mental health issues," Fleming said. "We need to help people understand that it can be a chronic process and you can't just treat somebody at a single visit, it's ongoing."

Additionally, the retired OBGYN said that she wanted to reduce administrative burdens to free up doctors to spend more time with their patients, saying that physicians averaged 15 hours each week managing pre-authorizations or denials for necessary procedures.

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BETSY From Page A1

ers have already heard the sad news. The former volunteer and retired costumed interpreter passed away on Friday, Dec. 30, 2022. She was 101.

About 17 months ago, I was fortunate to be invited to Gerrard's 100th birthday celebration. She turned 100 on Friday, Aug. 6, 2021.

The morning of her party, on Saturday, Aug. 7, 2021, I asked Gerrard about her key to longevity? "I feel like laughter and love has a lot to do with it," she replied. "...I'm grateful for what I have," said the centenarian who lived the past eight years in Sanders Glen assisted living facility in Westfield.

"I'm 100 and one day old today," Gerrard said on that day after her birthday.

"I'm tired. Sanders Glen had a party for me yesterday. And then my family took me to Hollyhock Hill for chicken dinner."

So what does it feel like to be 100? "I don't feel any different. I don't know what to expect," she said.

The telephone conversation occurred just hours before a birthday celebration on Aug. 7, 2021, at Forest Park Lodge, where folks she's known for more than half of her life came to celebrate her 100th.

Gerrard wore a sash that read "100 years loved" and smiled her sweet smile with every guest who stopped at her table for a snapshot, a kind word or to reminisce.

Photos of her life decorated a table, and a lifesize timeline display welcomed guests just inside the door.

Elizabeth Nancy Ann Alexander (named for both of her grandmothers) was born Aug. 6, 1921. She was grateful for good parents, her dad living into his 70s and her mom into her 80s. Her mother fried chicken for 16 years at Hollyhock Hill, where her mom, dad, brother and herself also worked there at one time.

She graduated from Broad Ripple High School in 1939 and took her first job at L.S. Ayres as a "stock girl." During WWII, she also worked at Lucas Harold, the Norden bombsight on Arlington Avenue in Indianapolis and lived at home with her parents.

She met her husband, 1941 Noblesville High School grad Jimmy Gene Gerrard, in Broad Ripple, at age 18, and married at age 20 on June 2, 1942, during a seven-day leave from the U.S. Army, for which he served 26 months during World War II beginning in 1941. (Her family had moved to Noblesville before marrying.) The timeline included living in Hattiesburg, Miss., in 1942, and in Texarkana, Texas, in 1943. They moved into a house that her in-laws bought in Noblesville on March 1, 1946, and she gave birth to her first child, son, Erick G. Gerrard, on March 1, 1947. Then, they lived in Chicago, Cleveland and Texas, before Jimmy took a job with Allison Transmission in 1951 and became supervisor of transmissions, staying for 31 years. Then a daughter, Melody Ann Gerrard



Photo courtesy of Conner Prairie

Betty Gerrard, whose favorite character was Kate Bend, mother-in-law of the potter," said, "She couldn't read or write or cipher. She had a pipe in her mouth and a jug on her hip. I neither smoked or drank but I played that character," Gerrard said. "As Kate, I would go barefoot. How many jobs can you go barefoot? Gerrard passed away on Friday, Dec. 30, 2022, at age 101.

was born April 9, 1954, in Columbus, Ga. Gerrard also has a grandson, granddaughter and a 4-year-old great-granddaughter. The family house where Gerrard and her family most recently lived on South 10th Street was demolished in summer 2022 just before the Dairy Queen was demolished, to make room for the future Pleasant Street roundabout.

Gerrard came to Conner Prairie in 1966. "I didn't go to get a job," Gerrard said. After her volunteer position changed to paid, she started earning \$3 a day.

Gerrard had kept a diary since grade school, writing about life, boys, work, family and the war. She still had a journal, and lots of photos of her life.

"Betsy and I became musical best friends at Conner Prairie when I was 16 or 17," said Sue Payne of Fishers, Conner Prairie's first youth volunteer in 1965 and who has volunteered or worked at Conner Prairie for more than 55 years. (Payne is a member of the textiles staff and leads the museum's youth spinning program in its 19th year.)

At the time, Dick McAllister, the director of interpretation, figured music would add a whole new dimension to Conner Prairie and bought hand-made cherry dulcimers, Payne said. Two of them were courting dulcimers; two sets of strings so players could sit facing each other. "A courting couple could sit within earshot of the parents and they would listen for both sides to play," Payne said.

"Betsy did a lot of research on the dulcimer and was phenomenally talented musically even though she had never had a single lesson," Payne added.

"She got me started playing and, for years, Betsy and I played dulcimer together in the Shady Grove in Prairietown, down on the still house porch (which is long gone), we played on the front porch of the Conner House for groups (also long gone and traveled for various outreach programs as well playing for thousands of school tour children while they were waiting to head out on the grounds."

Payne, who each August leads the spinning youth volunteers at the annual Sheep to Shawl spinning competition at the Indiana State Fair, said, "Betsy was also a spinner and that was a strong bond as well. We attended spinning workshops together."

Gerrard was born three years after World War I ended and was ages 18-25 during World War II, 1939-45. Her dad was too old to go to the military, said Gerrard, who had three brothers; two who died in infancy, while one brother, 94, lives in Arizona.

Her dad would move if he could find a better trade. "So he picked up work where he could find it." He worked as a farmhand at Indianapolis Gas and drove a milk wagon with a horse for Polk Milk Co.

"She would tell me stories of her life during WWII," Payne said.

Betty loved dancing and would share stories of going to the local USO places and dancing with soldiers who were on leave.

"I feel like I'm very blessed. I had blessed parents who loved me," Gerrard told me. "These were the depression years. We didn't have any money, but we had what mattered."

She got to Conner

Prairie after meeting a woman who volunteered at the museum. "I thought, 'Maybe I would like to do that.' I went out and met the acting director."

At the time, there were only volunteers. "That's how I happened at Conner Prairie. I wasn't sure I could do it because I realized that all those school children would be looking at me." She didn't think she could do it. But 42 years later, Gerrard retired from her volunteer position-turned-job that she turned into one of the most interesting positions at Conner Prairie.

That was 14 years ago that she retired and has since been enjoying life.

Gerrard, a couple of years ago, handwrote and mailed this journalist a thank-you note for a column that I wrote about Payne, Gerrard's former co-worker. I saved the note, thinking that I would write a column on Gerrard some day, and I did write a column for her 100th birthday.

Little did I know at the time of receiving the correspondence that Gerrard was approaching 100.

And, "oh, yes," she remembered me when I called her the day after her 100th birthday. Gerrard said, "Yes, I did write to you. You wrote about something, and I was so pleased that you had."

Rest in peace 101-year-old Betsy Birdwhistle. We will forever remember you.

And as Payne once said to me about Gerrard: "No one has taken her place, no one could."

Funeral services will be private. Read Gerrard's obituary this week in The Times.

Contact Betsy Reason at betsy@thetimes24-7.com

JENSEN From Page A1

challenge of transformational infrastructure development as the city continues to grow.

As Mayor, Jensen has worked to develop the city's workforce and generate jobs while making generational investments in infrastructure that will attract families and residents.

"In officially filing for re-election, I look forward

to continued improvement for our city and the services we can provide to our families and neighbors," Jensen added.

"With humility and gratitude, I'm excited to once again ask Noblesville for their vote and trust."

For more information about Mayor Chris Jensen, visit JensenForNoblesville.com

COUNTY From Page A1

ington and part of Clay Townships.

Prior to joining the County Council, Alexander has worked on skyline transforming projects in Indiana and the Washington, DC metro area. Shortly after the completion of the Sydney & Louis Eskenazi hospital in downtown Indianapolis, Alexander accepted the opportunity to serve his community as the City of Westfield's Director of Public Works and then as the first Executive Director of the Grand Park Sports Campus.

Working for the City of Westfield opened his eyes to the impact of local government. In 2019, Alexander started his own business, GKA Services, which provides construction and development oversight to projects in and around the Indianapolis area. It is that same critical eye for projects and finan-

cial controls that drives him in his role as a County Councillor.

Alexander and his wife Jenni have been married for 16 years. They have three children.

Mark Hall and Tim Griffin also joined the Hamilton County Council for their first meeting. Mark Hall was elected to represent District 3 in the November election which includes Noblesville, Jackson, Wayne and White River Townships. He is the Founder and CEO of three workforce solutions companies - TalentLogistiX, Tech Trades, and PinPoint Resources.

Griffin was elected to represent District 1 in the November election which includes nearly all of Carmel and the western edge of Fishers. Griffin works as a firefighter and public information officer for the Carmel Fire Department.

COUNCIL From Page A1

Chris Jensen.

"The strong working rapport between this administration and council will prove helpful as we move projects forward that improve east to west connectivity and vibrancy to our community."

Smith is in his first term and served as the council's vice president last year. Smith is a small business owner operating in downtown Noblesville and lives with his wife and two children in Old Town.

"I am eager to step into my new role as we see key infrastructure and capital projects move forward this year," said Smith.

"The strategic development of our city is exciting to be a part of while protecting and enhancing our downtown core. This will be a year of strong growth and strategic change that I am excited to be a part of as council president."

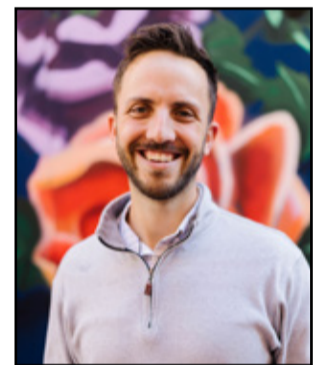
Smith is the representative from District 3, which includes historic downtown Noblesville.

Also discussed at the organization meeting were the 2023 Noblesville Common Council committee assignments, which include:

Building/Land Acquisition: Mark Boice (Chair), Aaron Smith, Brian Ayer, Darren Peterson

Downtown District: Megan Wiles (Chair) Darren Peterson, Brian Ayer, Aaron Smith

Economic Development: Darren Peterson (Chair), Pete Schwartz, Megan Wiles, Aaron



Council President Aaron Smith

Finance: Greg O'Connor (Chair), Megan Wiles, Darren Peterson, Mike Davis

Parks: Pete Schwartz (Chair), Megan Wiles, Aaron Smith, Dan Spartz

Public Safety: Mike Davis (Chair), Pete Schwartz, Dan Spartz, Mark Boice

Roads/Traffic/Engineering: Brian Ayer (Chair), Darren Peterson, Greg O'Connor, Mark Boice

Wastewater: Dan Spartz (Chair), Mike Davis, Greg O'Connor, Mark Boice

Nominating: Aaron Smith (Chair), Megan Wiles, Darren Peterson

Special appointments of the council include:

• **Architectural Review Board:** Aaron Smith and Brian Ayer

• **Cultural Arts District Liaison:** Pete Schwartz

• **Planning Commission:** Mark Boice

The Council holds its regular meetings on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month. The Council's next meeting is scheduled for next Tuesday at 7 p.m. at City Hall.

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