



Today's Bible Verse

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

— EPHESIANS 1:17



Sports

Knox duo have a plate full/A6



Weather

Partly cloudy with a high of 39° and a low of 29°/A12

Vincennes Sun-Commercial

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"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." — II Cor. 3:17

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Sun-Commercial photo by Jenny McNeece

Dozens of county residents flooded into the Vincennes Water Utilities' Drinking Water Plant on River Road on Tuesday night to hear details of a proposed solar development in Harrison Township.

APC hears from residents in favor of, against proposed solar development

BY JENNY MCNEECE

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Dozens of southeastern Knox County residents on Tuesday gathered at a meeting of the Area Plan Commission to hear details on a proposed solar development in Harrison Township.

And several made it crystal clear they don't want solar panels in their backyards.

Travis Vories was the first to take to the podium during the public comment portion of the APC's meeting, held at Vincennes Water Utilities' Drinking Water Plant so as to allow for greater social distancing.

Seven years ago, he told

the commissioners, he bought his dream home on Dutch Hinkle Road, one he'd been eyeing since he was 16 years old.

"And if you'd told me seven years ago it was now going to be surrounded by solar panels, I wouldn't have bought it," he said, arguing against the solar developers' evidence-based claims that

the existence of solar panels does nothing to decrease home values.

"I don't believe that for a second," he said.

Vories also worried, he said, about what the solar panels would do to wildlife habitats, especially those that have only recently begun to flourish.

"That habitat you're about to cover up or

destroy or whatever," he alleged, "we haven't had bald eagles or river otters or bobcats at there in years, and they've just now returned.

"That's prime habitat for them."

Likewise, Janet Houchin, who lives on Indina 61 in Monroe City, said she built her home 28 years ago; she's raised three kids there, she said.

The land owners that have leased with the solar development team will profit financially, she said, "but what about the homeowners?"

"There are a lot of new homes that have been

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Sun-Commercial photo by Jenny McNeece

The Knox County Jail is shown.

Commissioners take 'baby step approach' to jail expansion

BY JENNY MCNEECE

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The commissioners on Tuesday took yet another step toward expanding the Knox County Jail.

The commissioners, in their first meeting of the month held at the Pantheon, 428 Main St., voted to enter into yet another contract with Vincennes' RQAW, this time for the preliminary design of a jail expansion, one that could also house both the county's probation department and community corrections program.

The contract with RQAW is for \$150,000 and will cover the cost of a very basic and preliminary design, the commissioners noted, one that will lay the ground work for a more detailed design later.

"This is the next step in moving forward," said commission president Trent Hinkle. "Once this preliminary design results in a more thorough scope of work, additional agreements and contracts will be needed.

"This is a baby step approach," he said.

Hinkle, too, was careful to say that hiring RQAW now for a preliminary design doesn't mean they will automatically be awarded the contract for a full and final design later.

Lara Dawson, an architect with RQAW, told the commissioners Tuesday that they were "looking forward to getting started."

They, too, looked at the preliminary design phase as "the next stepping stone" in the overall process.

In short, a preliminary design is needed because there are so many unanswered questions in terms of how the county wants to move forward, Dawson explained.

It also carries the potential to be an exceptionally large project.

SEE JAIL/PAGE A3

Indiana lawmakers propose tougher penalties for rioting

BY CASEY SMITH ASSOCIATED PRESS REPORT FOR AMERICA

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana's Republican lawmakers are attempting to deter protests that have elevated since George Floyd's death with a series of bills that would increase penalties for rioting, vandalizing monuments, blocking emergency vehicles and violating curfews.

The proposals come in response to May 2020 protests against racial injustice and police brutality spurred by Floyd's death in Minneapolis police custody. In Indianapolis, it resulted in several nights of sometimes violent protests, as well as clashes between demonstrators and police.

One Senate bill introduced by Republican Sen. Eric Koch could allow the state to withhold funding to cities that fail to protect public monuments and memorials from vandalism. State police would also be required to assist local governments when investigating people who desecrate those monuments and memorials.

"This summer, we all watched with disdain and grief the attacks that were made around the country on historic monuments, memorials and statues by rioters and angry mobs," Koch said Tuesday during committee testimony. "In many cases, leaders of those communities instructed law enforcement to stand down, and in essence let it happen. This bill is brought to address that situation going forward."

Another piece of legislation seeks to allow Indiana's attorney general to prosecute criminal offenses that occur during an unlawful assembly. Under the measure, rioting would be raised from a Class A misdemeanor to a level six felony, which carries a prison sentence of up to 2.5 years and a fine of up to \$50,000 if there's resulting property damage or serious bodily injury.

The felony further increases to a level five — carrying one to six years in prison — if it results in catastrophic injury, death or damage of at least \$50,000.

EDITOR'S NOTE

This is the second in a two-part series looking at the new variant strains of COVID-19.

'Not your grandfather's flu'

Health officials race to vaccinate residents before COVID-19 variants take hold

BY JILL ERWIN JERWIN@SUNCOMMERCIAL.COM

Approximately 15% of Knox County residents have received at least the first of two COVID-19 vaccine doses.

And while the county is currently outpacing most of the state in vaccination rates, health officials locally and across the nation are racing the clock against variant strains of the virus that now have a foothold in the United States.

The celebration of the arrival of the first doses of the Pfizer vaccine in mid-December were short-lived as stories of more contagious strains of the virus spreading in South Africa and Brazil soon followed.

Of primary concern to researchers is the indication that these two particular COVID-19 variants are resistant to the current vaccines.

Though perhaps counterintuitive, these vaccine-resistant strains make mass vaccination efforts even more important.

Dr. David Hopper, an immunologist in Naples, Florida, explained that viruses can't mutate to create new strains if they have no host to live and replicate in in the first place.

"Because it's a virus and not a bacteria, it unequivocally needs a host to survive," Hopper explained, punctuating the importance of vaccinating as many people possible in the coming weeks.

Knox County Health Officer Dr. Alan Stewart explained that variations of any virus "are to be expected," he said. "As long as the virus spreads, mutations will occur."

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