



Today's Bible Verse

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." — ACTS 2:38

Sports

Swim Alices are runners-up/A7



Weather

Today will be partly cloudy with a high of 47/A12

Vincennes Sun-Commercial Indiana's First Newspaper-Since 1804

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

\$1.49

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City council partners with KCDC in housing study

BY JILL ERWIN JERWIN@SUNCOMMERCIAL.COM

City Council President Tim Salters on Monday said the city is ready to be a supportive partner in the Knox County Development Corp.'s upcoming housing study.

"Mayor Yochum and I have had discussions about this, and I know this is a top priority," he said.

For years, community leaders and elected officials have voiced a need for more mid-range housing, and KCDC's study will help pinpoint just how great the need actually is.

Chris Pfaff, CEO of KCDC, addressed members of city council Monday night, briefly discussing the rationale for the upcoming study and outlining its objectives.

"Housing is an essential element to attract and maintain the workforce," said Pfaff. "Without affordable and quality housing, this community is not going to prosper."

The KCDC contends that quality housing is what will help attract young households and entrepreneurs.

"It is essential to our economic diversity," Pfaff said, adding

that the study will "get to the bottom of" the gaps that exist in the local housing market.

The past couple of years have proved to be a seller's market, he said, with some homes selling above the original asking price.

Too, says Pfaff, some existing employees of Good Samaritan, Vincennes University and the Vincennes Community School

Corp. often choose to live in neighboring counties where the housing stock is more plentiful.

"There are more than 1,400 commuters that come into the county just from Illinois," Pfaff said, noting that Knox County could probably attract at least a percentage of them if they could find an affordable, quality home.

SEE STUDY/PAGE A2

State Board of Accounts cites mishandling of funds at VPD

BY JENNY MCNEECE JMCNEECE@SUNCOMMERCIAL.COM

In the summer of 2019, reports began to circulate that the Vincennes Police Department was being investigated by the FBI.

Shortly thereafter, in August of 2019, then city police chief Dusty Luking was placed on administrative leave.

A report issued this week by the Indiana State Board of Accounts finally provides some answers as to why.

The compliance report, filed on Jan. 8 and instigated in the summer of 2019, indicates the investigation began when Luking himself notified the Indiana State Police of some missing money — nearly \$32,000 — from the Vincennes Police Department's vault, located at headquarters, 501 Busseron St.

The year-long investigation that unfolded — which included the FBI, ISP and the State Board of Accounts — cites internal controls that were seriously lacking, so much so that they can't find the \$32,000 at all.

Luking, too, is accused in the report of using police funds to purchase a laptop computer for personal use and in the misappropriation of money, specifically funds that were given to the VPD by the Vincennes Community School Corp. for the reimbursement of a school resource officer.

Instead of reimbursing the city's General Fund, as was reportedly the agreement between the city and the VCSC, the money — a total of \$97,000 paid over three years — was placed into a separate donation fund and used to buy everything from new vehicles to a side-by-side and decals.

THE VAULT

The State Board of Accounts' report indicates that the \$31,957 missing from the vault was never located during the investigation, nor could they determine whether or not it was taken all at once or in smaller amounts over time.

The missing money was reported when a court order demanded the VPD give it back to the person it was confiscated from during an arrest, according to the state report.

The investigation revealed that four VPD "staff members" held keys to the evidence vault, but they also found that a spare key was kept in an unsecured location, therefore could have been accessed by anyone at any time.

The state also discovered that there were no cameras in or around the evidence vault, and a simple handwritten "sign in, sign out" system was missing several signatures and times.

There was no electronic logging system to identify who — and when — was entering the vault.

SEE FUNDS/PAGE A3



Sun-Commercial photo by Jenny McNeese

Local architect Larry Donovan and Michelle Carrico, a program manager with Loogootee-based Southern Indiana Development Commission, speak to members of the city's Board of Works on Monday about a bid for the second phase of a major window restoration project at the historic Vincennes Police Department headquarters, 501 Busseron St.

City receives one bid for police department window restoration project

BY JENNY MCNEECE JMCNEECE@SUNCOMMERCIAL.COM

City officials on Monday received a single bid for the second phase of a window restoration project at the historic, century-old downtown headquarters of the Vincennes Police Department.

Local architect Larry Donovan, who has been working with city officials on the restoration at 501 Busseron St., said as many as five contractors initially expressed interest in the project, but only one returned an actual bid.

The bidder, however, was Mominee Studios in Evansville, the same company that did the first phase of the window restoration in 2017, and local officials said

they were pleased with the work.

The city learned last spring that it had been successful yet again — the third time in five years — in securing a state historic preservation grant, one administered through the Department of Natural Resources.

Vincennes received \$50,000, money for the continued restoration of the police department's historic wood windows.

The city received the first grant, enough to do 15 of the building's largest wood windows, in 2016. This new money will go toward restoring another 20 windows; the oldest will be restored, others will be replaced with new,

vinyl windows.

Donovan structured the bid in such a way that the city would have options on what exactly it wanted to do, depending on the bid amount.

He sought a base bid, which was to do only the larger, most historic windows; there are about 20 left to do.

But there were a handful of alternates, things like other, smaller basement widows and even exterior doors and fresh paint, Donovan explained.

The base bid alone, however, came in higher than what city officials and those with grant administrator Southern Indiana Development Commission, Loogootee, had anticipated.

Mominee's base bid was for just over \$151,000.

To do everything would be much more, well over \$215,000.

Michelle Carrico, a program manager with SIDC, months ago told city officials to expect the project cost to be around \$121,000.

The city must put up at least half per the grant guidelines, but officials had expected to do more, possibly as much as \$70,000.

Mayor Joe Yochum, however, said up to \$100,000 isn't out of the question.

He previously indicated he would take the city's share from its allocation of Economic Development Income Tax dollars.

SEE VPD/PAGE A3

City awards more business mini-grants, another round upcoming

BY JENNY MCNEECE JMCNEECE@SUNCOMMERCIAL.COM

Members of the city's Revolving Loan Fund on Tuesday awarded another \$26,000 to seven businesses in an effort to bolster them through the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

This was the sixth round of grant awards for the RLF committee, which has been charged with handing out \$250,000 in funds from the state Office of Community and Rural Affairs' now revamped Community Development Block Grant Program.

With this latest round of mini-grants, the city has now awarded money to 47 local businesses, benefiting nearly 300 employees.

"So you've helped a lot of people and a lot of businesses," Matt Sward with the Loogootee-based Southern Indiana Development Commission told members of the RLF committee Tuesday as they met at City Hall, 201 Vigo St.

Depending on the number of employees a business has, it can be eligible for anywhere from \$2,000 up to \$10,000 under the city's mini-grant program.

Most of the seven businesses awarded funds Tuesday were in the lower tiers, earning either \$2,000 or \$4,000.

The city has \$88,000 left to spend but has until the end of May to do so.

RLF members have oft talked in recent weeks of ways to more quickly spend the remaining monies, likely by adjusting the tiers and retroactively awarding more money to past recipients.

SEE GRANT/PAGE A2

EDITOR'S NOTE

Due to press issues and, as a result, much earlier deadlines, reports on Tuesday's Vincennes Historic Review Board and county council meetings will not appear in today's editions but will, instead, be run on Thursday.



This edition of the Sun-Commercial is printed on recycled paper.



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