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SPORTS, B1



BIOLOGICAL MOTHER OF BOY ADOPTED 42 YEARS AGO THREATENS WOMAN
POLICE BEAT, A2



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Data center meeting set for Tuesday

By **KOLTON RUTHERFORD**
Log Cabin Democrat

The city of Conway's public committee meeting about ongoing work around a data center project proposal will begin at 5 p.m. on Tuesday in City Council Chambers on 1111 Main St.

Like other city meetings, Tuesday's committee meeting will be streamed live via YouTube and Facebook, city spokesman Bobby M. Kelly III told the Log Cabin

Democrat on Monday. While a regular city council meeting was originally scheduled to follow Tuesday's committee meeting, that meeting will not be held, agenda documents provided to the Log Cabin read.

As previously reported in the Log Cabin, the meeting will "provide residents an opportunity to share concerns, provide feedback and speak directly to the committee," the city said last week. Mayor Bart Castleberry called for the meeting.

"We know residents have questions and concerns about this proposed project," Castleberry said. "While we may not have every answer at this stage, we want to listen, gather feedback and make sure the people of Conway have another opportunity to be heard."

As previously reported in the Log Cabin Democrat, work on the data center proposal with an unnamed company the city of Conway entered a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with in

April 2025 is in a "quiet phase" as the company and utility providers work through "a season of design and engineering," Conway Area Chamber of Commerce Executive Vice President Jamie Gates told the Log Cabin in an April interview.

Conway Alderman Drew Spurgers on Monday said via social media that no votes will be taken at Tuesday's committee meeting and that he hopes "there will be some kind of presentation to kick off

the meeting explaining where this project is in the process."

"For those wishing to speak, you don't have to be added to an agenda for a public input meeting. Each speaker is typically asked to keep their comments to 3 minutes," Spurgers said. "I know this is an area of concern for much of the community - hence the need for the meeting. Hope to see you there."

See **MEETING**, page A2



Tess Vrbin / Arkansas Advocate

From left: Arkansas State Library Director Jennifer Chilcoat, State Library Board Chairman Clay Goff and board member Lynlee McMillan listen to discussion of proposed rules for libraries to receive state funding at the board's quarterly meeting on May 8.

Proposal links library funding to limiting access to 'sexually explicit materials'

By **TESS VRBIN**
Arkansas Advocate

The Arkansas State Library Board on Friday proposed requiring libraries to restrict children's access to 'sexually explicit' materials in order to receive state funding.

The board unanimously accepted a revised draft of the proposed rules after discussing them with library directors and Department of Education officials for more than two hours at its quarterly meeting Friday. Arkansans will have 30 days to provide feedback on the proposal.

If approved by the board and a legislative panel, the rules would require libraries to ensure that children under 16 cannot check out "sexually explicit materials," which depict or describe sexual contact and behavior as defined by federal law. It would also restrict access to materials that contain images or descriptions of human genitalia.

Such materials would have to be placed in sections of the library designated for patrons 18 years and older.

Board members suggested that libraries update their software, if possible, to prevent library cardholders under 16 from checking out certain books without parental permission.

The rules include an exception for children 11 and older to access "age-appropriate information designed to prepare minors for the sociology of puberty" with parental consent.

The restrictions are similar to ones that were included in Senate-backed legislation to abolish the Arkansas State Library that died in a House committee last year.

They also follow a federal judge's 2024 ruling striking down parts of an Arkansas law that would have imposed criminal penalties on librarians for providing materials deemed "harmful" to minors. The case is under appeal.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Arkansas was still analyzing the board's proposal late Friday afternoon but repeated its opposition to state restrictions on library content.

"At a time when Arkansas faces serious challenges that demand governmental attention, continued political intrusion into library collections represents a troubling erosion of the free speech and intellectual freedom rights protected by the Constitution," spokesperson Megan Bailey said in a statement.

Library directors on Friday said some libraries are too small to re-

locate certain materials so children can't reach them. They also said policing cardholders' access to digital materials would be difficult.

Central Arkansas Library System Executive Director Nate Coulter also questioned whether libraries agreeing to the condition would receive additional money for the expenses it would require.

"That is a huge hand of the government involved in the parenting relationship and in censoring the library," he said in an interview Friday.

The rules would also require librarians to "not knowingly promote or advertise sexually explicit materials."

Board member Emmaline Pilkington of Knoxville said this was a higher priority for her than what libraries stock on shelves.

"I don't want to have to explain Pride Month to my five-year-old," she said.

Promoting Pride Month is not sexually explicit, said Clare Graham, director of the five-county Mid-Ark Regional Library System. She and other library directors said they already keep sexually explicit fiction, such as romance novels, in sections aimed at adults.

See **FUNDING**, page A2

UCA receives TIAA Innovation Award from FirstGen Forward

By **LOG CABIN DEMOCRAT**

FirstGen Forward, the center for first-generation student success, recently announced the University of Central Arkansas as one of five higher education institutions to receive the TIAA Innovation Award.

The award, provided by FirstGen Forward with support from TIAA, will support new or existing programs, services or initiatives that implement creative approaches to enhancing campus-wide success for first-generation students.

"We are extremely honored to be selected for a TIAA Innovation Award," UCA Vice President for Student Affairs Robin Williamson said. "This award will allow UCA to create the First-Gen Innovation Fellows program, a paid fellowship opportunity for first-generation students that will help identify, design and implement programs and opportunities that enhance the first-generation student experience and empower all students' success."

The TIAA Innovation Award provides institutions with \$10,000 in unrestricted funds to apply to first-generation student success initiatives in one of two pathways:

■ The "Scalable" pathway provides funds to expand and adapt existing programs, services or initiatives to support a larger number of first-generation students across the campus without compromising quality or effectiveness. This involves designing solutions that can be efficiently scaled to meet increasing demand, ensuring that the benefits of innovative approaches to enhancing first-generation student success are extended to a broader audience. Scalability ensures that as the program grows, it continues to provide meaningful support and positive outcomes for all first-generation students.

■ The "Creative" pathway provides funds to generate original and innovative ideas that enhance campus-wide success for first-generation students. This involves thinking outside the box to develop unique programs, services or initiatives that address first-generation students' specific needs and challenges. Creativity ensures that solutions are not

only effective but engaging and inspiring, fostering a dynamic and supportive campus environment that encourages academic and personal growth.

UCA's award for First-Gen Innovation Fellows falls in the Creative pathway and will allow students to work alongside faculty and staff who are assisting first-gen students in their academic career at UCA. These Fellows will research, provide data analysis and partner with the university committee for first-gen student success to create events, programs and other opportunities that may lead to student success.

"With 54 percent of current undergraduate students identifying as first-generation, achieving unprecedented first-gen student success will have a life-changing impact across generations, as college completion is a significant contributor to education, workforce and life success for the families of graduates," Stephanie Bannister, president of FirstGen Forward, said. "UCA has displayed a commitment to creating solutions that advance the success of their first-generation students, and their selection as a recipient of a TIAA Innovation Award is a recognition of their efforts to date and their future success."

All TIAA Innovation Award recipients will author an award brief detailing their efforts, including the establishment of learning outcomes, success metrics and initial results of their programs, services or initiatives. The award briefs will be compiled into a summary and published on the FirstGen Forward website. Additionally, award recipients will be encouraged to present their work at high-profile conferences supported by First-Gen Forward.

"TIAA proudly supports the outstanding work of FirstGen Forward and higher education professionals who are shaping the futures of millions of first-generation students with their creative support solutions," Laura Turner, ead of Community Impact at TIAA, said. "Many of us at TIAA are first-generation college students ourselves, and we know how a bachelor's degree can lead to a more secure financial future, including a financially secure retirement."

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Comics A3
Puzzles A3

Sports A4
Yesterdays A2

TODAY
Sunny
81/57

TOMORROW
Sunny
86/55

THURSDAY
Sunny
82/63





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