

# THE Beacon-News

SUNDAY, MAY 24, 2026 | AURORABEACONNEWS.COM | \$3.50

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The new location of Hollywood Casino Aurora, seen here on Thursday, is set to open on June 24. R. CHRISTIAN SMITH/THE BEACON-NEWS

## Work is finishing up at new Hollywood Casino Aurora

Members of the media got a chance to walk through the new complex on Thursday

By R. Christian Smith  
AURORA BEACON-NEWS

One month before opening day, work is nearing completion at the new location of Hollywood Casino Aurora.

The \$360 million project — located along Farnsworth Avenue and Bilter

Road, across the street from Chicago Premium Outlets mall and near the Interstate 88 interchange — has been under construction since 2023. The new casino, hotel and related restaurants are planned to open on June 24, replacing the longtime riverboat Hollywood Casino in downtown Aurora.

But the new Hollywood Casino Aurora will be more than a simple replacement for the downtown location. Greg Moore, vice president and general manager of Hollywood Casino Aurora, called it “an absolute evolution in the strongest sense of

the word.”

The old property did well, but it was designed to “just be a casino,” according to Moore. In contrast, the new location is “a full-on entertainment complex,” he said, since it includes a casino, an entertainment venue, an outdoor courtyard, a spa, a hotel and multiple restaurants, some made through partnerships with celebrity chefs.

Members of the media got a chance to walk through the new complex on Thursday morning to

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World War II veteran Duane Stevenson, left, is recognized at a Memorial Day tribute event last year in St. Charles by retired U.S Army Lt. Col. Mark Powell, who has been organizing Memorial Day events in the city for many years. DENNIS WAMBANGCO

## ‘I know this is my mission’

St. Charles vet’s Memorial Day efforts honor brother who died in horrific military crash



Denise Crosby

Before Mark Powell talks about the brother he lost back in a 1985 plane crash that claimed 248 U.S. soldiers returning from a peacekeeping mission in the Middle East, the St. Charles man asks for a little time to compose himself.

“To this day,” he admits a moment later, “I still cry.”

Understandably,

That tragedy, one of the deadliest aviation disasters in North American history, not only claimed the life of his 27-year-old brother Barry, Powell was

on base at Fort Campbell when word came the plane bringing these soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division home for the Christmas holidays had crashed after taking off from Gander, Newfoundland, where it had stopped to refuel for its final leg to Kentucky.

Mark Powell, 26 at the time, was at Fort Campbell on Dec. 12, 1985 — along with hundreds of spouses, parents and children who had been preparing welcome-home celebrations — when the news hit.

“It was definitely,” he says, “the saddest day of my life.”

But Powell, who comes from a long military line and retired as a lieutenant colonel himself, also recalls the moment nearly



U.S. Army Capt. Barry Powell was among the soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division who died in a horrific plane crash in 1985 while coming home from a peacekeeping mission in the Middle East.

MARK POWELL

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### INDIAN PRAIRIE D204

## Board OKs new support staff contract

Raises for administrative, non-union employees are approved as well

By Molly Morrow  
AURORA BEACON-NEWS

Some more Indian Prairie employees are slated to get raises coming up.

The Indian Prairie School District 204 board has OK'd raises for administrative and non-union employees for next school year, and formally approved a four-year contract for support staff, which includes pay hikes in the coming years.

First, the school board approved, as part of the consent agenda at its meeting May 18, 3.9% pay hikes for some of its employees for the 2026-27 school year, according to district documents. The hikes are meant to be in line with the Consumer Price Index, or CPI, per the district.

These raises apply to administrative employees and non-bargaining staff, the latter of which includes employees like occupational therapists, physical therapists, registered nurses, administrative assistants, business support staff, HR support staff, tech support staff, communications support staff, science lab technicians, piano accompanists and schoolwide facilitators, according to district memos.

Also approved at the meeting was a four-year contract between the Indian Prairie Classified Association, or IPCA, and the district's school board.

The Indian Prairie Classified Association is made up of more than 600 staff members in the district, who serve as support staff — as teacher assistants, health aides, school secretaries, dean's assistants, Library Media Center assistants, receptionists and copy clerks, according to IPCA's website. IPCA is affiliated with the Illinois Education Association and the National Education Association.

IPCA approved the agreement earlier this month, with 68% of members voting in favor of it and 32% voting against it, according to a community message from the district provided to The Beacon-

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## Police: Kane County Cougars' bus set on fire in Canada

By Molly Morrow  
AURORA BEACON-NEWS

The Kane County Cougars' bus was set on fire and destroyed Thursday while the Geneva-based baseball team was in Canada for a series against the Winnipeg Goldeyes, according to police.

No one was injured, and a 15-year-old girl has been charged with arson in connection with the incident, according to the Winnipeg Police Service in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

The visiting Cougars, who play in the American Association of Professional Baseball, were in Winnipeg for a stretch of three

games this week, defeating the Winnipeg Goldeyes on Tuesday but taking a loss to the Canadian team Wednesday.

In the early hours of Thursday morning, at around 1:50 a.m., general patrol officers from multiple districts responded to the Cougars' bus fully engulfed in flames while parked at Goldeyes Stadium, according to the Winnipeg Police Service. The Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service extinguished the fire, but the entire bus and its contents were destroyed.

A bystander had observed a person inside the bus and assisted in removing them, police said, but no one was injured in the fire.

Upon police arriving, two teenagers were taken into custody in connection with the incident, the Winnipeg police said.

Investigators from its major crimes unit believe the fire was deliberately set, police said, and one of the teenagers — a 15-year-old girl — is facing charges of arson causing damage to property and possession of incendiary material. She has since been released and turned over to a responsible adult, the Winnipeg police said on Thursday.

The 56-passenger bus is valued at around \$425,000, according to

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The Kane County Cougars' bus was set on fire and destroyed Thursday while the baseball team was in Canada for a series against the Winnipeg Goldeyes, according to police. KANE COUNTY COUGARS

WEATHER FORECAST

TODAY H: 80 L: 60  
MON. H: 85 L: 63  
TUE. H: 85 L: 66

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Vol. 179 No. 96

