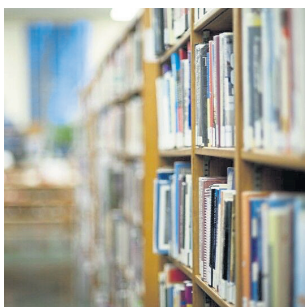




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The Elkhart Truth

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Elkhart truth photos / Jordan Fouts
Lester and Sherri Otto speak during the plan board meeting where members voted against recommending a detailed planned unit development for 959 acres of farmland south of Bristol.

County plan board rejects Bristol business park designs

Opposition raises
concerns about
possible data center
By JORDAN FOUTS
jfouts@elkharttruth.com

GOSHEN — County planners voted down blueprints for a Bristol business park after hearing hours of comments from residents opposed to one possible tenant above all: a data center.

The Elkhart County Plan Commission voted 6-2 to recommend against adopting a detailed planned unit development for 959 acres of farmland south of Bristol. The ultimate decision will come from Bristol Town Council, who may take it up on Aug. 6.

The plan would allow two newly annexed properties to



Rick Kain holds up a map while speaking to the plan commission where members voted against recommending a detailed planned unit development for 959 acres of farmland south of Bristol.

be combined into a business park for light manufacturing, with permitted uses ranging from warehousing and distribution to food processing and packaging. But the potential for a data center to occupy the land is what drew

Rafinski. “Right now, the zoning allows a data center under (manufacturing), but we just wanted to make sure that there was no question that that was in fact an allowed use, so we went ahead and specifically listed it.”

The civil engineering firm developed the DPUD on behalf of current landowners. She said she drew from her own experience with data centers to address the known risks by writing in protections for surrounding landowners.

Smith said the protections built into the plan make it a model that other towns could follow.

“We used this as a way to impose a significant amount of conditions in terms of increased landscaping, increased lighting standards,

See REZONING, page A6

State sets standards for 4-day school week waivers

Sole school operating
on four-day schedule
could lose eligibility
at end of pilot
By MACKENZI KLEMAN
Indiana Capital Chronicle

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana K-12 schools must meet new standards before seeking approval to implement a four-day school week.

The model, once favored by rural schools due to a shortage of bus drivers, is spreading nationwide to urban and suburban districts seeking to recruit teachers and students by extending the school day, so students and staff can take Fridays off.

Schools can apply for a flexibility waiver through the Indiana Department of Education to move to a four-day

school week.

Now, schools must earn an “A” grade through the state’s A-F accountability model to be considered for a four-day school week waiver.

That’s one of four minimum requirements outlined in House Enrolled Act 1266, which took effect July 1.

The Indiana Department of Education recently issued guidance to schools about the new criteria ahead of the coming school year.

Schools must also offer transportation for students who choose to attend a school operating on a five-day schedule, meet the state’s \$45,000-a-year minimum teacher salary threshold, and offer enrichment and remediation at no cost to parents the day school is not in session.

The State Board of Education must then grant approval before a school can transition

to a four-day week.

**Vinton Elementary
pilots four-day week**

Vinton Elementary School is entering its third and final year piloting a four-day school week.

The Lafayette-area school, with an enrollment of 408, is the sole school in Indiana operating on a four-day schedule through the state Department of Education’s flexibility waiver for innovation.

School starts at 8 a.m. Monday through Thursday, with dismissal delayed until 3:45 p.m. — a necessity to meet the required 54,000 minutes of instruction each year, which the school accomplishes in a mere 151 days compared to the typical 180 days.

Students attend class on Fridays only when a holiday falls on a Monday, so they don’t

miss two days in one week.

The National Conference of State Legislatures estimates 850 school districts operate on a four-day schedule, saving their budgets an average of 0.4 percent to 2.5 percent a year.

Principal Cindy Preston is impressed by the results she’s seen thus far: Student disciplinary referrals are down from 495 before the pilot started to 293 referrals last school year.

Staff absences declined from 656 to 398 a year.

Eighty-nine percent of third graders passed their spring assessments last year, up from 73 percent when the school still operated five days a week.

And a clear majority of parents and staff report they are satisfied with the four-day schedule, Preston said.

Yet she looks at the new

See SCHOOL, page A3

Officer-involved fatal shooting at park justified, prosecutor says

TRUTH STAFF

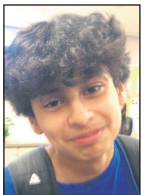
ELKHART — The officer-involved fatal shooting of a 17-year-old at High Dive Park on Feb. 8 was in self-defense and in the defense of others, and has therefore been ruled justified, Elkhart County Prosecutor Vicki Becker said Thursday.

No criminal charges will be filed against the two Elkhart Police Department officers involved in the shooting, Becker said in a news release Thursday. The city will make determinations regarding adherence to department policy and the circumstances for the officers’ return to duty, she said.

Becker has declined to release the name of the victim, but friends and family members have identified him as 17-year-old Bryan Axel Ramirez Gómez of Elkhart. The prosecutor earlier this year said the teen fired first before officers returned fire.



BECKER



RAMIREZ GOMEZ

The officers involved in the shooting were Patrolman Nicholas Ragsdale and Patrolman Thomas Breneman.

Becker said an investigation by the Elkhart County Homicide Unit documented evidence to establish that shortly after 1:30 a.m. on Feb. 8, officer Ragsdale was driving past the area of High Dive Park pavilion and noticed a vehicle that was running while sitting stationary in the parking lot after the park was closed. He pulled into the lot near the vehicle and observed several individuals inside, some appearing to be minors, according to Becker.

Ragsdale called for backup and, while he was speaking to the driver, smelled alcohol, Becker said. Officer Breneman arrived to provide backup while Ragsdale continued his work.

Ragsdale attempted to gather identifying information from each occupant of the vehicle, being led to believe that there were two individuals who were 18 and three claiming to be juveniles, two boys and a girl. Ragsdale then returned to his vehicle to determine whether



RAGSDALE



BRENEMAN

Both officers fired their handguns in response, Becker said, and the front passenger was fatally shot. A Glock 9mm handgun was on the ground near him.

In less than one minute, additional officers began arriving, the report said. Others from the passenger car were secured and more responding officers approached the front passenger lying on the ground, providing first aid until medics arrived. No other individual had approached the front passenger or inflicted any additional injury during that time, according to Becker. The front passenger was transported to the hospital, where he was declared dead.

During the crime scene investigation in which crime scene specialists documented and recovered evidence related to the event, another handgun was found on the front passenger floorboard of the vehicle that had been modified to be fully automatic by what is known as a “switch,” an after-market attachment that converts a semi-automatic handgun to a fully automatic handgun that is illegal to possess pursuant to both state and federal law. This modification allows for the extremely rapid firing of

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Tomorrow's weather
85° 64°
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**BEHAVIORS HAPPEN:
RESPOND VS. REACT**

*Presented by: Patricia Piechocki -
Alzheimer's and Dementia Services of
Northern Indiana*

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