

# PHAROS-TRIBUNE

## CLEANUP COMPLETE



Photo provided  
**EPA on-scene coordinator Lauren Hirschel** supervises soil removal at a home near the former Exide site in Logansport.

### EPA finishes contaminated soil removal from 84 Logansport yards

STAFF REPORT

More than four years after the former Exide Battery facility in Logansport was referred to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the agency has announced the completion an extensive cleanup of lead-contaminated soil in 84 residential yards.

The EPA completed the cleanup in October. The Indiana Department of Environmental Management referred the site to EPA on August 31, 2021, after discovering high levels of lead in yards surrounding the former facility at 303 Water St. EPA launched a series of assessments between 2021 and 2023 to determine the nature and extent of the contamination.

“Ensuring the health and safety of our communities is at the heart of EPA’s mission,” said EPA Region 5 Administrator Anne Vogel. “By removing harmful contaminants and restoring these residential areas, we are not only safeguarding the well-being of current residents but also contributing to a healthier future for generations to come.”

For more than two years, crews excavated soil from 84 residential properties and transported 16,664 tons of lead-contaminated soil to an EPA-approved facility for proper disposal. Workers then backfilled the excavated areas with clean soil and restored each property by replacing grass, plants, and flowers. Most of the homes were located on W. Columbia Street, Bates Street and Balsam Street.

“The city was glad to partner with the EPA on this significant project to improve the quality of life in these neighborhoods on our west side,” said Logansport Deputy Mayor Jacob Pomasl. “This is a crucial step toward our long-term goals of a safer and healthier community for all current and future residents of Logansport.”

Throughout the cleanup, EPA conducted air monitoring and implemented dust control measures to ensure worker and human health protection. EPA addressed all properties where lead was detected above cleanup levels, and determined no further action was necessary, according to a press release.

Post-cleanup verification includes soil sampling to make sure new soil samples confirm concentrations meet cleanup goals and monitoring and testing

See **EPA** on A3

### Legislature to consider actions on cellphones

Lawmakers preview goals for education

SUE LOUGHLIN  
TRIBUNE-STAR

With the Indiana General Assembly expected to conclude its short, non-budget session by Feb. 27, that leaves less time for K-12 education bills to move through the legislative process.

And that’s good news to the Indiana School Boards Association, said Terry Spradlin, ISBA executive director, who says, “We do need a pause” in new regulatory requirements.

In the last two years, 92 new laws have been implemented impacting K-12 education, creating “a heavy regulatory environment,” he said.

“We’ve done so much heavy lifting in the last three to four years with major education reform, and it is paying dividends,” Spradlin said. Performance indicators show “we’re going in the right direction” in reducing chronic absenteeism, improving IREAD proficiency and higher graduation rates, he said.

“Progress is underway ... let’s let that continue with the course that we’re on,” he said.

ISBA’s top priority is education deregulation and Spradlin anticipates a “substantial” bill that would provide regulatory relief for schools, expanding on a similar measure that passed last session, he said.

Among the regulatory relief, ISBA would like to see repeal of laws that restrict use and transfer of school buildings, including the so-called \$1 law.

Current law, passed more than a decade ago, requires districts to make closed or vacant buildings available to charter schools for \$1 before selling them to other buyers.

“Given recent changes in the law on school funding that increase both state and local revenue to charter schools to meet facility needs, school corporations should be relieved of these restrictions,” ISBA states.

ISBA would also like to expand

See **BAN** on A3

## New economic forecast shows big growth in Indiana surplus

Dems: Spending cuts should be restored

TOM DAVIES  
INDIANA CAPITAL CHRONICLE

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana’s state budget surplus could grow to nearly \$5 billion by the middle of 2027 under new and much rosier tax revenue projections.

An updated report presented Thursday to the State Budget Committee forecast tax collections growing by 4.2% this fiscal year and by 2.7% the following year.

That would give the state about \$2.4 billion more than officials expected when the new state budget was finalized in April — and revenue growth was anticipated at 0.8% and 0.1% for the two years of the spending plan.

But Republican state fiscal leaders showed no signs of any spending boosts for the tight budget that took effect July 1.

“It was a positive forecast and it was good news for our state,” House Ways and Means Committee Chair Jeff Thompson said. “But remember, we’re less than 25% through this biennial budget, so there’s some uncertainty still.”

The revenue growth would

push the state’s cash reserves from what had been an expected \$2.7 billion in mid-2027 — about 12% of annual state spending — to \$5 billion, or about 22% of state spending. That is well above the 10-15% level that leaders usually aim for.

Democrats said the unexpected revenue should allow the state to restore spending cuts made after the Legislature was “spooked” by the dismal April forecast.

Rep. Greg Porter, the top Democrat on the Ways and Means Committee, said the state needed to make better use of the available funds rather than more tax cuts.

“The people who really need it, the special needs individuals, our children, seniors, they’re going to be left out in the cold,” Porter said.

Gov. Mike Braun touted the revenue forecast as “evidence that our focus on jobs and wages to grow the economy is working.”

“We are boosting Hoosier wages and lowering taxes,” Braun said in a statement. “While many other states are struggling to gain momentum, Indiana is thriving and Hoosiers are keeping more money in their pockets.”

See **CUTS** on A3



Tom Davies | Indiana Capital Chronicle  
**State Budget Director Chad Ranney**, right, speaks with reporters alongside House Ways and Means Chair Jeff Thompson, left, and Senate Appropriations Chair Ryan Mishler on Thursday, Dec. 18.

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**FIRST AMENDMENT**

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

**WEATHER**

Clouds are likely throughout the day.  
**High 45, Low 57.**  
Complete forecast on Page A8.

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