

THE TIMES

Popular NWI farmers market expanding into Lake County

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A local school was treated to a visit from a professional volleyball team

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Wednesday, March 4, 2026

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SEEKING RELIEF



JOHN J. WATKINS, THE TIMES

Residents check in at a NIPSCO sponsored Community Customer Care Center at the Dean and Barbara White Community Center in Merrillville.

NIPSCO customers flock to community forums in search of help with high bills

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MERRILLVILLE — NIPSCO customers again turned out in droves to a community forum to seek relief from, or at least answers about, high utility bills that have strained budgets this winter.

Hundreds of people turned out to NIPSCO's three community forums in LaPorte, Valparaiso and Merrillville, NIPSCO spokeswoman Joshuauna Nash said. More than 100 turned out in the first hour of the forum on Monday at the Dean and Barbara White Community Center in Merrillville.

"Customers have questions about their bill," Nash said. "Customers are visiting the customer service table, asking about their bill, asking about energy assistance. The ones that come to the table are getting information about energy assistance and what's available. Customers

are asking about delivery fees, rates and things of that sort."

CoAction was on hand to sign residents up for utility assistance through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program. NIPSCO customers were able to sign up for energy assistance or the utility's budget plan that levels out bills throughout the course of the year so their winter bills don't spike as high.

"We hope customers are getting the information we need. We know customers have had a lot of questions," Nash said. "Customers have questions about their bills, energy assistance, getting additional help. We do hope that customers walk away with the information that they need — anything to help ease their concerns during this time."

Please see NIPSCO, Page A6

CP OKs zoning for housing project

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CROWN POINT — The City Council approved a rezoning Monday that could transform nearly 200 acres of property into almost 500 lots of medium-density, single-family property, going against a recommendation from the Plan Commission after the developer pledged to alter its proposal.

The council voted 4-2 to rezone the Preserve Point property from low-density R-1A zoning to the higher-density R-2 zone, pushing forward with a project that is expected to include 473 units. The project will sit right near the 129-lot Capstone Estate Homes development.

Diamond Peak Homes' Vice President of Land Acquisition Michael Herbers said city staff and the development team had worked "diligently" on plans to adjust lot widths in the Cottage Homes section of the project to 60 feet in width, addressing a concern that shaped the Plan Commission's unfavorable recommendation to the council.

Under the requested rezoning, the developer will officially be held to a minimum 80-foot lot width under the city's code. The development team can visit the Board of Zoning Appeals to request a 60-foot width in the Cottage Homes section of the development, in which homes will only be available to residents 55 and up, and in the Meadow Homes builds, where they are planning on 70-foot wide lots.

Crown Point-based site developer Cap Dev LLC will lead the development of the property.

Please see PROJECT, Page A4

Indiana voters must register by April 6

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Hoosiers planning to vote this year must register by April 6 to cast a ballot in the May 5 primary election.

The secretary of state's office also is encouraging Indiana residents who previously registered to vote to verify their registration remains active and the personal information in their voter record is correct.

Both registering to vote and verifying a registration can be completed online at IndianaVoters.com.

To qualify to vote, a person must be a U.S. citizen and an Indiana resident for at least 30 days before the election.

Voters also must be 18 years old; however, 17-year-olds can register and vote in the May primary election if they will be 18 on or before the Nov. 3 general election.

Registering to vote online additionally requires submitting a valid driver's license or state identification card number.

Please see VOTERS, Page A8

BP makes 'last, best, final' offer to Whiting workers

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BP is making what it's calling its last, best and final offer to workers at the BP Whiting Refinery.

The company is offering a six-year contract to about 900 workers represented by United Steelworkers Local 7-1 at the Midwest's largest oil refinery. The proposal would include 15% raises over the next four years and bonuses of between \$7,500 and \$15,000.

"After more than eight weeks of bargaining in good faith in an effort to reach a fair and equitable agreement, and after careful consideration, the company presented the union with a last, best and final offer," the company said in an update to workers. "This means that the company has now provided the Union with our most comprehensive and most competitive offer."

Please see BP REFINERY, Page A8



JOSEPH S. PETE, FILE, THE TIMES

USW rallied in Whiting last month.

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