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WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2024

BLUFFTON, INDIANA · Wells County's Hometown Connection

\$1.00

Common Council introduces electric rate increases

By JONATHAN SNYDER
Increases to electric rates over the next five years were introduced by the Common Council Tuesday.



Clerk-Treasurer Bri Lautzenheiser, left, along with council members Blake Fiechter, right, and Rick Elwell, second from left, listen as Scott Mentzer explains the reasoning behind the increases.

2030 to 2035 when they establish a new contract with Wolverine. The fund is not allowed to be used for any other electric department projects, and will only be used for keeping rates down.

thing," Baker Tilly representative Eric Walsh said to the council. "You're just taking control and doing it yourself."

Council member Chandler Gerber asked if those increased rates were tested against other providers, with Mentzer assuring that

(Continued on Page 2)

City set to receive \$900K grant for sidewalks

By JONATHAN SNYDER
Street Commissioner Tim Simpson announced Tuesday that Bluffton has received a \$900,000 federal grant for sidewalk improvements.

The improvements will take place along Spring street, then north on Mulberry street, and turning west on Washington street to the splash pad.

The initial request was made in early October, with Simpson noting that this was a special call from the Highway Safety Improvement Project.

Had we just chosen a bunch of sidewalks versus one that's connecting the school systems, it upped our ability to be awarded the grant," Simpson said during the Bluffton Common Council's meeting Tuesday.

"Just taking it down a regular

(Continued on Page 2)

EMS fund is projected to last 5 more years

By HOLLY GASKILL
According to current projections, Wells County EMS can operate for five more years with its current funding source.

Wells County EMS CEO Rick Piepenbrink and Trent Bucher of Honegger, Ringger and Co. presented a financial update to the Wells County Council on Tuesday.

hospital in 2000. The fund has depleted over time as costs have increased and revenue has not.

Wells County EMS makes an average of 8.5 runs per day — two-thirds of which are billable, meaning an individual was transported to the hospital.

Altogether, EMS revenue has

remained flat for five years despite significant inflating costs to the department. According to Bucher, EMS lost \$509 per run last fiscal year.

Council member Vicki Andrews noted that much of the issue is beyond the council's control — the county cannot dictate how people use EMS for nonbillable services nor that Medicare and Medicaid discounts have not

risen with inflation.

The county council has taken measures to delay this depletion — first in 2022, by committing \$100,000 of the budget to support EMS operations.

In his update, Bucher attributed part of this difficulty to the county solely bearing the cost of EMS

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Wells County prosecutor to go full-time

By HOLLY GASKILL
After nearly two years in office, Wells County Prosecutor Colin Andrews will begin working full-time in the position in 2025.

Andrews spoke with the Wells County Council about the position on Wednesday, and the council consented to the change.

Andrews, a Republican, was elected to his first term as prosecutor in 2022. He also previously served as a deputy prosecutor.

Andrews expects the change will take place by late January, giving time to transfer clients and work at his firm, Andrews & Crell P.C.

Andrews & Crell, which has an office in downtown Bluffton, will transition to Crell Law.

holly@news-banner.com



Colin Andrews

Indiana charter school group to push for property tax revenue sharing

By LESLIE BONILLA MUÑOZ
Indiana Capital Chronicle

A recently formed group representing Indiana's growing public charter school sector says it'll push lawmakers to make traditional public schools share local property tax revenue.

Indiana Charter Innovation Center President and CEO Scott Bess said his group's ask starts with the core principle underlying Indiana's approach to funding education: money follows the student.

All school types get the same share of money from the state. Charters also get federal dollars.

But charters don't receive local property tax revenue, so they run on about two-thirds of the fund-

ing obtained by traditional public schools, according to a news release Tuesday.

Bess wants to put a dent in that gap.

"We may not close the gap entirely, and that may be impossible to do, but we have to at least close it some. And the state isn't going to make up all that difference," said Bess, who founded Purdue University's Polytechnic High School and led it until this summer.

Charters organize

Charters are public schools, but they're not run by school districts. Instead, they're headed by nonprofit boards and are overseen by their independent authorizers.

They can control their own cur-

riculum, staffing, organization, and budget but have to meet academic, financial and other standards. They're still required to give students yearly state exams and they receive state ratings. They're subject to state public records and open door laws.

There are more than 120 charter schools in Indiana, making up about 5% of the state's total K-12 schools, according to the Indiana Charter Innovation Center.

The center soft-launched in August, per Bess.

Already, about 60 schools — some part of the same charter networks — are members of the 501(c)(3) nonprofit. They can access ser-

(Continued on Page 2)

South Korea lifts martial law decree after lawmaker rejection

By KIM TONG-HYUNG
Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The president of South Korea early Wednesday lifted the martial law he imposed on the country hours earlier, bending to political pressure after a tense night in which troops surrounded parliament and lawmakers voted to reject military rule.

President Yoon Suk Yeol, who

appeared likely to be impeached over his actions, imposed martial law late Tuesday out of frustration with the opposition, vowing to eliminate "anti-state" forces as he struggles against opponents who control parliament and that he accuses of sympathizing with communist North Korea.

Police and military personnel were seen leaving the grounds of parliament following the biparti-

san vote to overrule the president, and the declaration was formally lifted around 4:30 a.m. during a Cabinet meeting.

Parliament acted swiftly after martial law was imposed, with National Assembly Speaker Woo Won Shik declaring that the law was "invalid" and that lawmakers would "protect democracy with the people."

In all, martial law was in effect

for about six hours.

The president's surprising move harkened back to an era of authoritarian leaders that the country has not seen since the 1980s, and it was immediately denounced by the opposition and the leader of Yoon's own conservative party.

Lee Jae-myung, leader of the liberal Democratic Party, which holds the majority in the 300-seat parliament, said the party's

lawmakers would remain in the Assembly's main hall until Yoon formally lifted his order.

Woo applauded how troops quickly left the Assembly after the vote.

"Even with our unfortunate memories of military coups, our citizens have surely observed the events of today and saw the maturity of our military," Woo said.

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Supporting widows and building connections

Dear Readers: So many of you wrote about the widow columns that I printed recently...

Dear Annie: Oh, wow! I just saw this in our paper and pointed it out to my wife. She didn't believe it at first...

No. 1: Have those widows ever shown an interest in your husband? No. 2: Is your husband's loyalty and faithfulness in question?

No. 3: After a divorce, why is the ex-husband being invited? Could there be unresolved feelings there?

There's an old saying: "When you point a finger, three more point back at you." It's a sad situation all around...

Dear Annie: I got divorced at 42 many years ago, but not one of my friends abandoned me. Early on, I made it clear to everyone...

We had such a wonderful time together! I like to think it wasn't because I was considered "too homely" to be a threat...

Dear Annie: I got divorced at 42 many years ago, but not one of my friends abandoned me. Early on, I made it clear to everyone...

ence. — Friendships First Dear Friendships First: I love the fact that you addressed the issue head-on with your friends.

In my community, we have an organization called Compass Club, which has been a vital resource for women over the years.

Originally established as a newcomers club, we evolved our mission during my tenure as president to focus on supporting women in transition...

Dear Compass: Thank you for your wonderful suggestion. I hope it helps people connect with each other.

The Modern Widows Club was created by Carolyn Moor to help people find healing resources after loss. It started as a simple initiative in a widowed woman's living room...

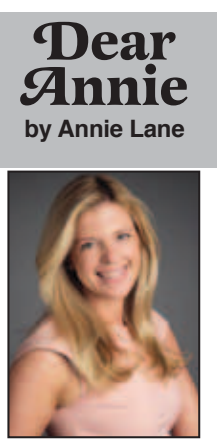
Dear Another Tip: That sounds fantastic. "How Can I Forgive My Cheating Partner?" is out now!

"How Can I Forgive My Cheating Partner?" is out now! Annie Lane's second anthology — featuring favorite columns on marriage, infidelity, communication and reconciliation — is available as a paperback and e-book.

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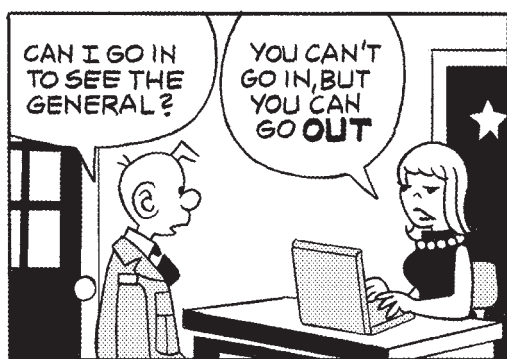
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Dear Annie by Annie Lane

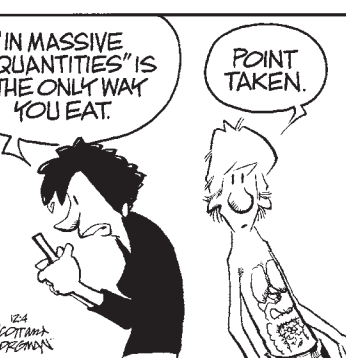
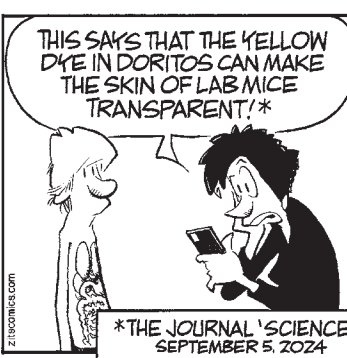
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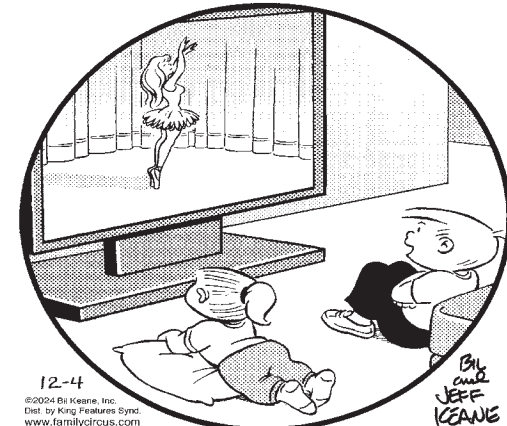


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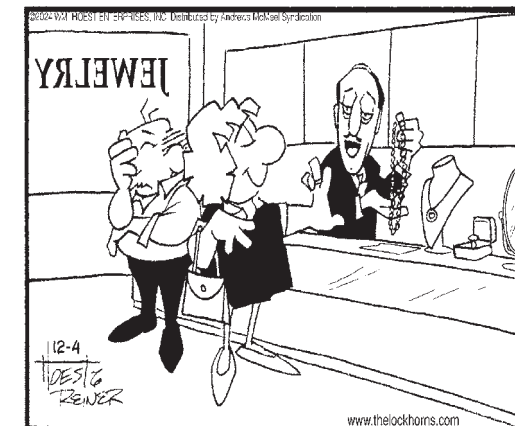
THE FAMILY CIRCUS

By Bil Keane



"Ballet dancers are always trying to look taller."

The LOCKHORNS



"If you like that expensive ring, you might also like this expensive necklace."

My Answer

By Dr. Billy Graham



Many hate to see Christmas coming

the tradition for me, or for them? Perhaps if I reset the nativity to the front of the tree and stash everything else in a dark corner...

birth of Jesus Christ, who came down from Heaven to save us from our sins. May we see His glory! "When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy..."

(This column is based on the words and writings of the late Rev. Billy Graham.)

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CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down. Includes 'Solution time: 23 mins.' and 'Yesterday's answer 12-4'.

Table of TV channels and their programming schedules for the week of Dec 2-8, 2024. Columns include channel number, time slot, and program title.

Table showing the solution for yesterday's crossword puzzle, with words filled in the grid.

