

The Commercial Review

Portland, Indiana 47371 www.thecr.com \$1

Airport seeking to add LEDs to project

Officials will push for new lighting as part of paving work

By RAY COONEY
The Commercial Review

A paving project will require layout changes that will lead to replacing runway lighting.

Airport officials hope to parlay those modifications into new lighting for the entire runway.

Jason Clearwaters of engineering firm Butler, Fairman & Seufert explained during Wednesday's Portland Board of Aviation meeting plans to push for the new lighting to be part of the federally funded project.

Butler, Fairman & Seufert is working on the design of a project to mill and pave the original 4,000 feet of the airport's runway. (In 2022, the airport's runway was extended to 5,500 feet.) He explained to the aviation board that the Federal Aviation Administration is now requiring any pavement-related projects to meet modern geometry standards. In the case of Portland's runway, that will require some of the turning radii for connectors between the runway and taxiway to be widened. As a result, several lights would need to be moved and several new ones installed.

Clearwaters said he'd like to try to leverage those required changes into a larger project to replace all of the runway's existing incandescent lights with LEDs and upgrade related wiring. Such a project would modernize the facility's 30-year-old lighting system.

"I'm going to push as hard as I can to get a whole new runway lighting system done at the same time," he said, noting that it is becoming difficult to find incandescent lights.

See **LEDs** page 2



The Commercial Review/Bailey Cline

Sanderson shuffle

First grader Gracie Sanderson raises her hands while singing in Bloomfield Elementary School's Christmas concert practice Thursday at East Jay Elementary School.

Unemployment stayed below 4%

By RAY COONEY
The Commercial Review

Unemployment stayed below 4% for the third consecutive month.

Data that the Indiana Department of Workforce Development released last week shows Jay County had an unemployment rate of 3.4% in September.

The report, which typically would have come out in October, was delayed because of the federal government shutdown, which ran from Oct. 1 through Nov. 12. The shutdown disrupted data collection and processing at the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Reports for October were

Reports were delayed because of shutdown

canceled in some cases. The department of workforce development calendar calls for releasing its report for November on Friday.

Jay County's rate was down by 0.5 percentage points in September. It was 0.1 percentage points higher than the same month last year.

The local rate has been

gin and is now the second-lowest in the state at 2.9%.

Delaware County had the worst rate in the region at 3.9%, tied for 10th-highest.

The state saw improvement in unemployment rates as well, with Indiana dipping to 3.5% from 4% in August.

Union County was the only county with an unemployment rate lower than Wells County, coming in at 2.6%.

Howard County again had the highest unemployment rate in Indiana at 5.5%. Lake County was next at 4.6%.

All but nine counties came in lower than 4%.

Area unemployment rates are as follows:

Adams County: 3.3%, down 0.2 percentage points, tied for 31st-lowest

Blackford County: 3.8%, down 1.5 percentage points, tied for 12th-highest

Delaware County: 3.9%, down 0.6 percentage points, 10th-highest

Jay County: 3.4%, down 0.5 percentage points, tied for 42nd-lowest

Randolph County: 3.5%, down 0.5 percentage points, tied for 31st-highest

Wells County: 2.9%, down 0.5 percentage points, tied for second-lowest



The Commercial Review/Bailey Cline

Thompson tune

Members of the junior high choir, including Finley Thompson (foreground left) perform Sunday during the Fort Recovery Local Schools Christmas Choir Concert. The junior high choir's selections included "Hot Chocolate" and "Believe" from "The Polar Express."

Facilities plan approved

By BAILEY CLINE
The Commercial Review

Updates to Fort Recovery Local Schools facilities are in the works over the next 10 years.

Fort Recovery School Board approved a 10-year capital plan Monday.

Superintendent Tony Stahl explained the plan includes the culmination of capital efforts started in 2024. The plan serves as a living document, including information about work completed since the district began an initial facilities review with architectural firm Garmann Miller last year.

The plan runs through a quick overview of the district's facilities, which include Fort Recovery Elementary/Middle School, Fort Recovery High School, The LeFevre Family Athletic Complex, Jerome & Maurice Grieshop Athletic Training Facility, Barrenbrugge Athletic

District plans upgrades for Barrenbrugge Athletic Park, roofing and bus barn

Park and the district's bus barn and maintenance building.

It also lays out a timeline. School board approved a contract with Garmann Miller in February 2024. It also updated its culture and commitment guide in September 2024, adding a goal to "maintain 80% of capital outlay projects" in reserve for future repairs and needs.

Other main items on the timeline include the board's decision in January to establish two capital funds for athletics and high

school expenses and the board approving a facility review of the football stadium in October.

Capital projects have already been in the works since Stahl started as superintendent in August 2023. Upgrades to the elementary and middle school's heating, ventilation and air conditioning system were completed over the summer.

The document lays out projects over the course of the next 10 years.

See **Plan** page 2

Deaths

Kathleen Medsker, 101, Greenfield
Suzanne Fields, 66, rural Portland
Barbara Bergman, 70, Fort Recovery
Details on page 2.

Weather

The temperature stayed between 34 and 44 degrees Wednesday in Jay County.

Tonight's low will be in the low 20s with winds gusting to 25 mph after midnight. Expect mostly cloudy skies Saturday with a high in the lower 40s and continued windy conditions.

See page 2 for an extended forecast.

In review

Jay County Solid Waste Management District will have recycling trailers from 8 to 11 a.m. Saturday across from Pennville Fire Station and 9 a.m. to noon in the parking lot at 220 Lincoln St., Portland.

Coming up

Saturday — Coverage of the Jay County boys basketball game against Delta.

Tuesday — Details from Monday's Jay County Commissioners meeting.

Wednesday — Coverage of next week's Dunkirk City Council meeting.



Obituaries

Kathleen Medsker
July 22, 1924-Dec. 15, 2025
Kathleen Prescott Medsker, 101, a former Jay County resident, passed away Monday at Crowne Pointe in Greenfield.
Kathleen was born on July 22, 1924, in rural Portland, the daughter of Forest and Maggie (Baldauf) Greaf. She graduated from Portland High School in 1941 and was formerly employed at G.C. Murphy in Portland. Kathleen attended Salamonia Christian Church in Salamonia, West Walnut Church of Christ in Portland and Morristown Methodist Church in Morristown. She was



Medsker

a member of the Portland Opti-mist Club.
She spent several years living in Lakeland, Florida, where she enjoyed playing shuffleboard. Kathleen also loved quilting and ice cream and cherished time spent with her family.
Kathleen married Harold Prescott on Sept. 15, 1944. He preceded her in death on Oct. 15, 1988. She later married Paul Medsker on June 10, 1995, and he passed away on Oct. 21, 2011.
Survivors include:
Her children — Sharon Wright (husband: Lloyd), Portland, and Becky Lowe (husband: Grant), Greenfield
One brother — Clarence Greaf (wife: Carol), Knoxville, Tennessee
Five grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren

She was preceded in death by three children, Harold Eugene Prescott, Larry Prescott and Catherine Prescott.
Visitation will be from 4 to 7 p.m. Monday at Williamson-Spencer and Penrod Funeral Home in Portland. Funeral services will be at 11 a.m. Tuesday at the funeral home with one hour of visitation prior to the service. Pastor Gil Alicea will officiate and burial will follow at Salamonia Cemetery.
Memorials may be directed to Hemophilia of Indiana.

Suzanne Fields
Feb. 10, 1959-Dec. 16, 2025
Suzanne Fields, age 66, of rural Portland passed away Tuesday evening, Dec. 16, 2025, in Enville Healthcare in Berne, Indiana. She was born in Portland on

Feb. 10, 1959, the daughter of Thomas and Annabelle (Corle) Lyons.
Suzanne had lived in Florida for several years and had worked for All Pro in Sanford, Florida. She was a 1977 Jay County High School graduate and member of Eagles Lodge. She enjoyed arts and crafts especially candle and soap making.
Surviving are her son Cody Fields of Lake Mary, Florida; her uncle John Lyons of Portland; and two cousins.
She was preceded in death by a sister, Christie Joy.
There will be no services at this time.
Baird-Freeman Funeral Home



Fields

in Portland is handling the arrangements.
Memorials can be made to Midwest Pet Refuge in Portland. Condolences may be expressed at bairdfreeman.com.
Barbara L Bergman, Fort Recovery, March 13, 1955-Dec. 15, 2025. A Mass of Christian Burial will be held at 10 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 20, at St. Joseph Catholic Church.
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The Commercial Review publishes death notices for those with a connection to our coverage area free of charge. They include the name, city of residence, birth/death date and time/date/location of services. There is a charge for obituaries, which are accepted only from funeral homes or mortuary services.

CR almanac

Saturday 12/20	Sunday 12/21	Monday 12/22	Tuesday 12/23	Wednesday 12/24
45/24 Cloudy skies are in the forecast for Saturday when the low may hit 24.	31/19 Sunday's forecast shows sunny skies with a high around 31 degrees.	39/34 Monday looks to be mostly cloudy with temperatures in the 30s.	48/37 Cloudy skies, with the high reaching the mid 40s.	58/47 Evening showers are expected Wednesday, when temperatures may hit a warmer 58.

Lotteries

Powerball 25-33-53-62-66 Power Ball: 17 Power Play: 4 Estimated jackpot: \$1.5 billion	Daily Four: 5-8-6-1 Quick Draw: 5-10-13-19-22-24-26-29-30-32-34-36-40-45-50-59-62-69-72-75 Cash 5: 6-13-16-23-44 Estimated jackpot: \$198,500
Mega Millions Estimated jackpot: \$90 million	Ohio Wednesday Midday Pick 3: 4-9-1 Pick 4: 1-7-8-8 Pick 5: 0-0-8-9-1 Evening Pick 3: 7-4-7 Pick 4: 7-7-8-0 Pick 5: 5-5-0-5-3 Rolling Cash: 22-29-31-38-39 Estimated jackpot: \$110,000
Hoosier Wednesday Midday Daily Three: 5-9-3 Daily Four: 6-1-9-1 Quick Draw: 1-7-9-21-23-25-30-32-39-45-51-53-54-57-61-62-68-69-72-77 Evening Daily Three: 9-7-0	

Markets

Cooper Farms Fort Recovery Corn4.64 Jan. corn4.62	Wheat 4.63
POET Biorefining Portland Corn.....4.62 Jan. corn4.54 Feb. corn4.49	ADM Montpelier Corn.....4.44 Jan. corn4.44 Beans10.46 Jan. beans10.46 Wheat4.78
The Andersons Richland Township Corn4.49 Jan. corn4.49 Beans10.43 Jan. beans10.46	Heartland St. Anthony Corn.....4.59 Jan. corn4.54 Beans10.18 Jan. beans10.18 Wheat4.58

Today in history

In 1154, Henry II was crowned King of England. He ruled for 34 years.
In 1776, Thomas Paine published the first installment in “The American Crisis,” a pamphlet series published during the American Revolution in order to boost morale among soldiers.
In 1843, Charles Dickens published “A Christmas Carol,” selling 6,000 copies at the time. The classic story about a curmudgeonly old man, Ebenezer Scrooge, finding a new perspective on life has been retold countless times with various movie and theatre adaptations.
In 1941, Adolf Hitler took control of the German Army. — The CR

Citizen’s calendar

Monday
9 a.m. — Jay County Commissioners, auditorium, courthouse, 120 N. Court St., Portland.
3:45 p.m. — Jay County Solid Waste Management District, district office, 5948 W. Indiana 67, Portland
7 p.m. — Dunkirk City Council, city building, 131 S. Main St.
Tuesday
6 p.m. — Pennville Town Council public hearing and regular meeting, town hall, 105 N. Washington St.
Jan. 5
3:45 p.m. — Jay County Solid Waste Management District, 5948 W. Indiana 67, Portland.
5 p.m. — Jay School Board, General Shanks, 414 E. Floral Ave., Portland.
5:30 p.m. — Portland City Council, fire station, 1616 N. Meridian St.
7:30 p.m. — Fort Recovery Village Council, village hall, 201 S. Main St.

LEDs ...

Continued from page 1
“The runway’s closed. We’ve got to mill it, we’ve got to overlay it, fix cracks. What better time?”
He estimated the cost at \$200,000 to \$300,000, which, if approved, would be covered 95% by the FAA. (Indiana Department of Transportation and the city would each be responsible for 2.5%, which would amount to \$10,000 to \$15,000 based on projected costs.) The paving project was originally estimated at \$1.52 million, but that cost is expected to go up with the need to change the turning radii.
The project is part of the airport’s ongoing improvement efforts, which have included the

runway extension, apron expansion and hangar upgrades. Work that is in the facility’s capital improvement plan for the future includes installing a new automated weather observing station, rehabilitating the apron, upgrading the taxiway, adding hangar space and constructing a wildlife fence.
Aviation board members Faron Parr, Clyde Bray, John Ferguson and Caleb Lutes were supportive of the idea.
Clearwaters said he will update board members on the project at their January meeting.
They also approved a \$16,713.20 pay request from Butler, Fairman and Seufert for work related to the design of the paving project, which is sched-

uled to go out for bid in the early spring.
The board also handled the final administrative steps on the apron expansion project that was completed this fall. Clearwaters reported that the work passed its final inspection.
Board members then approved the release of \$47,877.77 in retainage to contractor Kwest Group. It also approved a change order for a reduction of \$7,941.72 because the project came in under budget.
Three different FAA grants were used to cover the bulk of the \$957,555.43 project. The board approved reimbursement requests totaling \$81,247.10 for those grants.
The board also approved the FAA final acceptance document.

In other business, the board:
•Heard from airport manager Hal Tavzel that Schmitt Foam came in with the lowest of three quotes — \$15,776 for added spray foam insulation to a hangar at the airport. The company is expected to handle the work in January.
•OK’d leasing storage space for snow removal equipment from airport neighbor Chuck Denney at a rate of \$1,500 for three months.
•Learned from Tavzel that the airport sold 7,803 gallons of fuel in November for \$32,929.79. That’s up significantly from 4,973 gallons in November 2024 and 4,571 gallons in November 2023.
•Approved claims totaling \$17,091.53.

Plan ...

Continued from page 1
Future projects could include updates to Barrenbrugge Park in partnership with Fort Recovery Athletic Boosters, as well as other updates to buildings, such as roofing and envelope maintenance to both the elementary and middle school and high school buildings. If the district were to complete each project on the list, it would come to an estimated \$10.75 million.
School board member Sean Kahlig confirmed Monday’s decision didn’t signal formal approval for each project on the list but rather approved the planning process. Stahl pointed out final approval for any project will need to be voted on by school board members in the future.
In other business,

school board members Mitch Fullenkamp, Nick Wehrkamp, Don Wendel, Kahlig and LeFevre:
•Agreed to hold an organizational meeting at 6 p.m. Jan. 12, with the regular monthly meeting to follow, and elected Don Wendel as president pro-tem for the meeting.
•Heard from Stahl school officials may look into whether to adjust school start and end times in future years. The 2026-27 school calendar year will not be impacted, with the discussion to begin sometime next year.
•Learned the district’s membership with Ohio School Boards Association has increased by \$200, or a total \$4,319 for next year. Stahl told the board it could decide whether to renew its

membership at the next meeting.
•Approved the following: continuing to employ Kristy Wehrkamp as a classified substitute teacher next semester; with Nick Wehrkamp abstaining; a \$500,000 transfer from the general fund to the permanent improvement fund; an overnight trip for the FFA Ag Technology and Mechanical Systems team to attend state finals at Ohio State Agricultural Technical Institute in Wooster, Ohio, retroactive to Dec. 10 and 11.
•Reappointed Fort Recovery Public Library trustees.
•Accepted the following as volunteer coaches: Brandon Schoen as junior high basketball, Kylie Post as assistant softball coach (and accepted her resigna-

tion as high school reserve softball coach), Riggs Tobe as baseball assistant coach, Ben Will as baseball assistant coach, Isaac Osterfeld as junior high track assistant coach and Kylee Sutter and Mindy Bulp as swim coaches.
•Hired Gavin Faller as baseball reserve coach and Madalin Romer as a classified substitute.
•Rescinded approval for volunteer coach Lisa Huelsman and hired her as a softball reserve coach.
•Recognized Leah Weubker for making the Ohio Music Education Association All-State Choir.
•Accepted a \$4,000 donation from Win on the Wabash to the high school principal account and a \$6,430 donation from Fort Recovery Athletic Boosters to athletics.

Capsule Reports

Passing crash
Damage is estimated between \$10,000 and \$25,000 after a Pennville woman attempted to pass a Portland man while he was turning at the intersection of county road 100 North and U.S. 27, causing an accident about 3:30 p.m. Tuesday.
Kamylee Stephens, 21, was driving a 2018 Jeep Grand Cherokee west on the road. She told police the 2020

Chevrolet Traverse in front of her was motionless, so she attempted to pass on the left. As she overtook the vehicle, driver Larry Jacobs, 65, began turning south into a parking lot and crashed into Stephens.
Turning accident
A Berne woman lost control of her car and hit another Berne woman’s vehicle at the intersection of North

and Park streets in Portland about 6 a.m. Monday.
Reba Wendel, 20, was driving a 2024 Kia Sportage east on North Street when she attempted to turn south onto Park Street. Her car began sliding on the slick surface and crashed into a 2019 Chevrolet Malibu driven by 35-year-old Jessica Gentis.
Damage is estimated between \$5,000 and \$10,000.

SERVICES

Today

Schwartz, Irene: 9 a.m., Schwartz residence, 998 W. 850 South, Geneva.

Stigleman, Sarah: 6 p.m., MJS Mortuaries, 109 S. Meridian St., Redkey.

Saturday, Dec. 20

Bergman, Barbara: 10 a.m., 1689 St. Joe Road, Fort Recovery.

Tuesday, Dec. 23

Medsker, Kathleen: 11 a.m., Williamson-Spencer and Penrod Funeral Home, 208 N. Commerce St., Portland.

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Call (260) 726-8141 or email ads@thecr.com

Rate does not apply to special sections

Ads must run in December



Photo provided

Character Counts

Second graders at East Elementary School received recognition for demonstrating responsibility. Pictured in the front row from left are Jake Rowles, Lillian Stanton and Duke Steed. In the second row are Alanis Garcia, Ava Atkinson and Bexley Brunswick. Not pictured is Leo Esquivel.

Fort Festival of Trees kicks off at library

Fort Recovery's annual tree festival has started. Fort Festival of Trees continues this week during normal business hours at Fort Recovery Public Library. Patrons may cast a vote for one of 19 decorated trees on display. The tree with the most votes earns the title of People's Choice Award, and the decorator's name is added to a plaque

Taking Note

at the library. Library hours are 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesdays, 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Fri-

days and 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturdays. The library's hours on Dec. 31 are 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. The library is closed on Dec. 24, Dec. 25 and Jan. 1.

Next generation

Indiana high school seniors and college students pursuing careers in teaching may now apply for the Next Generation Hoosier

Educators Scholarship. The renewable scholarship established in 2016 pays \$10,000 per year up to four years for students committing to teaching in Indiana for at least five years. Scholarships will be awarded to students who have graduated or will graduate from an Indiana school. Applicants must also rank in the top 20% of

their high school graduating class, have a top 20% ACT or SAT score, or have a cumulative grade point average of at least a 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. The 2026-2027 application is available online at scholartrack.che.in.gov through Feb. 28. Applicants will be notified of their scholarship status by April 2026. For questions, email the

Indiana Commission for Higher Education at NextTeacher@che.in.gov.

Blue Christmas

Trinity Lutheran Church will host a Blue Christmas prayer service this month. The service begins at 7 p.m. Dec. 22 at the church, 301 Wayne St., Fort Recovery. The public is invited to attend.

Man sees 'signs' amid relationship heartache

DEAR ABBY: I'm a 55-year-old man who dated a very special lady, "Dawn," for 12 years. We were both married when we met. I fell in love with her, and after we divorced our spouses, we continued being together. I have two kids. Dawn didn't get along with the older one. My daughter wasn't rude, but she obviously didn't like Dawn. I proposed to Dawn, and she accepted. Over the next few months, she became agitated and threw her engagement ring

Dear Abby



back at me. I kept it until we figured things out. Two years later, Dawn ghosted me. I was hurt, so I gave her space. (We reconciled five

months later.) Three years later, I finally trusted her enough to ask her about getting married. Then, right at Christmas, she ghosted me again. Six months later, nothing. I texted her after four months to no avail. I am now in therapy. Abby, I don't know how to move forward. Sometimes I get these divine messages, signs, dreams, etc. I hesitate to label anyone, but I wonder if I'm dealing with a woman who has a commitment phobia. What should I do

now? I have respectfully not contacted her except once. I am heartbroken. I'm not asking if I should wait around. I'm living my life. But these divine messages and signs have me wondering. — DESTROYED IN VIRGINIA
DEAR DESTROYED: I am pleased you are now in therapy, because it is where you belong. I don't know what your daughter picked up on about Dawn, but perhaps you should ask her. If you do, it

may give you some insight. Your therapist may be able to explain what Dawn's problem is, but whatever it is, it is no longer your problem. Those dreams, signs and messages you are receiving are not divine; they are proof that your subconscious still hasn't let go of the fantasy about a future with her. If, heaven forbid, the woman contacts you again, RUN in the opposite direction!

Community Calendar

Notices will appear in Community Calendar as space is available. To submit an item, email news@thecr.com.

Friday

DUNKIRK HISTORICAL MUSEUM — Is open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the third Friday and Saturday of each month at Webster Depot, 132 W. Railroad St. PAST RECOVERY SERVICES — Peer Addiction Support Team recovery support group meets at 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. each Friday at the Jay County Drug Prevention Coalition office at 100 N. Meridian St., Portland. To learn more infor-

mation, please call (260) 251-3259.

Saturday

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS — Will meet at 10 a.m. at Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, 218 E. High St., Portland. For more information, call (260) 251-3336 or (260) 729-7000. DUNKIRK HISTORICAL MUSEUM — Is open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the third Friday and Saturday of each month at Webster Depot, 132 W. Railroad St. MUSEUM OF THE SOLDIER — Is open from noon to 5 p.m. the first and third Saturday and Sunday of the month. It is located at

510 E. Arch St., Portland. The website is museumthesoldier.com.

Sunday

A BETTER LIFE — BRIANNA'S HOPE — A faith-based recovery group for all kinds of addictions, will meet from 5 to 6:30 p.m. each Sunday at Fellowship Baptist Church, 289 S. 200 West, Portland. Come early for a meal. For more information, call (260) 766-2006.

Monday

PORTLAND BREAKFAST OPTIMISTS — Will meet at 7 a.m. for breakfast at Richards Restaurant. PING PONG — Will be played from 9 a.m. to noon each Monday at Jay Community Center. EUCHRE — Will be played starting at 1 p.m. each Monday at West Jay Community Center, 125 Hoover St., Dunkirk. TAKE OFF POUNDS SENSIBLY (TOPS) — Will meet for weigh-in at 4:30 p.m., with the meeting at 5 p.m., at Trinity United

Methodist Church, 323 S. Meridian St., Portland. New members welcome. For more information, call (260) 726-5924.

THE LIFE CENTER — Free pregnancy testing with ongoing support during and after pregnancy, as well as help with the needs of the family. The center is located at 1209 S. Shank St., Portland. Hours are 1 to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. For more information or to schedule an appointment, call (260) 726-8636.

BREAD OF LIFE COMMUNITY FAMILY MEAL — Will be served from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. at Asbury United Methodist Church, 204 E. Arch St. in Portland. Everyone is welcome.

PORTLAND EVENING OPTIMIST CLUB — Will meet at 6 p.m. the second and fourth Monday of each month at Richards Restaurant.

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS — Will meet at 6:30 p.m. each Monday at A Second Chance At Life Ministries, 228 S. Meridian St. in Portland.

Sudoku

2					5			6
			7		3			
				1		7		4
8								9
	7		4		8			
5		9	3					7
7		2				1		
		4						
					9	8		

Level: Advanced

Thursday's Solution

9	4	1	8	2	7	6	5	3
7	3	5	6	4	1	2	9	8
6	2	8	9	5	3	1	7	4
4	7	2	1	3	8	9	6	5
1	9	3	4	6	5	7	8	2
8	5	6	2	7	9	3	4	1
5	6	7	3	1	4	8	2	9
2	1	9	5	8	6	4	3	7
3	8	4	7	9	2	5	1	6

The objective is to fill a nine-by-nine grid so that each column, each row, and each of the nine three-by-three boxes (also called blocks or regions) contains the digits from 1 to 9 only one time each.

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Workshop feels the weight of D.C.

By MORTON J. MARCUS

Exclusive report: Santa distressed by constraints on traditional privileges. Annual visits possibly delayed or eliminated. Negotiations still in progress.

Yes, that's what I learned on my usual December visit to meet with Elvin Elfenhausen, the majordomo of Santa's workshop. Elvin looked tired and unusually anxious as he said, "The Boss is tired and unusually anxious."

"What's the trouble?" I asked. "What isn't?" was his terse reply. But he continued, "Tariffs! The goofs in D.C. want us to pay tariffs on the goods we deliver. All our gifts are made right here in our North Pole workshops."

"That means they are imported," I clarified.

Morton J. Marcus



"From where?" he quizzed. "This place is not part of any country. We are not subject to U.S., Canadian, Norwegian or Russian regulation. But Washington wants us to pay tariffs as if we were in a foreign country."

"But there's more," he continued. "Our products carry no price. So 2% or 50% of what is the expected payment to the U.S. Treasury? No other country has ever imposed tariffs on

us. The only compensation received are the cookies and milk Santa gets on his visits."

Elvin paused, the wrinkles on his brow deepening. He then sighed and said, "The U.S. Department of Labor wants to inspect our workshops for health and safety violations. It's preposterous; we don't work as modern shops do. Our tools and methods are at least two centuries old. All the elves are meticulously trained. We haven't had an accident since Sonia Sonogram scratched herself on a salient splinter in 1876."

"Furthermore," he was wound up now, "the U.S. Department of Transportation is challenging our right to draw the sled with reindeer. They claim reindeer and sled are not

certified by the Federal Aviation Administration as airworthy."

"The Environmental Protection Agency is concerned that the reindeer will relieve themselves in unauthorized areas."

"Customs and Immigration is suspicious that illegal elves are being employed at the North Pole."

"The Justice Department claims elves are voting."

"The Defense (War) Department demands an inventory of the drones we control."

"The Congress objects to elves taking jobs from American workers."

"And, worst of all, the Supreme Court has, without a hearing, declared us unconstitutional because we are not mentioned in that document."

"How do you manage under such a barrage of busywork?" I asked.

"It's very tough," Elvin sighed. "When your President Trump said he wanted to incorporate Canada and Greenland into the U.S., we were terrified. Then we looked around and couldn't find anything with which we could defend ourselves. Our toys are for peaceful play."

"All we had on our shelves and in our cabinets were the letters of joy and appreciation from children. And the U.S. Postal Service wanted to check them for the correct postage."

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Marcus is an economist formerly at the IU Kelley School of Business. Contact him via email at mortonjmarcus@gmail.com.

AI tools require police oversight

The Dallas Morning News
Tribune News Service

Artificial intelligence face recognition and other high-tech tools are helping police find criminals faster and more effectively. This is no longer science fiction territory. It is happening, and there are legitimate questions about just how far police are going with these tools.

The Dallas Police Department has several guardrails around the use of AI face recognition in criminal investigations, even though the extent of the department's use of the technology is unclear, according to recent reporting by our newsroom. The department is right to embrace new technology to aid in its detective work, but it should move cautiously as it considers expanding its scope.

Dallas police have been using Clearview AI for over a year. This tool scrapes tens of billions of photos from social media and other public websites to create a face-print database for law-enforcement searches. The department logged more than 140 facial recognition search requests, according to an internal police spreadsheet obtained by our colleague Chase Rogers.

AI face recognition has been used in investigations related to human trafficking, homicides, robberies and other crimes. The department is considering expanding facial recognition technology to certain misdemeanor cases. That's reasonable as long as police continue to follow their existing rules. For instance, investigators need a supervisor's approval to run a search and can look up someone only in relation to a crime that has already occurred.

Naturally, there is fear that the technology could lead to wrongful arrests, which have occurred in other places.

Dallas has rules to address civil liberty concerns. For example, a face match alone doesn't amount to probable cause for an arrest. The internal rules also state that facial recognition won't be used to identify people in public protests unless it relates to a criminal investigation.

Guest Editorial

AI is helping police do their jobs faster, but it remains an imperfect instrument, and investigators must understand its limitations.

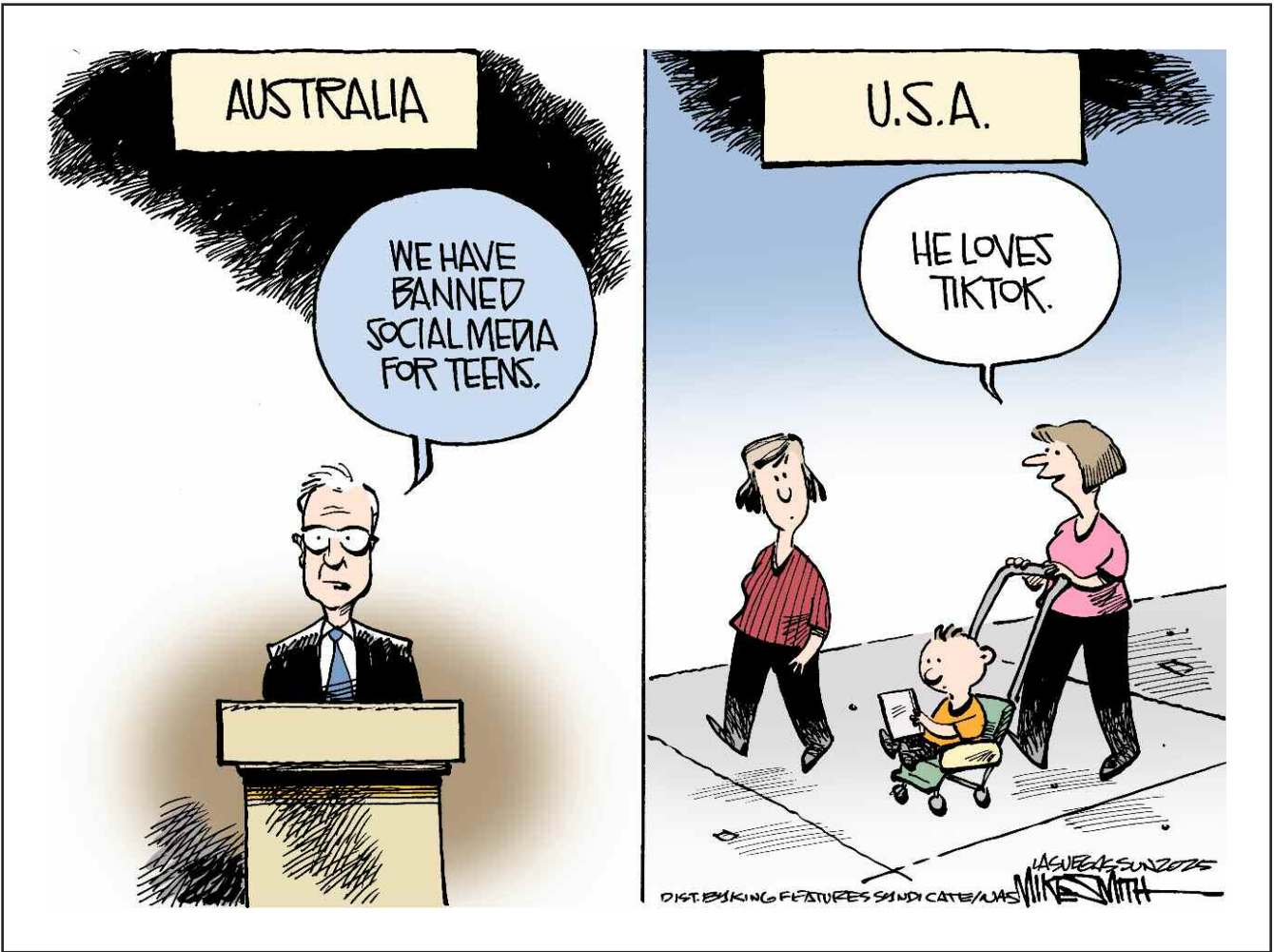
The rules are encouraging. An AI facial match is just one clue among more robust evidence that should be part of the investigation process.

Other tech tools, including license plate-reading cameras, are helping Dallas nab criminals. A suspected gunman was arrested within two days of the crime with the use of this technology, according to Dallas Police Chief Daniel Comeaux.

Last May, the City Council approved a three-year, \$5.7 million contract with Flock Safety, a company that makes smart cameras. A Dallas police spokesman told us that the department stores information from Flock cameras for one year.

All these tools rely on information in the public domain, either by capturing activity in public spaces like roads and sidewalks or by surfacing social media or other online activity. AI is helping police do their jobs faster, but it remains an imperfect instrument, and investigators must understand its limitations.

Police should continue to be sensitive to concerns about privacy and potential abuse as they evaluate additional ways AI might help in their work. We believe detectives can take dangerous people off the streets while using this technology responsibly.



Affordability isn't a hoax

By ALLISON SCHRAGER
Bloomberg Opinion
Tribune News Service

When someone tells you that they are struggling, it is generally a good rule of thumb to take them seriously. So it was not the best political move for President Donald Trump to call the affordability issue a "hoax." Too many Americans are trying to cope with rising food prices and high costs for housing, health care and child care.

At the same time, it is important to note that there is not a widespread "affordability crisis" in the U.S. Some people are truly unable to keep up with basic necessities. Some have high expectations that their incomes can't meet. And some are doing fine.

Affordability has been an issue for years, but it became an acute problem when inflation spiked after the pandemic and there was a drop in real income. Inflation is still high, about 3%. But real income growth is still positive for most Americans, suggesting that income is rising to cover many of the goods and services that are increasing in price.

There are caveats. For the bottom quartile, real wages are not rising as fast as for the other two. And even for the middle class, real wages haven't risen enough to keep pace with the increase in some critical goods and services.

Measuring the overall impact of all this is a challenge, because different households have different needs and priorities. There have been some high-profile estimates that show the middle class falling behind, but they make some questionable assumptions.

For example, they typically assume that a middle-class family has two children who require care. Child care is expensive, and it is often necessary even after children start school

Allison Schrager



(though once they do, costs do go down significantly). These costs are a real burden for many families, and more can and should be done to help them.

But this is not a nationwide crisis that affects a majority of Americans. In fact, only about 11% of American households contain at least one child under the age of six.

Another big expense facing Americans is housing. In urban areas, the rental value of a primary residence has increased nearly 30% since 2020, and higher interest rates on mortgages have made it harder for a lot of people to buy a home. But about two-thirds of American households are already homeowners, and about half of outstanding mortgages have a fixed interest rate that is less than 4%.

Yes, these conditions make it harder for these families to move, and it is more expensive for everyone who is not a homeowner. Yet it's difficult to argue that most households can't afford the cost of housing.

What about the cost of food? Food prices are up 27% since 2020 and are still rising about 3% a year. For lower-income Americans, this is a real burden and helps explain why their real incomes have fallen or are flat. The impact of tariffs is no doubt making things worse. For the average household, however, food remains a small part of the budget.

My argument is not that affordability is not an issue. It is that we should

be more precise about what affordability means, and for whom. Many of the more vocal complaints about affordability come from young childless households in large metro areas or those in the upper-middle or even upper class, and what they're complaining about is how they can't afford the trappings of affluence.

True, housing in cities has become more expensive than ever. Undoubtedly there are young people looking to build their careers in large cities who can't afford to do so. Like other generations before them, they may have to endure the hardship of not living in their ideal city or dealing with unpleasant roommates. Some of the challenges they face are new, but they are not remotely comparable to those of people on fixed incomes who struggle to afford food.

Another source of affordability anxieties is the residual sticker shock of high inflation from a few years ago. Prices went up a lot, and while the rate of inflation has since fallen, actual prices have not come down. Incomes may have risen since then too, but not for all families. More generally, inflation is just a bigger risk than it was before, and the job market is worsening. All of this makes consumers more wary and darkens the economic mood.

Affordability is a genuine problem that requires more attention from policy makers. Expanding child-care options, for example, or reducing tariffs and housing regulations, would go a long way toward helping struggling families. But it's just as unhelpful to refer to the affordability crisis as it is to call it a hoax.

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Schrager is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering economics. She is a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute.

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"Were it left for me to decide whether we should have government without newspapers or newspapers without government I should not hesitate to prefer the latter."
—Thomas Jefferson

Ranchers suggest improvements

Study pushes to modernize federal land program

By RONICA STROMBERG
University of Nebraska

Ranchers in a University of Nebraska–Lincoln study said the federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) could be modernized and improved using regenerative ranching practices.

David Sandahl, the master’s student from the School of Natural Resources who conducted the study over the past three years, interviewed 24 ranchers in Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota. Most of the ranchers also farmed, producing forage for their cattle. All had either taken part in a form of CRP, were still enrolled or had close family or friends enrolled.

“Nearly all of them seem to be moving away from it, in favor of their own set of practices because they feel like, although CRP may have started with good intentions and had good environmental intentions, now it doesn’t quite compare with how regenerative ranching can better benefit not only their operations but the general landscape around them,” Sandahl said.

Since the 1950s, CRP, formerly known as the Soil Bank Program, has contracted with farmers and ranchers to set aside land to benefit wildlife, control erosion and improve water quality. CRP issues 10- or 15-year contracts, but many of the ranchers Sandahl spoke with anonymously said the program was too restrictive.

As an example, when a problem like invasive species appeared on CRP land, ranchers felt the program hindered them in addressing the problem.

“When push comes to shove, these ranchers are under the impression that with CRP, they can’t adapt in the ways that they want to, especially in not



Tribune News Service/The Oregonian/Janet Eastman

Cattle ranchers involved in a study through the University of Nebraska suggested ways that the federal Conservation Reserve Program can be modernized and improved. They pushed for more flexibility, noting that the program hindered them from addressing the issue when invasive species were identified.

necessarily a day-to-day thing but more of a year-to-year,” Sandahl said. “When they look at a 10- or 15-year contract, they are like, ‘I don’t know why I would ever enter that, because I don’t know what I’m going to be doing in 10 years in my own life, let alone on my operation, and so, I need to have all my options in order to best protect the landscape.’”

Several of the ranchers told Sandahl regenerative ranching allowed them to adapt better to change on their ranches. They discussed this style of ranching mainly as adaptive management using rotational grazing, which allows land to recover for a year with natural inputs from manure and urine. It also could include using cover crops, diversified forage and minimal tillage or synthetic inputs. For a problem like invasive species, a regenerative rancher could disc the land and replant with native seeds.

Sandahl noted that ranchers who lived near publicly accessible areas like rivers, lakes or national or state parks disfavored CRP and, instead, favored practices they felt

aligned better with protecting or conserving wildlife.

In a related study Sandahl conducted with these ranchers on the effect of regenerative ranching on wildlife, the ranchers reported seeing more wildlife on their land with it than with conventional ranching.

Sandahl had originally started his master’s project to study the use of prescribed burns, but as he spoke with ranchers, the project morphed into a project focused on regenerative ranching and bridging the gap between ranchers and government agents or scientists.

“David’s work really highlights how much insight we gain when we let ranchers steer the conversation,” said Gwendwr Meredith, Sandahl’s advisor and an assistant professor in the School of Natural Resources. “He followed the science where it led, and in doing so, he captured a set of perspectives that are essential for improving conservation programs across the Great Plains.”

As a scientist and an avian ecologist, Sandahl said he did

not always agree with the ranchers he interviewed. He came from a background outside agriculture, having grown up in Northern Michigan with his father, an environmental scientist.

In the past years, he has carried out bird surveys across the Great Plains while working for the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies in Fort Collins, Colo. He met ranchers when he was working on the surveys and sought permission to go on private land. He said he saw a gap between ranchers and scientists or government agents and wanted to bridge it by finding common ground so they could work on problems with their combined knowledge sets.

“A lot of this inspiration for this research came from recognizing, through years of research, the gap that does exist and how I think ranchers tend to get a bad rap for, like, ‘Oh, they’re the ones destroying the earth and contributing to climate change,’ and I’m here like, ‘No, I think that they’re here to help us, and if we quit demonizing them and work together with them, we

can create a better future,’” Sandahl said.

His study used more qualitative research than quantitative, relying on what the ranchers said to convey their feelings and experiences.

“Qualitative research like this is crucial for understanding why conservation programs succeed or fail on the ground,” Meredith said. “David documented not just opinions, but patterns in how people experience these policies. That’s the kind of knowledge we need if we want programs like CRP to truly work for rural communities.”

Sandahl said he felt the research was an important contribution to science in this area.

“Scientists like me, researchers, we need to be, in my opinion, elevating these voices and bringing them into the fold of research,” he said.

Sandahl said he hopes to publish his findings in a scientific journal and would like to continue working in the Great Plains in the human dimensions part of wildlife conservation.

Growers association accepting applications

Board advocates for corn farmers

INDIANAPOLIS — Farmers who want to represent agriculture in the legislative halls of state and federal government should consider adding their name to this year’s Indiana Corn Growers Association board election ballot.

The ICGA board advocates for Hoosier corn farmers at the local, state and federal levels. ICGA’s governing districts match the nine congressional districts across the state. This year, ICGA will fill seats in districts 1, 4 and 7.

To be eligible, candidates must be an ICGA member in good standing; own, manage or operate a farm that produces corn; reside in the district they would represent; and be current on membership dues.

Elections will take place in the following districts:

District 1 — Lake and Porter counties and the northwest corner of LaPorte County

District 4 — Benton, Boone, Carroll, Clinton, Hendricks, Jasper, Montgomery, Morgan, Newton, Putnam, Tippecanoe, White, and Warren counties, and parts of Cass, Fountain and Howard counties

District 7 — Most of Marion County

Election applications are due to the ICGA office by Jan. 30. Ballots will be mailed to members in May and must be returned by June 30.

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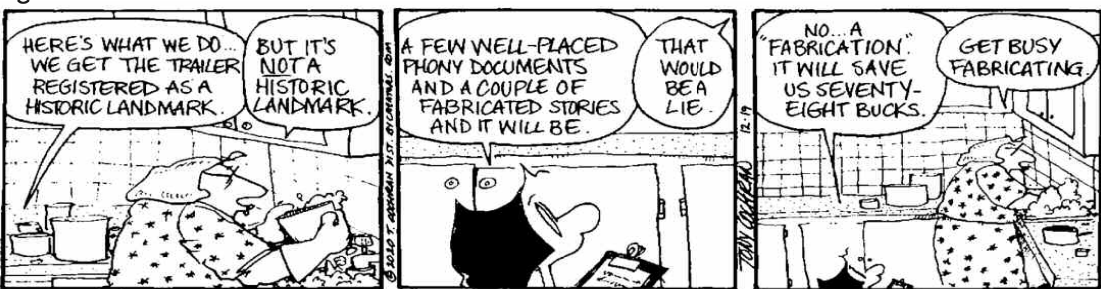
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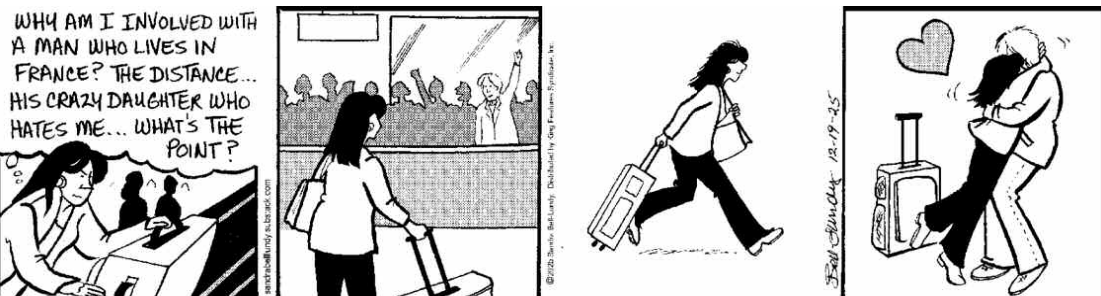
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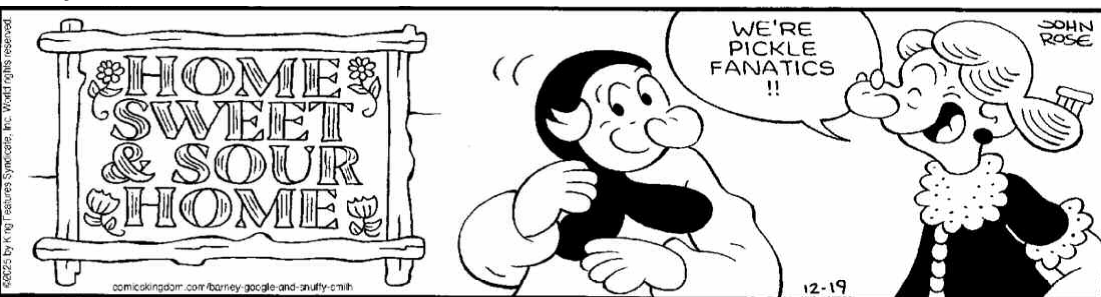
Between Friends



Blondie



Snuffy Smith



Beetle Bailey



Contract Bridge By Steve Becker

Double-dummy problem

NORTH		WEST		EAST		SOUTH	
♠	Q J 10 9 8	♠	A K 4 3 2	♠	7 6 5	♠	Q J 10 9 8 7 6 2
♥	A 5	♥	K 4 3	♥	—	♥	K Q
♦	A 10	♦	8 3	♦	J 9 7 6 5 4 2	♦	—
♣	A K 9 3	♣	6 5 2	♣	Q J 10	♣	8 7 4

Contract — Six Hearts.
South to make 12 tricks after West leads the king of spades.
Here is a curious hand, the likes of which you've probably never seen. It was not actually dealt, but was composed by Bruce Bell, well-known New Zealand expert.
It seems that declarer must ultimately lose a heart and a club to go down one, but careful play brings the slam home.
South ruffs the opening spade lead with the six and returns the deuce of hearts, finessing dummy's five after West follows low. Declarer next ruffs the nine of spades, cashes the king of diamonds, continues with the queen to dummy's ace and ruffs a third spade.
Now a club to dummy's king and another spade ruff are followed by a club to dummy's ace and the fifth and final spade ruff. As a result of these maneuvers, this is now the position, with the lead in the South hand:

North	West	East	South
♠ A	♥ K 4	♦ J 9	♥ Q J
♣ 9 3	♠ 6	♣ Q	♠ 8

Declarer exits with the eight of clubs, won by East with the queen, and East is forced to return a diamond. South ruffs with the jack, and West's apparently certain trump trick is trapped whether he elects to overruff or underuff.
Note that declarer must arrange to trump all five of dummy's spades in order to achieve the position where he can obliterate West's seemingly certain trump trick. Smother plays, of which this is an example, are so rare that they're practically nonexistent, but they're great fun — even if only on paper.

Tomorrow: Reducing the luck factor.
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12-19

CRYPTOQUIP

ZM MGI KZBSIC CFJBD KZQMU
GIVC FT MGI FBI BQIZW JGDK,
WZTU KIDKVI CZTBIC JGZSI

MD JGZSI.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF A BABY SHEEP NEEDS TO BE RUSHED TO THE HOSPITAL, SHOULD SOMEBODY FIRST CALL A LAMB-ULANCE?
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: K equals P

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Rent out
4 Simple rhyme scheme
8 "Don't move!"
12 Slangy suffix
13 "Fight Club" actor
14 "Peter Pan" dog
15 Well site
17 Sty cry
18 Covert
19 Ever-green tree
21 Em halves
22 Begin-nings
26 Sala-manders
29 Help
30 Mentalist
31 Raw minerals
32 Wise bird
33 Enfold
34 Cistern
35 —

DOWN

1 Novelist
2 Writer
3 Body powder
4 Extrater-restrials
5 Borscht base
6 Part of NATO
7 Skin softener
8 Bam-boozles
9 — chi
10 Raggedy doll
11 Tibetan beast
16 Worries
20 Finale
23 Franc replacer
24 Streetcar
25 Tries the wine
26 Bright star
27 "Taylor Swift: The — Tour" (2023 concert film)
28 Saturates
29 Plant
32 Fuel container
33 Like a tapestry
35 Actress
36 Pinpoint
38 Main artery
39 Wrestler
42 Top-notch
43 Pen tips
44 Duel prompter
45 Warm-up run
46 Brit. record label
47 Aachen article
49 Actor

Solution time: 25 mins.

Yesterday's answer 12-19

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12			13					14		
15			16					17		
18							19	20		
			21				22		23	24
26	27	28				29			30	
31						32			33	
34						35			36	
37						38			39	
			40				41		42	43
45	46	47				48	49			
50						51			52	
53						54			55	

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Bengals ...

Continued from page 8
Some fans might take consolation in Burrow’s reaction and be motivated that the leader takes the responsibility for the loss and the team missing the post-season again.
Every time Burrow has sat out with a significant injury, he has come back with vengeance and fury the next season.
The Bengals QB has won the NFL Comeback Player of the Year award twice — in 2024 and 2021.

Last year, he played at an MVP level and led the league in touchdowns (43) and passing yards (4,918) following wrist surgery. But they still missed the play-offs.
But after Sunday’s loss, something must change in the front office.
The defense is just terrible. The morale in the locker room is at an all-time low.
“Yeah, it’s frustrating,” Bengals head coach Zac Taylor said once again.

“This is a team that I thought was a talented team that was going to have a chance to do big things this year.”
Taylor has used the word frustrating every week it seems for the past 11 weeks or more.
Everyone had high expectations.
Those expectations are nice and can be a motivator. But the Bengals did not come close. Taylor uses the phrase “we just came up short” a lot.

That’s an understatement.
When a team as talented at the Bengals has a record of 4-10 when it should be 10-4 then there is another issue.
The team is not ready to play. And that is the job of the head coach.
“Just hang with us,” Taylor pleaded to the fans. “It’s been frustrating. We’re still pouring our hearts onto this thing and find a way to win, and it’s been a frustrating

season. I understand that.”
Those words fall on deaf ears to fans who have seen season-ticket prices continue to rise.
“They’re professionals. You know, that’s why you build the locker room the way you do it so that you don’t have to worry about guys like that,” Taylor said about trying to motivate his players for next week against Miami. “Go out there and put your best foot forward and I absolutely

trust that these guys will do that.”
But why should fans turn out for the final two home games against Arizona and Cleveland in January? It’s going to be cold, and the Bengals, Cardinals and Browns are all terrible.
Fans want ONE reason to come out — just ONE. Give them one. At this point, they don’t necessarily want a win — but rather they want effort. And a win would be nice too. But let’s not get greedy.



The Commercial Review/Andrew Balko

Bringing pressure

Jay County High School girls basketball guard Elizabeth Brunswick forces Janelle Slusher of the Blackford Bruins away from the basket during the Patriots’ 56-19 win on Monday. Jay County held Blackford’s leading scorer Olivia Murphy without a basket and scored 18 points off turnovers in the victory.

Sports on tap

Local schedule

Today
Jay County — Girls wrestling at Findlay – noon;
Boys basketball vs. Delta – 6 p.m.
Fort Recovery — Boys basketball at Parkway – 6 p.m.
Saturday
Jay County — Girls wrestling at Findlay – 11 a.m.; Girls basketball vs. South Adams – 6 p.m.
Fort Recovery — Girls bowling vs. Marion Local at Pla-Mor Lanes – 9 a.m.; Boys bowling vs. Marion Local at Pla-Mor Lanes – 1 p.m.; Boys basketball at Ansonia – 4:30 p.m.; Middle school girls basketball vs. St. John’s – 10 a.m.
Sunday
Fort Recovery — Boys bowling vs. Richmond –

1 p.m.; Girls bowling vs. Richmond – 1 p.m.

TV schedule

Today
11 a.m. — College football Myrtle Beach Bowl: Kennesaw State vs. Western Michigan (ESPN)
2:30 p.m. — College football Gasparilla Bowl: Memphis vs. N.C. State (ESPN)
6:30 p.m. — College basketball: Seton Hall at Providence (FS1)
8 p.m. — College Football Playoff first round: Alabama at Oklahoma (ESPN)
8 p.m. — College basketball: Wisconsin vs. Villanova (FOX)
9:30 p.m. — College basketball: Abilene

Christian at BYU (TNT)
10 p.m. — College basketball: Cal Poly at UCLA (BTN)

Saturday
11 a.m. — Women’s College basketball: Louisville vs. Tennessee (ESPN)
12 p.m. — College football playoffs first round: Miami vs. Texas A&M (ABC)
12 p.m. — College basketball: Oakland vs. Michigan State (BTN)
12:30 p.m. — Premier League soccer: Tottenham vs. Liverpool (NBC)
12:30 p.m. — College basketball: St. John’s vs. Kentucky (CBS)
1:30 p.m. — College basketball: Iowa vs. UConn (FOX)

3 p.m. — Premier League soccer: Everton vs. Arsenal (NBC)
3 p.m. — College basketball: Ohio State vs. North Carolina (CBS)
3:30 p.m. — College football playoffs first round: Tulane vs. Ole Miss (TNT)
4 p.m. — College basketball: Memphis vs. Mississippi State (ESPN)
4 p.m. — College football FCS semifinal: Montana State vs. Montana (ABC)
4 p.m. — College football DII Championship: Ferris State vs. Harding (ESPN2)
5 p.m. — NFL football: Philadelphia Eagles vs. Washington Commanders (FOX)
5:30 p.m. — College basketball: Houston vs. Arkansas (CBS)
6 p.m. — College basketball: Maryland vs.

Virginia (ESPN)
6 p.m. — College basketball: Bucknell vs. Iowa (BTN)
7 p.m. — NBA basketball: Indiana Pacers vs. New Orleans Pelicans (FDSN Indiana)
7:30 p.m. — College football playoffs first round: James Madison vs. Oregon (TNT)
7:30 p.m. — College football FCS semifinal: Villanova vs. Illinois State (ESPN2)
8 p.m. — College basketball: Xavier vs. Georgetown (FS1)
8 p.m. — College basketball: Penn vs. Rutgers (BTN)
8 p.m. — College basketball: Duke vs. Texas Tech (ESPN)
8:20 p.m. — NFL football: Green Bay Packers vs. Chicago Bears (FOX)

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The Commercial Review/Andrew Balko

Taking flight

Cole Forthofer of the Jay County boys basketball team floats a layup during the Patriots’ 58-41 win over the New Castle Trojans on Monday.

Bears mull Indiana move

Team came to Chicago in 1921

BY RICH EXNER
cleveland.com
Tribune News Service

CLEVELAND, Ohio — While the Cleveland Browns plan to move down Interstate 71 and just across the city line to suburban Brook Park, the Chicago Bears are threatening to move out of state.

Bears President and CEO Kevin Warren, frustrated with the lack of progress in securing commitments from the state of Illinois for a suburban Cook County site, said in an open letter to fans on Wednesday that the team would expand its stadium site search to include Northwest Indiana.

Warren said the team had not asked the state of Illinois for tax dollars to build a stadium at the team’s selected site in Arlington Heights, but he said the team does want “a commitment to essential local infrastructure (roads, utilities, and site improvements).”

“... Additionally, we sought reasonable property tax certainty to secure financing. We listened to state leadership and relied on their direction and guidance, yet our efforts have been met with no legislative partnership.”

Warren said state officials have told the team the stadium site would not be a priority in 2026.

“Consequently, in addition to Arlington Park, we need to expand our search and critically evaluate opportunities throughout the wider Chicagoland region, including North-

west Indiana,” the letter said.

A spokesperson for Gov. JB Pritzker said, as reported by the Sun-Times, that “suggesting the Bears would move to Indiana is a startling slap in the face to all the beloved and loyal fans who have been rallying around the team during this strong season.”

A spokesperson for Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle told the Sun-Times that she recently hosted a meeting with the team and state, city and county officials regarding the Bears.

“We’re shocked and disappointed that the Bears would discuss moving to Indiana at this time,” Preckwinkle said in a written statement, reported by the news website The Republic.

How to pay for infrastructure improvements around the Browns’ Brook Park stadium site is an open question. Brook Park has applied to the state for \$70 million to help pay for roadway and pedestrian upgrades.

Separately, Ohio has committed \$600 million toward the \$2.4 billion stadium. The Browns’ financing plan also calls for about \$300 million tied to Brook Park taxes generated at the site - mostly admissions taxes - and \$1.5 billion from the team. The Browns have also promised to pay for any cost overruns.

The team hopes to start construction in 2026, opening the stadium in time for the start of the 2029 NFL season.

Bengals out of postseason

BY DEL DUDUIT
The Portsmouth Daily Times
Tribune News Service

CINCINNATI — No more teasing. No more unrealistic hoping. No more praying to the Who Dey gods for that glimmer of playoff hope.



Del Duduit

The Bengals were officially eliminated from the NFL playoffs following Sunday’s embarrassing 24-0 shutout loss to Baltimore at a frigid Paycor Stadium in Cincinnati.

For the past few weeks, faithful and delusional Bengals fans racked their brains to find any substantial hope and odds for making a playoff run.

“IF the Bengals win out and IF the Steelers and Ravens drop this game or that game, they might sneak into the playoffs,” were the thoughts of many Cincinnati followers. “IF the defense can hold teams to under 25 points and IF Joe Burrow comes back and doesn’t throw five interceptions in three games and IF your pet starts talking to you while you get a Fed Ex delivery for a year’s supply of free bacon, the Bengals MIGHT make the playoffs. They JUST MIGHT.”

But after Sunday — poof! All hope is gone for 2025.

The sad truth is the Bengals are just a bad team right now.

They don’t deserve to make the playoffs, and they won’t this year — and that’s official.

Two weeks ago, the Bengals (4-10) defeated Baltimore (7-7) on Thanksgiving on Thursday Night Football and looked amazing.

Two weeks later, the Ravens got revenge and shut out the Bengals 24-0. It was the first time in the Joe Burrow era the Bengals did not score.

Burrow threw two inter-

ceptions, one of which was a pick-six, for the second week in a row, and the loss eliminated the Bengals from playoff contention for the third straight season.

“This is a team effort,” Burrow said after the game. “You know, at the end of the day, players got to play better on the field. Today was me. I got to be better.”

Burrow finished the day with 225 yards passing and completed 25 of 39 passes with two interceptions and no touchdowns.

The meeting with members of the media turned into a confessional at times — but there was no priest — only reporters.

“I want everything on my plate,” he added. “That’s the position I want to be in.

There’s not a team in the NFL that would have won the game today if I was a quarterback.”

Burrow didn’t blame anyone but himself — which can be refreshing at times. He did not blame the weather or the officials or his teammates or his coaches.

That’s what fans do. They look for someone else to blame.

“I think this is one of the worst games that I’ve played,” he said. “I’m honest with myself and my play and I hold myself to a high standard and today didn’t come close.”

What does this loss mean for the rest of the season? Can the team bounce back?

Can they recover?

See **Bengals** page 7



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