



# HEAT IS ON

Pacers play host to defending champions  
NBA B1



ACCENT A6

# BATTLING CLUTTER

DESIGNER TIPS FOR ORGANIZATION CENTERS

# DAILY JOURNAL

dailyjournal.net

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 9, 2013

Johnson County, Indiana

75 cents

## WEATHER



Today  
Skies: Partly sunny  
Temps: High 46; low 32

MAP, PAGE A8

## FREE TIME

### Spread the word

Want to have your own events added to our weekly Free Time listing? The best way to get your event publicized is to get the information to us at least three weeks in advance. Make sure to include all pertinent information and a phone number in case we have any questions. Send photographs if possible. Email the information to [freetime@dailyjournal.net](mailto:freetime@dailyjournal.net) or mail it to Free Time, Daily Journal, P.O. Box 699, Franklin, IN 46131.

## WEB EXTRAS

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For a sneak preview of what stories reporters are working on, sign up for the Daily Journal email news update.



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## DEATHS

### Franklin

Jeremy Scott Gerton, 39  
John Snyder, 95

### Greenwood

John Robert Elixman, 81  
Joshua S. Kean, 27

### Indianapolis

Christopher L. Crager, 25  
Sibbie Velda Finley Hoots, 79

Helen F. Messer, 89  
Ronald Leroy Young, 77

### Needham

Dewey L. Higdon, 75

### Whiteland

Thelma R. Scales, 82

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DAILY



# City considers panel revamp

## Longtime Greenwood Redevelopment Commission member might be replaced

By JOSEPH S. PETE  
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Greenwood is considering a further shake-up of a board that controls millions of dollars in spending on road work and other projects.

City council members are asking for applications from residents to replace a Greenwood Redevelopment Commission

member who has served on the board since it was started about 15 years ago. The council is weighing whether to appoint someone new to fill commission member Garnet Vaughan's seat but has backed off a plan to put a second city council member on the board.

The council also could decide to reappoint Vaughan, who owns Winchester Place, a special events venue in Old Town Greenwood. Council member Thom Hord

withdrew a request for the council to appoint him to the seat but called for a change on the commission, which recently was asked to pay for a wider variety of projects, including a \$10 million aquatic center. The city had developed a reputation for talking about projects for years without ever getting them done, and the commission didn't do things in a

## ABOUT THE JOB

The Greenwood City Council wants to hear from anyone who's interested in serving on the redevelopment commission.

**When appointed:** The council will decide whether to reappoint member Garnet Vaughan or appoint someone else to her seat at its Jan. 21 meeting.

**Whom to contact:** Thom Hord at 509-8778

**Qualifications:** Candidates ideally

would have a business background or some experience on a board but could be any Greenwood resident who wants to serve, Hord said.

**About the board:** The redevelopment commission plans projects and oversees the city's tax-increment financing districts

**About the position:** Members typically attend one meeting per month, get paid \$50 per meeting and serve one-year appointments.

(SEE PANEL PAGE A8)



# WHAT'S IT WORTH?

## Thousands question county property appraisals

By JOSEPH S. PETE  
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More than three times as many property owners as last year disagreed with or questioned the new value the county said their property was worth, after the first statewide reassessment in a decade.

About 3,770 property owners across the county want assessors to take another look at the new value of their property or have a question about how it was calculated, Johnson County Assessor Mark Alexander said. He initially expected that 2 to 3 percent of property owners, or about 1,700 people, would appeal.

That estimate was more in line with how many appeals the county gets in an ordinary year, when assessments are updated based on sales data. This year, nearly all property values changed.

But until the calls came flooding in, Alexander hadn't known exactly what to expect this year, when about half of property values in Johnson County increased after the first statewide reassessment since 2002.

The deadline to appeal the new value before this year's tax bills has passed. The county is now calculating how the new values will affect tax bills. You will find out

**INSIDE:** Property owners can appeal for next year's tax bills or if there's a factual error. A8

if your tax bill went up, down or stayed the same this spring.

Property owners still have a chance to disagree with the new value, but any changes likely would be made for future tax bills.

Alexander said the hope is to resolve all the appeals by the time property tax bills go out in the spring, but if property owners are disputing their reassessment, those could take the rest of the year to settle. The assessor's office likely will have to schedule more hearings to handle all the appeals because of the increased volume of calls this year, Alexander said.

Appeals and questions about assessments are the top priority at the assessor's office. Alexander assigned more employees to answering the initial flurry of calls, is having assessors focus full time on the appeals instead of estimating the value of new homes, which they typically would be doing now, and he is speaking with anyone who visits the office with questions so assessors are not interrupted while processing the appeals.

(SEE APPRAISALS PAGE A8)

## THE REASSESSMENT

**What:** All counties across the state updated the value of all properties, based on state calculations of the cost to rebuild and the age of the property and sales of similar properties. The most recent statewide reassessment was in 2002, and it resulted in backlash from taxpayers, especially homeowners of older homes who had big increases.

**How it works:** Property assessed values are used to calculate property tax bills. If the value increases, the tax bill could, too.

**The effect:** An assessment of the new values showed nearly all had changed in value. For most properties, except farmland, about half went up, and most of the rest went down in value.

**Where appeals, questions stand:** All the cases have been assigned to five assessors, who are sending written notice to the property owners that they have started the process to appeal.

**What happens now:** Assessors are calling the property owners to find out if they just have questions or if they want to file an appeal; they'll answer any questions and gather information about the property if the owner chooses to appeal their assessment.

## APPRAISAL REQUEST NUMBERS

The Johnson County Assessor's Office is processing appeals of and questions about assessments of property values after the first statewide reassessment in a decade. Here's a look:

**3,774**

Total property owner requests for review of assessment

**396**

Requests from owners of agricultural land

**515**

Requests from owners of commercial or industrial land

**2,863**

Requests from homeowners

Pictured are homes in a Center Grove area addition. So many Johnson County residents have appealed the new value of their property that it might take all year to sort them out.

SCOTT ROBERSON | DAILY JOURNAL

# Plans for vacant downtown building on hold

By STEVE GARBACZ  
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A building in downtown Franklin owned by a city board remains empty after plans to turn it into a banquet hall or visitor center were dropped.

The Franklin Chamber of Commerce had been working with city officials on a proposal to add a visitors center, café and offices to the

building, but it withdrew that plan because it couldn't afford the project.

The former G.C. Murphy building on East Jefferson Street has been government-owned since 2009, meaning property taxes aren't being paid on the building. The vacant building was purchased by the county as potential office space after county offices were damaged in the 2008 flood, was traded to Franklin in a land

swap and given to the redevelopment commission in 2011.

Late last year, the redevelopment commission requested proposals to purchase and redevelop the building. The board received two proposals, but both were dropped. So the commission is once again seeking a way to sell the building.

"We're kind of moving sideways I suppose. We took bids on it, took requests for proposals and those didn't work out. We're kind of not

doing anything with it right now," redevelopment commission member Bob Heuchan said.

The commission will discuss the building at its next meeting Jan. 17 and will discuss ideas for how to market the building, board member Rob Henderson said.

The board has gotten some inquiries about the building recently, but no proposals have been submitted to the commission, Heuchan said.

The commission turned down a proposal from Franklin resident Jim Cruser to use the building as a banquet hall because board members had concerns about his ability to get funding to complete the project.

The chamber of commerce proposed the city board continue to own the building and ask the Franklin Development Corp., a

(SEE BUILDING PAGE A8)

# Session assists start of school

## Workshop helps parents ready kindergartners

By TOM LANGE  
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Parents working to prepare their children for their first day of school don't always know the best way to help them learn the alphabet or to count to 20.

When a student starts kindergarten, teachers need them to be able to recognize letters, print their name and count to at least 20. But parents don't always know the best way to teach a preschooler these skills, Johnson County Learning Centers director Dawn Underwood said.

A parent who has never had a child entering school might not know what the state's kindergarten standards are and that the child needs to be able to read before moving on to first grade. This school year, fewer than half the students who began kindergarten at Franklin schools were ready for lessons on reading and counting, largely because not all parents know what to do to prepare students before they start school, Underwood said.

"More is expected of our kids than ever before," she said.

That's why next month Franklin schools and Johnson County Learning Centers are sponsoring a

(SEE SCHOOL PAGE A8)

## IF YOU GO

Here's a look at the kindergarten workshop slated for next month:

**What:** A workshop where parents can learn about kindergarten standards, how they can work with their children to prepare them for kindergarten and ask questions of kindergarten teachers.

**Who:** The workshop will be open to all parents but will be focused on families whose children will attend Franklin schools.

**Sponsor:** Franklin schools and Johnson County Learning Centers

**When:** 6 p.m. Feb. 19

**Where:** Webb Elementary School, 1400 Webb Court, Franklin

**Cost:** Free

**Questions:** Contact Dawn Underwood at 738-0055.