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Happy New Year Franklin!

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White River Township resident Joel Silverman talks about the changes he has planned for the Bureau of Motor Vehicles as its newest director. Appointed by Mitch Daniels, Silverman hoped for a new standard at the embattled agency.

January

Jan. 1-2

A 16-year-old former Center Grove band student lapsed and died from a heart condition while preparing for performances in the Insight and Fiesta Bowls halftime shows. Robert Plumlee had moved from White River Township to Texas in June 2004 and was a sophomore xylophonist at James Bowie High School in Austin.

A National Association of Marriage Enhancement counseling center opened in a New Whiteland strip mall in response to a United Way survey done in 2002, which found that family breakdown and divorce are top problems for the county. The center provides free, confidential counseling for married couples.

Franklin Parks and Recreation Department offered a new low-cost initiative that is open to residents and offers health screenings and quizzes about medical histories.

Jan. 3

The citizens group White River Citizens United expanded its mission to help Greenwood and Johnson County plan for businesses and road improvements. The group, which represents more than 1,500 households across the county, started meeting once a month with about 30 people attending each session.

Jan. 4

The county's board of commissioners began a new term with two new faces: R.J. McConnell and Mitch Ripley joined returning commissioner Jim Rhoades. Commissioners got started by creating task forces to evaluate road projects and potential funding options, building a new firing range and finding a home for a new animal shelter.

Jan. 5

The Greenwood City Council approved a 339-unit subdivision at the northeast corner of Cutsinger and Honey Creek roads.

Dr. William D. Province II resigned as Johnson County jail doctor after serving in the position for 20 years. The doctor decided to stay on for 60 days until a new physician was found. Sheriff Terry McLaughlin started evaluating a plan to increase nursing hours at the jail and hire a full-time office manager to better manage inmate appointments and treatment.

Jan. 6

Two Franklin manufacturers, Franklin Power Products and International Fuel Systems, announced plans to relocate into a building formerly occupied by Kawneer, which closed in 2002. The businesses, owned by the same company, asked for property tax breaks from the city for the expansion.

Dick's Sporting Goods announced that the six-month-old store at 733 Loews Blvd., off U.S. 31, would close. The closure followed the company's buyout of Galyans Trading Co. in July 2004.

Jan. 7

Johnson County Sheriff Terry McLaughlin sought answers in the death of a Whiteland murder suspect who died while in custody of the Indiana Department of Correction. David Cooper, who was charged with murder for strangling Whiteland minister William "Bill" McElroy, died in a medium-security correctional facility for the elderly and mentally ill.

County commissioners wanted bike trails and walking paths in the county and asked citizens group White River Citizens United, which had opposed a Wal-Mart supercenter development in the past, to help spread the word about the effort.

Jan. 8-9

Best Buy's distribution center in Franklin laid off 120 employees, the second hit for what was once the county's largest employer. The workers were no longer needed because DVD manufacturers began shipping DVDs directly to the hundreds of Best Buy stores across the country instead of to the distribution center.

Morgantown resident Jeffrey Troxal was sentenced to 112 years in prison for the shooting death of his wife and stepson, who was a senior at Indian Creek High School. Bill Patrick and his mother, Diane Troxal, were shot in January 2004 in their Morgan County home.

Jan. 10

The rate of new-home construction soared in Johnson County after hitting an 11-year low in 2003. Figures showed that nearly 1,441 building permits were issued for new homes in 2004, a nearly 44 percent increase over 2003. Sales of existing homes also surged over the 2003 figures.

Jan. 11

Indianapolis resident Tommy McElroy pleaded guilty in the July 29, 2003, truck fire that killed two painters and critically burned himself and 10 others. He pleaded guilty to two counts of criminal recklessness for his role in the fire. McElroy was accused of taunting a co-worker with a lighter and then igniting a flammable liquid inside the box truck, owned by Franklin-based RPT Painting.

Jan. 12

County commissioners abolished a five-member task force created in 2003 to investigate the finances and operations of Johnson Memorial Hospital. The commissioners said that the task force was largely ineffective and did not have a clear mission. Former county commissioners had assembled the task force after a Tennessee-based company offered to manage the hospital and return profits to the county through lease payments, a proposal that sparked outcry from employees and local residents fearing a decline in quality and local control of the county-owned hospital.

The Franklin school board heard a plan for \$65 million worth of potential school projects, including a kindergarten center and renovations to existing schools.

Jan. 13

Marine Lance Cpl. Klay South of White River Township returned home from Fallujah, Iraq, after being shot in the face. His mission as a team leader was to kick open doors of to homes in volatile Fallujah, Iraq, and sweep the home for suspected insurgents.

The Greenwood parks board wanted the city to borrow \$2 million to buy 85 acres of land on Averitt Road for a water park. Property tax money would be used to pay back the debt.

Information was released that Johnson Memorial Hospital had agreed to pay a task force investigating the hospital's finances and operations \$12,000.

Jan. 14

At least 10 students were evacuated from the Atterbury Job Corps Center near Edinburgh after the power company shuts off electricity. Fires erupted in the darkness, and police were called to the center, where about 600 teenage and young adult students are taught job skills.

Franklin College graduate Dilip Jayawickrama and his family spent the holiday in Sri Lanka, aiding in a relief effort following a tsunami where more than 150,000 people were killed. He graduated in 1986.

Jan. 15-16

White River Township man Joel Silverman took the reins at the embattled Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles and planned to set a new standard for the agency.

Jan. 17

Greenwood police considered opening the county's second reserve-officer academy to train volunteer officers in a broad range of enforcement skills, including accuracy on the shooting range and legal do's and don'ts. The reserves would be in addition to the city's 50-person department but would do the same work as full-time officers without getting paid. Reserves would be armed, uniformed and drive city police cars and have the power to arrest and question suspects.

Jan. 18

A remonstrator group in Franklin organized in opposition to a 291-home subdivision proposed by Mann Properties. The developer considers pulling out of the project because of the resistance and delays from city officials.

Greenwood Police Department started a citizens academy and a workshop on avoiding online predators. The programs are designed to make community members more aware of certain crimes and help them prevent those crimes.

Jan. 19

The Greenwood City Council voted to raise the property tax rate for the first time in five years. The rate goes up 16 cents, meaning \$2.1 million more could be collected, instead of the city dipping into cash reserves used for road and bridge repairs.

A White River Township Catholic church, SS. Francis and Clare, studied the possibility of building a grade school on 25 acres at the church site at Olive Branch and Mullinax roads. This would be the county's eighth private Christian school and would fall within the Center Grove district.

Jan. 20

Johnson Memorial Hospital created a plan for dealing with a nursing shortage and influx of patients, which included changing some job responsibilities.

The Greenwood City Council drafted new rules to give businesses tax breaks and allow them to pay a reduced amount of property taxes during the first 10 years of a new construction or expansion project.

2003 Franklin Community High School graduate Jeni Jessen attended President Bush's second inauguration in Washington. The 20-year-old was working as an intern for the College Republican National Committee and landed an invitation.

Jan. 21

Franklin parents spoke against the school district's proposal to send the youngest students to a kindergarten center, a centralized location near Creekside Elementary School by fall 2006.

Franklin College partnered with area schools in Johnson County to raise money for victims of the December tsunami disaster. Donations were directed to Save the Children fund, which was created by Franklin College graduate John R. Voris. Schools participating included Center Grove, Edinburgh, Franklin, Nineveh-Hensley-Jackson and St. Rose of Lima Catholic School.

Jan. 22-23

A Greenwood committee recommended that city engineers measure how much space is available in city hall's unused gymnasium and determine costs before agreeing to any renovations of the building.

Jan. 24

2,800 residents were on probation between the Greenwood Police and Johnson County Adult Probation departments, and local officers were being equipped with handguns, bulletproof vests and pepper spray to guard against potentially dangerous situation.

Jan. 25

Supporters of a youth volunteer program created safety guidelines and a testing process to make sure volunteers under age 18 know the rules and are not put in danger while working at the county's animal shelter. The county commissioners had decided in November to only let adults volunteer because of insurance rules. The new rules mandated that volunteers be tested and get certification before starting work, and volunteers ages 11 to 14 would need adult supervision.

County commissioners appoint members to three task forces that will study animal shelter sites, a new shooting range location and road repair needs.

Jan. 26

Johnson County schools are serving more students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunches.

The Franklin City Council agreed to a temporary ban on new zoning rules while the city reviewed changes. Council members raised concerns about how the ordinance awarded points to developer Mann Properties, which was proposing a 291-home subdivision on the city's east side. A homeowner's association objected to the rules and said the ordinance allowed too many homes be built in exchange for certain features, including parks, trees and design options.

Jan. 27

Albert Hessman was named leader of the community corrections department by an advisory panel of 20 lawyers, law enforcement and court officials. Hessman was one of 17 applicants who applied for the job.

Jan. 28

Craig Lawson, the 36-year-old magistrate of the county's juvenile court, was found dead in his car from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. Lawson had been the juvenile court magistrate since 1999.

A Greenwood committee narrowed a list of potential candidates for police chief to Joe Pitcher, former county attorney; Brian Clouse, an attorney and 23-year veteran of the Indianapolis Police Department; and Mike Sherman, a former safety department employee at Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

A 39-year-old construction company owner, Wayne Harshman, joined the Trafalgar Town Council after Jonathan Brown's resignation at the end of the year. Harshman, who is married to the town clerk-treasurer Juana Harshman, was the only person who applied for the seat. His term lasts through 2007.

Thomas P. Ryan, a former sheriff's deputy working as an office manager, was accused of stealing more than \$12,000 through forged checks and fraudulent credit card use while working at Johnson County Internal Medicine in Franklin.

A soil survey found arsenic on portions of 85 acres along Averitt Road, and Greenwood park board members decide to study sample results in detail before deciding whether to buy the land.

Jan. 29-30

Steve Hollenbeck joined the seven-member county council after being elected by a special caucus of 19 Republicans. He replaced R.J. McConnell, who was elected to the county board of commissioners.

Jan. 31

A 1999 graduate of Center Grove High School died after an automobile accident in Hamilton County. James Suchomel, 23, was a service technician and died on his way home from work.

The Edinburgh school district started gathering feedback on a proposal to start school later, at 8:45 a.m.

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