The South Bend Paper

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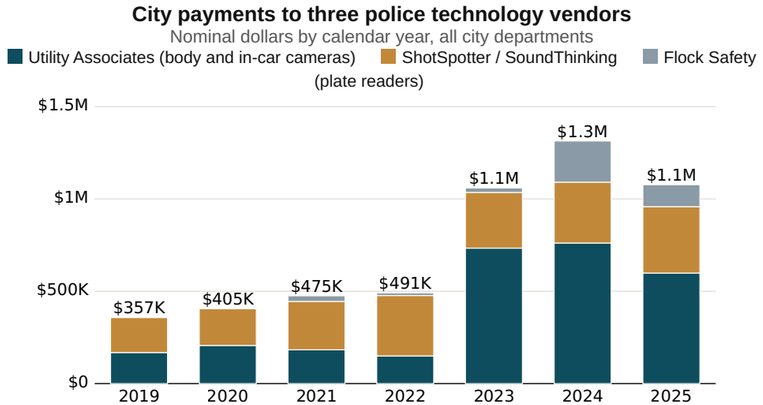
The South Bend Paper

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ECONOMY

City's bills for police cameras and gunshot sensors triple since 2019

Checkbook records show yearly payments for body cameras, ShotSpotter and Flock plate readers rose from $357,400 in 2019 to about $1.08 million in 2025.



Source: City of South Bend checkbook via the South Bend Transparency Portal

South Bend paid about $1.08 million in 2025 to the three companies behind its police body cameras, gunshot sensors and license plate readers, roughly three times the $357,400 it paid them in 2019, according to the city checkbook.

The payments went to Utility Associates, which supplies the police department's body and in-car cameras; SoundThinking, the company formerly known as ShotSpotter Inc., which runs the gunshot-detection sensors; and Flock Safety, which rents the department license plate reader cameras. Most of the money is booked as "repairs and maintenance" in the Department of Innovation & Technology's budget, the category the city uses for software subscriptions and service plans.

Continued on page 2

ECONOMY

City pays $2.27 million for solar array at sewage plant

Veregy guarantees 15 years of savings equal to the price, but about half the first-year savings are agreed figures the contract says are never verified.

Older records: The main records behind this story run through March 2026.

South Bend paid Indianapolis energy contractor Veregy $1.97 million in 2025 for a solar array and energy upgrades at the city's wastewater treatment plant, city checkbook records show. That made Veregy one of the city's larger new vendors last year, after a single $226,782 payment in December 2024.

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WEATHER THIS WEEK

FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU
43°	45°	48°	48°	52°	55°	59°
Slight Chance Rain Showers then Partly Sunny	Chance Snow Showers	Mostly Cloudy	Sunny	Sunny	Sunny	Partly Sunny

Police tech bills triple CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

What changed

The biggest jump came from body cameras. From 2019 through 2022 the city paid Utility Associates $150,000 a year for its camera plan. Since 2024 that annual payment has been $428,799, recorded in April 2024, May 2025 and May 2026. The vendor's totals in 2023 and 2024 also include one-time police "upfit" equipment purchases of $288,618 and $299,641, and in July 2025 the city paid $119,177.88 for interview room cameras.

The yearly ShotSpotter renewal grew from $189,000 in January 2019 to $359,966 in January 2026. Since 2021 the city has also paid for add-on products: a subscription the checkbook first calls "Connect" and later "Resource Router," a program police reports describe as directing where officers patrol.

Flock payments were $30,250 in 2021, the year police say they began using its cameras. They reached $223,068 in 2024, when the checkbook records two payments of $103,667.81 each, one described as license plate recognition and one as city street cameras. The city paid $117,500 for the plate reader system in September 2025 and again in September 2026. At a 2024 council committee meeting, a police operations chief said each Flock camera is rented for $2,500 a year.

So far in 2026, through mid-October, the city has paid the three companies about $970,600.

What city officials have said

When the technology department presented its 2024 budget in September 2023, the council minutes record that its biggest maintenance cost increases were "big-ticket and public safety-related items," including the police body camera equipment and ShotSpotter.

Police leaders have defended the tools on the record. At a June 2024 Board of Public Safety meeting, a board member asked whether ShotSpotter was worth keeping after reading that some cities were dropping it. Chief Ruszkowski said, according to the minutes, that its main purpose is a fast response to shootings, that the sensors cover about four square miles in the areas with the most crime, and that the department runs unannounced checks to make sure the sensors work.

At a council budget hearing on Sept. 9, 2026, Council President Canneth Lee said some residents have a negative perception of Flock. The chief said the plate readers had been used 126 times this year and helped in five of the department's seven murder cases, that only vetted supervisors and analysts can search the system, and that under the city's contract Flock does not share or sell the department's data beyond a law enforcement alert network. He said he would seek the firing of any officer found to have misused the system.

The checkbook figures are nominal and include every payment to these vendors, not only subscriptions.

Sources: City of South Bend Checkbook Explorer: payments to Utility Associates, SoundThinking/ShotSpotter and Flock Safety, 2019-2026 (South Bend Transparency Portal); City of South Bend finances dashboard (source of the checkbook); Common Council Personnel and Finance Committee minutes, Sept. 26, 2023 (2024 Innovation and Technology budget); Health & Public Safety and Information & Technology joint committee minutes, May 30, 2024; Board of Public Safety minutes, June 18, 2024. Links at sbpaper.com.

Sewage plant solar costs $2.27M CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

With a final $70,674.50 payment in March 2026, the city has paid Veregy $2,267,831, exactly the contract price the Board of Public Works approved on Dec. 10, 2024. Every payment is labeled "WWTP SOLAR/UPGRADES" and charged to Public Works capital spending.

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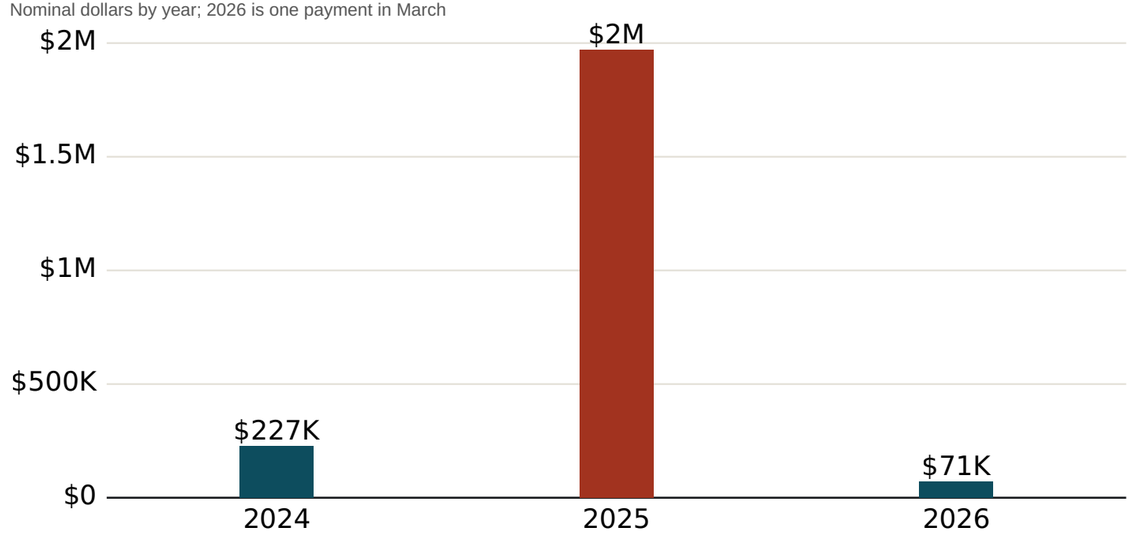
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City payments to Veregy
Nominal dollars by year; 2026 is one payment in March



Source: City of South Bend checkbook via the South Bend Transparency Portal

What the city bought

The project is a guaranteed energy savings contract, a kind of deal Indiana law allows in which a contractor installs equipment and promises the savings will cover the cost. A Dec. 3, 2024, memo from project engineer Gemma Stanton lists the work: a 300-kilowatt solar array, new heating and cooling controls at the plant's headworks and administration buildings, LED lighting in the administration building and two air-conditioning units.

The board found the lighting substantially complete as of March 1, 2025, and the solar array as of Nov. 17, 2025. It tabled that certificate on Dec. 9, 2025, when an attorney for the board said reports showed Veregy "a little lower" on its minority- and women-owned business goals, then approved it the next week. The board accepted the finished project on Feb. 24, 2026. A February 2026 Public Works report says Veregy ended slightly above both goals.

The savings guarantee

The contract runs 15 years from final acceptance. Veregy guarantees that the total savings over that term equal the $2,267,831 contract price, and it must repay the city any shortfall it can't make up from earlier years.

Its savings table projects $65,704 in electricity savings in the first year, mostly from about 500,000 kilowatt-hours the panels are expected to produce, rising to $137,348 in year 15. That climb rests on an assumption, written into the contract, that power prices rise 6% a year.

The contract also counts $69,914 in first-year "operational" savings, chiefly avoided equipment replacement costs, falling to about $7,600 a year after year 10. The contract says those figures "are calculated values based on industry standard information and information provided by CUSTOMER and are agreed to values. No verification of Operational and Future Cost Savings is performed." It also says that if the guaranteed savings are met after the first year, "the Guarantee will be deemed realized for the entire Guarantee Term."

Veregy will also maintain the solar array for five years, starting at $4,100 a year with 2.5% annual increases.

What officials said

At a July 22, 2024, Common Council committee hearing, Public Works Director Eric Horvath said the city "will be creating their own energy." Asked how much the project would save, his answer is recorded in the minutes as "five to six million dollars over twenty five million years," an apparent typo for 25 years. Rick Anderson, a Veregy account executive, told the committee the project "will save money over time." No one spoke at the public hearing.

The city has since chosen other companies for two more solar savings contracts: Ameresco for the Olive Street water treatment plant in January 2025 and CMTA for fire department sites and the MLK center in March 2025. Veregy bid on both.

The first yearly savings report under the contract was not in the records reviewed for this story.

Sources: City of South Bend Checkbook Explorer: Veregy IN, LLC payments (South Bend Transparency Portal); Contract: Guaranteed Energy Savings, WWTP Solar, Project No. 124-015, Veregy (Board of Public Works, Dec. 10, 2024), with engineering memo and Attachment E; Board of Public Works minutes, Dec. 9, 2025 (substantial completion tabled); Substantial Completion, WWTP Solar GESC, Project 124-015 (Dec. 16, 2025); BPW regular meeting agenda, Dec. 16, 2025 (substantial completion dates). Links at sbpaper.com.

DEVELOPMENT

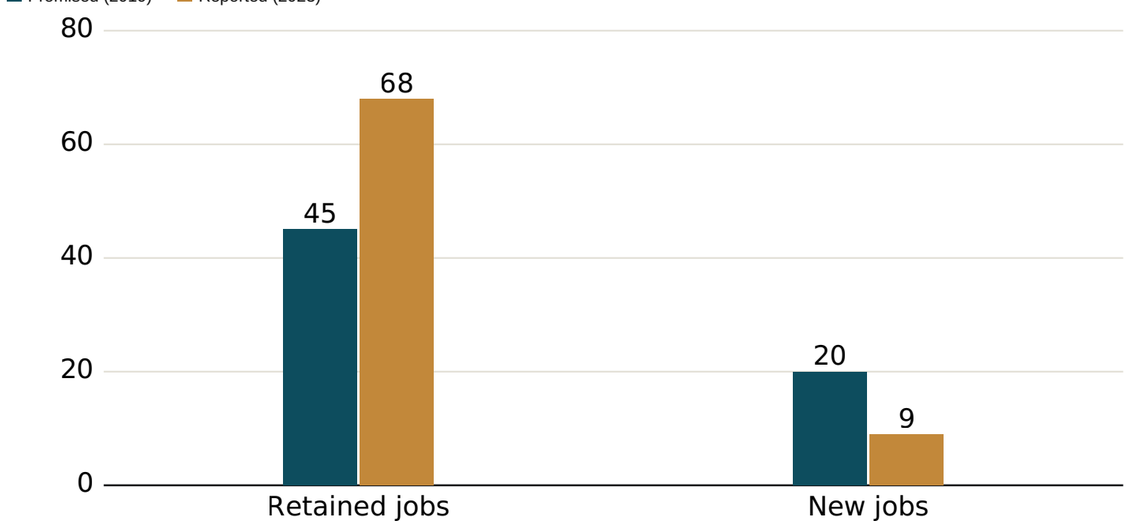
Molding Products skipped required tax-break filing, city says

The Olive Street compound maker reported 9 of 20 promised new jobs, then stopped filing, and city staff recommended the council consider its 2019 break noncompliant.

Older records: The main records behind this story run through June 2025.

Molding Products jobs: promised vs. reported

Full-time jobs, 2019 petition vs. company's report in the city's 2023 abatement report



Source: City of South Bend petition (Resolution 4773-19) and 2023 Annual Tax Abatement Report

A South Bend manufacturer that won a five-year tax break in 2019 by promising to add 20 jobs reported hiring nine, and then did not file the yearly report the break requires, according to the city's own tax abatement reports.

The city's most recent annual report, filed with the Common Council on June 13, 2025, lists Molding Products LLC, at 1545 S. Olive St., with the code the city uses for a company that "failed to submit this year's Form CF-1." For those companies, the report says staff tried several times to get the information and recommends that the council consider the business noncompliant. The documents in the city's public records show no later council action on the company's abatement and no explanation from the company. No newer annual report was found in the city's records.

What the city approved

Molding Products makes sheet molding compound, a fiberglass-reinforced material that its customers mold into products ranging from bathtubs to Corvette outer body panels, according to the Department of Community Investment's April 2019 report to the council.

The company asked for a break on new equipment: tanks, mixers, pumps, mixer blades and forklifts to add mixing capacity and upgrade raw-material storage, at an estimated cost of $5 million. The staff report said the company had already spent more than $5 million on an addition to its building and was seeking city

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The South Bend Paper

11/14 Notre Dame Football vs. Boston College · Notre Dame Stadium 2010 Moose Krause Cir Notre Dame

11/15 Pro Wrestling King — Now or Never IV · Holiday Inn Conference Center 1208 E Douglas Rd Mishawaka

11/15 Girls basketball: Norwell at Northridge · Northridge High School, Middlebury

11/15 Girls basketball: Lake Central at Penn · Penn High School, Mishawaka

11/15 Girls basketball: Goshen at Fairfield · Fairfield High School

11/15 (2026) Ride the Cyclone · South Bend Civic Theater 403 N Main St South Bend, IN 46601

11/15 Holiday Lights on the Diamond · Four Winds Field 501 W outh St South Bend

support "to assist with rising project costs." The petition named IP Corporation of St. Paul, Minn., as the parent company and said the site is leased from Norfolk Southern.

A personal property tax abatement lets a company phase in taxes on new equipment. The council confirmed this one on May 13, 2019, in Resolution 4773-19, with deductions of 100% in the first year, falling to 65% by the fifth. The department estimated the company would pay about $687,630 over the five years in taxes on its new and existing equipment.

In return, the petition promised to keep 45 full-time jobs and add 20 more by 2021: seven in 2019, eight in 2020 and five in 2021, at about $18 an hour.

What the reports show

Each year, companies with abatements report their investment and jobs to the city on a state form called the CF-1, and the department rates their compliance.

The city's report for 2022 shows the equipment was in place by July 31, 2020, and lists 70 retained jobs and nine new ones. The report for 2023 lists $5 million in actual equipment spending, 68 retained jobs and nine new jobs. Both reports rated the company 1, the city's top score, meaning "in compliance." Counted together, the 77 jobs in the 2023 report topped the 65 the company had promised in all, though new hiring fell 11 short. The city's reports list the estimated cost as $5.5 million; the 2019 petition and staff report said $5 million.

The 2024 report leaves the actual cost, completion date and job columns blank for Molding Products and gives it the failed-to-file score of 5. That report says six personal property abatement recipients did not file the form that year.

The city's reports list the abatement as running from taxes payable in 2021 through 2025, so the final year of the break has already been billed.

The company has not been the subject of any council vote on its compliance in the records reviewed. Under the city's legend, the council, not staff, decides whether to treat a company as noncompliant.

Sources: Resolution 4773-19, confirming five-year personal property tax abatement for Molding Products, with DCI report and petition (May 13, 2019); Bill 19-18, designating personal property tax abatement for Molding Products (April 2019); City of South Bend 2022 Annual Tax Abatement Report (June 15, 2023); Department of Community Investment budget answers with 2023 tax abatement report (Sept. 12, 2024); City of South Bend 2024 Annual Tax Abatement Report (filed June 13, 2025). Links at sbpaper.com.

ECONOMY

South Bend rewrites rules for riverfront liquor permits

New guidelines bar nightclub-style operations, require police camera registration and move the program from Downtown South Bend Inc. to the city.

Restaurants and bars that want one of South Bend's riverfront liquor permits now face tighter rules on food service, entertainment and security, under guidelines the South Bend Redevelopment Commission adopted Thursday.

The city posted a signed copy of Resolution No. 3681, dated for the commission's Nov. 12 meeting, in its file of commission resolutions. The minutes, which would show the vote, have not been posted yet.

What the permits are

Indiana law lets cities set up riverfront districts where qualifying businesses can get three-way permits to sell beer, wine and liquor outside the state's usual quota on how many permits a city may have, the commission's agenda memo explains. South Bend's districts take in qualifying areas within 3,000 feet of the St. Joseph River, after the Common Council expanded them in 2023.

The state Alcohol and Tobacco Commission issues the permits, but an applicant needs a favorable recommendation letter from the mayor. The commission's rules decide who gets one.

What changes

The new rules replace guidelines adopted in September 2023. Comparing the two documents:

- **Who runs it.** The program moves from Downtown South Bend Inc., which administered it and collected fees under the 2023 rules, to the city. The fees stay the same: $1,000 to apply and $1,000 a year to renew, now paid to the City of South Bend, plus the state's own fees.

- **What qualifies.** The 2023 rules allowed a "dining experience" or a cultural venue with food. The new rules list six types: full-service restaurants; brewpubs, microbreweries and distilleries; upscale craft cocktail bars; cafés, wine bars and bistros; lounges or social venues; and cultural or entertainment venues.
- **Food.** The 2023 rules already required a restaurant under state law and projections showing at least 51% of sales from food and non-alcoholic drinks. The new rules add that food must be prepared on site by the permit holder, with no third-party food service, and available whenever alcohol is served. Food trucks count only if they stay within the business's footprint the whole time alcohol is sold.
- **Nightlife.** The 2023 rules said only that a permit holder could not be a private club, nightclub or adult venue. The new rules spell it out: DJs and dancing only occasionally, no cover charges for club-style events, no bottle service aimed at high-volume drinking, no removing seating to create standing-room crowds and no heavy strobe or flashing lighting.
- **Security.** Permit holders must register their cameras with Sync South Bend, the police department's Real Time Crime Center registry, keep cameras outside the building and hand over footage when police ask. A review committee can recommend exceptions.
- **Track record.** Reviewers may weigh an owner's record at other properties, including ones held through separate companies, such as repeated code violations or police calls. The city can now turn down an incomplete or ineligible application without a committee hearing, with written notice. Whether a business is locally owned is a new factor.

Erik Glavich, the city's director of growth and opportunity, wrote in the agenda memo that the update "strengthens the current guidelines" with clearer standards for food service, neighborhood compatibility and security.

Permit holders must follow the rules in effect when they renew, the new guidelines say, so existing riverfront businesses will be held to them at their next renewal.

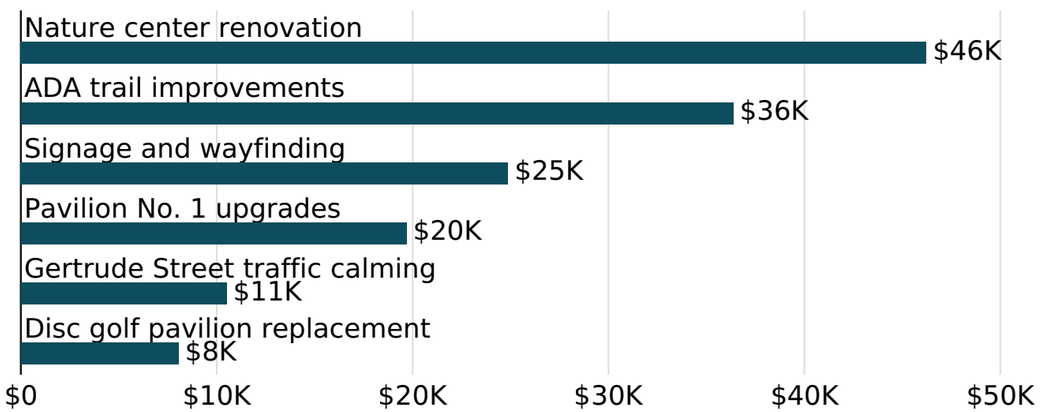
Sources: South Bend Redevelopment Commission Resolution No. 3681 (Riverfront District Alcohol Permit Program), signed, Nov. 12, 2026; South Bend Redevelopment Commission agenda and packet, Nov. 12, 2026 (agenda memo by Erik Glavich, Nov. 10, 2026); South Bend Redevelopment Commission Resolution No. 3580 and 2023 Riverfront Liquor License District requirements (Sept. 28, 2023). Links at sbpaper.com.

COMMUNITY

Rum Village Park plan drops bike trail through old-growth forest

The Board of Public Works on Nov. 10 added a $34,250 land survey to first-phase design work, raising the engineering contract to $179,935.

Where Rum Village's first-phase design fee goes
Estimated split of Jones Petrie Rafinski's $145,685 design fee, nominal dollars



Source: City of South Bend Board of Public Works agreement, Aug. 25, 2026

Weather

Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu
43°	45°	48°	48°	52°	55°	59°
Slight Chance Rain Showers then Partly Sunny	Chance Snow Showers	Mostly Cloudy	Sunny	Sunny	Sunny	Partly Sunny

National Weather Service forecast at press time.

Scoreboard

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Calendar

11/13 Cinderella, presented by United European Ballet · Morris Performing Arts Center

11/13 Compagnie Hervé Koubi: Sol Invictus · Patricia George Decio Theatre, DeBartolo Performing Arts Center

11/13 Alec Goldfarb and Utsav La · Merrimans' Playhouse, 401 E Colfax Ave, Suite 135

11/13 Mozart! ND Sacred Music Festival Orchestra · DeBartolo Performing Arts Center 100 Performing Arts Center Notre Dame, IN 46556 Notre Dame

11/13 Mozart! · DeBartolo Performing Arts Center DeBartolo Performing Arts Center, 100 Performing Arts Center Notre Dame, IN 46556

11/13 Alec Goldfarb and Utsav · Merrimans' Playhouse 401 E. Colfax Ave., Suite 135 South Bend

11/13 Girls basketball: South Bend Saint Joseph at Concord · Concord High School, Elkhart

11/13 The Honeymoon Killers (1969) · DeBartolo Performing Arts Center DeBartolo Performing Arts Center, 100 Performing Arts Center Notre Dame, IN 46556

11/13 (2026) Ride the Cyclone · South Bend Civic Theater 403 N Main St South Bend, IN 46601

11/13 Football Fridays at the Eck · Eck Visitors Center 100 Eck Visitors Center Notre Dame

11/14 Football regional (4A): Hobart at Northridge · Northridge High School, Middlebury

11/14 Football regional (6A): Penn vs. Crown Point

11/14 Hobart at Northridge, football regional · Northridge High School

11/14 Football regional: Concord vs. Chesterton (IHSAA Class 5A) · Concord home game (MaxPreps lists it as 'vs.'; Concord High School, 59117 Minuteman Way, Elkhart)

11/14 Chesterton at Concord, football regional · Concord High School

11/14 Football regional (5A): Chesterton at Concord · Concord High School, Elkhart

11/14 Football regional: Penn vs. Crown Point (IHSAA Class 6A) · Site not yet posted on the bracket

11/14 DANIEL O'CONNELL: THE EMANCIPATOR Documentary Screening · Debartolo Performing Arts Center, University of Notre Dame 100 Performing Arts Center Notre Dame

11/14 Penn at Crown Point, football regional · Crown Point High School

11/14 Christopher Lucas Wilson Trio · Merrimans' Playhouse 401 E. Colfax Ave., Suite 135 South Bend

11/14 Holiday Lights on the Diamond · Four Winds Field 501 W outh St South Bend

11/14 (2026) Ride the Cyclone · South Bend Civic Theater 403 N Main St South Bend, IN 46601

11/14 Holiday Craft Fair · Battell Community Center 904 N Main St Mishawaka, IN 46545

11/14 Macrame Tree Of Life · Wellfield Botanic Gardens 1011 N Main Street Elkhart

11/14 Gameday at Legends: Boston College · Legends of Notre Dame Restaurant and Alehouse Pub N Eddy St Notre Dame, IN 46556

11/14 Fire Arts Holiday Open House November 14th · Fire Arts Inc. 305 East Colfax South Bend

11/14 Girls basketball: Marian at Chesterton · Chesterton High School

11/14 Girls basketball: Elkhart at Merrillville · Merrillville High School

11/14 Touchdown at Cheers: Notre Dame vs. Boston College · Cheers Bar and Grill 103 S Dixie Way South Bend

SPORTS

Penn, Northridge and Concord set for football regionals Friday

Unbeaten Penn travels to unbeaten Crown Point, while Northridge hosts Hobart and Concord hosts Chesterton, according to IHSAA brackets posted this week.

The area's three remaining high school football teams learned their regional opponents this week, and the biggest test belongs to Penn: an unbeaten-versus-unbeaten Class 6A game at Crown Point on Friday, Nov. 13, according to the Indiana High School Athletic Association's official brackets.

All three won sectional titles on Nov. 6. When the paper reported those results, the IHSAA had not yet posted regional pairings. Its brackets now list the following games, all on Friday:

Class	Matchup	Site	Listed time
6A	Penn (11-0) vs. Crown Point (11-0)	Crown Point	6:30 p.m.
5A	Chesterton (6-5) vs. Concord (6-5)	Concord	7:30 p.m.
4A	Hobart (9-3) vs. Northridge (12-0)	Northridge	7:30 p.m.

Class 6A. Penn reached the regional unbeaten after beating Elkhart 48-7 in the Sectional 2 final, as the paper reported Nov. 7. Crown Point is also 11-0, the bracket shows.

Class 5A. Concord, which entered the sectional with a 4-5 record, has won both of its playoff games: 54-28 in the semifinal at South Bend Adams and 38-14 over LaPorte in the final. It hosts Chesterton, which has the same 6-5 record.

Class 4A. Northridge is 12-0 and has survived one close call, a 28-27 semifinal win at South Bend Saint Joseph on Oct. 30. It beat NorthWood 43-21 in the Sectional 18 final and now hosts Hobart.

No other area school is still playing. In Class 3A, Angola, which ended Mishawaka Marian's season in the first round, plays at Andrean (11-1) at 6:30 p.m. Friday, the IHSAA bracket shows.

Times are as the IHSAA lists them. Its tournament page says regional games start at "7 pm local time or as determined by host school."

Regional winners advance to the semi-states on Nov. 20. The state finals are Nov. 27-28 at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, according to the IHSAA.

Matchups and records come from the IHSAA's official tournament brackets as of Nov. 12. The paper had no newly verified scores from schools or leagues this week; schools and coaches can send results for verification.

Sources: IHSAA 2026-27 Boys Football State Tournament, regionals round; IHSAA Class 6A regional bracket; IHSAA Class 5A regional bracket; IHSAA Class 4A regional bracket; IHSAA Class 3A regional bracket. Links at sbpaper.com.

The only mountain bike item in the first-phase contracts for Rum Village Park is a fence.

It is $4,575 worth of split-rail fencing at what city records call the "Rum Village Mountain Bike Trailhead." The new trail once sketched into the park's master plan, through its old-growth forest, is no longer there.

"The proposed mountain bike trail through the old growth forest area of the park has been removed from the plan because of public feedback," say the June 22 minutes of the Ecological Advocacy Committee, a city panel that had voted to oppose the trail's design.

What the first phase buys instead came into sharper focus Nov. 10. The Board of Public Works approved a $34,250 amendment for a full topographic survey, which maps the lay of the land. That raises the city's design contract with Jones Petrie Rafinski Corp. to $179,935, about 23.5% more than the $145,685 the board approved Aug. 25.

A trail meets resistance

Council Vice President Sheila Niezgodski, of the 6th District, announced at the Jan. 26 Common Council meeting that a public input meeting on the Rum Village Park Master Plan would be held Jan. 29.

By March 16, objections had reached the Park Board.

Clay Kusbach of North Liberty, newly appointed chair of the Ecological Advocacy Committee, addressed the board. The committee had voted Feb. 23 to authorize him to do so. According to the minutes, the proposed trail was planned for an area of sensitive champion trees and critical habitat that had been identified earlier.

"The early conceptual plans of the trail conflict with the guiding principles and practices outlined in the VPA 2021 Natural Resource Management Plan," the minutes say. VPA is Venues Parks & Arts, the city's parks department.

The minutes also say Rum Village Forest "is uniquely diverse in its native flora and fauna," and that local bird alliance groups have documented dozens of bird species, several of them rare.

The committee, the minutes say, "has voted to oppose the current trail design and called for engagement with ecological experts and community partners to develop alternative improvement plans."

Deb Marr, who lives on Eastwood Side Street, praised parts of the plan: increased access, accessibility under the ADA, or Americans with Disabilities Act, a playground updated with more natural materials and roads made safer for pedestrians.

Her concern, the minutes say, was that "doubling the number of trails" would harm a high-quality forest ecosystem, compact soil, fragment understory vegetation and hurt rare plants and wildlife. She urged alternatives for the mountain bike trail.

Jennifer Betts, who lives on Cottage Road and chairs the South Bend Bird Alliance, asked for more time for input from groups such as Wild Ones, the Ecological Advocacy Committee and other conservation groups before the plan was finalized.

"She shared there are a lot fears within the ecological community," the minutes say.

Bruce Cates, who lives on North Crescent Avenue, raised a separate objection. He objected to the term "zones of interest" on display images at the Jan. 29 meeting, noted its historical association with Auschwitz and recommended it be changed, according to the minutes.

Others followed. "Multiple additional residents, ecological advocates, and organizational representatives voice strong opposition to the proposed mountain bike trail in Rum Village," the minutes say. Those speakers are not named in the minutes.

The city's answer

Jordan Gathers, then executive director of Venues Parks & Arts, responded at the same meeting.

According to the minutes, Gathers "reiterated the city's commitment to ecological restoration and native plantings in Rum Village," clarified "that the Master plan remains conceptual," and "assured continued community engagement and protection of the park's natural character."

Bike trails already exist in the park. On May 26, the Common Council's Zoning and Annexation Committee heard a bill to rezone several Rum Village Park parcels, owned by Venues Parks & Arts, from suburban neighborhood to open space.

Asked whether that was consistent with the master plan, zoning specialist Mark Dellostritto said the parcels "are currently used as bike trails, and there may be some expansion of the trails," according to the minutes. He said zoning staff was working with Venues Parks & Arts to finalize the plan. Nobody spoke at the public hearing.

On June 9, Niezgodski announced an open house the next evening to view the final draft.

"After about a year of community engagement, careful listening, and consideration of many residents, organizations, and neighbors, I am very happy to welcome the community to view the final plan for Rum Village Park," she said in a June 9 news release.

By June 22, the Ecological Advocacy Committee's minutes recorded the trail's removal. Members had attended park

board meetings and open houses to give individual feedback, the minutes say. The same minutes introduce Erin Thornton as the newly appointed executive director of Venues Parks & Arts.

What the first phase buys

First, a road. "Phase 1 is underway at Rum Village, where visitors can now enjoy the newly paved park road," the Park Board's Sept. 21 minutes say.

A day later, at a council budget hearing, Venues Parks & Arts said road improvements were under way "as part of the first (1st) phase of the recently adopted Rum Village Park Master Plan," according to the minutes. Thornton listed continuing enhancements at the park among the department's priorities.

The Aug. 25 design agreement covers six pieces of work. The largest estimated share, $46,220, goes to designing a nature center renovation. Trail improvements labeled ADA are next at $36,370. The smallest, $8,040, is for replacing the disc golf pavilion.

Those are design fees, and the agreement lets the engineer alter the split.

The fence was awarded the same day. The city asked four firms for quotes and three answered. Custom Fence Company of Niles, Michigan, quoted $4,575. Schuell Fence Company quoted $7,350 and Milestone Fence LLC $7,358.

The records leave a good deal out. They do not show the full text of the final master plan. They show no construction cost estimate for the full plan or for the first phase beyond these contracts, and no cost for the road paving. They give no date for a next phase.

A center nearby

A second project is moving a short distance away. On July 27, the Common Council voted 9-0 for Bill 26-20, a neighborhood bond.

Joe Molnar, deputy director of Community Investment, said the bond would fund converting the former William Penn building on Indiana Avenue into a Rum Village Neighborhood Center. The city acquired the building earlier in 2026, and the Boys & Girls Club is a partner.

The bond presentation says the neighborhood "has no community center currently" and estimates the cost at $3 million to $4 million. Molnar said afterschool activity space has been the top community request and that the hope is to begin construction by mid-2027. The center was called for in the Rum Village Neighborhood Plan, which the council adopted in October 2022.

Duane Wilson, CEO of the Boys and Girls Club, said the club intends to make it an intergenerational community space. Patti Huettl, treasurer of the Rum Village Neighborhood Association, said board members are all in favor.

Evelyn Gills, the association's vice president, noted the neighborhood's many children and seniors. The center, the minutes record her saying, "is something they have wanted for a long time."

Sources: South Bend Park Board minutes, March 16, 2026; South Bend Ecological Advocacy Committee minutes, June 22, 2026; Councilmember Sheila Niezgodski news release, June 9, 2026; Common Council Zoning and Annexation Committee minutes, May 26, 2026; Board of Public Works minutes, Aug. 25, 2026. Links at sbpaper.com.

DEVELOPMENT

City drops garage change from Northeast Neighborhood zoning rewrite

The Plan Commission tabled the overlay changes Oct. 19 over a plan for bigger garages. A second version without it goes to a hearing Nov. 16.

South Bend zoning staff have pulled a proposal to allow bigger garages in the Northeast Neighborhood from a package of rule changes for the area, after the Plan Commission tabled the package last month.

The commission tabled the changes on Oct. 19 "due to concerns over changes to garage capacity rules," according to the staff report in the agenda packet for the commission's Nov. 16 meeting. The new version, called a second substitute, removes the garage changes "for further study," the report says. Staff recommend the commission send it to the Common Council with a favorable recommendation.

The hearing is at 4 p.m. Monday, Nov. 16, in the third-floor council chambers at City Hall.

What the overlay does

The Northeast Neighborhood Zoning Overlay, or NNZO, is an extra layer of design rules on top of ordinary zoning in the Northeast Neighborhood. It governs things like roof shapes, porches, garages and where trash cans can sit.

AUGUST 26TH 1901," signed by the city clerk and approved by the mayor. Directly below it is "Ordinance No 1065 Amended offered by Councilman Somers," titled "AN ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR LAMPS ON BICYCLES." It carries the same date and is also signed.

A handwritten note in the left margin beside the repeal appears to read "Amended."

The account that follows comes from the city's Common Council minute books and that ordinance book.

The law in question was Ordinance No. 1015, "An ordinance providing for lamps on bicycles," adopted May 22, 1899. Its text is not in the records found, so what it required of riders is not known.

What is known is that two years later a large number of people wanted it gone. The minutes of July 22, 1901, list a "Petition from W. C. Stover and 900 others to repeal Bicycle lamp ordinance No. 1015." The record says nothing more about Stover, and it does not give the petitioners' reasons.

The petition went to the Committee on Ordinances.

On Aug. 12, "An Ordinance repealing an ordinance providing for lamps on bicycles" was given its first reading by title and its second in full, and it too was sent to the committee.

Three votes in one night

Two weeks later the repeal came up for its third reading and was adopted. Beyrer, Elbel, Knoblock, Essex, Joyce, Thumm, Kucharski, Kingsley and Somers voted aye. Montgomery, Hartzer, Loughman and Stuckle voted nay.

Then the minutes turn. "Joyce voting in the affirmative moved later on to reconsider, which was done by the following vote," the minutes say. The count was 8-6.

Five men who had just voted for repeal, Elbel, Joyce, Thumm, Kingsley and Somers, voted to reopen it. So did Montgomery and Stuckle, who had opposed repeal, and Koczorowski.

"The amendment to Ordinance No. 1065 offered by Councilman Somers was then passed," the next entry reads. The vote was 13-1. Essex, who had voted for repeal and against reconsidering, was the only no.

The minutes record no debate, and they do not say what changed between the first vote and the second.

The amended ordinance spells out the rule. It says "no person shall ride any bicycle on or along or over any street, alley or public place in the City of South Bend between the hours of 7 P. M. and 12 P. M. from September 1st to May 1st and between the hour of 8 to 12 P. M. from May 1st to September 1st, of any day without having a lighted lamp upon such bicycle."

In the book, the word "midnight" is handwritten above each "12 P. M."

As written, the rule required a lamp from 7 p.m. to midnight from September to May and from 8 p.m. to midnight in the summer months. It does not require one after midnight. It states no penalty. Its second section says only that it takes effect after passage and legal publication.

The matter did not rest there. On Sept. 9, 1901, "An Ordinance providing for lamps on bicycles, presented by Councilman Somers," was given its first and second readings and referred to the Committee on Ordinances. Records found do not show what became of it.

Bicycles stayed in the council's minutes. In November 1909, a communication about opening William Street reported a 12-hour traffic count through "a ten foot alley" that included "perhaps something more than 50 bicycles." The counters had first tallied bicycles with people on foot, then counted them separately, deciding "it would be much more difficult for a bicycle with safety to meet a team in a ten foot alley."

In May 1911, on a motion by Councilman Fink, the council asked that the Board of Public Safety be told to enforce the ordinance on riding bicycles on sidewalks, "especially as to paved streets."

Sources: South Bend Common Council minutes, July 22, 1901 (Minute Book 18, p. 208); South Bend Common Council minutes, Aug. 12, 1901 (Minute Book 18, p. 215); South Bend Common Council minutes, Aug. 26, 1901 (Minute Book 18, p. 220); South Bend Ordinance Book 4, p. 111: Ordinance No. 1065 and amended version, Aug. 26, 1901; South Bend Common Council minutes, Sept. 9, 1901 (Minute Book 18, p. 224). Links at sbpaper.com.

Trotter's petition lists birthday celebrations, family gatherings, neighborhood meetings and workshops among the intended events, and says the hall "will operate under a structured reservation system." Asked about parking, he confirmed there is street parking. City engineers noted that access for both lots will need to come off the alley.

The records do not give an opening date or rental prices.

One question remains open. Councilmember Sharon McBride asked whether Trotter had talked with the Historic Preservation Commission about landmark status. He said he had spoken with them before, but the process did not move forward.

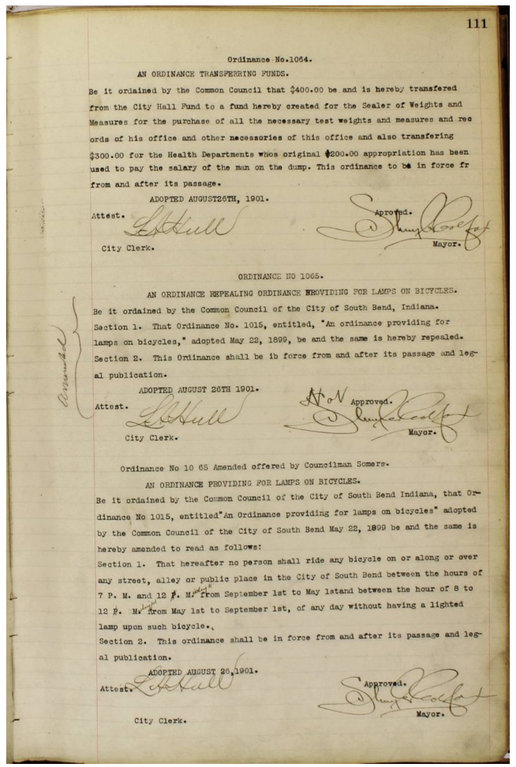
McBride encouraged him to follow up, the minutes say, and noted the council can reach out as well.

Sources: South Bend Common Council meeting minutes, Oct. 26, 2026; Ordinance No. 11331-26, 2209 W. Washington St. (signed); Bill No. 79-26 packet: Plan Commission letter, petition and staff report PC#0338-26 (Oct. 26, 2026 agenda). Links at sbpaper.com.

HISTORY

Council repeals bike lamp law in 1901, then rewrites it that night

After a petition from W. C. Stover and 900 others, the council voted 9-4 to repeal, then passed Councilman Somers' amended lamp rule 13-1.



111

Ordinance No.1064.

AN ORDINANCE TRANSFERRING FUNDS.

Be it ordained by the Common Council that $400.00 be and is hereby transfered from the City Hall Fund to a fund hereby created for the Sealer of Weights and Measures for the purchase of all the necessary test weights and measures and records of his office and other necessories of this office and also transfering $300.00 for the Health Departments whos original $200.00 appropriation has been used to pay the salary of the man on the dump. This ordinance to be in force fr from and after its passage.

ADOPTED AUGUST26TH, 1901.

Attest. Approved.

City Clerk. Mayor.

ORDINANCE NO 1065.

AN ORDINANCE REPEALING ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR LAMPS ON BICYCLES.

Be it ordained by the Common Council of the City of South Bend, Indiana.

Section 1. That Ordinance No. 1015, entitled, "An ordinance providing for lamps on bicycles," adopted May 22, 1899, be and the same is hereby repealed.

Section 2. This Ordinance shall be in force from and after its passage and legal publication.

ADOPTED AUGUST 26TH 1901.

Attest. Approved.

City Clerk. Mayor.

Ordinance No 10 65 Amended offered by Councilman Somers.

AN ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR LAMPS ON BICYCLES.

Be it ordained by the Common Council of the City of South Bend Indiana, that Ordinance No 1015, entitled "An Ordinance providing for lamps on bicycles" adopted by the Common Council of the City of South Bend May 22, 1899 be and the same is hereby amended to read as follows:

Section 1. That hereafter no person shall ride any bicycle on or along or over any street, alley or public place in the City of South Bend between the hours of 7 P. M. and 12 P. M. from September 1st to May 1stand between the hour of 8 to 12 P. M. from May 1st to September 1st, of any day without having a lighted lamp upon such bicycle.

Section 2. This ordinance shall be in force from and after its passage and legal publication.

ADOPTED AUGUST 26,1901.

Attest. Approved.

City Clerk. Mayor.

Page 111 of South Bend's Ordinance Book 4 records two versions of the city's bicycle lamp law, both dated Aug. 26, 1901: a repeal, and the amended rule offered by Councilman Somers. CITY OF SOUTH BEND RECORDS

On Aug. 26, 1901, the South Bend Common Council voted 9-4 to repeal the city's bicycle lamp law. Before the meeting ended, it voted 13-1 to keep one.

Both decisions sit on the same page of the city's ordinance book. Page 111 of Ordinance Book 4 records Ordinance No. 1065, the repeal, marked "ADOPTED

The staff report says development since the city's new zoning code took effect in 2020 prompted a review of whether the rules "are still driving desired outcomes for the neighborhood today."

The garage proposal

Under current overlay rules, garages and carports on a lot in the S1, U1 and U2 residential districts can hold no more than two vehicles when they face a street or open space. The September version of the bill would have let garages that don't face a street hold more than two, according to the change summary in the commission's Oct. 19 packet.

At a Common Council Zoning and Annexation Committee meeting on Sept. 28, zoning specialist Mark Dellostritto said that would raise the limit for those garages to four vehicles, the citywide maximum, according to the committee's minutes. He said it could allow garages four stalls wide, though that "would likely be uncommon due to established lot widths," and that larger garages "would make sense for duplexes."

Dellostritto told the committee there had been "some back-and-forth discussion" with the Northeast Neighborhoods Revitalization Organization on garage capacity, but that the two "ended in agreement" on the proposal, the minutes say. Minutes of the Oct. 19 Plan Commission meeting, which would say who raised the concerns that led to tabling, were not yet posted in city records reviewed for this story. They are on the Nov. 16 agenda for approval.

What stays in

The second substitute keeps the other changes, according to the staff report and the bill:

- **All development, not just new buildings.** The overlay's rules would apply to renovations and expansions too. Today they apply only to new construction. Dellostritto told the council committee this was something neighborhood residents asked for.
- **Trash cans** could sit in a front or corner yard if screened or not visible from the street.
- **Flat roofs** would be allowed on carriage houses, detached houses, cottage courts, duplexes and townhouses when they fit the building's architectural style.
- **Porch and stoop minimums** (50% and 30% of the house front) would apply only to detached houses, cottage courts, duplexes and townhouses, not apartment buildings.
- **Garage roofs** would have to match the house only for detached houses, cottage courts and duplexes.
- A ban on street-facing window and wall air conditioners would be deleted from the overlay because, staff say, the same rule appears elsewhere in the code.

The bill, No. 76-26, is a text amendment, so it carries no direct public cost. After the Plan Commission acts, it goes to the Common Council for a final vote.

Also on the Nov. 16 agenda: a second primary-approval hearing for the Riverfront West subdivision at 330 E. Jefferson Blvd., which the paper reported on earlier, and a three-lot minor subdivision at 1702 S. Robinson St.

Sources: South Bend Plan Commission agenda packet, Nov. 16, 2026 (PC#0341-26 staff report, change summary and second substitute Bill 76-26); South Bend Plan Commission agenda packet, Oct. 19, 2026 (NNZO change summary, first version); Common Council Zoning and Annexation Committee minutes, Sept. 28, 2026; Bill 76-26, Amendment 10, NNZO (Common Council, Oct. 26, 2026 packet). Links at sbpaper.com.

ECONOMY

South Bend mayor's pay to rise 3% to $134,395 in 2027

The council's salary ordinances give most appointed staff the same 3% raise, keep a $2,000 bonus for workers who live in the city and let seven top jobs pay more than the mayor.

South Bend Mayor James Mueller will be paid $134,395 in 2027, up 3% from $130,481 this year, under an ordinance the Common Council passed Oct. 12.

The council passed a companion ordinance the same night setting the most the city may pay each of its non-union, or non-bargaining, employees and appointed officers next year. It gives most positions the same 3% increase and keeps the extra payments the city already offers, including a $2,000 annual bonus for full-time employees who live inside city limits.

Both ordinances were presented to the mayor Oct. 13. The non-bargaining ordinance takes effect once he signs it; the mayor's salary ordinance also requires any publication the law demands.

Why the mayor's raise is 3%

Indiana law requires the council to set the pay of elected officers each year, and it may not cut it below the previous year's amount, the ordinance says. City

Controller Kyle Willis told the council's Personnel and Finance Committee that the mayor's 2027 salary "reflects the three percent (3%) standard increase," according to the committee's minutes. No one spoke at the public hearing, and the committee sent the bill to the full council with a 5-0 favorable recommendation.

Seven jobs can pay more than the mayor

The non-bargaining ordinance lists a maximum salary for each position. Willis' letter to the council says the ordinance "proposes a standard increase of 3.0%," along with new positions, title changes and "higher than standard increases for various positions." The ordinance notes that actual pay may be less than the cap but may not exceed it.

Seven positions have 2027 caps higher than the mayor's salary:

Position	2026 cap	2027 cap
Corporation Counsel	$150,041	$154,542
City Controller	$143,878	$148,194
Director of Public Works	$143,878	$148,194
Executive Director, Venues, Parks & Arts	$141,212	$145,448
Chief Innovation Officer	$133,570	$137,577
Executive Director of Community Investment	$133,570	$137,577
City Engineer	$132,923	$136,911

At the committee meeting, Willis said the final version removed the Chief of Venues and Promotions and Director of Operations – Venues titles and restored the salary for the General Manager – Venues position after a proposed cut. Asked why, he said he did not have that information because he was not part of those conversations with Venues Parks and Arts leadership, according to the minutes. Committee Chair Sheila Niezgodski asked about an Assistant Forester position that department had proposed but that did not appear in the ordinance; Willis said he would check whether it was missed. The committee sent the bill on 5-0.

Bonuses and allowances

The ordinance keeps these extras. The $2,000 residency bonus is the same amount set in the 2026 ordinance.

- **Residency incentive:** $2,000 a year, paid in December, to full-time employees who live in South Bend on a continuous, permanent basis.
- **Engineering license:** $4,000 a year for full-time Engineering Department employees with an active Professional Engineer license.
- **Hiring bonus:** $100 to $4,000, at the mayor's discretion.
- **Car allowance:** up to $500 a month in place of a city car, at the mayor's discretion.
- **Cell phone allowance:** up to $100 a month.
- **Health insurance opt-out:** $130 a month for employees who leave the city's medical plan for other coverage.

The city added the residency payment for non-bargaining employees in 2021. That October, Councilmember Canneth Lee said 161 employees would receive $1,000 each, according to council minutes, or about $161,000 that year. The records reviewed for this story do not show how many employees qualify now or what the $2,000 payment costs the city.

Sources: South Bend Ordinance 11322-26, 2027 mayor's salary; South Bend Ordinance 11324-26, 2027 non-bargaining salaries; Substitute Bill 72-26, 2027 non-bargaining salary ordinance, with controller's letters (salary table text); Common Council Personnel & Finance Committee minutes, Oct. 12, 2026; South Bend Ordinance 11233-25, 2026 non-bargaining salaries. Links at sbpaper.com.

ECONOMY

Dexter Axle to close Elkhart plant, ending 51 jobs

The trailer-axle maker told the state the Protecta Drive plant will close permanently, with the first job losses Dec. 31. It gave no reason.

Dexter Axle LLC plans to permanently close its plant at 21608 Protecta Drive in Elkhart, cutting 51 jobs, the company told the Indiana Department of Workforce Development in a notice dated Oct. 29.

"The entire Facility is expected to close permanently," the letter says. The company told the state the first separations would come Dec. 31, with the closing's "completion currently targeted for December 31, 2026."

The notice, filed under the federal WARN Act, which requires larger employers to give 60 days' warning of a plant closing or mass layoff, does not say why the plant is closing or whether its work will move elsewhere. The letterhead identifies Dexter as "a DexKo Global Company."

The letter puts the number of affected employees at 51. A list of job titles attached to it adds up to 54 positions, all with a Dec. 31 date; the notice does not explain the difference. The largest groups on the list are welders, eight, and assemblers, 18 across three grades. It also includes the plant manager, supervisors, quality inspectors, maintenance technicians, material handlers and drivers.

"No affected employees are represented by a union," the notice says. It lists HR Manager Charles Mburu as the company contact.

Dexter's notice is the fourth this year from Elkhart County on the state's list of current WARN notices. Wabash reported 144 jobs in Goshen in January, Shiloh Industries 172 in Goshen in February and Forest River 105 at a Bristol plant in July.

Sources: Dexter Axle LLC WARN notice to Indiana DWD, Plant 61, Elkhart, Oct. 29, 2026; Indiana Department of Workforce Development, Current WARN Notices. Links at sbpaper.com.

COMMUNITY

Council clears 1924 grocery building for use as an event hall

James C. Trotter Jr., owner of the West Washington Street building since 2000, won a 6-0 vote as two council members recalled their own ties to it.

When Bill No. 79-26 reached the South Bend Common Council on Oct. 26, it arrived from the Zoning and Annexation Committee "with no recommendation," according to the council's minutes. Councilmember Rachel Tomas Morgan noted that the petitioner had not been present during the committee meeting.

By the end of the night, the bill had passed 6-0, and two council members had put their own history with the building on the record.

The building stands at 2209 West Washington Street. A Plan Commission staff report describes it as "a two story shop style building with a garage in the rear." It was built in 1924 and, the report says, "served as a local grocery store," with an apartment above.

Its owner is James C. Trotter Jr., who lives on Bennington Drive in Mishawaka. He asked the city for permission to use it as what his petition calls "a multi-purpose event hall available for hourly rental."

According to the minutes, Trotter apologized for missing the committee meeting. He said he has owned the building since 2000 and has worked over the years to bring it to its current condition. He noted that it is the last historic building in the neighborhood, and said he is trying to preserve it and use it for the community.

The house next door

Then the council members spoke.

Councilmember Ophelia Gooden-Rodgers thanked Trotter for preserving the building and noted that she grew up in the home next door, which her family owns. According to the minutes, she said she has used the building before and knows how nice it is, encouraged keeping it for community use and said it is much needed on the west side.

Councilmember Karen L. White recalled visiting the building back when it was a grocery store. Council President Canneth Lee thanked Trotter for restoring a historic building for community use and noted the space has been used for various events.

At the public hearing, nobody spoke. Council Vice President Sheila Niezgodski and Councilmembers Sherry Bolden-Simpson and Dr. Oliver Davis were absent for the vote.

What the vote does

Ordinance No. 11331-26 rezones the vacant lot across the alley from Urban Neighborhood 1 to Urban Neighborhood Flex, matching the building's parcel. It also grants a special exception, which is permission for a specific use, for "Retail & Service, General" on both the lot and the building's parcel.

The staff report says the lot "has been vacant since at least 1960" and would be used "when additional space is needed."

Tim Staub, who presented the bill, told the council the request does not match the 2022 Kennedy Park Neighborhood Plan, which calls for a different zoning district on the lot. But he said the use fits the plan's strategies for underused properties and neighborhood safety. He showed a 1960 Sanborn map of the small commercial spaces that once existed nearby.

The Plan Commission voted unanimously on Oct. 19 to recommend approval. Its staff wrote that the use "would allow this shop style building to serve as a commercial space again."