

The Chamber Scene

HUNTINGTON COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

40 E. Franklin Street • Huntington, Indiana 46750 • (260) 356-5300 • www.huntington-chamber.com • January 2022

Ribbon cuttings, expansions 2021



As the Chamber closes out another year in Huntington County, we are grateful for the many blessings we had during 2021. The Chamber is hopeful for 2022, and looks forward to the new year ahead. We build those hopes on our strong past, and the continued hard work of Huntington's dedicated leaders toward the future.

In this first newsletter of 2022, we look back at some of the accomplishments of the past year. The Chamber is featuring and sharing with you some of the new businesses and expansion of businesses here in Huntington County. This information also highlights some of the things the Chamber does every day and every year to promote and support our members and the local business community.

As we begin the New Year, we also want to say "thank you" to all of our wonderful members, and will continue in our mission to "support and promote a community atmosphere in which business prospers and the quality of life continually improves."

Shown in the photos from top left, down, are the ribbon cuttings at Not to Shabby Home Decor & Design, 500 N. Jefferson Street; Diverse Kutz, 1217 S. Jefferson Street; Pathfinder Services new office in Wabash; Bend the Trend Boutique & Decor, 510 N. Jefferson Street and the ribbon cutting and celebration of the \$420,000 improvement at the Terry R. Abnett Splash Park on Etna Avenue. The last photo shows the rendering of the new \$13.1 million expansion at the Huntington University Merillat Complex & Fieldhouse (PLEX).



Huntington, Roanoke, Warren, Markle and Andrews have all seen new businesses begin in recent months, and buildings revitalized, repainted, improved and more. As we move into 2022, the Chamber is hopeful that the momentum continues. People are expressing the desire to visit downtowns for a special experience or unique gift. Huntington County has begun to see the resurgence of small independently owned businesses start in the county, and the Chamber believes this is a positive beginning to the new year.

The top photo, at left, shows the ribbon cutting at Bear & Beak Bakery, 44 E. Park Drive and ribbon cutting at the remodeled Indiana Dream Center, 501 N. Jefferson Street. Shuttleworth, Inc., 10 Commercial Road announced an expansion will provide an additional 50,000 sq. ft. to the manufacturing area with more loading docks and restrooms. The project has an investment of \$4.7 million. A ribbon cutting was held at Laggs Automotive, 1885 N. Jefferson Street and a ribbon cutting was held at the Huntington County Community Learning Center, 2201 N. Jefferson Street. The expansion adds 20,478 sq. ft. at a cost of more than \$4.1 million bringing the total facility to 49,784 sq. ft. A ribbon cutting at GQT Movies as they reopen under new ownership; the new Nurture Soap, 2809 Theater Avenue and the groundbreaking and ribbon cutting at Ecolab. Ecolab is installing new equipment at their facility at 970 E. Tipton Street and adding 132,000 sq. ft. of distribution space at their 68 Commercial Road location.



The top photo shows the ribbon cutting at The Fiber Alchemist, 442 N. Jefferson Street in downtown Huntington. The middle photo is the ribbon cutting at the UB Launch, 40 E. Franklin Street. The UB Launch offers affordable and flexible workspace when an individual is looking for coworking space to rent; month-to-month membership options; no long-term contracts; high-speed Wi-Fi; printer/copier/-scanner access and private phone conference space where entrepreneurs can make a private call. The bottom photo is the ribbon cutting held at Huntington's newest business, Express Employment Professionals, 2916 Walmart Drive. "Express' long-term goal is to help as many people as possible find good jobs by helping as many clients as possible find good people."



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Indiana's revenue is heavy on positives

Source: Indiana Chamber of Commerce

"Indiana is on solid footing." That's how the economist giving Indiana's economic forecast to the State Budget Committee last week opened his presentation.

The economist offered a positive outlook, pointing out that all key economic indicators (payrolls, unemployment rates, wages, incomes and consumer consumption) are encouraging. It is largely that positive view that lays the foundation for the revenue forecasters to project the tax collections.

Yet "solid footing" may be something of an understatement considering the revised tax collection projections presented by revenue forecasters following the economist's comments. The revenue forecast detailed just how much additional money is now expected to come in above what was forecasted last April when the biennium budget was passed. The new projections add \$1.87 billion in the first fiscal year of this budget and another \$1.43 billion in the second fiscal year. For context, those dollars roughly equate to 10% of our total budgeted appropriations for the biennium. That's a lot of new money. Those totals reflect the anticipated growth in each of the general fund taxes: sales, individual income and corporate income taxes. All of these, as well as gaming and other tax revenues, are trending upward.

Again, the bottom line: No matter how you look at it, Indiana's fiscal picture is good. The economic outlook: positive. Revenue collections: strong. Surplus balances: healthy.

Wendy Speakman

Director of Graduate and Professional Programs

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Cheryl McCoy
Branch Manager

Funded partner applications are now open to the county



The United Way of Huntington County is now accepting applications from 501(c)3 organizations that serve Huntington County. The United

Way is looking for all organizations that have a role in enhancing the quality of life for those in Huntington County in the areas of education, health and wellness and financial stability.

This is an annual, open and competitive process where funds are allocated toward one or more of the areas. All organizations must be able to demonstrate how they plan to produce outcomes in one or more of the issue areas and take part in transforming the community based on the metrics developed by the United Way board of directors.

Organizations are vetted through the process and are required to report progress at least twice a year. Data must be tracked and reported based minimally on the metrics outlined in the United Way of Huntington County Community Investment Portfolio. This document is available upon request at the United Way office.

Letter of Intent applications are due February 4, 2022 and may be accessed online at [huntingtonunitedway.org/partner-resources/under "Community Impact Application."](http://huntingtonunitedway.org/partner-resources/under-Community-Impact-Application) Only organizations who submit a Letter of Intent will be eligible to submit a full application. Organizations applying for multiple programs must submit a Letter of Intent for each.

Any questions may be directed to the United Way of Huntington County at (260) 356-6160.

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Virus bill, permanent tax cuts, abortion among other hot topics for legislature

Niki Kelley – The Journal Gazette

A debate over permanent tax cuts will likely dominate the 2022 legislative session. But lawmakers will also tackle plenty of other topics, including abortion and curriculum.

The first priority, though, is COVID-19. Republican leaders are pushing House Bill 1001 through in an expedited manner. It has already had two public hearings and could have a House vote in the session's first week. Legislators return January 4.

The bill has two major parts – the first are administrative changes that would ensure Indiana continues to receive additional federal benefits even if the state's public health emergency ends. And the second would limit employer vaccine mandates.

"People are losing their jobs. We must protect Hoosier workers," said Rep. Matt Lehman, R-Berne, the author of the legislation.

A small number of employers have implemented a vaccine mandate and are firing workers who don't comply. Most of these are health care companies.

The business community has come out against the bill but, so far, it looks like individual rights will win. The bill isn't the outright ban on vaccine mandates that many conservatives want. But it would provide an opt-out to weekly testing and require businesses to grant religious and medical exemptions without question.

Gov. Eric Holcomb wants the topics separated into different bills because there is broad agreement on the items needed to end the emergency. A bill could come in the Senate with just that language.

Although not on the fast track, perhaps the biggest issue this session is a permanent tax cut.

House Republicans are pushing hard for the cut as the state sits on an unprecedented \$4 billion surplus that is expected to grow to \$5.1 billion by June. And Hoosiers are set to get a one-time refund in 2022 of \$125. These are all state tax dollars that are growing at a faster-than-expected pace – with sources including sales, income, corporate and gaming. Federal stimulus dollars are kept separate.

"We wouldn't be in this strong position



without hardworking Hoosiers who showed an unbelievable amount of grit during very challenging times," said House Ways and Means Chairman Tim Brown, R-Crawfordsville. "We're looking at a number of options, including a permanent tax cut that would put money back in the pockets of Hoosier taxpayers."

But Senate Republicans want to wait until the next budget is up for negotiation in 2023. An existing law sends excess surplus dollars to pay down unfunded pension relief in 2022.

Senate Appropriations Chairman Ryan Mishler, R-Bremen, said money seems to burn a hole in government's pocket. People either want to give it back or spend it. For now, he wants to see if the robust revenues are long-term instead of a temporary blip.

"We have triggers in place already if the balances get beyond a certain point," he said. "This is a hard year – guarding the cash."

The discussion will focus on whether a tax cut should happen and what kind – with individual income and business personal property taxes at the head of the line.

Although tax cuts might not get support, abortion legislation will undoubtedly move.

Every year, there is a new wrinkle from pro-life Republicans. But this year they will be emboldened by several new aggressive state laws.

Texas uses a novel approach, letting citizens sue anyone who performs or assists a woman in getting an abortion after about six weeks of pregnancy. A Mississippi law bans abortions after 15 weeks.

A U.S. Supreme Court ruling likely won't come until after legislators wrap up

the session in March. Bills taking both approaches will be filed, though none has been made public yet.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Indiana is ready to defend reproductive choices. It almost always sues – and has a winning record.

Another national flashpoint is education. School boards in recent months have become a cauldron of anger over issues including critical race theory, face masks, social emotional learning and book banning.

Indiana GOP leaders don't want to get into defining what critical race theory is because it is so difficult to pinpoint in legal terms. They also believe it is a higher education phenomenon that isn't happening here in K-12 schools.

But the topic has stirred parents' emotions, so they want to do something. That something will be transparency on curriculum – likely a requirement that teachers post classroom materials, lesson plans and more.

To go even further, some legislators want to make school board elections partisan races. Republican Rep. Bob Morris of Fort Wayne has said he will file a bill to do so.

Terry Spradlin, executive director of the Indiana School Boards Association, said 43 states including Indiana have nonpartisan school board elections.

"We absolutely believe it's important to remain that way. We think our board members should leave partisan politics at the school door and do what's best for kids," he said. "Most of the decisions aren't based on political ideology – purchasing buses, balancing budgets, hiring superintendents."

Spradlin said moving to partisan races would require primary elections and limit the pool of who might want to run.

House Education Chairman Robert Behning, R-Indianapolis, said the House discussion is a hybrid of sorts. It would allow a school board candidate to self-identify on the ballot but not have primary elections.

And there might be an adjustment to how a vacancy is filled. Right now, the school board chooses a successor. But a new process would give the public and local political parties more input.



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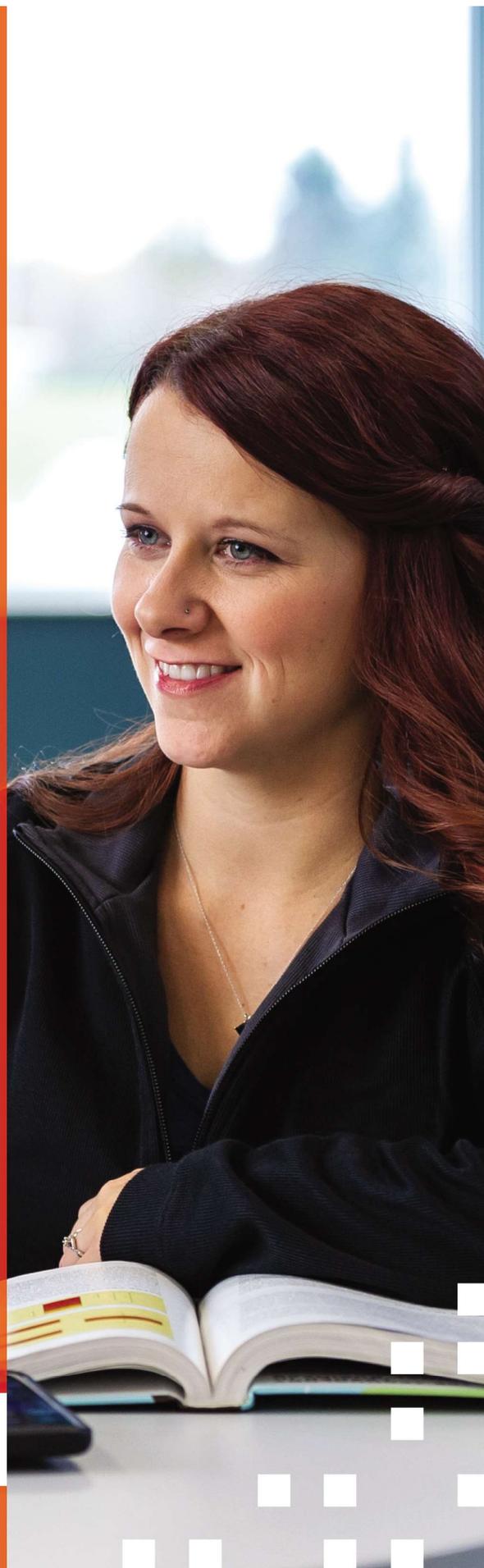
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State of the City

Wednesday, February 16, 2022
Mayor Richard Strick
Huntington Arts & Entrepreneurial Center, 9 a.m.

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