



February 4, 2026

Franklin County Commission  
Franklin County Planning & Zoning Commission  
Franklin County Planning & Zoning Department  
Via e-mail

Re: Data Center Zoning Regulation

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the developer of the Gateway data center project on Robertsville Road, we are providing this letter in response to the public hearing on January 20th. In short, most of the emotional testimony that you heard there was factually incorrect and based on uninformed social media content that too often pervades our communities. While we respect the passion of the residents, their dire warnings regarding health risks, noise, water usage and utility costs are simply not true. Our goal with this letter is to ensure that you have the facts needed to distinguish between myth and reality and are able to make your most informed decisions going forward.

Contrary to the residents' fears, we are fully committed to a project design that ensures **no impact** on our most sensitive neighbors, the Shaw Nature Reserve and Desloge Estates. Through permanent open-space covenants, massive 1,000+ foot buffers, and strict adherence to "zero-increase" noise and light standards, we will ensure that our project remains **quiet, discreet** and tucked into the natural landscape.

This minimal environmental impact stands out against the enormous economic benefits that a data center campus can provide. Our Gateway project represents the **largest economic development project in the history of Franklin County**. At full build-out, this facility will deliver over **\$50 Million in annual tax revenue** to the County and its various taxing districts. This unprecedented amount of investment will fundamentally change Franklin County's financial future without requiring the "intense" traditional development typically needed to grow the tax base. The scale of this revenue will empower the County to:

- **Maintain its Rural Character:** By providing a massive tax base from a low-impact use, **the County can fund essential services without needing to approve dense residential subdivisions or heavy industrial plants** that would strip the natural landscape.
- **Fully Fund Public Safety:** We are proud to commit that this project's tax revenue can fund **100% of the 911 funding gap** that currently exists in the County, ensuring that first responders have the resources they need to keep residents safe.

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The dichotomy of massive economic benefits with minimal physical impacts will inevitably lead residents to allege that our project is “too good to be true.” We can assure you that is not the case. We have seen firsthand the positive impacts that data centers can have on rural communities. The attached article shows the positive economic impact of a recent project of ours in Indiana.

Altoona, Iowa is a perfect analog to Franklin County. Since 2014, Meta has operated a massive 5 Million SF data center campus in this rural farming community. Just last month (January 2026), Dean O’Connor, the Mayor of Altoona, reported to the Jefferson County Leader newspaper that **“he hasn’t heard any complaints from neighbors or other residents about the data center’s operations.”** He went further, saying, **“I tell people all the time, it’s something that we can brag and hang our hat on...it’s added a lot to our community.”** Importantly, this positive impact is felt despite the fact that Altoona hasn’t received tax revenue anywhere near the scale that our Gateway project would provide Franklin County and its taxing districts; Meta negotiated for 100% abatements at the outset of the project in 2014, when such abatements were required to lure data center projects.

Beyond the huge local economic impact, data centers are often described as the **“invisible backbone” of our modern world**, powering almost every aspect of our daily lives. Every time we send an email, use a banking app, stream a video, or save a family photo to the cloud, we are using a data center. The “cloud,” despite its ephemeral name, is an aggregation of physical facilities, i.e. data centers. Beyond personal convenience, they host the complex systems required for **modern healthcare**, allowing doctors to instantly access electronic medical records and enabling the research needed to develop new medicines. Data Centers are also essential for **public safety**, providing the infrastructure for emergency 911 dispatch systems, weather forecasting, and national defense. In short, data centers have become as vital to our communities as power plants and water systems, ensuring that the services we all rely on, from hospitals to first responders, stay connected and operational every second of the day.

We recognize the daunting task in front of the Commission and Planning Staff. Sorting fact from fiction on a project of this importance can be intimidating, especially when the subject matter seems so foreign. To aid in your process, we have prepared the information table attached hereto as Exhibit A as a comprehensive FAQ to debunk false allegations made at last month’s public hearing with technical facts and our binding commitments. Our singular goal with this is to arm you with facts and resources so that you can make an informed decision that’s in the best interest of Franklin County.

If you have any questions regarding the above or would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact us.



Regards,

A blue ink handwritten signature of Leon Backes.

Leon Backes, Founder - Provident Realty

David Burch, Managing Principal – InLight Real Estate

Exhibit A – Information Table

Exhibit B – Water Usage

Exhibit C – Concept Plan

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Exhibit A

Information Table

Citizens' Concern or Allegation	Facts and Commitments from Gateway Development Team
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The project will consume millions of gallons of water</li> <li>- The project will result in other wells running dry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We will commit to a <b>fully closed loop system</b>. This dramatically reduces the amount of water consumed. A closed loop system will use the water equivalent of approximately 54 homes, which is a fraction of what the current permitted uses would allow. (See note below re: current zoning allowing for 1,000+ homes.)</li> <li>- None of the water used for cooling will be discharged into the public sewer. Instead, it is disposed of offsite by certified disposal companies.</li> <li>- We have attached a fulsome explanation of our project's water usage and lack of impacts as Exhibit B attached to this letter.</li> <li>- We will not use onsite wells and instead will use public utilities. We will pay for all necessary upgrades to both water and sewer systems.</li> <li>- State law and regulations protect well water in the area. Specifically, we are required to register the project and then report annually its water use to the Missouri Department of Natural Resources.</li> <li>- MO DNR monitors aquifers to ensure there is no disruption to other wells.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The project will cause their electric bills to increase</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The project will pay 100% of all infrastructure upgrades associated with the project. Zero out of pocket from Ameren on transmission or service infrastructure.</li> <li>- By law (Senate Bill 4 and the recent PSC Order from November 2025), the data center owner / user is obligated to contractually commit to buy enough electricity from Ameren to pay for any new generation costs or similar charges they incur.</li> <li>- Missouri Senate Bill 4 and the recent PSC case in November protects the rate base and requires the data center user to pay its fair share.</li> <li>- See new article here summarizing this:  <a href="https://missouriindependent.com/briefs/missouri-passes-new-rules-costs-for-data-centers-and-large-power-users/">https://missouriindependent.com/briefs/missouri-passes-new-rules-costs-for-data-centers-and-large-power-users/</a> </li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The project will emit harmful light pollution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We will commit to downlighting as recommended by staff and Shaw Nature Reserve to minimize impact on wildlife. This would include "dark sky" lighting fixtures.</li> <li>- We are amenable to adding a light modeling study as part of the building permit package that confirms light spillover onto residential properties of not more than .5 footcandle measured at 3' above grade, consistent with the Festus ordinance (a copy of which is enclosed with this letter).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project will have serious negative impact on Shaw Nature Reserve, in multiple ways</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We are actively discussing with Shaw their requests for restrictions applicable to Data Centers generally and our project specifically.</li> <li>- <b>We are committed to satisfying Shaw's concerns</b> and reaching mutual agreement over the restrictions in the new zoning regulation applicable to Data Center projects. Our agreement will include a permanent open space covenant for over 1300 feet of farm and tree buffer between the project building area and the Nature Reserve.</li> <li>- We will commit to (and support the zoning ordinance requirements for) the project causing NO increase in the ambient noise level currently established at the boundary with the Shaw Nature Reserve.</li> <li>- In other words, <b><u>the project will NOT result in any increase whatsoever in noise level at the boundary with Shaw Nature Reserve.</u></b></li> <li>- We aim to have this agreement finalized before the end of February.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project will destroy the rural nature of the vicinity and natural view corridors from Robertsville Road and Deslodge Estates subdivision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Our site development plan concentrates all activity into the corner of the site furthest from Shaw and Deslodge, utilizing the natural contours of the land and natural vegetation to create a low profile, discreet campus.</li> <li>- We are committed to developing the site in a manner that limits / confines the building area such that <b><u>no buildings will be visible from Robertsville Road or Deslodge Estates.</u></b></li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project will destroy all buffer around Desloge Estates subdivision to the south and disturb the residents' peace and quiet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Our plan includes 1000+ feet of untouched, natural stream and tree buffer between the building area and Desloge Estates.</li> <li>- We will commit to (and support the zoning ordinance requirements for) the project causing NO increase in the ambient noise level currently established at the boundary with Desloge Estates.</li> <li>- In other words, <b><u>the project will NOT result in any increase in noise level at the boundary with Desloge Estates.</u></b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project will disturb the Tiler cemetery on Diamond Farms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b><u>We will NOT disturb the cemetery.</u></b></li> <li>- We learned of the cemetery early in our due diligence process, and our site planning was undertaken in a manner to ensure that the project would NOT impact the cemetery.</li> <li>- In fact, we intend to restore the cemetery, provide permanent access to descendants and agree to maintain the cemetery in the future.</li> <li>-</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project will result in the "leveling" of all of the trees and landscape of Diamond Farms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The current zoning allows for 1,000 single-family homes as is and over 2,400 homes under a PUD. Either of these would result in the potential leveling of 90%+ of the site.</li> <li>- We are committed to leaving <b><u>50%+ of the site undisturbed.</u></b> That's over 300 acres of open space. See our concept plan attached to this letter as Exhibit C.</li> <li>- So much open space would be all but impossible for any other form of development of Diamond Farms (meaning any other development, including current allowed uses, would require more density than our project).</li> <li>-</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The project will cause brain and hearing damage because of electro-magnetic fields (EMF) and low-hum noises</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The EMF concerns are a red herring. Data centers emit only non-iodizing radiation, the same found in toasters or other small household appliances.</li> <li>- EMF levels outside the building walls of data centers are lower in frequency / intensity than common home appliances.</li> <li>- See article here explaining how non-iodizing EMFs created by data centers are not a risk to human health.  <a href="https://nwidatafacts.nwiforum.org/faq/are-there-electromagnetic-field-or-other-health-risks-associated-with-data-centers/">https://nwidatafacts.nwiforum.org/faq/are-there-electromagnetic-field-or-other-health-risks-associated-with-data-centers/</a> </li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The project will create a low humming noise that can cause harm to hearing</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- We will commit to no change in ambient noise level at the boundaries with Shaw Nature Reserve and Desloge Estates.</li><li>- The other two sides of the property are I-44 and Commercial/Industrial uses, and we will commit to a max increase of 10 dBs from the current ambient noise level at those boundaries.</li><li>- We will commit to a permit requirement of modeling studies to confirm our project complies with the above noise standards before construction permits are issued.</li><li>- We will commit to annual monitoring reports to confirm compliance during operation.</li><li>- We will commit to generator testing only during working hours Monday through Friday, consistent with the Festus ordinance.</li></ul>
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## Exhibit B

### Water: How a Closed-Loop System Operates within a Data Center

In a closed-loop data center, the cooling fluid (a mixture of deionized water and glycol) is **rarely changed**, often lasting for **5 to 15 years** depending on the system design and maintenance.

Unlike older "open" systems that evaporate water and require constant flushing, a closed-loop system is a sealed environment where the fluid recirculates indefinitely. New water is used sparingly, only to replace water that has evaporated from the system. Below is a breakdown of how the maintenance and disposal process works in plain English.

#### **1. Frequency of Replacement: Once a Decade or Less**

- **Sealed Integrity:** Because the system is air-tight and pressurized, the coolant is not exposed to the outside environment. This prevents the growth of algae or the buildup of minerals that usually require water to be drained.
- **Typical Lifespan:** With regular testing of pH levels and corrosion inhibitors, the fluid can maintain its effectiveness for **over 10 years**. Some high-quality glycol mixtures are rated for 15+ years of continuous use.
- **Maintenance vs. Replacement:** Instead of "changing the oil" every year, technicians perform small "top-offs" if a leak occurs or add tiny amounts of stabilizers to keep the chemistry balanced.

#### **2. Disposal: Specialized Handling, Not the Public Sewer**

A key distinction is that the fluid in a closed-loop system is **never discharged into the public sewer system**.

- **The Pump-Out Process:** When the fluid finally reaches the end of its life, a specialized environmental service company is brought on-site. They use a vacuum truck to pump the fluid directly out of the system into a sealed tank.
- **Certified Recycling Facilities:** The waste is transported to a certified industrial recycling facility where the glycol is separated, purified, and often recycled into new industrial products.

#### **3. Why This Protects Franklin County**

- **Zero Impact on Wastewater Plants:** Because the coolant is handled by private contractors and taken to specialized facilities, it places **zero burden** on the County's municipal wastewater treatment plant or local septic systems.



- **Significantly less than Currently Permitted Residential:** Per the US EPA, the average American household uses 300 gallons of water per day, or 110,000 gallons per year. Our closed-loop system will use less than 10% of the water that would otherwise be used by a currently allowed residential development.
- **Groundwater Protection:** Modern data centers are built with "secondary containment" (like a giant tray under the equipment) to ensure that even in the unlikely event of a pipe leak, the fluid is captured before it can reach the soil and/or the water table.

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Exhibit C

Gateway Data Center Concept Plan



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# Post-Tribune

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## Panel weighs firing squad bill

Senate committee could amend death penalty legislation as 4 opponents testify against plan

By Alexandra Kukulka

Post-Tribune

The Senate Corrections and Criminal Law committee discussed a bill Tuesday that would allow firing squad executions for

death penalty inmates, including testimony from four people opposed to the bill.

Senate Bill 11, filed by State Sen. Michael Young, would allow firing squad executions if medications for lethal injection can't be

obtained or the inmate chooses death by firing squad at least 30 days before the scheduled execution date.

The firing squad would be made up of five Department of Correction officers selected by the warden. The firing squad members' identity would be kept confidential and not subject to discovery in civil or criminal

lawsuits, according to the bill.

At the time of execution, four members will have guns with live ammunition and one member will have a gun with blank ammunition. The guns would be loaded without the members knowing who has what kind of ammunition, according to the bill.

Young, R-Indianapolis, testified before the committee Tuesday

that it could cost up to \$300,000 per dose of pentobarbital, which is used to conduct a lethal injection, and it often expires before use.

The federal government conducts death penalty executions at the Terre Haute prison, Young said, and it is constrained by the execution laws in Indiana, Young

**Turn to Firing, Page 2**

### HOBART CITY COUNCIL



Hobart Mayor Josh Huddlestun, center, listens as Richard Marks speaks before the start of the planning commission meeting at City Hall on Aug. 7.

ANDY LAVALLEY/FOR THE POST-TRIBUNE

## Mayor touts data center deal, but skeptics remain

Amazon would pay city \$47M as part of agreement to build on 72-acre site

By Deborah Laverty

Post-Tribune

Hobart Mayor Josh Huddlestun called the \$47 million upfront cash the city is poised to receive from Amazon, if plans go forward to build a data center at 61st and Colorado, "record breaking." Hobart secured the largest publicly known upfront cash payment ever for a private development on private land in the country. The developer (Amazon) will pay \$47 million in community enhancement payments. These dollars are not part of the levy and not part of any TIF (Tax Increment Finance) district. They go straight to the city and can be used to serve the whole community," Huddlestun said.

Because of this agreement, Huddlestun said the city will not have to raise its income tax, meaning the city can fix roads, improve drainage, invest in parks, invest in its youth, and keep public safety departments strong without putting more pressure on resi-



Visitors hold signs during a planning commission meeting on Nov. 6 regarding a permit for the proposed Hobart Devco Data Center.

KYLE TELECHAN/FOR THE POST-TRIBUNE

dents, he said.

"This really should be celebrated," he said.

The Hobart City Council at its meeting on Wednesday will consider a resolution that would declare a 72-acre economic revi-

talization area at 61st Avenue and Colorado Street the first step toward a tax abatement agreement with Amazon officials, who in late November announced plans to invest \$15 billion in the city.

To accommodate a larger crowd, the city council meeting, which starts at 6 p.m., was moved to the Hobart High School auditorium, 2211 E. 10th St., door No. 21, on the east side of the school

Huddlestun said the meeting was moved from Hobart City Hall to the high school auditorium at the request of the No Data Center group, which opposes building any data centers in the area of 61st Avenue and Colorado Street.

Angelita Soriano, a spokesperson for the group, confirmed a request was made to change the venue after more than 500 people packed a Nov. 6 plan commission meeting held at the PCC Building, 705 E. 4th St.

Soriano is one of four Hobart homeowners who last month filed a lawsuit seeking to vacate multiple actions by Hobart city officials that have "prepared" the way for the possible construction of an Amazon data center on farmland within city limits.

**Turn to Amazon, Page 3**

## State sets grad rate record in 2025

Officials: Nearly 92% of Ind. seniors earned high school diploma

By Carole Carlson

Post-Tribune

Indiana continued its upward graduation rate climb with nearly 92% of 2025 high school seniors earning a diploma, according to results released Monday by the state Department of Education.

State officials said the mark represents a new record, eclipsing the 2024 graduation rate of 90.23%.

It's also the third consecutive year of increased graduation rates.

The graduation rate of students who didn't need waivers improved from 87.53% in 2024 to 90.34% in 2025, a 2.81 percentage point improvement.

The state allows students to earn a diploma without completing or passing some graduation requirements if they demonstrate knowledge or skill.

Recently, the state set caps on the percentage of graduation waivers that can be counted toward a school's graduation rate to lower the reliance on the waivers.

Locally, all nine high schools in Porter County topped the state graduation rate of 91.83%. In Lake County, 12 of 17 schools beat the state average.

The 2025 graduates at Lake Station Edison High posted the biggest traditional school increase, shifting 15 points from 71% in 2024 to 86.14% last year.

Lake Station Edison High Principal Diana Flanagan said: "The increase in our graduation rate reflects a more intentional approach to supporting students early and consistently. By identifying needs sooner, expanding credit recovery, and offering flexible and alternative pathways, we were able to keep more students on track," she said.

"Most importantly, we shifted our focus toward connection over compliance, maintaining high expectations while building strong relationships and helping students take ownership of their learning. That balance of accountability and support has made a meaningful difference. At

**Turn to Grads, Page 3**

## Doxxing bill on table following threats to state legislators

By Alexandra Kukulka

Post-Tribune

Following false police reports against State Senators amid the mid-census redistricting at the end of last year, a bill has been filed to hold people who commit doxing to face criminal charges.

Doxxing is when a person know-

ingly or intentionally posts information, like an address or phone number, of a targeted person in retaliation. Under Senate Bill 140, authored by State Sen. Vaneta Becker, doxing will become a Class A misdemeanor and a Level 6 felony if the posting of the personal information results in the targeted person or someone closely

connected to the person suffering serious injury or death.

Under the bill, doxing would become a Level 5 felony if the posting of personal information of a specific person or someone close to the targeted person results in catastrophic injury or death.

Becker, R-Evansville, said in committee Tuesday she filed the bill

because of what many State Senators experienced with doxing and swatting, or false police reports to generate a large law enforcement response, amid the state's discussion around mid-census redistricting.

In November, Senate Pro Tem Rodric Bray, R-Martinsville, announced he would cancel the early December session to take up

mid-census redistricting because the chamber did not have the votes to pass the measure.

Two days after the cancellation announcement, President Donald Trump issued a statement on his social media site Truth Social, calling out "RINO" Bray and Greg

**Turn to Doxing, Page 2**

## CROWN POINT

# Community Foundation building wins approval

By Deborah Lavery  
Post-Tribune

Plans by the Crown Point Community Foundation to build a new 4,600-square-foot office building will go forward following action taken Monday.

The Crown Point City Council suspended the rules, upon the initial reading, and gave final approval for a zone change from residential to office services for 6.2 acres at 12410 Marshall Street, property owned by the Crossroads YMCA.

Foundation spokesman Jeff Ban said the organization, which was founded in 1990, has outgrown its location at 115 S. Court St. and needs to expand.

Ban said the present location is "woefully small" and offers only two small office rooms for a staff of six.

In addition, there are no provisions for much-needed private meeting rooms.

According to the foundation's website, its mission is to enrich the quality of life in South Lake County by:

■ Providing financial assistance to fund a broad range of community needs.

■ Maximizing charitable gifts by utilizing current tax law.

■ Directing resources in a manner tailored to meet donors' specific needs, managing endowment assets that will meet philanthropic needs.

Ban said the zoning change had been previ-

ously approved by the Crown Point Plan Commission.

He deemed the site not appropriate for a residential area but a good fit for their project.

Ban said now that zoning was approved, the construction could begin later this year.

City Councilman Scott Evorik questioned whether land to the south, now owned and used by the Crossroads YMCA, could still be used for outdoor sports play as it is presently.

Ban said there is an agreement with Crossroads YMCA that the parcel will be left alone.

"Our property won't prevent that from happening," Ban said.

In other business, the council:

■ Unanimously named Joe Sanders, R-5, as the new council president for 2026.

■ Named the Guzman family, 210 Northwest St., as the first-place winner of the 2025 Tour of Lights decorations.

■ Named the three finalists of the tree decorating, called Christmas on the Square, as: Royal Pools and G2 Landscaping, third place; Cedarhurst Senior Living, second place; and Karing for Kennedy, in memory of Kennedy DiMarco, first place. Some 119 participants took part in the tree decorating, city officials said.

Deborah Lavery is a freelance reporter for the Post-Tribune.

reduced lunch — from 91.52% to 93.34%.

"As we continue to scale the new Indiana diploma and readiness seals statewide, we will not only strengthen the value of high school and help more students graduate, we will ensure that they are prepared to succeed in whatever path they choose for their future," said state Secretary of Education Katie Jenner.

The state is preparing new diploma standards that take effect with the Class of 2029 and a new school accountability system.

"While high school graduation marks the end of a student's K-12 journey, our schools play an essential role in preparing students for all that comes next, whether that's going to college, starting a career, or joining the military," said Gov. Mike Braun in the release.

"This strong improvement in our state's graduation rate shows that when we focus on academic excellence and establish clear, personalized pathways, our students thrive."

Carole Carlson is a freelance reporter for the Post-Tribune.

## Grads

from Page 1

the heart of this improvement is truly knowing our students and understanding the barriers they face each day. When students feel seen, supported, and believed in, they rise to meet expectations. When they know you care, they care."

Gary's 21st Century Charter School improved more than 18 points from 79% in 2024 to 97.62% last year.

In Porter County, Washington Township posted a 100% graduation rate. Andrean and Illiana Christian, both private schools, also had 100% rates.

Statewide, graduation rates increased for every student population, including:

Black students — from 83.88% in 2024 to 86.90% in 2025.

Hispanic students — from 87.83% to 89.90%.

White students — from 91.89% to 93.36%.

English learners — from 89.48% to 92.38%.

Special education students — from 85.30% to 88.05%.

Students receiving free/

## Indiana graduation rates

### LAKE COUNTY

Hanover Central

River Forest

Merrillville

Lake Central

Lowell

Calumet

Crown Point

East Chicago

Lake Station

Gary West Side

Griffith

Hammond Central

Hammond Morton

Highland

Hobart

Munster

Whiting

### PORTER COUNTY

Hebron

Chesterton

Morgan Twp.

Kouts

Washington Twp.

Boone Grove

Wheeler

Portage

Valparaiso

### CHARTER SCHOOLS

Thea Bowman

Gary Lighthouse

21st Century

HAST

Steel City Acad.

### PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Andrean

Bishop Noll

Illiana Christian

**2024**

**2025**

94.3% 96.92%

89% 97.64%

94% 92.31%

96% 96.51%

98% 99.19%

94% 97.95%

98% 98.77%

89% 90%

71% 86.14%

65% 59.42%

92% 93.01%

77% 80.07%

74% 75.65%

98% 95.30%

90% 94.54%

98% 98.07%

97% 92.31%

**2024**

**2025**

96% 97.78%

98% 99.16%

93% 98.36%

92% 94.12%

100% 100%

100% 97.04%

98% 98.88%

96% 94.07%

99% 99.23%

**2024**

**2025**

95% 71.43%

85% 82.42%

79% 97.62%

97% 98.44%

69% 80%

**2024**

**2025**

100% 100%

98% 92.97%

97% 100%

## New sentence cuts six months for Gary man in death of stepfather

By Michelle L. Quinn  
Post-Tribune

A motion to correct the sentencing of a Gary man, 31, convicted in October of killing his stepfather netted him only six months less on his sentence.

Lake Superior Court Judge Gina Jones and Lake County Deputy Prosecutor Judith Massa conceded at a Tuesday hearing that the portion of James G. Adams Jr.'s sentence declaring 10 years of it was "non-suspendable" was a "misstep." Nevertheless, the sentence itself — 17.5 years — was "very fair," Massa said, adding that victim Lanier Miller's family was "relatively happy" with it.

"(The crime) involved a death, and since 2024, the (Indiana) Legislature found that for a person convicted of a Level 2 felony, there should be a minimum of 10 years," Massa said. "(Adams) has been given all the mitigators he can get."

Adams's attorney, James Dillon, said that Jones "had the ability to craft a sentence that's punitive but restorative" and asked for five years in work-release and five years suspended on general order.

"He's always been polite in court," he said, listing mitigating factors that he felt should count.

Jones, however, said the 2.5-hour sentencing hearing in October gave every-

one the information needed for the sentencing and then adjusted Adams's sentence to seven years in prison; five years in Community Corrections, with one year served in the Kimbrough Center; two years on house arrest and two years of daily report; and five years of probation. Because the sentence was a plea agreement, the state will have to agree to any sentence appeal, she said.

Munster Police were called around 4 a.m. Feb. 27 to MRC Global, 101 45th Street, near the Illinois state line, where a man, identified as Miller, was lying just outside a white Dodge Charger facing the loading bays with the driver's side door glass shattered, the Post-Tribune previously reported.

Miller, of South Holland, Illinois, was shot in the head and declared dead at the scene, according to court records.

Soon after, a relative dropped off Adams Jr. and Ferria Jones, his sister, at the Munster Town Hall, telling police officers they were involved with the shooting and the weapons were inside the car. Police took a silver and black Smith and Wesson gun and a black Glock 31, according to court records.

Their mother left her purse in the car — containing the Smith and Wesson — and Miller dropped his cell phone on the ground.

Miller later called his

phone from MRC Global, telling a relative he'd trade it for her purse. Adams Jr. "recognized" the phone number, because he'd also worked there, too, the affidavit states.

Adams Jr. and his sister went to make the exchange. She gave different versions of what happened. Miller appeared to be "asleep" and "surprised" to see him.

Ferria Jones then changed

her story and said Miller was

listening to music when they

arrived. Her brother first

tried to find something in

her trunk to "jimmy" open

the locked door. When he

couldn't find anything, he

ran away and grabbed a tire

chock to bust open the driv

er's side window. He didn't

want to use a gun in case it

accidentally went off.

When Miller tried to grab

the mother's gun, Adams

tried to pull him away from

it, ripping Miller's shirt.

Jones jumped out and

went to help her brother.

Miller fired a shot that

grazed her knee.

She "heard another shot," but didn't know who fired, she said in court documents.

They swapped and Adams