

### STARBUCKS' PUMPKIN SPICE LATTE TURNS 20



### TOP 20 PLAYERS TO WATCH FOR THIS SEASON

# THE EXAMINER

SERVING EASTERN JACKSON COUNTY, MISSOURI, SINCE 1898

FRIDAY, AUGUST 25, 2023

@EJC\_Examiner | facebook.com/examiner.net | Examiner.net | CherryRoad Media | \$1.50

## Experts weigh in on IPL options

### Should Independence sell Power & Light or find the money to invest in production?

By Mike Genet  
mike.genet@examiner.net

As the city of Independence, and ultimately its voters, mull a decision on the future of the city's Power & Light utility, two attorneys with

years of experience in electric utilities note there are benefits and drawbacks to both municipal and private, investor-owned utilities.

"The best thing about a municipal form of governance is your council is going to listen to you. ... You have the ability to vote them out," said Karl Zobrist said, former chair of the Missouri Public Service Commission, an appointed group

that regulates the actions of private utilities. "I think your voice is going to be heard more."

"I think there's good things and bad things about both," said James Owen, former head of the Missouri Office of Public Counsel, which represents the public in cases before the PSC. He is now executive director of

See ELECTRICITY, Page A5

## Mumps exposure found in Eastern Jackson County

By The Examiner staff

Jackson County Public Health says it is investigating a mumps exposure case in Eastern Jackson County.

In a social media post Wednesday, the department says it has tracked at least four individuals who were exposed in the mumps case, including children and adults, and they live in Eastern Jackson County, Kansas City, Cass County and Johnson County, Kansas.

Mumps is a contagious viral infection that typically starts with a few days of fever, headache, muscle aches, tiredness and loss of appetite, then often shows in the swelling of salivary glands below the ear, causing puffy cheeks and a tender, swollen jaw. There is a common vaccine for mumps, the MMR vaccine, which also covers measles and rubella.

Jackson County Public Health did not specify when or where the mumps exposure case originated.

The agency (formerly known as Jackson County Health Department) says it asks all area health-care providers to be "vigilant in assessing signs and symptoms of mumps (swollen salivary glands) and administer testing when appropriate (buccal swab)." Also, Public Health suggests that providers emphasize isolation for patients who are suspected of having mumps and report cases to the agency at 816-404-9898 (phone), 816-404-9885 (fax) or jacksoncountyCD@

See MUMPS, Page A5

# High honor for a local teacher

### Band director at Brittany Hills Middle School is in the running for Missouri Teacher of the Year

By Bill Althaus  
The Examiner

An exciting journey continues for teacher Matt Willis.

The band director was nominated by his peers and named the Brittany Hills Middle School Teacher of the Year. Following a series of questions and essays, Willis was named the Blue Springs School District Teacher of the Year.

And last week, after he gave the keynote speech at the district's convocation,



Brittany Hills Middle School band teacher Matt Willis is the Blue Springs School District Teacher of the Year. Last week he learned that he is one of 17 Regional Teachers of the Year who have been selected as semi-finalists for the 2024 Missouri Teacher of the Year award. [BILL ALTHAUS/THE EXAMINER]

See WILLIS, Page A5

## More leadership opportunities for teachers recommended

By Annelise Hanshaw  
Missouri Independent

Statewide teacher development programs could curb educator burnout, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's blue ribbon commission concluded in its latest

set of recommendations.

The commission, which is studying teacher recruitment and retention, presented its recommendations to the State Board of Education for review last week after speaking to teachers, administrators and community leaders.

"The teachers who we spoke with

during our meeting in May told us they feel undervalued and overworked and lacked adequate staffing and resources to alleviate the pressures they face," commission chairman Mark Walker told the board. "They also expressed a

See TEACHERS, Page A6

Vol. 119, No. 70  
Newsroom: 816-350-6365

Comics.....B4  
Community.....A2  
Classified.....B3

Obituaries.....A5  
News.....A4  
Sports.....B1

FRIDAY  
Mostly sunny  
103° / 76°

SATURDAY  
Partly sunny  
90° / 69°

SUNDAY  
Sunny  
00° / 00°




- Pre-Arrangements
- Memorial Services
- Cremation Options
- Funerals and Burials
- Cemetery Options

Julie Simcosky

Speaks Chapels | See Death Notices inside  
SpeaksChapel.com | info@speakschapel.com

**(816) 252-7900**



Gather. Connect. Remember.

**SPEAKS**  
from the heart

# RECORD

**OBITUARIES** The Examiner prints death notices, without charge, as a service to the community. Families who wish to publish a memorial of a loved one with more information may do so through their funeral director. A fee will be charged through the funeral home. Pictures also can be published for a fee. For information consult with the funeral director.

## Governor blasts mayor's proposed gun ban

By Kurt Erickson  
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

JEFFERSON CITY — Republican Gov. Mike Parson opposes a plan by St. Louis Mayor Tishaura O. Jones to ban “military-grade” weapons on city streets, including the prominent AR-15 and AK-47 model rifles.

Echoing his hand-picked attorney general's position, Parson questioned the constitutionality of the mayor's plan as well as whether a prohibition on high-powered weapons would have any effect on crime.

“Governor Parson is a strong and proud supporter of the Second Amendment and does not support any measure that he views weakens Missourians’ right to bear arms,” spokesman Johnathan Shiflett said Wednesday.

The comments came a day after Jones said a measure will

be introduced at the Board of Aldermen in the coming days. The board could begin considering the measure at its next meeting, on Sept. 15.

Along with the ban on certain weapons, the proposal also aims to stop minors from getting guns, crack down on the proliferation of gun-making kits used to skirt federal possession bans, and rein in random gunfire on New Year's Day and the Fourth of July, she said.

In making the announcement, Jones acknowledged the bill could prompt blowback from Republicans in state government, who she criticized for dismantling gun regulations and blocking the city from enacting its own.

With Republicans in power in state government, Missouri's gun laws have become looser. Attempts to impose more restrictions on firearms

to address violence are typically dead on arrival in the Capitol.

In 2021, state lawmakers approved a law prohibiting local police from enforcing federal gun laws. The so-called Second Amendment Preservation Act has been ruled unconstitutional, but it is being appealed.

Lawmakers earlier this year sent Parson a version of “Blair's Law,” which is designed to stop the practice of people shooting bullets into the air, including on New Year's Day, July Fourth and after other events. It is named after Blair Shanahan, who was killed by a stray bullet during a 2011 backyard barbecue in Kansas City.

Parson said he favors Blair's Law, but vetoed the overall bill because of an unrelated provision. It could be reintroduced next year.

“Cities with the strictest gun laws

still have some of the highest rates of gun violence because, simply, criminals are not deterred by restricting the rights of law-abiding citizens,” Shiflett said.

Parson's opposition mirrors that of Attorney General Andrew Bailey, whom the governor appointed to the post in January. Bailey, who is running for a full, four-year term in 2024, quickly threatened a lawsuit against the city if the anti-crime package is adopted.

“Your proposed measure would violate the constitutional right of Missourians to keep and bear arms,” Bailey said in a letter to the mayor. “It is my hope that you will reverse course and use existing law to combat the crime plaguing your city, rather than choosing to target the rights of law-abiding Missourians. In other words, I encourage you to go after criminals, not guns.”

## INDEPENDENCE RESTAURANT INSPECTIONS

*Critical violations involve factors that can directly lead to foodborne illness and must be corrected within 72 hours or as otherwise stated. All critical violations must be corrected within 72 hours (or as otherwise stated on the report). All non-critical violations must be corrected by the next regular inspection (or as otherwise stated on the report).*

*Recent city of Independence inspections include:*

**The Player's Club:** 1501 S. Noland Road, inspected Aug. 16.

- Bar hand sink water shut off at time of inspection due to faucet screen being plugged with debris. Screen removed at time of inspected and issue corrected. Plumbing system shall be repaired and

maintained in good repair.

- Individual-disposal paper towels noted not at each hand sink. Corrected.
- Prep cook door seal gaskets worn and torn.
- Light intensity noted not meeting requirements. Lights in kitchen not properly working.
- Tile at prep cooler broken or cracked.
- Oven dirty with buildup and debris.
- Vent hood dirty with buildup and debris. Vent hoods must be cleaned at least every six months or as needed if before.
- Prep cooler interior dirty with buildup and debris.
- Drink wells dirty with buildup and

debris.

- Small refrigerator at bar dirty with buildup and debris.

**Carmel Hills Wellness & Rehabilitation:** 810 E. Walnut Ave., inspected Aug. 8.

- Sanitized water not available at prep area. Corrected. Sanitized water must be available at all times.
- Drain pipes leaking at hand sink at ice machine.
- Both hand sinks blocked by portable air conditioners. Air conditioner in cooking kitchen area relocated at time of inspection. Both must be relocated to not block hand-washing sinks.

Corrected Aug. 9. A hand-washing sink shall be maintained so that it is accessible at all times for employee use.

- Walk-in freezer with torn and worn door seals/gaskets, causing ice buildup in freezer.
- Base cove tile falling off, and holes in wall. Corrected Aug. 9.
- Individual-disposal paper towels noted not at each hand sink. Corrected.

**Pier 88 Boiling Seafood & Bar:** 11825 East U.S. 40, inspected Aug. 9.

- Equipment is not in good repair and proper adjustment. Ware-washing machine sanitizer at 10 ppm. Needs to

be at 50 ppm for proper concentration. Service person called at time of inspection. Three-compartment sink to be utilized until issue resolved.

- Sanitized water not available at bar, prep and cooking areas. Equipment food contact surfaces and utensils shall be sanitized. Must be available at all times, changed every four hours or whenever water becomes dirty.
- Time/temperature, date markings are not met on food in walk-in cooler.
- Food must be stored in packages, covered containers or wrapping in walk-in cooler and reach-in coolers.
- Ice machine dirty at chute with buildup and debris.

## ELECTRICITY

From Page A1

the advocacy group Renew Missouri. “You have to ask yourself if by addressing one problem, are you creating another problem? There is no easy way to make energy and no easy way to consume it.”

If IPL becomes part of a private company such as Evergy, he said, “you would have to really rely on how the PSC makes decisions rather than the City Council.”

Zobrist and Owen were guests Wednesday at a forum presented by the local group Indy Energy. Neither took a position on what route they believe Independence should take.

The City Council voted

this week to negotiate contracts with two consulting firms that will evaluate aspects of the two IPL options – keep and invest or seek a sale. The council has promised the evaluation will result in a citywide election no later than November 2025.

Wednesday's crowd of a couple dozen included a handful of former and current council members, familiar with the complicated and often expensive nature of decisions related to Independence Power & Light, which is under increasing financial stress.

“A utility has to go to the commission to do anything significant,” said Zobrist, adding that it's important to note who the PSC commissioners are – five individuals appointed by the governor. Whereas that

group used to mostly be field experts, he said, now is mostly ex-politicians, in part to avoid any appearance of conflict of interest.

“There are some of us that wish we had more people of professional background in electricity or telecom,” he said.

Former City Council Member and longtime IPL employee Mike Huff noted the utility's longstanding record of reliability, and he wondered what effect a sale would have on those employees and the utility's reliability standards.

Owen said that even if citizens vote to sell, the Public Service Commission still has to approve any merger or acquisition.

“In Missouri the only standard is, will there not be a net detriment,” he said. “One of things always

here in mergers and acquisitions is ‘We believe we can reduce redundancies.’ They're not going to reduce the people doing the technical work.”

“There would be no merger occurring if the public didn't believe it would help,” Zobrist added.

In closing, Zobrist said that what citizens should keep in mind through the IPL evaluation, and what they and the council should ask about, are rates and reliability.

“Is it reasonable, and it is it reliable?” he said. “If so, then maybe there's not a reason to make a major change. But when you talk about reliability, it's not just about today.”

That means the costs to invest and maintain that reliability also have to be considered, he said.

Owen said that as a member of Southwest Power Pool, IPL enjoys lower wholesale power purchase costs but still must produce some energy.

“It is expensive for a municipal utility to do that, whether it's coal, gas, renewable,” he said. “Even if you build (a small) nuclear plant you have to be able to charge customers while building. I think battery storage is great opportunity in the future.”

Having large-scale customers -- IPL has relatively few even as the NorthPoint project develops -- helps with operating costs, Owen said.

“How much do you want to spend on generating power to keep the place running,” he said. “Unless you have anchor customers, it's tough to run a utility.”

## WILLIS

From Page A1

school district Superintendent Bob Jerome informed Willis that he is one of 17 Regional Teachers of the Year selected as semi-finalists for the 2024 Missouri Teacher of the Year award.

The semi-finalists include teachers from different grade levels and subject areas, including three other music teachers. The six finalists are to be announced Sept. 31.

“This has been so overwhelming,” said Willis, the only teacher from Eastern Jackson County who advanced to the semifinal round.

“Really, the most

satisfying and important part of this started when my fellow teachers voted for me as the Brittany Hills Teacher of the Year.”

“Respect from your peers means so much to me, and now, it's such an honor to represent my school and our school district.”

Willis said Jerome's timing was perfect.

“So, I'm sitting on the stage at the convocation and Dr. Jerome comes over to tell me that I'm a semifinalist,” Willis said. “... and I am so pleased that it happened after my speech because I'm not sure what would have happened if he had told me before.”

This is the third year Willis has been the band director at Brittany Hill, as he was former

director Elizabeth Puyear's assistant before she joined Tim Allhouse's nationally recognized program at Blur Springs High School.

“It's really been a team effort between the high school and our middle school,” Willis explained. “I help with the brass at the high school and work with the jazz ensemble, and that's so neat because I get to work with many of the students who were at Brittany Hills.”

Willis, a 2003 graduate of Grain Valley High School, graduated from Northwest Missouri State University. He then received his master's degree from Central Methodist University before earning his

education specialist degree from the University of Central Missouri.

“I love what I do, and I feel like I'm where I should be,” Willis said. “I am in a school district that is allowing me the opportunity to work in a creative and nurturing culture.”

“And everything I have accomplished has been through a team effort – from the five years I was Elizabeth's assistant to the present day, working with (my assistant) Alyssa DeSantis.”

“I truly feel blessed and want to thank everyone who has been alongside me through this journey.”

## MUMPS

From Page A1

uhkc.org.

The agency says isolation should be five days from when symptoms develop, though a patient could have been infectious two to seven days prior to symptoms.

According to the Centers for Disease

Control, outbreaks have most commonly occurred among groups of people who have prolonged, close contact, such as sharing water bottles or cups, kissing, practicing sports together, or living in close quarters, with a person who has mumps. Some vaccinated people may still get mumps if exposed, but with milder symptoms.

## Obituaries

### DOROTHY IRENE FRANCIS

Dorothy Irene Francis passed away on Monday, August 21, 2023.

She was the daughter of John L. and Esther C. Dudley of Harrisonville, Mo.

A surviving brother is Joseph E. Dudley of Kansas.

There was no memorial service and she requested cremation.

**Joseph Liccar**  
Multimedia Sales Executive  
Cell: 816.520.4767  
Office: 816.350.6334  
JLiccar@cherryroad.com  
www.examiner.net

CherryRoad Media  
THE EXAMINER

**Jennifer Palmer**  
Multimedia Sales Executive  
Cell: 816.591.1129  
Office: 816.350.6334  
JPalmer@cherryroad.com  
www.examiner.net

CherryRoad Media  
THE EXAMINER

CherryRoad media  
info@CherryRoad.com • www.cherryroad.com