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Indianapolis, Indiana - Marion County

SmartIndy, Smart Growth & a Smarter Budget

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This Week at a Glance

Public Safety Technology: Drone Operations with IMPD

Budget Meetings Begin: Addressing a \$27M Deficit

Economic Development: Meetings with Visionaries & Stakeholders

Data Center Updates: Zoning & Community Engagement

SmartIndy PAC Launch

Public Safety Technology: Drone Operations with IMPD

This week, I was invited to IMPD's Remote Operations Command Center to observe and pilot their new drone technology. Currently, drones are deployed manually by officers from their squad cars. Now an option for remote exists operations because of new FAA permissions. I had the opportunity to fly one myself, and I was struck by how user-friendly and effective the system is.

This drone initiative is not about surveillance it's about officer safety and smarter policing. With officer staffing stretched thin, drones can be deployed quickly to assess scenes and determine whether a physical response is necessary. While there are undeniable benefits to this approach, I raised concerns about citizen privacy. I've begun discussing the need for policy frameworks to ensure these tools are used responsibly. As we embrace technology, we must also protect civil liberties.



Additional News

Budget Meetings Begin: Addressing a \$27M Deficit

I returned from vacation on Wednesday and jumped into my first meeting with the City Controller, Council CFO, and Mayor's Office budget staff to begin discussions on the 2026 budget. We're currently facing a projected \$27 million deficit. Our budget must be balanced, so we have two choices: cut spending or raise taxes. **As your representative, I advocate for a reduction in spending before we ever raise taxes.**

I immediately asked for a department-by-department breakdown of proposed reductions. While most departments submitted 4% cuts, public safety was allowed a 2% increase to account for union contracts. Still, reductions will be required in other areas.

2026 Budget - Republican Caucus Update - 6-26-25			
High Level Surplus/Deficit Analysis + Policy Changes			
		Change from 25 to	
		26 Budget	
Revenue	Property taxes	(2,712,634)	*does not inc
Changes	Income taxes	31,570,956	
	Cable Franchise revenue	(2,000,000)	
	HHC MOU	(2,700,000)	
	MCSO 1006	(3,231,305)	
	MCSO federal holds	850,000	
	MCCC DOC grant reductions	(1,000,000)	
	End of SAFR grant (IFD)	(6,000,000)	
	Change in Revenue	\$ 14,777,017	
Expense	Election	2,209,434	
Changes	Funding for Roads	10,000,000	
	INPRS PS Rate Change	8,519,178	
	IMPD Union	16,001,508	
	IFD Union	12,332,633	
	MCSO Union	9,252,039	
	IBEW Union	3,224,012	
		61,538,804	
	Surplus/Deficit	(46,761,786)	
Policy	Reserve requirement	19,860,493	
Changes		19,860,493	
	Revised Surplus/(Deficit)	(26,901,293)	

Here are a few of the smart cost-saving strategies I proposed:

- Don't budget for vacancies we won't fill (human capital underspend)
- Expand lease terms for capital equipment to reduce annual costs
- Consolidate underused city-owned buildings

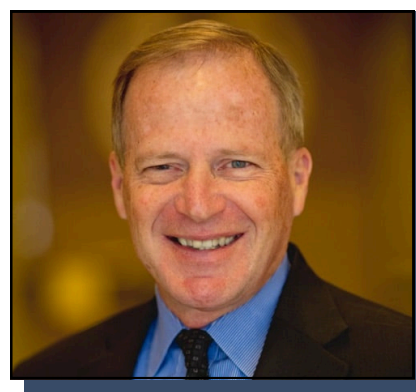
[\[Expand View\]](#)

These conversations are just beginning, but I'm committed to protecting core services and holding the line on taxes.

Economic Development: Meetings with Visionaries & Stakeholders

I had several important meetings this week focused on redevelopment and economic opportunity:

- ◆ **Mike Higbee, former Director of DMD under Mayor Hudnut:** We discussed strategies to reimagine the Washington Street corridor and vacant properties like Washington Square Mall. Mike is helping connect me with additional leaders and attempts to make contact with Durga Properties in Ohio—owners of the mall—and suggested a introduction to the [Urban Land Institute](#) to expand support for redevelopment.



Mike Higbee

Additional News

Economic Development: Continued..

◆ **LISC Indy: I met with Brandon Taylor and Megan Bulla from LISC Indy** to discuss how we can leverage local and national partnerships for East Side revitalization. Their approach, investing in housing, business corridors, and neighborhoods driven by community voices—aligns perfectly with Smart Indy's values. LISC will help expand our coalition and access new resources.

[\[Learn More About LISC Indy\]](#)



Brandon Taylor

Data Center Updates: Zoning & Community Engagement

This Thursday marked the first public hearing for the proposed 460-acre data center development spanning Franklin and Warren Townships. I delivered a formal public statement outlining why I cannot support the current structure of this proposal—and I encourage you to read it in full at michaelpaulhart.com.

More than 40 residents showed up, many taking time off work, to raise serious concerns about noise, traffic, infrastructure strain, and lack of school funding. Their commitment speaks volumes.

Here are the facts:

- The developer is asking for decades of tax breaks—including 50 years of sales and energy tax exemptions, 40 years of personal property abatements, and 10 years off real property (renewable).
- In return? Essentially a payment in lieu of taxes that is significantly lower than what this land could generate through other commercial or industrial uses.
- The proposed data center would create about 50 jobs, yet consume massive energy resources, limiting AES's capacity to power future job-creating developments elsewhere in the district.
- Meanwhile, local schools are struggling to raise teacher pay and are forced to shift money from their education fund to basic operations. This project offers little to no direct help.

[\[Read My Full Statement\]](#) [\[Hart's Financial Projection\]](#)

Additional News

SmartIndy PAC Launch



This week, I officially launched the SmartIndy PAC—a new initiative grounded in pragmatic, community-based leadership. SmartIndy is a response to what local government should be: focused on results, not rhetoric. Our city deserves better than the dysfunction of federal politics.

Upcoming Meetings and Events

- ✓ Public Safety Roundtable: July 10
- ✓ Economic Development Roundtable: July 29
- ✓ **PAC Kickoff Event: August 12**

Visit [SmartIndy.org](https://www.smartindy.org) to sign up and be part of the movement.

SmartIndy is here to elevate voices, connect communities, and drive smart policy that improves life for every resident—starting with safer streets, stronger neighborhoods, and innovative solutions that stretch our resources further.

[\[RSVP for Kick Off\]](#)

SmartIndy
Building the Smartest City in America

PLEASE JOIN
Councilor Michael-Paul Hart, Chairman
Councilor Josh Bain, Vice Chairman
Joe Elsener, Honorary Chairman
(Host Committee in Formation)

Tuesday, August 12
5:00 - 6:30 p.m.
InterContinental Hotel Indianapolis
Astrea Rooftop Bar
17 W Market St.
Indianapolis, IN 46204

SPONSORSHIP LEVELS:

Host	Co-Host	Sponsor	Ticket
\$2,500	\$1,000	\$500	\$100

FOR QUESTIONS OR TO RSVP:
Heather Patterson heather@smartindy.org 615-438-3531

PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO SMART INDY PAC
Mail to PO Box 441446, Indianapolis, IN 46244,
or donate online [HERE](#)

FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO www.smartindy.org

Contributions by corporations and labor organizations are limited to \$2,000 annually among all local candidates; contributions by individuals, LLCs and political committees are unlimited. Contributions are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. Contributions from foreign nationals are prohibited.

PAID FOR BY SMART INDY PAC

Thank you for staying engaged as we work to build the Smartest City in America. We are leading with real action, practical leadership, and a vision for every township, not just downtown.

Reply to this newsletter anytime or reach out directly. Let's keep building the Smartest City in America, together.

Until next time,
Michael-Paul Hart
Minority Leader
Indianapolis City-County Council

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Movement!](#)

