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HOBART | The protest of any plans by the GEO Group Inc. to build an immigration detention center in Hobart has been quietly taken on by a local group, Sandy O'Brien said. The group, called the Concerned Citizens of Hobart, had its first meeting Wednesday after the City Council meeting, O'Brien said. A second meeting is planned for Dec. 18 at T's Pizza, 840 E. Third St., after the 6 p.m. City Council meeting, resident Tom DuBois said. "We decided we needed to have a local group. Outside people can advise, but we are the ones who have to be there," O'Brien said. O'Brien, a spokeswoman for Friends of Robinson Lake, said Mayor Brian Snedecor had attended that group's meeting this past week and assured members he would listen to the will of the people. "As elected officials, we have to represent the will of the people and what's good for the community as a whole," Snedecor said. Dozens of protesters, including members of Friends of Robinson Lake, Concerned Citizens of Crete and self-described "good government activist" Frank Smith, packed the Nov. 20 City Council meeting to voice opposition to a possible detention center in Hobart. Snedecor, who said he spoke to GEO officials after the Nov. 20 City Council meeting, said GEO officials are aware several protesters came and spoke against a possible immigrant detention center in the city. "I let them know an immigrant center was not well received at the council meeting. They were aware of it. They said they have no plans to do anything with the property at this time and have no proposal," Snedecor said. GEO, in a statement released Thursday by attorney John Bushemi, said officials think there will be a need for a variety of facilities and services under contract with federal, state and local government agencies in the Midwest and has therefore made an investment in Hobart land. However, GEO has no immediate plans for the Hobart site because there is no pending procurement or request for proposal at this time, the statement said. GEO has had some initial exploratory discussions with some local officials, but the company has not submitted any formal proposals because it would be premature to do so at this point, according to the statement. If and when GEO makes a formal proposal to Hobart, there would be several community hearings and forums to explore whether a processing facility would be a good fit. If GEO and the Hobart community determine that a potential future project would not be a good fit, the company would explore other potential sites, the statement said. Paul Palmateer, an executive director at Northwestern Indiana Building and Construction Trades Council, said he favors construction of the project because it would create 150 local union construction jobs. "It will put my people to work," Palmateer said. Snedecor said he informally discussed a proposal earlier this year with GEO officials that entailed a facility where immigrants would be brought before a court and then possibly detained for a short time. The immigrants, depending on the outcome of their hearing, then would be processed. Snedecor said any plans for the property would have to be approved by the Hobart Plan Commission and other city officials before going forward. The sale of the 40 acres of land owned by Bear Country Park to the GEO Group Inc. took place Nov. 4, Hobart resident Larry Brown said. Brown is a managing member and one of five partners comprising Bear Country Park. The property is east of Interstate 65 near Robinson Lake.