

Fired teacher faces Dublin City Schools in court

Judge: 'A lot of families and people destroyed by the board's spending habits'

By RODNEY MANLEY
Staff Reporter

A teacher whose job was one of more than 50 eliminated midcontract by the Dublin City Board of Education testified in court Tuesday about the emotional, physical and financial toll the cash-strapped district's budget cuts have taken on employees.

Ashley White, a former art teacher at Hillcrest Elementary, is suing the school system for reinstatement and damages. Schools officials contend the system is broke and that the cuts are crucial for the system's survival.

White testified in Superior Court this week that she was let go in early October



Former Hillcrest Elementary art teacher Ashley White (left) takes the witness stand in a hearing on her breach-of-contract lawsuit against Dublin City Schools/PAYTON TOWNS III

after refusing to resign as school officials tried to cut into a projected almost \$19 million deficit. She recalled reporting to work Oct. 9 on an in-service day, leaving and then finding herself locked out of the building

until a co-worker let her in. "In about an hour or so they came to my classroom and told me that the previous day was supposed to be my last day and they were collecting my keys and my badge," White said.

She testified that since then, she has struggled financially — to the point of not being able to afford her daughter's daily seizure medicine — and that her own health has suffered, with the stress aggravating

an existing condition and resulting in five trips to the emergency room.

White and four other teachers have filed suit against Dublin City Schools through the Professional Association of Georgia Educators, claiming breach of contract. School officials claim its reduction-in-force policy allows the terminations mid-contract because the system has no money.

"We wouldn't be able to make it," interim School Superintendent Marcee Pool testified. "We wouldn't have enough to make payroll. That's why we're getting the state advances, to pay payroll and other bills."

The school system has received more than \$3 million in advances of state Quality Basic Education funding and is seeking a fourth advance for December's bills. If approved, the system would not receive any more state funding for the current school year after February.

Neither side could produce a legal precedent of a school board firing teachers mid-contract without cause, and both sides agreed that White had a spotless work record. Judge Jud Green said he will issue a ruling later, but still shared some strong opinions in court about the school board and district's troubling financial history and current situation.

"The interim superintendent says it was mismanagement. That's being very, very kind. This is unprecedented," Green said.

"There have been a lot of families and people destroyed by the board's spending habits. A lot of people have been hurt around this area. It came out in Ms. White's testimony ... can't get the tire fixed, can't take her medicine. It's all because of the Dublin School District."

SCHOOL HEARING
Continued on page 11



Dublin Mayor Joshua Kight reads a Christmas story to students at Susie Dasher Elementary School/PAYTON TOWNS III

Reading programs combine to help students at two schools

By PAYTON TOWNS III
Senior Reporter

Local organizations recently teamed up to partner with two reading programs to help bring the importance of reading to local students.

Officials with the city of Dublin, Dublin City Schools, the Laurens County Commission and the Laurens County School System are partnering with Ferst Readers and the Mayor's Reading Club to expand early literacy opportunities for young children across the community. Both groups, and local officials made trips to Susie Dasher Elementary School and Southwest Laurens El-



Susie Dasher Elementary students listen to a reader /PAYTON TOWNS III

ementary School on Dec. 10.

At both events, officials met with students and Dublin Mayor Joshua Kight

read a book. Afterwards, the students received a free book from Ferst Reading, which provides free monthly books and parent en-

gagement tools for children from birth to 5 years old.

"Advancing childhood literacy in Georgia begins with strong community partnerships, and we are proud to stand with state and local leaders to bring this important literacy day to Dublin," said Davida Morgan Washington, CEO of Ferst Readers.

The Mayor's Reading Club encourages family reading and civic engagement. Dublin City Schools and the Laurens County School System continue to expand structured literacy instruction and early learning readiness through

READING PROGRAMS
Continued on page 12

County school board approves \$1,200 bonus for employees

By PAYTON TOWNS III
Senior Reporter

Laurens County Schools teachers and employees received an early Christmas present in the form of a \$1,200 bonus during the district's board of education meeting held Tuesday.

Superintendent Clifford Garnto proposed the bonus for Jan. 9. He met with finance director Mary McCollough, and they agreed they were in position to fund the bonuses.

"We thought this would be a great gesture," Garnto said. "They will be paid at the rate at which they are employed. If they are a full-time employee, they will get the full bonus, and if they are a 49 percent, they will

get 49 percent of that." Before going into executive session, board chairman Jarvis Wilcher asked Garnto to step to the front to be presented with a plaque.

"On behalf of the board, we wanted to thank you for your years as superintendent," Wilcher said. "You were chosen as superintendent in 2020 and it has been a great run since I've been here. I want to thank you and appreciate everything you have done."

At the beginning of the meeting, Tony Johnston was elected to serve as the board chair for 2026 while Kenny Payne was selected as the vice-chair.

COUNTY SCHOOLS
Continued on page 12

State helping investigate fatal fire in East Dublin

STAFF REPORTS

State investigators were called to look into a fatal fire early Wednesday morning on Clover Street in East Dublin.

According to Bryce Rawson, director of legislative affairs for the Office of Insurance Commissioner John F. King, its office was requested to assist in the fire at wood-sided backyard shop which was being used as a dwelling.

The cause of the fire was undetermined, though no

foul play is suspected at this time, Rawson said.

Laurens County Deputy Coroner Nathan Stanley believes the victim is a 39-year-old man from East Dublin. He said a neighbor called Laurens County 911 around 3:45 a.m. Wednesday about a fire at 317 Clover St.

"There was a shelter out back at this residence that was completely engulfed with fire," Stanley said. "East

FATAL FIRE
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DPD awarded federal grant for local DUI enforcement

SPECIAL TO THE COURIER HERALD

The Governor's Office of Highway Safety announced that the Dublin Police Department is one of 26 law enforcement agencies in Georgia to receive a Highway Enforcement of Aggressive Traffic (HEAT) grant for federal fiscal year 2026, which began Oct. 1 and ends on Sept. 30, 2026.

The DPD's award totals \$124,624. The HEAT Unit will use the grant to develop and implement strategies to reduce local traffic crashes due to aggressive and dangerous driving behaviors.

The goal of the HEAT program is to combat crashes, injuries and fatalities caused by impaired driving

and speeding, while also increasing seat belt use and educating the public about traffic safety and the dangers of DUI.

"Crash data shows enforcement and education of traffic laws are two of most effective countermeasures to help our state and nation reduce crashes and eliminate deaths and serious injuries on our roads," said Allen Poole, director of the Governor's Office of Highway Safety. "Each life saved on our roads is one less family that will have to live with the pain of losing a loved one whose life was taken from them in a traffic crash that was completely preventable."

HEAT grants fund specialized traffic enforcement units in counties

throughout the state. The program was designed to assist Georgia jurisdictions with the highest rates of traffic crashes, injuries and fatalities with grants awarded based on impaired driving and speeding data.

Dublin Police Chief Keith Moon presented statistics in response to the success of the HEAT grant awarded to the DPD.

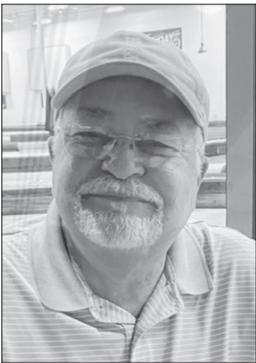
"During the period Oct. 1, 2024, to Sept. 30, 2025, there were 960 seatbelt contacts made, 1,468 speeding contacts were made, 120 DUI contacts made, and 374 distracted driving contacts," Moon said. "The HEAT Unit is also extremely active in the community, in events like the Dublin Teen Driving Class and

events to educate the public on seatbelt and child safety. This has been made possible by the HEAT grant."

As law enforcement partners in the Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over DUI campaign and the Click It or Ticket seatbelt campaigns, the Dublin Police Department will also conduct mobilizations throughout the year in coordination with Governor's Office of Highway Safety's year-round waves of high visibility patrols, multi-jurisdictional road checks and sobriety checkpoints.

For more information about the H.E.A.T. program or any other GOHS campaign, visit www.gahighwaysafety.org or call (404) 656-6996.

OBITUARIES



Huey Greg Canady

Graveside funeral services for Huey Greg Canady, 72 will be held at 11 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 20, 2025, at Bethlehem Baptist Church Cemetery. Rev. Nate Dooley and Rev. Matt Haywood will officiate.

Mr. Canady was born May 29, 1953, in Dublin, Georgia. He was the son of the late Merideth Drexel Canady. He worked for the Dublin City School System and retired from the Laurens County School System. He was a Special Ed teacher, coach and administrator. He coached the 1996 and 1997 Irish Girls Softball State Championship teams. He also worked as a bailiff for the Laurens County Courthouse, and a poll worker at the Registrar's Office and the voting precinct. He served in the United States Air Force. He was a member of Liberty Church. Mr. Canady passed away Wednesday, Dec. 17, 2025, at his residence following an extended illness.

Mr. Canady is survived by his wife, Billie Ann Canady of Dudley; his mother, Betty Outlaw Canady of East Dublin; a son, Bo (Angela) Canady of Perry; a daughter, April (Max) Nolan of Paso Robles, Calif.; a sister, Kathy Canady (Steve) Warnock of Macon; two brothers, Shannon (Krystal) Canady of Montrose and Shawn Canady of East Dublin; five grandchildren, Taylor Harper, Cal Nolan, Conner Nolan,

Natalie Kate Nolan, Haleigh (Justin Burke) Albritton; two great-grandchildren, Wren and Bentley; and several nieces and nephews.

Pallbearers will be David Davis, Tim Myers, John Myers, Clay Hall, Davy Outlaw, and Dwayne Outlaw.

The family will receive friends from 10 a.m. until 11 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 20, 2025, at Bethlehem Baptist Church Cemetery.

The family would like to extend a special thank you for the compassionate care we received from Georgia Hospice Care and the family would like to extend many thanks for the compassionate care we have received from Ashley Vickers, Bailey Cannon, RN and team at Georgia Hospice Care, Rachel Singletary, PA and her team, Hawkinsville Health Care and Liberty Church Family.

In lieu of flowers the family asks that donations be made in memory of Mr. Canady to LBCDublin.com/give to the legacy offering.

Stanley Funeral Home and Crematory/Dublin Chapel has charge of funeral arrangements. To sign the Online Register Book please visit www.stanleyfuneral-home.com.



Ladale "Dale" Cravey Braden

Mrs. Ladale "Dale" Cravey Braden, 72, of Rhine, Ga. died Wednesday, Dec. 17, 2025.

Funeral services will be held at 11 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 20, in Rhine Baptist Church, with interment in Bay Springs Cemetery in Rhine, Ga.

She is survived by her sons – Joey Braden (Felicia) and Jason Braden (Joni); grandchildren – David, Carter, Owen and Olivia; great-grandson – Weston; brother – Eddie Cravey

(Barbara); and sister-in-law – Carolyn Williams Cravey.

The family will receive friends in Rhine Baptist Church from 10 a.m. - 11 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 20.

Stokes-Southerland Funeral Home of Eastman has charge of arrangements.



Joyce Maxine King

Joyce Maxine King, passed away peacefully on Dec. 17, 2025, in Dublin, Ga., at the age of 90. Born on Feb. 24, 1935, in Lyons, Ga., Joyce was the cherished daughter of the late Hubert Young and Clara Bell Bush. She was also the loving granddaughter of George and Annie Young, and Jordan and Alice Bush, and the beloved niece of her special aunt, Alice Young, all of whom predeceased her. Joyce's life was marked by the deep bonds of family, including her late husband, Larry King, with whom she shared a lifetime of memories.

Joyce's legacy continues through her devoted children, Gail Durden (Wilson) of Helena, Ga., and Ricky Richardson (Alexia) of Dublin. She was the proud grandmother to Hope Salyer (Rob) of Eastman, Clarissa Abbott (Brent) of Helena, Nicole Phagan (Stephen) of Cochran, Jon Eric Richardson of Valdosta, Lindsey Richardson of St. Louis, Mo., and Hannah Surine (Matt) and Sarah Shiver, both of Dublin. Her joy was multiplied with the birth of each of her several great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren, who will carry her spirit forward, life long friends, Sue and Steve Lindsey and Karole Davis.

She is also survived by her brother, Maxwell Young (Judy) of Vidalia and her niece, Tammy Young, who will remember her fondly for her loving guidance and thoughtful nature.

Joyce dedicated many years of service as a physical therapist at the Carl Vinson VA Medical Center, where she touched the lives of countless individuals with her care and expertise. She was a member at the First

Christian Church, where her faith-filled presence was a source of comfort and inspiration to many.

Those who knew Joyce will recall her passion for cooking, which was just one of the ways she expressed her love for family and friends. A strong woman who loved being in control, Joyce was the matriarch who brought people together, creating a warm and welcoming atmosphere that will be deeply missed.

Joyce's family would like to personally thank Georgia Hospice and Twelve Oaks Assisted Living for their loving care.

Services will be held on Saturday, Dec. 20, 2025, at 2 p.m. in the Mary Whitaker Townsend Memorial Chapel at Townsend Brothers Funeral Home. Burial will follow at Hardens Chapel Cemetery. Rev. Billy Glosion will officiate. The family will receive friends on Saturday from 1 p.m. until service hour at the funeral home.

Please visit www.townsendfuneralhome.com for service updates and to sign the online memorial register.



Mary T. Haywood

Mary T. Haywood, 90, of Macon, Georgia, passed away on Saturday, Dec. 13, 2025.

Mary was born on June 14, 1935, in London, England. As a child, she was evacuated from London during WWII to the countryside and lived at a convent during the war years. After the war, she met her future husband James Haywood who was stationed in London with the US Air Force.

She and her husband lived at Otis Air Force Base in Massachusetts before moving to Georgia. She moved with her family to Dublin, Georgia in the late 1960s.

Mary was a gifted artist and taught many students how to paint at her home studio. She took great pride in restoring old paintings that had been damaged. Mary also loved music and enjoyed singing with friends. She also expressed her creativity through a variety of arts and crafts, including knitting, crocheting, and sewing.

Mary moved to Macon in 2016 and lived at John Wesley Villas. She will be missed by her family and the many new friends she made in her senior living community.

Mary is survived by her sons, Kevin B. Haywood (Felicia) of Macon and Ian Haywood of Richmond, Kentucky; and her two grandchildren. She is the widow of James Wesley Haywood.

In honor of Mrs. Mary, please donate to Kitty City,

at <http://www.kittycitycarescue.com/donate>.

Sardis Heard Funeral Home, 6125 Houston Road, Macon, Georgia 31216, has charge of the arrangements.



Judy Smith Johnson Garrett

Mrs. Judy Smith Johnson Garrett, 82, passed away Tuesday, Dec. 16, 2025, at Atrium Health Navicent Medical Center.

Mrs. Garrett was born May 30, 1943, in McRae, Georgia. She was the daughter of the late Preston Albert Smith and Molly Lucile Towns Smith. She was also preceded in death by her two husbands, Vernon Leonard Johnson and Robert Clinton Garrett and her daughter, Pamela Denise Sellars. She was a retired Registered Nurse where she worked for numerous hospitals. She moved to Laurens County in May of 2017 after living in McRae, Georgia for the past 74 years. She was a member of Dublin First Church of the Nazarene where she helped with Sunday School. She was a member of the Rotary Club in Telfair County. She was loving wife, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. She loved her church and absolutely enjoyed making food for the sick and elderly neighbors.

Mrs. Garrett is survived by her daughter, Vickie (Wayne) Moody; two stepsons, Bobby (Debbie) Garrett and Joe (Caroline) Garrett; a daughter-in-law, Kim Garrett; a brother, Benny (Debbie) Smith; 8 grandchildren, and 18 great-grandchildren.

At Mrs. Garrett's wishes she will be memorialized by cremation and no formal services will be held.

Stanley Funeral Home and Crematory/Dublin Chapel has charge of funeral arrangements. To sign the Online Register Book please visit www.stanleyfuneral-home.com.



Annie Lee Tharpe

Funeral services for Annie Lee Tharpe, 90, of Dublin, will be held on Saturday, Dec. 20, 2025, at noon, at the Springhill Missionary Baptist Church, 494 Evergreen Road in Dublin. Interment will follow in the church cemetery.

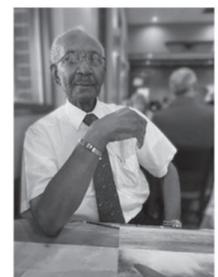
Annie Lee Tharpe was born in rural Laurens County, Georgia, on Monday, Sept. 16, 1935. She worked in agricultural and domestic services for many years.

She was raised by her loving grandparents, Fronie and Ben Coney are now both deceased. Ms. Tharpe was devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ and was a lifelong member of Spring Hill Missionary Baptist Church. She passed away on Dec. 11, 2025, in Fayetteville, Ga. She was preceded in death by her mother, Rosa Lee Willie Thorpe, and by father, George Tharpe.

She is survived by her children, Timothy Tharpe, and Jeanette (Damien) Lawhorn, grandchildren, Taylor Thorpe, Gabrielle Lawhorn and Jia Tharpe, and by a host of cousins who were so close as if they were siblings. She was a symbol of strength, resilience and unconditional love who will forever be in our hearts.

Please post your condolences online at ServicesbyDudley.com.

Services by Dudley Funeral Home and Cremations of Dublin



In Loving Memory of Dea. Coleman Smith 8/9/34 – 12/20/24

It's hard to believe that a year has passed, but memories of you we keep in our hearts and on our minds. We reflect often on all your humor and wise sayings, and these almost always turn tears of sorrow into joy and laughter. We look forward to the Great Reunion in heaven.

We love and miss you dearly. Your wife, son, grandchildren, and great grandson!

The Courier Herald

LOCAL MATTERS



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This newspaper is committed to the idea that the press should tell the truth without prejudice and spread knowledge without malicious intent.



POSTING DATE DECEMBER 19, 2025

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT AN APPLICATION HAS BEEN SUBMITTED BY MAANDESH LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY FOR A 27' HEIGHT VARIANCE FROM 35' TO 62'. SAID PROPERTY IS LOCATED AT PARCEL D13A 035, DUBLIN, GEORGIA.

A PUBLIC MEETING WILL BE HELD JANUARY 5, 2026 AT 5:30 P. M. IN THE HENRY "BUD" HICKS JR MEMORIAL CHAMBERS, LOCATED IN CITY HALL AT 100 S. CHURCH STREET IN DUBLIN GEORGIA AT WHICH TIME YOU MAY APPEAR IN PERSON, OR AND IN WRITING, BY AN AGENT OR BY AN ATTORNEY AND PRESENT ANY REASONS WHICH YOU MAY HAVE IN GRANTING OR DENYING THIS PETITION.

Sharon Eveland, City Planner

If you should have any questions, please call (478) 277-5070.

POSTING DATE DECEMBER 19, 2025

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT AN APPLICATION HAS BEEN SUBMITTED BY LM CURRY JR FAMILY LLLP FOR A SIDE SET BACK VARIANCE FROM 10 FEET TO 0 FEET. SAID PROPERTY IS LOCATED AT 1802 PINE FOREST STREET, DUBLIN, GEORGIA.

A PUBLIC MEETING WILL BE HELD JANUARY 5, 2026 AT 5:30 P. M. IN THE HENRY "BUD" HICKS JR MEMORIAL CHAMBERS, LOCATED IN CITY HALL AT 100 S. CHURCH STREET IN DUBLIN GEORGIA AT WHICH TIME YOU MAY APPEAR IN PERSON, OR AND IN WRITING, BY AN AGENT OR BY AN ATTORNEY AND PRESENT ANY REASONS WHICH YOU MAY HAVE IN GRANTING OR DENYING THIS PETITION.

Sharon Eveland, City Planner

If you should have any questions, please call (478) 277-5070.

The Courier Herald office will observe reduced hours on Wednesday, December 24th, and be closed on Thursday December 25th and Friday, December 26th.

PLEASE NOTE:

Your Thursday, December 24th and Saturday, December 27th editions will be a combo paper.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year

OBITUARIES



Johnnie Bell Jordan Bey

Funeral services for Mrs. Johnnie Bell Jordan (Wright) Bey of Macon, Georgia, will be held on Saturday, Dec. 20, 2025, at 2 p.m. at the Mitchell Grove Baptist Church, 78 Mitchell Grove Church Road in Wrightsville. Rev. David Hall will deliver the eulogy. Interment will follow in the church cemetery.

Johnnie Bell Jordan was born in Wrightsville, Johnson County, Georgia, on Wednesday, Sept. 19, 1951, to Lillie Bell (Cason) Jordan and Johnny Jordan, Sr. She attended Dock Camp School of Johnson County. She had several jobs which she was known for. She was employed by Mohawk, she was a substitute teacher for the Johnson County School system. She was the editor and chief of the Rainbow Observer Newspaper, and she was employed by the Hope Home of Dublin, and she was a Certified Nursing Assistant.

Johnnie was united in holy matrimony to Bobby Wright.

Mrs. Jordan passed away on Thursday, Dec. 11, 2025. She was preceded in death by her parents, her husband, her only brother, Alfonso Cason, her aunts, Rose Z. Atkins, Ella M. Robinson, Marie Aycox, and by her uncles, Mose Cason, Sr., Floyd Cason and Carther S. Cason Jr., and her niece, Nikki James.

She leaves to mourn her children, LaRissa Wright, Anthony Wright, Syreeta (Randy) Martin, all of Dublin. Letitia Wright of Macon, Sandra (Duane) Wright, Sabrina Wright of Tampa, Florida, Demetre Wright and Travis Wright of Dublin, Constantine Williams of Dublin. Tishanda Lewis of Alabama, and Aireal Simmons of South Carolina, nieces, Freda Taylor, Trish Ann (Wyman) Brantley of Dublin, Joyce Beaty of Jacksonville, Florida, Sheila Cason of Florida, and Denise "Niece" Gamble of Palm Beach, Florida, nephew, Swayze Montford of Florida, grandchildren, James Ricks, Jazuy Ricks, Diamond Wright, Drayton Wright, Ishaq (Anna) Dunlap, Temprance Anderson, Randy Martin Jr, Ariel Martin and Layla Martin. Na-Kiya Redding, Robert Holloway, Lauryn Holloway, Tristan Wright, Amari and Ki'asia Davis, and Trelanni Wright, and great-grandchildren, Jaiden and Aurrie Ricks, Bryce Wright, Brylic Peele, Ja'kai Brown, Journee, Chance, Aubree and Nicholas Mitchell, sister-in-law, Edith W. Cason, a devoted friend, Juanita McKenzie, and a host of other cousins, relatives, friends.

Please post your condolences online as Servicesby-Dudley.com.

Services by Dudley Funeral Home and Cremations of Dublin.

Peggy Baisden

Mrs. Peggy Baisden of Dublin passed away on Thursday, Dec. 19, 2025. Funeral arrangements are incomplete but will be announced later.

Services by Dudley Funeral Home and Cremations of Dublin.

Crowds throng here for display

Dublin Courier Herald, Dispatch, And Press

Several thousand persons jammed streets adjacent to the Court House Square here late yesterday as the Christmas season was ushered in with exercises marking lighting of the city in holiday fashion and the unveiling of a replica of the Bethlehem Scene.

Many of them remained until into the night, some of them visiting stores and shops to make Christmas purchases to get the holiday buying under way.

As the throngs milled about the Square to view the display - by far the most elaborate ever undertaken here and probably the most outstanding in any city of its size in the state of Georgia - carols were carried through out the entire business area over a loud speaker system installed in the Court House tower.

Earlier, in a program broadcast over middle Georgia, the Laurens County Schools' Drum and Bugle Corps and the Dublin High School Band had presented a concert from the grandstand constructed at the main entrance to the grounds, and the Rev. W.A. Kelley, Presiding Elder of the Dublin Methodist District, had addressed the assemblage on the story of the Birth of Christ.

Miss Mae Hightower, daughter of R.H. Hightower, Dublin theatre manager and general chairman of the event, threw the switch that lighted the scene just as darkness settled over the city.

Streets adjacent to the Square were closed for traffic so that the thousands standing in the streets could hear the program and view the scene.

Dr. C.H. Kittrell, President of the Dublin Lions Club, was the Master of Ceremonies and said in his opening remarks, "We have assembled here this season to dedicate the most impressive Christmas display our community has ever had.

"This magnificent showing has been made possible by the united effort of the people of Dublin and Laurens County.

"It demonstrates to us the value of co-operation, and we hope this will be the beginning of a new era of harmony and understanding among us all.

"In these times of hatred, war, and violence to religious freedom, we think it is very important that our people should place greater emphasis upon the observance of the spiritual significance of the Christmas season."

CAROL PROGRAM

The Carol Program will begin on Monday afternoon at 4:30 and continue through 5:30 in the afternoon of December 23.

General Chairman Bob Hightower stated that out of town buses will bring the school children to the high school campus at 3:30 in order that those taking part in the carol singing may be organized and arranged in marching order by the time the program begins.

First grade children who will sing the opening number may report at the Court House lawn and not at the high school.

The Christmas lights over the city, around the Court House, at McCall's Point, and at the library will be turned on at the close of the program.

Hundreds of out-of-town guests are coming to town daily, and more are expected on Monday for this program.

Traffic regulations which will be in effect from 3 p.m. until 5:30 p.m. during the Christmas program on Dublin streets as

announced by Chief of Police J.W. Robertson are the following:

"On Bellevue and Jackson streets, traffic will be blocked from Maiden Lane to the Court House.

"On Academy and Jackson streets, traffic will be blocked from Rowe Street to the Court House.

"On Jefferson Street, traffic will be blocked from Hicks Drug Store across to Westbrook Store; also on Jefferson from Morris Motor Co. across to Tindol Brothers.

"All east and west bound traffic between Rowe and Franklin streets will travel on Madison Street.

"All east and west bound traffic between Maiden Lane and Franklin streets will travel on Gaines Street."

Chief Robertson added that no cars left parked inside the blocked off areas could be moved between 3:00 and 7:30 p.m., so that anyone who wished to move their autos during this time should get them out before the 3:00 p.m. deadline when the block off begins.

COTILLION BALL CLIMAXES XMAS FESTIVITIES

Brilliance and charm characterized the setting for the Dublin Cotillion Club Ball in the Woman's Club House where several hundred members of the Club and their guests enjoyed the annual Christmas ball given by the Club.

Varicolored lights entwined with smilax and a huge red bow on the door of the club house greeted guests as they arrived.

A Directorie motif was artistically presented in the decorations of the spacious clubrooms, with red drapes at the sides of windows and white swags over the tops of them, forming the background for the colorful Christmas decorations.

Overhead, chandeliers were hung with clusters of silver bells and smilax entwining the chains to the ceilings.

Ropes of red colors hung with silver icicles extended

from the chandeliers to corners of the room, forming a canopy over the dancers.

An arch of smilax covered with silver icicles was arranged behind the orchestra, and soft lights twinkled merrily as the musicians rendered dance music for the lovely young ladies and their escorts.

In the reception room, the mantel was covered with silvered snow, and a tall red candle on each end of the mantel shelf gleamed brightly. A lighted wreath centered the chimney and was tied with a bow of red ribbons.

In the refreshment room, a table was overlaid with a snowy white cloth, which had a wide red satin band down the center and lighted red tapers in silver candlesticks arranged at two ends.

Hor'oevres and iced drinks were served during the evening.

Miss Frances Lanier, President of the Cotillion Club, and Miss Margaret Watkins, Secretary and Treasurer, assisted by members of the club, received the guests and the specially invited parents of the members.

Miss Lanier wore an evening gown of white net, the snug bodice having silver threads, and the voluminous skirt was formed of layers of net. Her corsage was red rose buds.

Miss Watkins was gowned in red crepe fashioned with graceful full skirt and fitted waist. Rhinestone clips at the neckline formed the only trim.

Dean E. Dreyer of Atlanta planned the decorations.

FIRST BAPTIST CANTATA

Members of the choir of the First Baptist Church will tell the beautiful Christmas story in song at the morning hour of worship in the church on Sunday at 11:30.

The complete program for the morning service is this:

Prelude - "The Holy City" Mrs. F.R. Zetterower, Organist
"Doxology" - Assembly

LOOKING BACK... 85 YEARS AGO DECEMBER 20, 1940



By HARRIETT CLAXTON

Invocation - Dr. C.D. Graves, Pastor
Hymn, No. 284 - Assembly

Offertory - "There Were Shepherds" Miss Leah Kittrell, Violin and Mrs. F.R. Zetterower, Organ

Come and Worship: "The Voice of Prophecy: "How Beautiful on the Mountains"

Scripture Reading - Dr. Graves

"Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus."

"O Little Town of Bethlehem"

Scripture Reading- Dr. Graves

"And There Were in That Same Country"

"Suddenly There were Angels"

"Glory to God in the Highest"

"Arise, Shine, Come and Adore Him."

Benediction - Pastor

The members of the choir are these:

Sopranos:
Mrs. Sam Swinson
Mrs. M.Z. Claxton
Mrs. W.S. Reese
Mrs. T.T. Williams
Mrs. T.E. McDaniel
Miss Louise Rountree
Miss Ann Cochran
Miss Eunice Powers
Miss Dorothy Black
Miss Maud New Shepard

Miss Bonita Chivers
Miss Rose Waldron

Altos:
Mrs. Guy Cochran
Mrs. Fred L. Brown
Mrs. D.G. Adams
Miss Flora Turlington

Tenors:
Baum Wilkes
W.S. Reese
Vivian Register
Basses:
C.W. Walters, Sr.
C.W. Walters, Jr.

James Townsend
Forest Townsend
Jim English
Director: S.V. Conyers

JEFFERSON STREET NIGHT CANTATA

On Sunday evening, at the regular hour of worship, beginning at 7:30, the Choir of Jefferson Street Baptist Church will present the Christmas message in song. "The Music of Christmas" by Wilson has been chosen as the Cantata for this annual musical program, which will be broadcast.

Prelude - Mrs. James English, organ; Miss Leah Kittrell, violin

Prologue - Choir Solo - "Ave Maria" - Charles Alexander

"Holy Night" - Choir

"He Shall Feed His Flock" - Alto obligato solo, Mrs. Fred Brown, and Choir

"Come, Tho Long-Expected Jesus" - Bass obligato solo, Edgar Evans, and Choir

"Oh, Little Town of Bethlehem" - "Good Tidings" - Soprano solo, Miss Maybelle Stith and two-part chorus and choir

Violin solo - Miss Leah Kittrell

"Glory Be to God" - Women's three part chorus and choir

"The Magi" - Men's Union Chorus and choir

"Little Lord Jesus" - Alto solo, Mrs. Estelle Neal

Offertory

"In Our Hearts" - Soprano solo, Mrs. Paul Alexander

"The Living Stone" - Choir

Benediction - Rev. R.W. Eubanks, Pastor

Benediction Response - Choir

LET'S CELEBRATE

AND GIVE THANKS!

We are grateful for another year of serving our customers and this community. Thank you for putting your trust in Morris Bank. Wishing you a safe and wonderful holiday season!



Merry Christmas to the ones who make Christmas happen

My mother used to torture my brother and I on Christmas morning.

We'd wake up early in the morning, no matter what time the excitement of Christmas Eve had faded and we had finally fallen asleep. We didn't fall asleep, really, but passed out. My parents forbade us from entering the living room on Christmas morning until permission was granted.

Long before the sun rose, I'd shout across the house until my parents were awake, not that hard of a task, because I grew up in a doublewide trailer. Even after they were up, I was not to set foot close to the loot left under the tree by Santa until a fire was burning in the fireplace, a fresh pot of coffee was brewed and most importantly, the camera was loaded with film.

After what seemed like an eternity, I was beckoned to the living room. There were cheers and yells of joy and the triumphant brandishing of long-wished-for gifts, all captured for eternity by an Olympus point and shoot. When the flurry of excitement died down, my father would relinquish the camera and arm himself with pocket knife, screwdrivers and an assortment of batteries (all conveniently stashed arm's length from his favorite chair) and assist with opening packaging and boxes.

Then my parents took a nap, while new toys and games were broken in. By midmorning, it was off to my grand-

Full of Christmas magic!

THE NEW SOUTHERN DAD



By **KYLE DOMINY**

parents for a Christmas feast, followed by the exchange of more gifts.

The most wonderful time of the year comes with a lot of work; there's the decorating, the shopping, the wrapping

and, ever-increasing in importance as I get older, the meal prep and cooking. A merry Christmas doesn't just fall out of the sky, it comes with a lot of stress and pressure on families, even if you like to keep things simple and in tune with the true reason of the season.

It's something I didn't really appreciate until I had a family of my own and a proper share of Christmastime chores, and I'm happy to admit that the adult side of Christmas is just as enjoyable as the kid side.

So, let's forget about Santa, the jolly fat man who gets more credit than he deserves, and here's to the ones that make Christmas happen: To the mothers who set a picture-perfect scene, even if they did it in October; to the grandmothers who host giant families and make sure everyone has their favorite meal; to the dads who stay up late putting bicycles and dollhouses together and install batteries in gadgets (and set up new phones, gaming systems and other electronic devices for the older kids); and let's not forget the grandpas just along for the ride and enjoying their second childhoods. Everyone has their place and an important job to do.

However, you pass the festive days ahead, may it be with those you love and cherish and who help make Christmas happen.

Stuart K. Hine: 'How Great Thou Art'



By **JACK BROWN**

jestic hymn of faith.

The original poem was written by a 26-year-old Swedish pastor named Carl Boberg (1859-1940), who in 1886, found himself caught outside in a violent thunderstorm.

He took refuge under a tree until the storm passed by.

Then, as he observed the bright sunshine, the beauty of the earth, and the singing of the birds, he fell on his knees in adoration and penned the poem that was first named "O Store Gud" ("O Mighty God").

An existing Swedish folk song became the melody for his poem, and a wonderful hymn was born.

The hymn was translated into German, then into Russian, and then into En-

glish by Hine and his wife who were serving as English missionaries in Russia at that time.

He expanded and modified the poem, wrote a fourth verse in 1948, and made his own arrangement of the original Swedish folk melody.

In 1954, during a Billy Graham Evangelistic Crusade in England, this poem with music was handed to the beloved evangelistic singer George Beverly Shea, who showed it to the evan-

gelistic team.

In 1955, during the evangelistic crusade in Toronto, Canada, "How Great Thou Art" was sung by Bev Shea and thus introduced to multitudes on this side of the Atlantic.

In the New York crusade in 1957, he sang this magnificent hymn 99 times!

It became then, and remains so today, a favorite song of faith throughout all of Christendom.

Then sings my soul, my Savior God to thee,

How great Thou art!
How great Thou art!

"Thank You, Lord, for inspiring men and women to write the words and music to songs and hymns of faith, all of which warms our hearts whenever we hear them or sing them. Thank You for the gift of music ... especially the music of faith. God, You are always, always worthy to be praised. Amen."

Peace!

Sometime about 1977, when this chaplain was still in the U.S. Army Chaplaincy and was stationed in Michigan, my wife and I attended an evening church service in Detroit.

It was during that evening service that a gentleman by the name of Stuart K. Hine was introduced to

the congregation as a former English missionary to the Ukraine, then a republic within the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), who translated into English the majestic hymn "How Great Thou Art."

Hine walked to the center of the platform and sang to the glory of God and ma-

DID YOU KNOW ...?

By **JACK BAGLEY**
GTLN Columnist

In this column's home newspapers, Christmas comes one week from today. I hope you are ready.

If you aren't, you still have time to get that last-minute shopping (or last-minute letter to Santa Claus) taken care of.

If you are, then sit back and coast. Make sure the tree is up and decorated, the stockings are hung by the chimney with care (now where have I heard that before?), and that your holiday repast is planned and underway.

Since I won't see you here again before the holiday, let me be the first among others to wish you a very Merry Christmas! Now, your gift from me ... trivia. Enjoy!

Did you know ...

... a scientific term exists for the "pins and needles" feeling you get when your foot goes to sleep? It's called temporary paresthesia and is the result of pressure on a nerve. (Yes, I had the nerve to say that.)

... you may know someone who practices hippology? No, that person doesn't study hippos. They study horses. (I leave it to you to figure out why the study of horses is called hippology.)

... the CIA used a classic novel to try and undermine communism? During the 1950s, the Central Intelligence Agency launched balloons bearing copies of the novel *Animal Farm* from West Germany, sending them into the nations behind the Iron Curtain. The plan was for the novel by George Orwell (1903-1950), a thinly-veiled parody of communism, to be read by people in Communist nations and get them to question the party line. (Maybe if they'd not sent the books in English, it might've worked.)

... pinball was once

banned in New York City? The game involving metal balls, flippers, bumpers and other noise-making gizmos was made illegal by Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia (1882-1947) in 1942. LaGuardia said the game robbed school children of their nickels and dimes and led to other forms of gambling. The mayor led police raids through the city, seizing and destroying the offending machines. The ban remained in place until 1976. (Notice they waited until the game cost quarters instead of nickels and dimes.)

... a popular singer's guest-star appearance on a television series was not seen by many viewers? During the brief run of the 1961 dramatic series *Bus*

Stop, singer Fabian (born Fabian Forte, 1943) was advertised as the guest star on one episode. Teenyboppers anxiously awaited his appearance, but in many markets the episode was not shown. Why? Because in the episode, titled "A Lion Walks Among Us," the singer played a psychotic killer, and many affiliates chose not to run the show due to its violent content. For his part, Fabian has always said he considered his performance in that episode the best acting work he had done, and the show - though not seen everywhere - did a lot to bring respect to his acting career. (Odd things happen at the bus stop.)

Now ... you know!

Moment of Inspiration

"Joy for All People"

"Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Luke 2:10

Christmas reminds us that joy is not something we create—it's something God gives. On a dark night in Bethlehem, the angel didn't tell the shepherds to cheer up, work harder, or try to be more positive. Instead, heaven announced a gift: "Good tidings of great joy."

This joy came wrapped in swaddling clothes—Jesus, God's Son, born to bring light into our darkness. Real joy doesn't depend on perfect circumstances but on the presence of Christ in our hearts. The shepherds were still poor... still out in the fields... yet because Jesus had come, they suddenly had a joy nothing in the world could take away. And the angel made something very clear:

This joy is for "all people." That includes you—no matter your past, your struggles, or your season of life.

Today, take a moment to remember:

Joy has a name: Jesus. Joy has a promise: He is with us.

Joy has a purpose: to remind us we are loved and never alone.

May His joy fill your heart this Christmas and overflow into the lives of others.

Dr. Curt Lysaker, Pastor Shady Grove Baptist Church, East Dublin, GA

Pastors if you would like to share a devotional please email to: advertisingtch@gmail.com



These merchants and The Courier Herald take pride in presenting this message and encourage you to attend the church of your choice.

DUBLIN CITY BOARD OF EDUCATION SCHEDULE OF APPROVED LOCAL OPTION SALES TAX PROJECTS YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2025

PROJECT	ORIGINAL ESTIMATED COST (1)	CURRENT ESTIMATED COSTS (2)	AMOUNT EXPENDED IN CURRENT YEAR (3) (4)	AMOUNT EXPENDED IN PRIOR YEARS (3) (4)	TOTAL COMPLETION COST	EXCESS PROCEEDS NOT EXPENDED	ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE
SPLOST III PROJECTS (January 1, 2023 - December 31, 2027)							
General Obligation Bonds, Series 2011, in an amount not to exceed \$1,700,000	\$ 1,565,700.00	\$ 1,565,700.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 1,565,700.00	\$ 1,565,700.00	\$ 0.00	Complete
Additions, renovations, refurbishment, repairs and improvements to existing school buildings and facilities, including, but not limited to, Dublin High School, Dublin Middle School, Moore Street School, Hillcrest Elementary School, Susie Dasher Elementary, Saxon Heights, and Old Dublin High School Gymnasium;	\$ 5,615,000.00	\$ 5,615,000.00	\$ 596,269.11	\$ 2,686,301.36	\$ 3,282,570.47	\$ 2,332,429.53	12/31/2027
Acquisition of real property;	\$ 520,000.00	\$ 520,000.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 520,000.00	12/31/2027
Construction, equipping and furnishing of new school facilities, including but not limited to, physical education and athletic facilities;	\$ 385,000.00	\$ 385,000.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 385,000.00	12/31/2027
Acquisition of school vehicles, including but not limited to, school busses and transportation vehicles and equipment;	\$ 2,000,000.00	\$ 2,000,000.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 294,515.50	\$ 294,515.50	\$ 1,705,484.50	12/31/2027
not limited to hardware, computers and infrastructure;	\$ 1,500,000.00	\$ 1,500,000.00	\$ 245,869.65	\$ 1,117,074.62	\$ 1,362,944.27	\$ 137,055.73	12/31/2027
Acquisition of safety and security equipment;	\$ 500,000.00	\$ 500,000.00	\$ 193,493.44	\$ 224,882.78	\$ 418,376.22	\$ 81,623.78	12/31/2027
Acquisition of band instruments; and	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 25,000.00	12/31/2027
Purchase of instructional materials and textbooks.	\$ 3,729,300.00	\$ 3,729,300.00	\$ 479,060.96	\$ 381,622.98	\$ 860,683.94	\$ 2,868,616.06	12/31/2027
SPLOST III PROJECTS (January 1, 2023 - December 31, 2027)	\$ 15,840,000.00	\$ 15,840,000.00	\$ 1,514,693.16	\$ 6,270,097.24	\$ 7,784,790.40	\$ 8,055,209.60	

(1) The School District's original cost estimate as specified in the resolution calling for the imposition of the Local Option Sales Tax.
 (2) The School District's current estimate of total cost for the projects. Includes all cost from project inception to completion.
 (3) The voters of Laurens County approved the imposition of a 1% sales tax to fund the above projects and retire associated debt.
 Amounts expended for these projects may include sales tax proceeds, state, local property taxes and/or other funds over the life of the projects.

BE NOTIFIED FURTHER: All objections to the petition must be in writing, setting forth the grounds of any such objections. All objections should be sworn to before a notary public or before a probate court clerk, and filing fees must be tendered with your objections, unless you qualify to file as an indigent party. Contact probate court personnel for the required amount of filing fees. If any objections are filed, a hearing will be scheduled at a later date. If no objections are filed, the petition may be granted without a hearing.
Genola O. Jackson
Judge of the Probate Court
By:
Warren
Clerk of the Probate Court
P.O. Box 2098
Dublin, GA 31040
478-272-2566
December 6, 13, 20, 27, 2025

25-595
NOTICE OF SALE
Pursuant to the Official Code of Georgia, Annotated Section 10-4-210, et seq., there will be a public sale at Little House Self Storage, 2420 US Highway 80 West in Dublin on Wednesday, January 7, 2026, beginning at 11:00 AM. The proceeds of said sale will be used first to satisfy the storage fee and other expenses of the auction. Any other proceeds will be used to satisfy such creditors as present their claims in advance of sale.
Occupant/Unit: #0538
Lori Couey #0505
Samantha Johnson #1121
Jordan Mankus #0916
Jaden Pittman
December 20, 27, 2025

25-592
To Whom It May Concern:
Notice is hereby given that Abhijeet Hegde alcohol agent, manager, or alcohol licensee has submitted an application to the City of Dublin for a 2026, license to sell retail Beer Wine, off premises, at A.S.R. Dublin Inc d/b/a Speedy Snack Shop located at 300 E. Jackson Street, Dublin, GA 31021. Further notice is given that the City Clerk will hear public comments on Wednesday, December 31, 2025 at 11:00am, in the City Clerk's office at City Hall regarding the issuing of said license.
This notice is given that 15 day of December 2025.
Abhijeet Hegde
December 20, 27, 2025.

25-574
NOTICE TO DEBTORS AND CREDITORS
STATE OF GEORGIA
COUNTY OF LAURENS
IN RE: ESTATE OF RHONDA D'NETRA WRIGHT, DECEASED
All creditors of the Estate of Rhonda D'netra Wright, deceased late of Laurens County, are hereby notified to render their demands to the undersigned according to law, and all person indebted to said estate are required to make immediate payment to me.
Melinda Wright battle
Executer of Rhonda D'netra Wright, deceased
114 Linton Forest Dr. Sandersville, GA 31082
O.C.G.A 53-7-41 states: " Every personal representative shall, within 60 days from the date of qualification, publish a notice directed generally to all of the creditors of the estate to render an account of their demands. the notice shall be published once a week for four weeks in the official newspaper of the county in which the personal representative qualified"
December 6, 13, 20, 27, 2025

25-593
CITATION
IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF LAURENS COUNTY
GEORGIA
CITATION
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION vs. 1.101 acres of land; and Kennie Tucker, individually
DOCKET NO. 25-CG-0700-JH
IN REM
The said named persons and any and all other persons known and unknown claiming any right, title, power, interest, ownership, equity, claim or demand in and to the lands hereinafter described, and all occupants, tenants, lessees, licensees and all holders, owners and users of ways and easements in, across, over and under said land are hereby notified, under the provisions of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated Sections 32-3-4 through 32-3-19, providing for the exercise of the power of eminent domain by the State of Georgia, or any of its subdivisions, or by any county of such State, as follows:
That the above stated case, being a condemnation in rem against the property hereinafter described, was filed in said Court on the 4 day of Sept, 2025; That, in accordance with provisions of the aforesaid Official Code, a Declaration of Taking, duly authorized and properly executed as provided by the Official Code, has been made and filed in said case, declaring the necessity for and exercising the power of taking the said described lands for State-aid public road purposes, thereby vesting the title to same in the Department of Transportation; and, in pursuance of such authority, the Department of Transportation has deposited with the Clerk of the Superior Court of said County \$14,100.00 as the just compensation for the said lands described; and all persons claiming such fund or any interest therein, are hereby required to make known their claims to the Court; In accordance with the provisions of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, the Plaintiff-Condemor has prayed the Court for Immediate possession of said property, and all persons having any interest in or claim against such property, as above set forth, are required by the Order of the Judge of said Court to surrender possession of the property to the Department of Transportation no later than 30 days from filing of the Declaration of Taking.
That in accordance with the Official Code of Georgia Annotated Section 32-3-13 through 32-3-19, if the owner, or any of the owners, or any person having a claim against or interest in said property, shall be dissatisfied with the compensation, as estimated in the Declaration of Taking and deposited in Court, such person or persons, or any of them, shall have the right, at any time subsequent to the filing of the Declaration and the deposit of the fund into Court but not later than 30 days following the date of service as provided for in the Official Code of Georgia Annotated Sections 32-3-8 through 32-3-10 to file with the Court a notice of appeal, the same to be in writing and made a part of the record in the proceedings.
The said property, as thus affected, is described as follows:

SEE PAGE 20-A and 20-B; FOR DESCRIPTION
This 15 day of Dec, 2025.
Georgia Jeffcoat
Deputy Clerk, Superior Court
LAURENS COUNTY
PROJECT NO. Being a project for widening and reconstruction on SR 31 / US 441 FROM S POPLAR SPRINGS CHURCH RD. TO S OF SR 117
P. I. NO.: 0013578
PARCEL NO.: 84
COUNTY: LAURENS
REQUIRED RIGHT OF WAY: 1.101 Acres of land
DATE OF R/W PLANS: December 29, 2023
REVISION DATE: For Drawing No. 60-0043, July 30, 2025;
For Drawing No. 60-0044, July 30, 2025
PROPERTY OWNER: KENNIE TUCKER
PARCEL 84 REQUIRED RIGHT OF WAY:
All that tract or parcel of land lying and being in Land Lot 202 of the 17 Land District of Laurens County, Georgia, being more particularly described as follows:
Beginning at a point 78.00 feet left of and opposite station 652+69.33 on the construction centerline of S.R. 31 / U.S. 441 on Georgia Highway Project No. 0013578, running thence S 43°20'58.6" W a distance of 33.38 feet to a point 105.00 feet left of and opposite station 652+49.54 on said construction centerline laid out for SR 31 / US 441 ; thence northwesterly 0.46 feet along the arc of a curve (said curve having a radius of 11693.35 feet and a chord distance of 0.46 feet on a bearing of N 10°34'44.6" W) to the point 105.00 feet left of and opposite station 652+50.00 on said construction centerline laid out for SR 31 / US 441 ; thence S 79°25'11.4" W a distance of 10.00 feet to a point 115.00 feet left of and opposite station 652+50.00 on said construction centerline laid out for SR 31 / US 441 ; thence northwesterly 168.34 feet along the arc of a curve (said curve having a radius of 11683.35 feet and a chord distance of 168.34 feet on a bearing of N 10°59'34.6" W) to the point 115.00 feet left of and opposite station 654+20.00 on said construction centerline laid out for SR 31 / US 441 ; thence N 78°35'39.3" E a distance of 5.00 feet to a point 110.00 feet left of and opposite station 654+20.00 on said construction centerline laid out for SR 31 / US 441 ; thence northwesterly 108.97 feet along the arc of a curve (said curve having a radius of 11688.35 feet and a chord distance of 108.97 feet on a bearing of N 11°40'22.2" W) to the point 110.00 feet left of and opposite station 655+30.00 on said construction centerline laid out for S.R. 31 / U.S. 441; thence N 39°26'20.1" W a distance of 16.72 feet to a point 70.00 feet right of and opposite station 2713+30.00 on said construction centerline laid out for JJ Club Rd. / Grant Rowe Rd.; thence southwesterly 74.72 feet along the arc of a curve (said curve having a radius of 990.00 feet and a chord of 74.70 feet on a bearing of S 73°47'05.2" W) to the point 70.00 feet right of and opposite station 2712+50.00 on said construction centerline laid out for JJ Club Rd. / Grant Rowe Rd.; thence N 18°22'38.3" W a distance of 10.00 feet to a point 60.00 feet right of and opposite station 2712+50.00 on said construction centerline laid out for JJ Club Rd. / Grant Rowe Rd.; thence S 67°04'58.1" W) to the point 60.00 feet right of and opposite station 2710+82.02 on said construction centerline laid out for JJ Club Rd. / Grant Rowe Rd.; thence N 34°36'24.0" W a distance of 63.81 feet to a point 3.35 feet left of and opposite station 2710+74.10 on said construction centerline laid out for JJ Club Rd./ Grant Rowe Rd.; thence N 22°08'18.6" E a distance of 85.21 feet to a point 60.00 feet left of and opposite station 2711+35.94 on said construction centerline laid out for JJ Club Rd. I Grant Rowe Rd.; thence northeasterly 120.52 feet along the arc of a curve (said curve having a radius of 1120.00 feet and a chord distance of 120.46 feet on a bearing of N 68°32'24.1" E) to the point 60.00 feet left of and opposite station 2712+50.00 on said construction centerline laid out for JJ Club Rd./ Grant Rowe Rd.; thence N 35°06'33.9" Ea distance of 22.74 feet to a point 85.00 feet left of and opposite station 2713+45.93 on said construction centerline laid out for JJ Club Rd./ Grant Rowe Rd.; thence N 12°57'06.0" W a distance of 70.90 feet to a point 105.00 feet left of and opposite station 657+73.31 on said construction centerline laid out for SR 31 / US 441 ; thence S 44°33'46.0" Ea distance of 51.61 feet to a point 78.00 feet left of and opposite station 657+28.98 on said construction centerline laid out for SR 31 / US 441 ; thence southeasterly 456.61 feet along the arc of a curve (said curve having a radius of 11720.35 feet and a chord distance of 456.58 feet on a bearing of S 11°47'24.4" E) back to the point of beginning. Containing 1.101 acres more or less.
December 20, 27, 2025

25-579
NOTICE TO DEBTORS AND CREDITORS
Georgia, Laurens County.
All creditors of the Estate of Mary Hobbs, deceased, late of Laurens County, are hereby notified to render in writing their demands to the undersigned according to law, and all persons indebted to said Estate are required to make immediate payment to the undersigned.
This 4th day of December, 2025.
William Franklin Hobbs, III and Mary Ellen Hobbs Ross, Co-Executors of the Estate of Mary Hobbs, deceased
c/o Jackson Dixon
Smith Dixon Law Group, LLC
205 N. Franklin Street
Dublin, GA 31021
December 13, 20, 27, 2025, Jan 3, 2026

25-585
TRADE NAME REGISTRATION OFFICE OF JACKIE H. DALTON CLERK SUPERIOR COURT LAURENS COUNTY, GEORGIA
PERSONALLY APPEARED THE UNDERSIGNED WHO ON OATH DEPOSES AND SAYS THAT:
Fernando Reyes, USA
IS/ARE DONG BUSINESS IN LAURENS COUNTY, GEORGIA UNDER THE NAME OF:
TRADE NAME: Reyes Pine straw & Landscaping
ADDRESS:
Dublin, GA 31021
AND THAT THE NATURE OF THE BUSINESS TO BE CARRIED ON IS:

Yard work, Selling Pine straw to be Spread on Flower beds.
SWORN TO AND SUBSCRIBED BEFORE ME THIS 10 DAY OF DECEMBER, 2025.
December 13, 20, 2025

25-582
IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF Laurens COUNTY
STATE OF GEORGIA
In Re: Christopher Alan Kemp
P. I. NO.: 0013578-01
NOTICE OF PETITION TO CHANGE NAME
GEORGIA, Laurens County
Notice is hereby given that Christopher Alan Kemp, the undersigned, filed his petition to the Superior Court of Laurens County, Georgia on the 29 day of September, 2025, praying for a change in the name of petitioner from Christopher Alan Kemp to Christopher Alan Taylor. Notice is hereby given pursuant to law to any interested or affected party to appear in said Court and to file objections to such name change. Objections must be filed with said Court within 30 days of the filing of said petition. This 28 day of Oct, 2025.
Christopher Alan Kemp
Petitioner
December 13, 20, 27, 2025, January 3, 2026

25-562
IN THE PROBATE COURT OF LAURENS COUNTY
STATE OF GEORGIA
IN RE: ESTATE OF MILDRED CROOMS DECEASED
ESTATE NO. 25-219
NOTICE
IN RE: The Petition to Probate Will (and Codicil(s)) in Solemn Form in the above-referenced estate having been duly filed.
TO: JEFF MADDOX, TIM MADDOX
This is to notify you to file objection, if there is any, to the petition to probate will in solemn form, in the Court on or before January 5, 2026.
BE NOTIFIED FURTHER: All objections to the petition must be in writing, setting forth the grounds of any such objections. All objections should be sworn to before a notary public or before a probate court clerk, and filing fees must be tendered with your objections, unless you qualify to file as an indigent party. Contact probate court personnel for the required amount of filing fees. If any objections are filed, a hearing will be held on or scheduled at a later date. If no objections are filed, the petition may be granted without a hearing.
Genola O. Jackson
Judge of the Probate Court
By: Cwarren
Clerk of the Probate Court
P.O. Box 2098
Dublin, GA 31040
478-272-2566
December 6, 13, 20, 27, 2025

25-514
NOTICE OF SALE UNDER POWER
STATE OF GEORGIA
LAURENS COUNTY
WHEREAS, Tisha McDonald, as borrower(s), executed a SECURITY DEED to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as grantee, as nominee for Carrington Mortgage Services, LLC, Lender which was dated 7/22/2016, and recorded on 7/22/2016, in Instrument No.: , Deed Book 2712, Page 232, securing the payment of a Note in the amount of \$81,645.00 in Laurens County, Georgia Register of Deeds.
NOW, THEREFORE, notice is hereby given that the entire indebtedness has been declared due and payable as provided in said Security Deed by the Holder, and by virtue of the power of sale and authority vested in it, will on 1/6/2026 sell at public outcry to the highest bidder for cash before the Courthouse door of the Laurens County Courthouse, 101 N Jefferson Street, Duplin, Georgia 31040 of Laurens, the following described property situated in Laurens County, Georgia, to wit:
ALL THAT TRACT OR PARCEL OF LAND LYING AND BEING IN THE CITY OF DUBLIN, LAURENS COUNTY, GEORGIA, BEING LOT 3 OF A REARRANGEMENT OF BLOCK "C" OF GARDENDALE ESTATES SUBDIVISION AND FORMERLY PARTS OF LOTS 2 AND 3 OF BLOCK "C" OF SAID SUBDIVISION BEING RECORDED IN PLAT BOOK 3, PAGE 184, IN THE OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF LAURENS SUPERIOR COURT. THE PROPERTY HEREIN CONVEYED IS MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS:
BEGINNING AT AN IRON PIN THAT IS LOCATED ON THE SOUTH MARGIN OF CAMELLIA DRIVE 120 FEET WEST OF THE SOUTHWEST CORNER OF THE INTERSECTION OF CAMELLIA DRIVE AND LANCASTER STREET, THENCE RUNNING ALONG THE SOUTH MARGIN OF CAMELLIA DRIVE IN A WESTERLY DIRECTION 100 FEET TO AN IRON PIN THENCE IN A SOUTHERLY DIRECTION 112.83 FEET TO AN IRON PIN; THENCE IN AN EASTERLY DIRECTION 100 FEET TO AN IRON PIN; THENCE IN A NORTHERLY DIRECTION 118.66 FEET BACK TO THE SOUTH MARGIN OF CAMELLIA DRIVE AND THE POINT OF BEGINNING. SAID PROPERTY IS IMPROVED BY A RESIDENCE KNOWN AS 1502 CAMELLIA DRIVE, IS SHOWN ON A PLAT PREPARED BY J.D. CLOVER, SURVEYOR, DATED NOVEMBER 1, 1966, AND RECORDED IN DEED BOOK 246, PAGE 477, IN THE OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF LAURENS SUPERIOR COURT, AND SAID PLAT AND THE RECORD THEREOF ARE BY REFERENCE INCORPORATED HEREIN AND MADE A PART OF THIS DESCRIPTION.
SAID PROPERTY IS FURTHER IDENTIFIED BY THE LAURENS COUNTY TAX ASSESSOR AS 1502 CAMELLIA DRIVE, DUBLIN, GA 31021, MAP/PARCEL: D10F/187
SUBJECT TO COVENANTS, RESTRICTIONS AND EASEMENTS OF RECORD. Tax Parcel ID: D10F-187
Being real property commonly known as **1502 CAMELLIA DR DUBLIN, GA 31021**

The debt remaining in default, this sale will be made for the purpose of paying the debt and all expenses of this sale including attorney's fees (notice of intent to collect attorney's fees having been given).

Said sale will be made subject to the following items which may affect the title to said property: All restrictive covenants, easements and rights-of-way appearing of record, if any; all zoning ordinances; matters which would be disclosed by an accurate survey or by an inspection of the property; all outstanding or unpaid bills and assessments for street improvements, curbing, garbage, water, sewage and public utilities which may be liens upon said property; and any outstanding taxes, assessments and other liens superior to the security deed being foreclosed hereby. To the best knowledge and belief of the undersigned, the above-described property is in the possession of the borrower and/or other persons with the consent and acquiescence of the borrower.

FROM THE RECORD

Divorce: Morgan D. Parrish v. Joshua Parrish

Kvann Hall et al v. Alivia Clifford

General tort: Kathy Battle v. Medical Center LLP d/b/a Dublin Medical Center; Tammy Patisaul v. Medical Center LLP d/b/a Dublin Medical Center; Brain Bahle v. Medical Center LLP; Jeanette Gasper v. Thomas Edward

Support - IV-D: Ga DHS ex rel Destiney Solomon et al v. Leroy Mack

Liens: Deanna Dudley to Fairview Park Hospital; Deanna M Chubb to Navy Federal Credit Union; Nathaniel Jackson to First Franklin Financial; Isac Castillo Nunez to Georgia United Credit Union

Contract: Amur Equipment Finance Inc. v. Goolsby Services LLC & John Goolsby III; Wells Fargo Bank v. Carlee Wilson; Opportunity Financial LLC v. Danielle Graddy; Wells Fargo Bank v. Amanda Vibelius; Crown Assesst v. Stephanie Hall

Security deed: Kameron Kross Hodge & Maya Franklin Hodge to Howard T. Brown & Glenda Sue Brown; Monte Tal Kellam & Karen Lynn Stokes to Robins Financial Credit Union; Todd Michael Evans to Farmers State Bank; JoBeth Rozier & Jobias Nichols Rozier to Morris Bank; Jeremy D. Middlebrooks & Markeisha Middlebrooks to Capital City Home Loans LLC; Spencer C. Fussell to The Citizens Bank of Cochran; Steven Bryan Harvey to Greenstate Title & Escrow LLC; Marsha Hope Jackson Morris to Rocket Mortgage LLC; Judy Caulder & Hubbard Caulder to Loandepot.com; Jomeika Griffin to Crosscountry Mortgage LLC; Andrew Shane Morris & Hannah Paige Morris to Community Bank of Dublin-Laurens

Real property: Georgia Department of Transportation v. Bennie Graham for Estate/Marcus Jones

Complaint for judicial foreclosure: Lakeview Loan Servicing v. USA/ Dept. of Housing/Urban Dev. John Wiggins

Contempt - child support: Ga DHS ex rel Shunjoya Boyd v. Octavius Boyd; Ga DHS ex rel Akeimeya Johnson v. Mendrell Lemon

Modification - child support: Ga DHS ex rel

Fani Willis testifies to committee

By TY TAGAMI
Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA — After more than a year of rebuffering Republican attempts to compel her testimony before the Georgia Senate, Fani Willis went to the state Capitol Wednesday to give three hours of often combative testimony to a special committee that she deemed to be a political farce.

Senate Republicans created the committee to investigate “alleged and admitted” misconduct by Willis, whom they have been pursuing since her decision to indict Donald Trump and 18 alleged co-conspirators in the wake of the 2020 election.

The hearing featured questions about her use of public funds as Fulton County district attorney, whether she had coordinated with the administration of President Joe Biden, her handling of open records

requests and her payment to a subscription service she used to track the value of the media coverage of her and her office.

It also featured Georgia’s last Democratic governor, Roy Barnes, as her attorney, who frequently interrupted to advise her not to answer questions.

Sen. Greg Dolezal, R-Cumming, led the committee in the place of Sen. Bill Cowser, R-Athens, whom Dolezal said was recuperating from surgery.

When Barnes cut Dolezal off after dismissing the relevance of some of his questions, Dolezal said they were about the investigation while Barnes said they were merely to infer wrongdoing.

Willis then added, “also to divide the country.”

Each side accused the other of political grandstanding. Dolezal asked about a \$10,000 a year subscription service that reported media coverage worth tens of millions of dollars, according to a projected slide of an email to Willis from her media relations staffer.

Dolezal also offered documents that indicated the same staffer had worked as a Democratic political consultant and that Willis had contributed to the political campaign of Charlie Bailey, now chairman of the state Democratic party, when he ran for lieutenant governor in 2022. (She pointed out that the money was for his primary campaign against another Democrat.)

Willis, in turn, had handed out photocopies of social media posts that showed both Dolezal, who is running for lieutenant governor, and Cowser, who hopes to be attorney general, using the investigation for political messaging.

She repeatedly insulted Dolezal, telling him at one point that he had asked “a really ignorant question” about whether she had considered investigating Trump before his infamous phone call to Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger.

County; Michael Spearing II to Union Home Mortgage Corp; J Green Enterprises LLC to First Laurens Bank; Lashon Lorraine Bell to Freemortgage Corporation; Kyle William Sluder to The Citizens Bank of Cochran; Jessie Caleb Cameron & Virginia Dawn Cameron to RBC Bank (Georgia); Marcus K. Rayner to Secretary of Housing and Urban Development

Warranty deed: Dylan Daniels & Catherine Daniels to Monte Tal Kellam & Karen Lynn Stokes; Scallions Development Middle Georgia LLC to Dublin Claxton Dairy LLC; Frank Moulis & Wendy Moulis to Spencer C. Fussell; Jan J. Claxton to Steven Bryan Harvey; Mark C. Walker to Robert T. Richardson & Nancy T. Richardson; Andrew Shane Morris to Andrew Shane Morris & Hannah Paige Morris; Carrie Spearing to Michael Spearing II; Rufus White; Sylvia N. White to Kimberly Simpson & Daniel Simpson; Brairhouse LLC to Lashon Lorraine Bell; Joseph Matthews Jr. to Kyle William Sluder; Andy Rudd to Jesse Caleb Cameron & Virginia Dawn Cameron; WJH LLC; Daniel Dalby Jr.

She also insulted the premise of the panel itself, calling it a “QAnon committee.” She said white senators were pursuing her because she is Black and she had indicted white and influential people. She said repeatedly that they wanted to be “daddy.”

After the hearing, Sen. Harold Jones II, D-Augusta, the Senate minority leader and a member of the committee, questioned the purpose, as well. He said Dolezal, who by committee rules was the only one besides Jones who got to ask questions, had simply reshaped old information about billing while raising “esoteric” questions about Willis’ handling of open records requests.

He said none of the questions got to the core issue of why Willis chose to indict. He said that was because the defendants had tried to overturn the election and she had done the right thing.

Although four defendants took plea deals, the rest avoided trial. Last month, Peter Skandalakis, executive director of the Prosecuting Attorneys’ Council of Georgia, asked a judge to dismiss the case and the judge agreed.

Skandalakis had taken over as special prosecutor after the courts sidelined Willis on ethical grounds because of her romantic entanglement with a contract lawyer she had hired to help her with the case.

Dolezal said the committee would have to cut through the “theatrics” and name calling in her testimony to determine what to do next. He said the committee should look at Willis’ handling of state funds and open records and at her use of a special purpose grand jury to investigate the defendants before indicting them.

He also said he was glad to finally force her to answer questions on behalf of “my friends who spent hundreds of thousands of dollars defending themselves against these politically motivated charges.”

4 local football standouts sign early...

'I'm ready': Register eager for chance to kick Between the Hedges

By CLAY REYNOLDS
Sports Editor

With the entire Trinity Christian School student body – numbering a few hundred – assembled in the Clyde Evans Fieldhouse bleachers, Trinity head coach Bruce Lane couldn't pass up the chance to tease his Georgia-bound punter Wade Register about how much larger a crowd in Athens, and in stadiums around the rest of the SEC, he'll soon be playing in front of every Saturday.

"If this makes you nervous, I was in Sanford Stadium a couple weeks ago, and there are gonna be a few more people," he quipped, before offering Register the floor to say a few words to those gathered at his signing day celebration earlier this month.

The prospect of doing anything with 92,000 people watching in person (and maybe somewhere close to a million more on TV) is definitely no joke, much less handling a deep snap and kicking a football while several ill-tempered opposing players are running your direction.

But Register, who was hardly fazed by this comparatively small spotlight, said he's got zero stage fright when it comes to the attention and pressure of performing at the highest level of the college game.

"I'm ready," he said. "It's gonna be so cool. I've been on the field a few times, not in uniform, so I'm excited about that. But looking up at the stadium, at 90,000 people, is an extraordinary experience unlike any other, and I'm super excited about it."

The nationally-rated specialist, who becomes Laurens County's first kicker or punter to join the Dawgs since Brian Mimbs (of Dublin) in 2004, certainly has some talent worthy of the big-time.

Register demonstrated as much of it in front of evaluators at multiple offseason events sponsored by special teams-dedicated recruiting service Kohl's Professional Camps as he did on-field handling the bulk



ON TO THE CLASSIC CITY: Trinity's Wade Register signed with the University of Georgia on Dec. 3 /SPECIAL PHOTO

of the Crusaders' kicking chores the past three seasons, over which his career average was 42 yards per punt and 60 per kickoff, the longest of each close to 70.

He also hit 68 touchbacks and, on punts, pinned opponents inside their own 20-yard line 26 times, on top of making 13 field goals (a longest of 48 yards) and all but one of 58 point-after tries while leading Trinity in both rushing and tackles, among other defensive stats.

"He is the most decorated player that I've coached in 42 years," Lane said. "Under Armour All-American, No. 1 punter in the nation, Atlanta Journal-Constitution preseason all-state team... But he means so much more to us than just as a kicker."

Much like it would for a baseball pitcher, his linebacker's build – 6-foot-2, 218-pounds – offered some projectable upside that proved just as exciting to Georgia when it offered Register, and quickly secured his verbal commitment, early this past summer.

The chance to become a Bulldog meant a lot, though getting to play college football in what's basically his own backyard was an added blessing that made the decision a no-brainer.

"It is a dream come true to be able to play in my home state," Register said. "It's two hours up the road, you can't beat it. Any certain weekend that I want to I can come home and visit with family, and I don't have to worry about them taking plane flights, or missing games or anything. Being able to basically stay in my community is super cool, and I'm really happy to be able to have that opportunity."

Cummings sticks with Ga. Southern

By CLAY REYNOLDS
Sports Editor

Ty Cummings' recruitment got a little bit crazy after a record-breaking performance against Baldwin in September suddenly launched him into the statewide and national spotlight.

The wave of attention earned the West Laurens running back a much-deserved look from some major programs, and several new opportunities he took into consideration along with existing offers.

In the end, his original commitment to Georgia Southern didn't waver.

The fact that the Eagles were one of the first programs interested, and everything else that made them a great fit to begin with, kept him locked in on a destination in Statesboro that he made official at the start of the NCAA early signing period Dec. 3.

"They were the only one that really talked to me every day and it felt like a connection and a family between them," Cummings said. "They were the closest to me, closest to home, right up the road."

His official signing, amid the Raiders' final preparations for a state semifinal matchup with Jefferson, came with little fanfare earlier in the month, but the senior enjoyed his day to celebrated with loved ones – from teammates and family to coaches and fans – who packed out the WLHS library this past Wednesday, Dec. 17.

Most gathered for photos with Cummings around a table decorated with pieces of Georgia Southern memorabilia, mixed in along with photos and mementoes of the many school and state records broken during his illustrious high school career (of which a recent write-up on the 615-yard, eight-touchdown game in Sports Illustrated might have been the coolest of all).

It should come as no surprise that the newly-selected region 4-AAA player of the year, and the Raiders' class of 2026 as a whole, necessitated a complete overhaul of the school record book, which Laurens County Schools athletic director Jeff Clayton finished updating this past weekend.

Cummings now tops categories for points in a season (204) and career (422), all-purpose touchdowns in a season (34) and career (70) and season (2,822) and career (6,704) all-purpose yards.

The only rushing categories he doesn't lead are single-game attempts (Cummings, even in the Baldwin game, never had more than 30) and carries in a season (Darius Bradford's 244 remains the high mark).



NO PLACE ELSE!: Though he got some increased recruiting interest from other schools as his senior season took off, West Laurens star Ty Cummings would remain an Eagle all the way. He officially landed with Georgia Southern upon signing Dec. 3, but commemorated the occasion with a celebration this past Wednesday/CLAY REYNOLDS

But his bests for yardage in a game (615), season (2,558), career (6,003) and touchdowns in a game (eight), season (31) and all-time (64) will likely be unmatched for generations.

Interestingly enough, Cummings is slated to be joined in Georgia Southern's running back room by the player whose single-game rushing record he broke on that unreal night in September, as former Coffee Trojan Tyreese Woodgett – a transfer portal pickup via GMC – is also a member of its incoming recruiting class.

Both before and after the breakout, no one pursued Cummings harder than the Eagles, whose running backs coach Taylor Reed stayed in near-constant contact to emphasize his centrality to their future plans on the offensive side of the ball. The continual communication, and that relationship going back to the very beginning of the process, counted for a lot when it came time for a final decision.

"It's always been the same," Cummings said. "They've been texting me every day since the summer... Good morning. How've you been? How's the family?"

On the subject of relationships, a strong bond already in place with current and future teammate Grady Howell will allow the two to pick up right about where they left off this past season when Cummings joins him as a freshman in Statesboro this fall.

And as an added bit of déjà vu, Shannon Adkins and Charleston Southern will also be first up on their schedule Sept. 5 at Paulson Stadium.

"That's always been our dream and goal to play with each other at the next level," Cummings said. "And we play against Shannon the first game, so that's gonna be real fun."

With WL history made, Adkins set to continue memorable journey at CSU

By CLAY REYNOLDS
Sports Editor

Shannon Adkins isn't ashamed of the fact that some of the happiest moments of his football career have gotten just a bit emotional.

He admits shedding a tear or two after fulfilling a long-time dream when West Laurens won the region 4-AAA championship to wrap up a perfect regular season back in October. But there were definitely quite a few flowing when another one came true much earlier this year, as he got a phone call out of the blue from a Charleston Southern assistant coach to let him know he'd be getting the opportunity to play Division 1 college football.

The Buccaneers had had their eye on the Raider linebacker since an introduction at some point before his junior season. But one thing wouldn't begin leading to another until the following spring, when CSU linebackers coach Zack Johnson stopped by an unpadding spring workout during April, and got a chance to converse with both Adkins and several of his coaches.

"That day, he shook my hand and we didn't really hear from each other... but we stayed in contact," Adkins said. "Then, Memorial Day, I was driving on the way home, and he just called and said, we're gonna offer you. Once he told me that, I just broke down crying, and it just went from there."

After a visit to Charleston during some rounds later in the summer, and some time to think over his options (which included several other in-state opportunities), he'd commit to the Bucs late this past season.

"What stood out to me was the city," Adkins said. "Where we're from, there's not a lot down here. So me just seeing a different city, it was like a bigger Savannah. I kind of liked how it looked. Water, 30 minutes from the beach. The people down there are nice. It was just a lot of good stuff down there."

While he might have some sentimental moments off the field, Adkins is no softy when it comes to tackling, and plays with



SWIMMERS BEWARE: The Carolina coast and the Big South conference will be under a shark advisory starting in 2026 as West Laurens linebacker Shannon Adkins begins hunting some new waters at Charleston Southern next fall /CLAY REYNOLDS

an edge that made him both the emotional and statistical leader of the West Laurens defense the past two seasons.

On top of delivering some of his signature physicality in short-yardage situations at running back (where he never took a loss on the way to 253 yards and 11 touchdowns this year), he had likely the keenest killer instincts of the Raiders' sharks on the other side of the ball, chalking up 130 total tackles (to get within seven and a half of Johnny O'Neal's single-season record, and move to eighth on the school career list), and a whopping 93 solos, with 10 for loss, two sacks and a hand in five turnovers, plus two defensive touchdowns.

He and the West Laurens defense definitely left a literal mark on some opposing players, though the figurative one made by the Raiders this past season has him more than satisfied with what was accomplished by the team, and its senior class, to cement its status as the program's greatest ever.

If you asked him for one single memory from the fall that summed it all up, it'd definitely be the poignant winning feeling after defeating Westside Augusta to reach a long-awaited mountaintop in game 10.

"I'm gonna have to say the region championship," Adkins said. "There's too many moments. I can't pick one, but that would be my most memorable."

Howell excited longtime teammate will join for next steps in Statesboro

By CLAY REYNOLDS
Sports Editor

The two were by no means any type of package deal, but it's not lost on Grady Howell – who also signed with Georgia Southern Dec. 3 – how rare and neat an opportunity it's going to be to continue playing football at the next level with a running back in Ty Cummings who he's blocked for since middle school.

The strong bond shared between West Laurens' two most highly-recruited offensive standouts, and their other teammates, was one you couldn't miss in the chemistry and sense of shared desire that helped drive the Raiders to their record 13 wins, a region championship and first-ever state semifinal appearance this past fall.

Though Howell will be heading to Georgia Southern a semester early as a spring enrollee next month (Cummings is set to join after a traditional graduation this summer), the history-minded duo will be able to get to work on a new set of goals in a new place as soon as both reunite with sights set on some fresh opportunities in Statesboro.

"It's just unreal the fact that we get to go to the same college," Howell said. "We've built such a bond together. It's going to continue at the next level, and we're going to continue just to win games."

Though he moved from a sophomore and junior-year position at left tackle to right guard (aside from a spot on back on the exterior in an extra-heavy package) this fall, Howell was just as much a cornerstone as many of the Raiders' leading skill players on a roster that began building toward this past fall's success as freshmen.

At 6-foot-5, 280, he was also blessed with



'BORO-BOUND: Grady Howell will also trade out the West Laurens Royal for a slightly darker shade of Blue as another Raider-turned-Eagle next year/CLAY REYNOLDS

some uncommon physical gifts realized well in advance of that first high school season that foreshadowed this eventual D1 potential.

Georgia Southern wasn't the only school interested, but similar to the recruiting experience of Cummings, Howell was consistently blown away by how much of a priority the Eagles placed on getting him.

"When I went on my official visit, that was just the breaking point," he said. "They were showing me all kinds of attention, and welcoming. I knew they wanted me worse than anything."

Fresh off the culmination of a four-year high school career that goes to show what can be accomplished by staying the course, Howell is enthusiastic about getting started with a new chapter that has just as many possibilities.

"I'm definitely most proud of us winning region and going from a 1-9, 2-8 team to growing and turning this thing around into a 13-1 semifinal playoff team," Howell said. "I'm most looking forward to the rivalry games and the experience and the environment I'll be in for the next four years."



DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

Son dissappoints mom over calls

DEAR ABBY: My sister recently became very ill and had to be hospitalized for four days. When I called and told our daughter, she was concerned and supportive. Then, I called our son, "Isaac," and left a message to please call me because it was important. He did not return my call.

A couple days later, my husband left another message for Isaac to call. He finally sent us a picture of himself and his family at Disneyland in California. He was on vacation with his wife and two kids and didn't want to be bothered. After he got back, he waited a few days to call me.

I am hurt and disappointed in Isaac. We live in Texas, and they go to Disneyland three or four times a year. I think Isaac should have taken five minutes to return my call so I could fill him in about the situation with his aunt. Because of this, I no longer feel as close to my son. In fact, I feel I'm very unimportant to him. Am I wrong to be sad and disappointed? Is it common for close relatives not to respond when they are on vacation? My sister is now recovering, but her illness has taken a huge toll on her. -- DISILLUSIONED IN TEXAS

DEAR DISILLUSIONED: What a rude awakening you had. That you are hurt and disappointed is understandable. Have you been in the habit of calling your son at inconvenient times? I can't think of another reason why he would fail to respond to your urgent request to talk with him.

Your son appears to be self-centered and emotionally distanced from you and the family. If this is the first time you have noticed, pay attention to it. If you need a support system as you and your husband grow older, do NOT take it for granted that Isaac will be there for you.

DEAR ABBY: I am a 61-year-old woman who still works full time. My husband is 65 and retired. Unfortunately, he has severe back issues that prevent him from doing much. He's unable to walk or ride long distances or even sleep well at night.

When I get home from work, I cook dinner and clean up, but by then he's asleep in the living room, and I am unable to entertain myself. He controls the TV, and I'm stuck watching old shows from the '50s and '60s. I feel so isolated. We can't go anywhere or do anything. I am the loneliest married woman I know.

My husband is currently good and kind, but he is getting more easily frustrated by everything. Should I stay or go? -- WAFFLING IN WEST VIRGINIA

DEAR WAFFLING: Where you should go is straight to a store that sells television sets. Buy one for yourself and place it in a room your husband doesn't sleep in. This should solve part of your problem. As to your husband's increasing level of frustration, this should be discussed with his doctor. Neither of you is in a particularly happy place right now, but this might be a step in the right direction.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

SUDOKU

								5
			7					
			9	4	2			8
	7				4	6		
3				9			1	
9		1	2					7
	9		5	2	3	1		
		3						
7							2	

Fun By The Numbers
Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

Here's How It Works:
Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

8	7	2	1	3	6	9	5	4
8	7	2	1	3	6	9	5	4
8	7	2	1	3	6	9	5	4
8	7	2	1	3	6	9	5	4
8	7	2	1	3	6	9	5	4
8	7	2	1	3	6	9	5	4
8	7	2	1	3	6	9	5	4
8	7	2	1	3	6	9	5	4
8	7	2	1	3	6	9	5	4

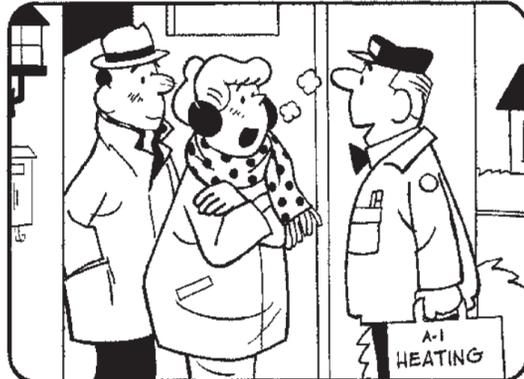
ANSWER:

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Mailbox is smaller. 2. Patch on sleeve is higher. 3. Mouth is open. 4. Roof is different. 5. Cap is smaller. 6. Mitten is missing.

THE Daily Commuter Puzzle by Stella Zawistowski

- ACROSS**
- Hodgepodge category: Abbr.
 - Not fresh
 - Leave out
 - Prefix that means "outer"
 - 1981 John Lennon hit
 - Handle ___ care
 - Tush
 - Agenda parts
 - Not difficult
 - Sticky breakfast pastry: 2 wds.
 - Mother's nickname
 - Very determined
 - Process, as oil
 - Despises
 - Pass out cards
 - In favor of
 - Claus
 - Mexican snacks
 - "___ time no see!"
 - Mexican corn
 - Adhesive liquid
 - "Walk the dog" toys
 - Sluggish
 - Metallic mineral
 - Cry loudly
 - Two-person fights
 - Perth native, for short
 - Catholic clergyman
 - 23rd Greek letter
 - Sherlock Holmes' hat
 - Football kick
 - Burj Khalifa's city
 - "Toy Story" kid
 - Erie or Huron
 - Cynthia of "Wicked"
 - "Smokes"
 - Otherwise
 - Al of baseball
 - Editor's "don't delete"

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
14				15					16				
17				18					19				
20				21					22		23		
24								25	26				
27								28	29				
30	31			32			33		34		35	36	37
38			39			40			41		42		
43			44			45			46		47		
48			49			50			51				
52	53	54						55			56	57	
58				59		60	61	62					
63			64			65			66				
67						68			69				
70						71			72				

Created by Stella Zawistowski

A	P	E	S	L	A	I	N	C	A	M	P
M	A	S	C	T	A	N	G	O	R	A	L
O	N	C	E	A	S	T	I	R	P	I	S
K	E	A	N	U	R	E	E	V	E	S	O
L	I	S	T	E	L	E	M	E	N	T	
F	R	A	C	T	U	R	E	C	E	O	
E	A	T	A	P	O	L	L	O	C	U	B
T	I	E	D	S	E	A	K	N	E	E	
A	L	S	O	S	A	N	I	T	Y	R	A
E	Y	E	A	D	H	E	R	E	N	T	
J	N	K	S	A	C	S	W	A	I	F	
D	U	N	O	U	T	S	T	A	N	D	I
I	R	O	N	L	O	V	E	R	I	N	C
O	S	L	O	A	R	E	N	T	N	E	A
M	E	L	T	R	E	N	D	S	G	D	A

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- DOWN**
- French "Thanks"
 - Strand in winter: 2 wds.
 - Patron of the poor: 2 wds.
 - Layer of the eye
 - Group of pool competitors: 2 wds.
 - Dorothy's dog
 - "So true!"
 - Baby sheep
 - Make certain
 - Have to repay
 - Florida port
 - "Let's do this!": 2 wds.
 - Cooking herb
 - Marching insects
 - Tidy
 - National symbol
 - Slow-moving animal
 - Punch-drunk
 - Toilet paper layer
 - Kanga's kid
 - Cookie holder
 - Tightly bonded
 - Your and my
 - "___ what I did there?"
 - Oodles
 - Volcanic event
 - Uttered
 - Prefix meaning "trillion"
 - Dandelion puller
 - Fragrant flowers
 - Granny Smith, e.g.
 - Customary
 - Submerges
 - Wetland plant
 - Lovers' meetup
 - French currency
 - Hitter's stats: Abbr.
 - Keep for later
 - Casual top

PEARLS BEFORE SWINE

BY STEVE PASTIS



GARFIELD

BY JIM DAVIS



OVERBOARD

BY CHIP DUNHAM

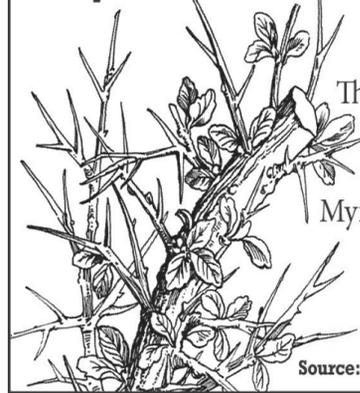


DEFLOCKED

BY JEFF CORRIVEAU



The Garden Bug Myrrh



Myrrh trees grow in the very hot, very dry regions of the Arabian Peninsula, Somalia and Ethiopia. The resin of the myrrh tree has a long and ancient history as a valuable substance in many cultures. To harvest it, the tree itself is wounded repeatedly to cause its resin to "bleed" out, then harden. These secretions are then collected and used to make perfume, incense, flavoring for food and as medicine. Myrrh can be grown in warm, arid parts of the U.S. such as southern California, Arizona, Texas, and Florida.

- Brenda Weaver

Source: healthyplants.com/Myrrh

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Saturday, December 20, 2025

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH BOB JONES

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WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q 1 - Neither vulnerable, as South, you hold: ♠ K 10 7 ♥ A Q 4 2 ♦ K Q 2 ♣ Q 7 6

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♣	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♥	Pass	?	

What call would you make?

Q 5 - North-South vulnerable, as South, you hold:

♠ A K 9 8 ♥ Void ♦ K 7 6 4 ♣ A Q 10 7 6 3

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♥	Pass	2♣	2S
3♣	Pass	?	

What call would you make?

Q 6 - Fast-West vulnerable, as South, you hold:

♠ A K J 10 ♥ K 9 6 4 ♦ K J ♣ Q 9 8

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1NT	Pass	2♣*	Pass
?	Pass	4♦	Pass

What call would you make?

Q 2 - North-South vulnerable, as South, you hold:

♠ K Q 8 3 ♥ A 9 6 3 ♦ A 9 5 ♣ Q 5

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♣	Pass	?	

What call would you make?

Q 3 - Fast-West vulnerable, as South, you hold:

♠ J 10 6 ♥ K 7 5 ♦ Q 7 6 2 ♣ Q 6 4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	Dbl	1♠	1NT
2♣	Pass	Pass	?

What call would you make?

Q 4 - Both vulnerable, as South, you hold:

Look for answers on Monday.

(Bob Jones welcomes readers' responses sent in care of this paper.)

Local 7-day Forecast:

The next 48 hours:

SATURDAY:
63°
 Plenty of sunshine.
 Sunrise: 7:28 a.m.

SATURDAY NIGHT:
34°
 Clear.
 Sunset: 5:29 p.m.

SUNDAY:
68°
 Mostly sunny and nice; quiet weather for early holiday travelers.
 Sunrise: 7:29 a.m.

SUNDAY NIGHT:
39°
 Clear.
 Sunset: 5:29 p.m.

 Monday 12/22 HIGH/LOW 61/35 Intervals of clouds and sun. Sunrise: 7:29 a.m. Sunset: 5:30 p.m.	 Tuesday 12/23 HIGH/LOW 66/44 Pleasant with periods of clouds and sunshine. Sunrise: 7:30 a.m. Sunset: 5:30 p.m.	 Wednesday 12/24 HIGH/LOW 75/50 Partly sunny and very warm. Sunrise: 7:30 a.m. Sunset: 5:31 p.m.	 Thursday 12/25 HIGH/LOW 64/35 Cooler with some sunshine. Sunrise: 7:31 a.m. Sunset: 5:32 p.m.	 Friday 12/26 HIGH/LOW 73/51 Warm with times of clouds and sun. Sunrise: 7:31 a.m. Sunset: 5:32 p.m.
---	---	---	---	---

River levels...
 Oconee (at Dublin) 2.1'
 Ocmulgee (at Macon) 6.33'



TELL IT!

CALL 272-0375, EMAIL CHTELLIT@GMAIL.COM, OR TELL IT! AT COURIERHERALDTODAY.COM

It is so cool that Moe's on Madison has a Christmas pop-up bar during the month of December! I've always seen them in other cities and thought it would be so festive... Way to go Moe's!

I think it's time for the city of Dublin to do something besides downtown and the southside. Other parts of Dublin need attention too. We all pay taxes on the north, south, east and west. Everything in the city limits of Dublin needs to be taken care of.

Why are they always discussing downtown safety? Isn't the whole city supposed to be covered with safety? We need policemen all over the city. The people on the outside of the downtown area need coverage too.

What will Dublin High change their name to after consolidation?

Dublin City would

rather continue to spiral into not existing than admit IGA was a mistake and put those kids in the same building as the other students.

Is the city school system that worried about the rich kids moving back to Trinity or Laurens County than [publicly] admit IGA (and those sign-on bonuses) were paid for with Covid funds?

Are there any steps the city or animal control can take regarding the dogs on the west side of Stone-wall near Kellam Road? It's become very difficult to walk down the street due to this issue.

The multicolored lights popping up at the stores downtown remind me of a vintage Christmas ... I like it. And the sparkling decorated balcony is fantastic! High-five to that person!

I hope my stocking is stuffed with jerky from The Jerk Shop. Have ya'll tasted

that meat yet? And the seasons? Easy to shop for dads there ... and me! It's delicious!

Someone calling in Tell It! is confused. They don't understand the difference between the schools and the local governments. Schools need consolidation not local governments.

Consolidation of city and county governments will save money, reduce confusion, and make services work better for everyone. Consolidation has to happen.

Counties in Georgia already consolidated are outperforming non-consolidated peers in economic development. Dublin-Laurens County needs this boost in development. Consolidation is a must

Mr. Superintendent of LCBOE, please go to the OWL and send home the adult in the building with holes in jeans and phone in hand. Professionals people! My child was sent home for holes in jeans and using phone!

Well Laurens Countians, it looks like the county is doing the same thing the city school system is doing. Giving away our money for bonuses and then going up on our school taxes and stuff.

I was wondering if they would spread the wealth to more than just downtown. Us in the city limits need support also.

Mr. Towns man I enjoyed about your Christmas movies, but you didn't do Christmas songs. I can name three, 33 albums. One happens to be Perry Commo, the other happened to be Burl Ives - one of my favorites - and the other is the king, Elvis.

City of Dublin, Georgia
Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax-2018
 Annual SPLOST Report for Period Ending June 30, 2025
 Projects Funded With Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax

Project	Year Approved	Original Estimated Cost	Current Estimated Cost	Expenditures		Total Amount Expended	Excess Proceeds	Project Behind Schedule	Project Underfunded	Estimated Completion Date
				Prior Years	Current Year					
Road, Street, Bridge, and Drainage Improvements	2017	\$ 4,250,000	\$ 2,653,408	\$ 2,533,308	\$ 27,500	\$ 2,560,808	\$ -	Yes	No	December 2025
Water and Sewer Improvements	2017	\$ 4,000,000	\$ 6,393,144	\$ 740,974	\$ 3,608,414	\$ 4,349,388	\$ -	Yes	No	June 2027
Gas System Improvements	2017	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 359,356	\$ 359,356	\$ -	\$ 359,356	\$ -	No	No	N/A
Public Works Facilities and Equipment	2017	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 1,187,185	\$ 1,187,185	\$ -	\$ 1,187,185	\$ -	No	No	N/A
Public Safety Facilities and Equipment	2017	\$ 1,250,000	\$ 6,750,959	\$ 5,379,832	\$ 1,361,187	\$ 6,741,019	\$ -	Yes	No	December 2025
City Hall and Associated Buildings Improvements	2017	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 456,604	\$ 399,724	\$ 56,880	\$ 456,604	\$ -	No	No	N/A
Recreational, Cultural and Historic Facility Improvements	2017	\$ 2,000,000	\$ 2,068,010	\$ 2,068,010	\$ -	\$ 2,068,010	\$ -	No	No	N/A
Total 2018 SPLOST Projects		\$ 14,500,000	\$ 19,868,666	\$ 12,668,389	\$ 5,053,981	\$ 17,722,370				

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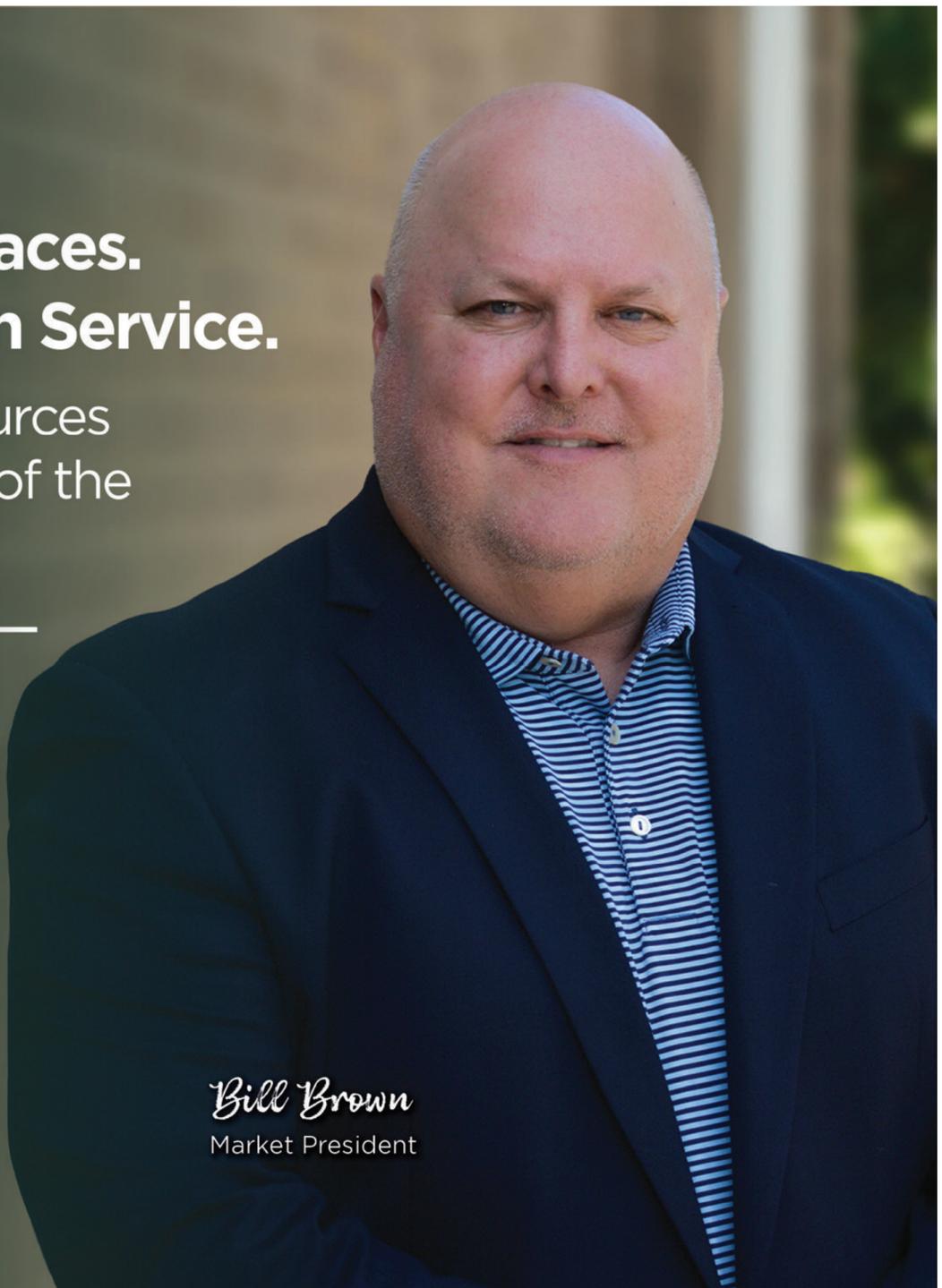


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Dublin Police Department

- Around 6:23 p.m. on Nov. 22, an officer was in the back parking lot of the police department when he heard a single gunshot come from the Gladstone Street area.

The officer patrolled the Gladstone Street area and saw a silver 2013 Volkswagen Passat traveling without taillights. He maneuvered behind the vehicle and activated his emergency lights at a traffic signal, which was red, making it unsafe for him to get out of his patrol car to conduct a traffic stop.

While waiting for the light to turn green, he saw the driver reach over into the passenger seat several times. Once the light turned green, the driver pulled over into a parking lot near North Washington Street and East Jackson Street.

An officer used his K-9 to conduct a free air sniff of the

vehicle and the dog alerted to the driver's side of the vehicle. During a search, they discovered a Glock frame semi-automatic handgun.

The man was charged with firearms possession by a minor, tail lights/lens required and criminal use of an article with altered ID mark.

- On Nov. 22, an officer responded to North Franklin Street and East Gaines Street for a wreck without injuries. An officer met with both drivers and gathered their information. Driver one stated he was traveling southbound when he failed to stop at the stop sign because he couldn't see it from his dim headlights.

Driver two stated she was traveling east on East Gaines when driver one failed to stop. Driver one was issued a citation for failure to stop at the stop sign.

Both vehicles were damaged and needed to be towed. While running driv-



POLICE BEAT...

er two's information, her license came back suspended. The driver, Jessica Carswell, 29, was charged with driving while license suspended or revoked. She was taken to the police department to be fingerprinted and released.

- Andrew Elijah Martin, 59, was charged with driving under the influence, driving while license suspended or revoked and tag/registration requirements on South Jefferson Street around 12:26 a.m. on Nov. 23 for a DUI investigation.

Once on scene, officers met with Martin who said he had one beer a while ago. The investigation led to Martin being arrested. He was taken to the Laurens

County Jail for booking.

- Patrice Denise Williams, 42, was charged with theft by shoplifting around 12:04 p.m. on Dec. 1 at TJ Maxx on Veterans Boulevard.

An officer responded to the store in reference to a shoplifting call. The officer met with a loss prevention employee who said that a woman, identified as Williams, had been seen putting items into her cart and then walking out of the front of the store to her red Kia sedan.

Officers saw Williams who told them she had purchased the items but later retracted the statement and stated that she had taken

two kid's dolls and some pieces of kid's clothing from the store without paying.

Williams was transported by officers to the police department to be fingerprinted and then released on summons.

Laurens County Sheriff's Office

- On Dec. 8, around noon, a deputy initiated a traffic stop on a stolen 2010 Ford F-150 near Highway 19 South. The investigation led to the arrests of Kendra Rena Carter, 42, of Baxley and James Josh Zacker, 48, of Baxley.

Zacker was charged with possession of scheduled II drugs, theft by receiving stolen property and driving while license suspended/revoked while Carter was charged with possession of scheduled II drugs.

- On Dec. 4, around 2:30 p.m., a deputy met with a man about an incident on

Salter Moon.

- A theft occurred on Wyatt Martin Road in East Dublin around 10:27 a.m. on Oct. 3.

- On Dec. 9, around 12:30 p.m., a deputy talked to the complainant on the phone about something that happened between him and his ex-coworker on Dec. 4.

Editor's note: This information is public record and was taken from reports of local law enforcement agencies. These reports do not reflect guilt or innocence. An "arrest" does not always indicate incarceration. Readers are cautioned that people may have similar names. Police Beat does not identify minor children, victims of sexual assault, suicide attempts or medical conditions. Cases dismissed do not appear if the newspaper is notified before deadline.



VA holds Christmas event for veterans

The Carl Vinson VA Medical Center recently held a VA holiday shop for the veterans. Lynda Prymula sent in these pictures from the festivities. If you have any Christmas-related event pictures, please send them to tchnewsreporter@gmail.com/SPECIAL PHOTOS



RELIGION DIGEST

The Mount Tilla Baptist Church Family will hold a Christmas play on Dec. 21 at 11 a.m. called "The Trial of Mary, Mother of Jesus." Directors are Catherine Rozar and Luciana Kemp. Everyone is welcomed.

Free Vision Deliverance Outreach Ministry, 540 Charles W. Manning Sr. Way, will hold a service to bring in the New Year at 10 p.m. on Dec. 31. The theme will be The Swift Shift.

The House of Refuge Ministries International, 149 Central Dr., invites everyone to its New Year's Eve service on Wednesday, Dec. 31 at 10:30 p.m.

The First Rehoboth Baptist Association of Montrose will have a worship service on Jan. 4 at 3 p.m. Vice moderator Rev. Eric Carswell and Upper Mount Zion Baptist Church of Jeffersonville will lead the service. Everyone is invited.

Religion Digest is for special services and events at our local churches. Please send in announcements to tchnewsreporter@gmail.com by 9 a.m. every Thursday to appear in the upcoming Saturday edition of The Courier Herald.

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SCHOOL HEARING
Continued from page 1

Green said his own wife is a teacher, and "when you sign a contract, you expect to be there for the whole year." However, he acknowledged the school system's precarious financial situation. Both the judge and school attorney Brian Smith likened suing the broke school system to "trying to get blood out of a turnip."

The lawsuit seeks declaratory relief that the school "has no authority to unilaterally terminate" contracts and a writ of mandamus requiring that the board reinstate White to her position for the entirety of the 2025-2026 school year.

"Hypothetically if I grant the writ of mandamus, have I not opened the floodgates for every other aggrieved employee to come in, and at some point you're going to have 800 breach-of-contracts you can't pay?" Green asked.

"They don't have the money. You're going to have endless copycat lawsuits wanting the same relief, and they won't be able to pay anybody. Every single person who worked there is going to sue, saying, 'Hey, I should have gotten paid but I haven't been.'"

Smith argued the district's reduction-in-force policy allows the school board to terminate employees for a lack of funding. However, White's lawyer, PAGE attorney Ellen Schoolar, countered that the policy allows firings only if funding decreases, and she produced budget documents and an updated cashflow statement showing the schools actually received more funding than budgeted for the current fiscal year.

"There has not been a decrease in funds. We've established that. They just want to use the money for something else because somebody dropped the



Attorney Brian Smith questions Dublin Interim School Superintendent Marcee Pool during a hearing in Laurens County Superior Court on Tuesday. Pool testified the school district has no money and was forced to eliminate jobs because of an inaccurate budget and "financial mismanagement"/PAYTON TOWNS III

ball," Schoolar said. "They don't have answers for how that money went missing. But they did have the funds to keep Ms. White employed. They just chose to use those funds in a different way."

Pool, who was curriculum director before taking over for former Superintendent Fred Williams in October and had no role in financial decisions before then, confirmed the documents but disputed the numbers on the budget approved in June, before the start of the new fiscal year.

"The budget adopted by the board is not the same thing as it being accurate," Pool said. "This document is not accurate. We know that now. The expenditures have increased beyond what that documents says. The district had more expenditures that it had revenue."

Pool, who was the only school official attending the hearing, also testified that



PAGE attorney Ellen Schoolar (center) is representing White and four other Dublin City Schools teachers who lost their jobs to budget cuts. Schoolar argued Tuesday that the city school board should not be "given a pass because they're saying, 'Now we can't afford it.'"/PAYTON TOWNS III

although she was not superintendent at the time, it was her understanding that the school board learned that it

was operating in a deficit in January 2025. Then in August, school officials were

notified by the state that the district owed more than \$6 million in overdue pay-

ments to the State Health Benefit Plan for employee insurance.

State officials also found other "operational deficiencies" and determined the system faced a deficit of more than \$13.9 million, if nothing changed, by the time the fiscal year ends next June. Even with the job reductions and other cuts, the current projected deficit is about \$9 million, Pool said.

"Where did that money go?" Schoolar asked.

Though she was not involved in financial decisions at the time, Pool blamed the deficit on the incorrect budget and "mismanagement of funds."

"We hired too many people, and we did not have the funds," she said.

The judge said his decision will be based on the school district's financial position in February 2025 – when White signed her new contract – and on whether district officials breached her contract.

Schoolar said White and other employees should not pay for the school district's poor past choices. A summary report from the state Department of Education found the system's deficit crisis on "financial mismanagement, lack of fundamental financial knowledge and processes, and a culture of excess related to programs and personnel."

The reports also said the school system used COVID funding "to mask the district's underlying financial/budgetary issues" and allowed the district to report positive fund balances for several years.

"Whether it was former employee or not, the district has put itself in this position," said Schoolar. "They were hiring new employees when they knew they had a negative balance in the general fund. I don't think they should be given a pass because they're saying, 'Now we can't afford it.'"



we wish you a very

Merry Christmas

and Happy New Year



Back Row, left to right: Alan Green, Dana Hardison, Lindsay McLeod, Kelly Newsom, Wendy Brooks, Brooke Player, Kelly Tuten, Brandi Deaton, Lauren Padgett. Front Row, left to right: Regina Andrews, FNP-BC, Surrender Malhotra, M.D., Shannon Gay, FNP-C

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COUNTY SCHOOLS
Continued from page 1

The board approved board meeting times for 5:30 p.m. in 2026, with its work sessions to begin at 5 p.m. The work sessions for 2026 will be held on Jan. 6, Feb. 10, March 10, April 14, May 12, Aug. 11, Sept. 8, Oct. 6, Nov. 10 and Dec. 8. There are no work sessions in June or July. The board's regular meetings will be held on Jan. 8, Feb. 12, March 12, April 16, May 14, June 11, July 9, Aug. 13, Sept. 10, Oct. 8, Nov. 12 and Dec. 10.

In other meeting news:

- Garnto showed the board a graphic of the layout of the Eastside campus and where the new East Laurens Elementary School would be, and the location of the new ELMS athletic complex.
- The Clean School Award went to West Laurens Middle School.
- The board room art was provided by East Laurens Middle School. Some of the art, which had a Christmas theme, was brought over to the old West Laurens High building.
- The WLHS competition and game day cheerleaders were recognized for their seasons. The competition squad won region and finished third in state. Game day cheerleaders finished fourth out of 25 teams in state.

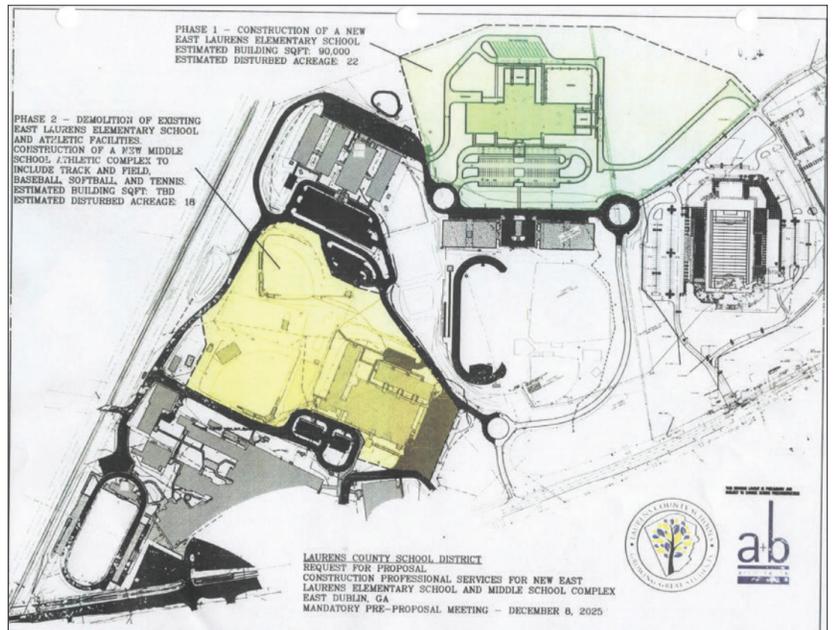


Board chairman Jarvis Wilcher shakes hands after handing Clifford Garnto a plaque for his years of service with the school system/PAYTON TOWNS III

Garnto brought up options for tracks at WLHS and ELHS. He wanted the board to have information on four different bids on the track surfaces.

"We'll be recommending the top dollar one because it gets an average of about 10 to 12 years out of those surfaces," Garnto said. "I'm just giving you this for general information, and it will come as a proposal next month."

- The board approved the transfer of Mikahaila Dixon from SWLE to Heartland as parapro.
- The board approved the retirements of Lili Bozeman, Shayna Morgan and Jennifer Tucker, all teachers at East Laurens Primary School.
- The board approved the following new hires: Brittany Allen (food nutrition assistant at SWLE); Theodore Eagy (bus driver for Laurens



The school board saw plans for the new East Laurens Elementary School and middle school athletic complex/LAURENS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

County Schools); Julie Frix Kersey (parapro at ELPS); (teacher at ELMS); Kate- Raymond Palmer (custodian at ELPS); and Reid Ragan (teacher at ELMS); Carley

- The board named Jackson Carter as a community coach for WLHS boys soccer.



Local and state officials gather with students and their new books/PAYTON TOWNS III

READING PROGRAMS
Continued from page 1

aligned classroom and community strategies.

"Healthy communities depend on strong schools and a strong workforce. By supporting early literacy together, we are making a long-term investment in the families and businesses that make Dublin thrive," Kight said.

These events reflect a shared commitment to improving early childhood literacy by increasing access to books, supporting fam-

ilies, and aligning school and community efforts from birth to age 5. The partnership is part of a broader effort among Georgia communities to close early literacy gaps through collaborative strategies that prepare young learners for kindergarten and long-term success.

SDES was the first stop for the reading events.

"The early years shape a child's entire learning journey," said Marcee Pool, interim superintendent of Dublin City Schools. "When

families and schools join with community partners, we can create stronger foundations for every student who walks through our doors."

About two hours later, officials traveled to SWLE to do the same program.

"Our focus is on giving young children every opportunity to thrive," said O.J. Hall, superintendent of Laurens County Schools. "This collaboration expands access to books and strengthens the support families receive during the

FATAL FIRE
Continued from page 1

Dublin Fire and Laurens County Fire departments arrived on the scene and put the fire out and notified me to come to the scene because there was a deceased body

lying inside there."

Stanley pronounced the man dead at the scene at 5:01 a.m. The man had been sent to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation Crime Lab in Atlanta for positive identification purposes and

to determine the cause of death.

"We're going to have to identify him through dental records," Stanley said. "I'm going to hold off giving the name until I make sure it's him."

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