



Will Curry, President of Curry Companies, discusses the project with Dublin City Council members Thursday morning/PAYTON TOWNS III

City Council OKs rezoning for 65-home subdivision

By PAYTON TOWNS III
Senior Reporter

The construction of 65 residences off Woodlawn Drive moved a step closer to beginning after the Dublin City Council approved a rezoning Thursday.

During a meeting, council approved the rezoning of the property from a neighborhood business zone (B3) to high density residential development zone (R5) and will be directly across from Woodlawn Apartments.

"The R5 zone will allow for more homes in a smaller acreage than what is normally allowed in a R1 zone," said Dublin City Manager Josh Powell.

Will Curry, president of Curry Companies, called Thursday's vote the first big step to an even bigger

process for what will be 65-single family homes on 22-acres of land.

"Now we can get plans, pricing, costing, developers and builders," he said. "This was a very important step."

Currently there is no start date. Curry said there will be a lot of required infrastructure work.

"They will be a little bit tighter together, but it's very consistent with other developments throughout the city of Dublin and other neighboring communities," Curry said.

Curry explained more details to the council during a public hearing. Almost a year ago, Curry said they engaged with partners from Hilton Head, South Carolina, to help them design, draft and work on the concept they have initially

called the Madison Place Subdivision.

"This is not just the back of a napkin drawing," Curry said before handing out a drawing of the subdivision. "Wood & Partners (landscape architecture land planning) was also engaged on Moore Station Village. This development is intended for attainable and affordable housing and that is what we are attempting to do."

Curry showed where there would be "a very nice" entry feature into the subdivision.

"There will be a water feature people can see as they are driving in that will also have a walking trails around it," Curry said. "The intent would have a nice, upscale

CITY COUNCIL
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'Thanks'giving meal

Local dealership feeding first responders as a show of gratitude

By PAYTON TOWNS III
Senior Reporter

Fire trucks and law enforcement vehicles parked along the side of a business might have the look that something bad is happening.

But every first Friday around noon, first responders travel to Dublin Nissan to enjoy a meal thanks to the business' owner and employees.

"It's great that we have a community that supports law enforcement," said Laurens County Sheriff Larry Dean. "I spend two or more hours watching the national news at night and see what is going on in other parts of the world and that makes me so thankful to be living in Dublin and Laurens County where we are supported by our citizens so much."

Don Carswell, general

manager at Dublin Chevrolet Buick GMC Nissan, began thinking of a way they could honor first responders a few years ago.

"After thinking about it, we decided that we could feed them," Carswell said.

In February 2025, he and his employees decided to begin what they called "First Responders First Friday." On that day, they invite the first responders from EMT, troopers, sheriff's deputies, officers, firefighters and even emergency room workers, the Carl Vinson VA Medical Center police and workers with Air Evac.

"We have skipped a month here and there," Carswell said. "A few times, we have served something more special, but most of the time we serve hot dogs and hamburgers. We've had a good turnout. We've had anywhere from probably



First responders from the Dublin Fire Department, Laurens County Sheriff's Office and Dublin Police Department enjoyed the recent luncheon at Dublin Nissan/PAYTON TOWNS III

70 to 100 first responders come out. It's been cool, and we want it to grow."

This is a time where Carswell hopes the work-

ers from different agencies will spend the time getting to know each other. For the dealership, it is time to say thanks. And the dealership

is not the only one in this endeavor.

Cochran Brothers has helped, and Brian Nash, from Ole Times, chipped in

by helping with a Thanks-giving meal. Williamson's

FIRST RESPONDERS
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DAR Good Citizen awards, from left: Jefferson Davis V (Dublin High School), Jemaryon Chapman (East Laurens High School), Kyndal Claire Kyzer (Johnson County High School), Ansley Nicole Kilpatrick (Trinity Christian School) and Darci Ryan Dixon (West Laurens High School)/PAYTON TOWNS III



The John Laurens Chapter essay winners, from left: Gregorionna Hamilton (East Laurens Elementary), Malcolm Vickers (Northwest Laurens Elementary), Journie Holton (West Laurens Middle School), Presley Dixon (West Laurens Middle), Trinity Mack (West Laurens High) and Bethany Sumner (Trinity Christian School). Not shown: Chatman Hill Cranford (Trinity Christian)/PAYTON TOWNS III

John Laurens DAR chapter honors essay, Good Citizens award winners

STAFF REPORTS

The John Laurens Chapter National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution presented

awards to middle and high school essay contest winners and announced the Good Citizen awards on Thursday, Feb. 5, at the

Moore Station Village clubhouse.

For the DAR Good Citizen award, Jefferson Davis V (Dublin High School),

Jemaryon Chapman (East Laurens High School), Kyndal Claire Kyzer (Johnson County High School), Ansley Nicole Kilpatrick (Trinity Christian School) and Darci Ryan Dixon (West Laurens High School) were the representatives from the schools.

Chapman was named the chapter winner.

For the essay winners, Gregorionna Hamilton,

from East Laurens Elementary School, was declared the school and chapter winner for fifth grade. Malcolm Vickers was also honored as the Northwest Laurens Elementary school winner.

Journie Holton, from West Laurens Middle School, was named the school and chapter winner for seventh grade while Presley Dixon, also from WLMS, was declared the

school and chapter winner for eighth grade.

For high school, the chapter award is not given for each grade. Only one winning essay was sent to the district level from entries by Bethany Sumner, 10th grader from TCS, Chatman Hill Cranford, ninth grader from TCS and Trinity Mack, 11th grader, from WLHS. Sumner was named the chapter winner.

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Senate focuses on tax breaks, mentally ill in mid-year budget

By TY TAGAMI
Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA — Taxpayers, rural drivers and the mentally ill were among the winners in the mid-year budget adopted by the Georgia Senate on Friday.

Financially distressed college students and metro Atlanta drivers were not exactly the losers, but they would get less than initially proposed in the Senate's version of the \$42.3 billion amended budget for the fiscal year through June.

The state House started the budget based on a blueprint from Gov. Brian Kemp. On Friday, it was the Senate's turn to make some edits.

Both the House and Senate kept Kemp's \$1.2 billion rebate to taxpayers that would break down to \$250 per single filer, \$375 for heads of household and \$500 for couples filing jointly.

But the House added more gravy with an \$850 million property tax grant for homeowners, and the Senate liked that line item.

Several senators are running for higher office, and voters tend to appreciate tax breaks, especially in an election year when affordability is key.

The property tax rebate would work out to about \$500 per homeowner in urban areas and \$300 in rural areas, said Sen. Blake Tillery, R-Vidalia.

"We are laser focused on affordability," said Tillery, who is running for lieutenant governor and, as chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, helped craft the Senate's budget.

What the Senate gives, the Senate can take away. Under its proposal, state employees would get a smaller bonus than Kemp wanted. He had put a \$2,000 one-time pay supplement in the budget at a cost of over \$600 million, but the Senate saved a couple hundred million by knocking the payment down to \$1,250.

The Senate also kneecapped a new program for college students that Kemp had touted. Georgia is still on a path to give tax-



Sen. Blake Tillery, R-Vidalia, discusses House Bill 973 on the Senate Floor at the Georgia Capitol on Friday, Feb. 20. This legislation is the amended fiscal year 2026 state budget /ASHTIN BARKER, Capitol Beat News Services

payer dollars to a need-based scholarship fund called Georgia DREAMS.

But instead of the \$325 million endowment allotted by Kemp, the Senate kept only \$100 million.

The Senate also slashed Kemp's idea for a \$50 million grant to communities to

address homelessness, trimming it to \$10 million.

Senators needed the money for other priorities. They shifted \$15 million to the Department of Veterans Service and put a whopping \$409 million toward construction of a regional hospital for the mentally

ill who often wind up housed in local jails by default.

The House had introduced money into the budget for the same project, but it was only \$27 million to get it started.

Lt. Gov. Burt Jones, a Republican running for governor, said all could agree that mental health services in Georgia were lacking.

"This is not a partisan issue," he said. Judging by the 49-1 vote to pass the budget, or House Bill 973, he was right.

The Senate made several changes Kemp might appreciate. The governor had proposed \$88 million for an aerospace building at Georgia Tech, but the House had pared that back to \$15 million. The Senate's budget restored the funding.

But there were some bumps in the road.

The Senate cut nearly \$100 million from Kemp's \$2 billion in improvements to I-75 south of Atlanta and to state Route 316, from Gwinnett County to Athens.

Yet the Senate added back \$15 million that the House had trimmed from Kemp's \$100 million to fix rural bridges, some dating to the 1940s, according to Tillery.

Senators also added \$30 million for rural infrastructure projects, and they expanded the \$35 million improvement program for natural gas infrastructure that had been pitched by Kemp and endorsed by the House.

In the Senate's budget there is now \$55 million to deliver methane to customers as a means of spurring economic development.

"There are areas across our state where gas capacity is so weak that we can't even put another Burger King on the line," Tillery said.

The House said later Friday that it did not like the Senate's changes. So, the budget will now go to a conference committee where a handful of lawmakers will negotiate the finer details.

After they pass the mid-year amendments, they will look to the full budget for the fiscal year that starts in July.

TO YOUR GOOD HEALTH

Understand the relationship between HRT and UTIs

By DR. KEITH ROACH
Kibng Features

DEAR DR. ROACH: In a recent column, you wrote that hormone replacement therapy (HRT) should be considered in elderly women to prevent urinary tract infections (UTIs) by stopping bacteria from getting into the bladder in the first place. How does this work? Which is better: pills or vaginal creams? Isn't HRT in postmenopausal women

frowned upon these days?

I also wonder whether HRT in elderly men also helps prevent UTIs. (My husband, who died recently at 82, had a succession of UTIs during the final months of his life, which may have contributed to his death from pneumonia and sepsis.) -- J.H.

ANSWER: I'm glad that you wrote because I didn't make this point clear enough. I specifically meant topical estrogen that can be a cream, tablet or ring -- all of which deliver estrogen locally. The tissue lining of the vulva and vagina are estrogen-sensitive, and the low levels of estrogen that occur after menopause often cause them to atrophy.

Not only can this cause dryness and discomfort, the urethra sometimes doesn't seal properly. Bacteria can then get into the urine and make their way up into the bladder (and sometimes into the kidneys). Having a healthy lining reduces the risk of UTIs. Topical estrogen is not considered HRT.

While oral estrogen (which is considered HRT) also helps these tissues, there is an increased risk of heart disease if systemic estrogen (a pill or patch) is started at age 60 or more than 10 years after menopause, so topical estrogen is safer. Topical estrogen is not appreciably absorbed,

so it does not have the potential for harm in the heart or the potential for blood clots.

People with estrogen-sensitive tumors should still discuss topical estrogen with their oncologists as small amounts are absorbed when the lining is atrophied.

HRT is not an effective treatment to prevent UTIs in men. Although there are several reasons that older men can get UTIs, the most important one is that the prostate gland enlarges, making it more difficult for the bladder to be drained. In men with enlarged prostate glands, the urine can become "stale" and a breeding ground for bacteria. Testosterone replacement has many potential benefits, but it does not shrink the prostate. (It's the reverse, unfortunately.)

Shrinking the prostate with medication or a surgical procedure is occasionally necessary in men with recurrent UTIs.

DEAR DR. ROACH: For at least a decade, I've had CT scans that noted an incidental "small" liver cyst. The latest CT scan mentions that the liver cyst is 3 cm. Is a 3-cm liver cyst considered small? I am trying to understand if the actual measurement now means that it's no longer

small. If this is the case, do I need to see a specialist?

Thank you for any assistance you can provide. (I'm now 60, but the cyst was first noted when I was in my late 40s.) -- K.B.

ANSWER: Incidental findings on CT scans or MRIs are common, and sometimes it's not clear what to do. But as we have gained more experience with liver (and kidney) cysts, there is now an accepted regimen. These cysts are common, with perhaps 10% to 20% of people having them appear in advanced imaging like a CT scan.

For a "simple" liver cyst (meaning that the cyst appears to be a single fluid-filled space with no walls and no enhancement with contrast) that is less than 4 cm, the risk is very small; no further testing is required for the cyst. The fact that yours is still small after at least a decade is further evidence that this is not one to worry about.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu.

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MOMENTS IN TIME

* On March 9, 1841, at the end of a historic case, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled, with just one dissenting vote, that the enslaved Africans who seized control of the Amistad slave ship had been illegally forced into bondage and thus were free under American law.

* On March 10, 1982, all solar system planets aligned on the same side of the sun in an event called a syzygy. Fortunately, and contrary to the natural catastrophes predicted in the 1974 bestselling book "The Jupiter Effect" by John Gribbin and Stephen H. Plagemann (including an earthquake in the San Andreas fault), Earth went on with business as usual.

* On March 11, 1997, former Beatle Paul McCartney added "Sir" to his name when he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II for his "services to music" at London's Buckingham Palace. Three of his children accompanied him, but wife Linda was unable to attend as she was dealing with breast cancer, which would end her life a little more than a year later.

* On March 12, 1988, a sudden hailstorm caused a stampede of fans at a soccer match in Kathmandu, Nepal's National Stadium, killing at least 70 people and injuring hundreds more.

* On March 13, 1942, the Quartermaster Corps of the United States Army began training dogs for the newly established War Dog Program, or "K-9 Corps." More than a million dogs served on both sides during World War I, the most famous being Rin Tin Tin, who made his film debut in 1922.

* On March 14, 1979, Judy Chicago's art installation "The Dinner Party" debuted at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, earning praise for its feminist focus as well as controversy over its use of genital imagery. It remains on permanent display at the Brooklyn Museum in New York City.

* On March 15, 2021, Deb Haaland became the first Indigenous person in American history to serve as a cabinet secretary when she was sworn in as Secretary of the Interior.

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OBITUARIES

Donald Baker

Mr. Donald Baker of Dublin, passed away on Thursday, Feb. 19, 2026. Funeral arrangements are incomplete but will be announced later.

Services by Dudley Funeral Home of Dublin. servicesbydudley.com.

Burnell Joyceann Washington

Ms. Burnell Joyceann Washington of Dublin, peacefully transitioned on Friday, Feb. 20, 2026. Funeral arrangements are incomplete but will be announced later.

Services by Dudley Funeral Home of Dublin. servicesbdudley.com.

Ricky Stuckey

Mr. Ricky Stuckey of Macon, passed away on Saturday, Feb. 21, 2026. Funeral arrangements are incomplete but will be announced later.

Services by Dudley Funeral Home of Dublin. servicesbydudley.com.

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Dublin Police Department

- Nathan Lowe, 34, was charged with simple battery and criminal trespass damage to property on Woodland Street around 5:55 a.m. on Feb. 4.

An officer responded about a domestic call. The complainant advised dispatch that the other party had left the location in a Grand Marquis. While en route, the officer saw a Grand Marquis passing him on West Street near Calhoun Street. A traffic stop was made and the officers identified the driver as Lowe.

The man told officers he had gotten into a verbal altercation with a woman. He said he was trying to get around her and fell into the door causing damage to it. Another officer asked Lowe how a hole got placed in the wall. Lowe stated the hole was old.

The complainant said Lowe woke up fussing with her. The woman said she took her kids to school and returned to the residence. She said the man pushed her up against the wall, causing the hole. The officer saw wood chips on the floor. The woman said Lowe then punched the door, causing damage.

Lowe was arrested and transported to jail.

- On Feb. 6, around 1:49 p.m., an officer was dispatched to Aldi's on Highway 80 in reference to a shoplifting in progress.

An officer met with a store employee who stated there was a man, later identified as James Derik Addison, 50, who had shoplifted several times from the store. As they were talking, Addison exited the store without any items and got into a Honda Accord, attempting to leave the location.

The officer stopped Addison as he was about to exit the parking lot. The officer collected Addison's identification to do a barment and it came back suspended. He was taken into custody at that time. He was taken to the police department where he was charged with driving while license suspended or revoked.

- On Feb. 6, around 11:19 a.m., an officer saw a seat belt



POLICE BEAT...

violation in a blue Chevrolet Malibu at the intersection on North Jefferson Street and Gaines Street.

The officer initiated a traffic stop on the vehicle. Before exiting the patrol vehicle, dispatch told the officer that the vehicle did not have insurance. The officer met with the driver, who identified herself as Sheryll Garrett, 37, who did not have a license to provide to the officer.

Both the passenger and the driver had their seat belts behind their backs. The officer noticed a smell of marijuana coming from the vehicle, and searched it based on probably cause. Nothing was found in the vehicle.

Garrett's name and date of birth was run through dispatch and came back that her license was suspended due to failure to appear. She was arrested and transported to the police department where she was fingerprinted and released on the charged of driving while license suspended and cited for the no seat belt violation.

Laurens County Sheriff's Office

- Tiffany Smith, 40, of Forsyth, was charged with driving under the influence at the intersection of Buckeye and Central Drive around 1:51 a.m. on Jan. 30. A deputy responded to that location to assist the East Dublin Police Department on a traffic stop.

- On Feb. 3, around 8:04 p.m., a deputy served a warrant on Taylor Rowland Road. The incident led to Michael Shane Loyd, 47, of Dexter, being charged with obstruction of law enforcement officers.

- A counterfeit bill was found at the Bank of Dudley on Second Street in Dudley on Feb. 3.

- A deputy responded to a scam on Sixth Street in Dudley around 1:56 p.m. on Jan. 28.

- Around 3:04 p.m. on Jan. 29, a deputy talked with a man about custody issues on Rockledge Road.

- A vehicle was stolen on Highway 199 around 11:43 p.m. on Jan. 28.

- On Jan. 28, around 11:12 p.m., during routine patrol on Rock Springs Road, a deputy made contact with a black F-150 sitting on the roadside. This led to Bailey Jonathan Brantley, 28, of Alamo, being charged with driving under the influence of alcohol.

- Darron Eugene Busbee, 54, and Gregory Lee Hightower, 48, both of East Dublin, were charged with theft by taking from a building on Carolyn Avenue around 1:17 p.m. on Jan. 28.

- A woman walked into the sheriff's office to talk about a fraud report that happened on North Lake Drive around 12:54 p.m. on Jan. 28.

- A deputy heard about a fraud that happened on Railroad Street in Dexter around 2:36 p.m. on Jan. 28.

- A deputy talked with a man at his house around 11 a.m. on Feb. 2 in reference to a report.

- On Feb. 2, around 10 a.m., a deputy received a phone call in reference to several stop signs missing in the area of Rawls Road and Ben Hall Lake Road/Pleasant Way Road and Jackson Lake Road.

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.

The high cost of being the 'Top State for Business'

Last September, Area Development, a trade publication serving the economic development community, crowned Georgia as the nation's "Top State for Business" yet again.

Gov. Brian Kemp, of course, promptly issued a press release headlined "Georgia No. 1 for Business for 12th Straight Year." The governor and other Republican state leaders naturally reaped a fair-sized PR bonanza from media coverage around the state.

A couple of weeks ago, when the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis issued state- and county-level per capita income data for 2024, it somehow escaped the attention of the governor and his communications team. Or maybe not. After all, "We're 41st in Per Capita Income" doesn't have quite the same ring to it.

These are, I submit, not unrelated stories. This contrast — between celebrated business rankings and sagging incomes — has defined much of Georgia's recent economic history. Indeed, when Area Development bestowed its 2021 honors on Georgia and Texas (co-winners that year), it made the connection explicit, noting: "Companies choosing locations in Georgia and Texas appreciate the fact that they both have wages below the average in more than half of all other states..."

Well, yes. Georgia first snared Area Development's "Top State for Business" honors in 2014, just as its per capita income performance was bottoming out (for the first time) under then-Gov. Nathan Deal, the state's second Republican governor pretty much since the dawn of time.

Deal's predecessor, Sonny Perdue, the state's first Republican governor pretty much since the dawn of time, had inherited a statewide PCI that was right at 95% of the national average from Roy Barnes, the last Democratic governor. When Barnes left office at the end of 2002, Georgia ranked 25th nationally among the 50 states; by the time Perdue hung it up eight years later, we were down to 85.7% of the national average and ranked 40th. No state dropped further in rank during that period.

I should probably pause here to emphasize that improving Georgia's citizens' incomes was once regarded as an important economic development objective. Whether that's



By CHARLIE HAYSLETT

TROUBLE IN GOD'S COUNTRY

still the case is unclear. In the 1980s, Gov. Joe Frank Harris and his economic development chief, the late George Berry, focused heavily on elevating PCI across the state. Berry, who served as commissioner of industry, trade and tourism (since renamed the Department of Economic Development), jawboned the issue in speeches throughout the state.

Toward the end of Harris' time in office, the state developed a job tax credit program designed to steer jobs to the state's poorest counties, based on a formula that combined the unemployment, poverty and PCI rates of all 159 counties. That program was implemented under Gov. Zell Miller, who oversaw continued progress in PCI. Barnes, who followed Miller into the governor's office, told me in an interview a few years ago that Harris had "educated me" on the importance of PCI.

Perdue may not have had the benefit of Harris' tutorial. He oversaw a downhill slide in PCI performance that extended through Deal's two terms and has shown little sign of recovering under Kemp. The latest batch of PCI data, for 2024, puts Georgia's statewide average at 86.1% of the national average; the 41st-place rank is the state's lowest in at least a half-century.

That statewide drop, though, hides an even starker divide once you drill down to the county level.

A dead-even 100 of Georgia's 159 counties landed in the bottom national quartile for 2024 PCI performance. If those counties constituted a state unto themselves, it would replace Mississippi at the bottom of the nation's PCI rankings. Mississippi's 2024 per capita income was \$52,074, according to the latest BEA report.

The Not-So-Great State of Bottom Quartile Georgia could only muster an

average PCI of \$45,038 — more than \$7,000 less than Mississippi. This continues a pattern that has been developing and hardening for more than a decade now. Further, those 100 counties are home to 3.3 million Georgians, more than any other state but Texas.

Texas, with triple our population, had 3.6 million people living in the bottom quartile in 2024. Hapless Wheeler County, Georgia, ranked dead last, 3,115th out of 3,115 counties, and not for the first time.

That bottom-quartile list includes not just rural counties but also most of the state's major regional hub cities, which play a vital role in anchoring neighboring rural areas. These include Dalton (Whitfield County); Rome (Floyd County); Athens (Clarke County); Augusta (Richmond County); Statesboro (Bulloch County); Dublin (Laurens County); and Valdosta (Lowndes County).

A few made it into the third national quartile: Columbus (Muscogee); Macon (Bibb); and Albany (Dougherty). Savannah (Chatham) and Thomasville (Thomas) made the second national quartile. The only South Georgia county to make the top national quartile for PCI in 2024 was Glynn County.

In one of Georgia's great political ironies, the small rural counties at the bottom of the state's PCI rankings are overwhelmingly Republican. In the 2022 governor's race, 86 of Georgia's 100 bottom-quartile counties sided with Kemp and over Democrat Stacey Abrams and gave him, collectively, 73.1% of their vote. The average 2024 per capita income for those 86 counties was \$45,570, just over 62% of the national average. At the risk of being uncharitable, it seems fair to suggest that Gov. Kemp and his team are earning their No. 1 State for Business honors, in part, on the backs of their poorest supporters.

Also clear from the latest batch of PCI data: Georgia continues to lose ground to North Carolina when it comes to the economic livelihood of their citizens.

North Carolina now outperforms Georgia in PCI and is expanding its advantage. From 1980 through 2005, Georgians enjoyed higher average per capita incomes than North Carolinians. But that began to change amid the collapse in Georgia's PCI performance. The Georgia and North Carolina PCI lines crossed in 2007, and North Carolina has maintained a higher average PCI for most of the time since then.

Since 2020, North Carolina has been steadily expanding its advantage, to the point that PCI in the Tar Heel state is now more than \$2,600 higher than in Georgia.

Perhaps more significantly, North Carolina has whittled steadily away at its bottom quartile population while pulling more and more of its residents into the top quartile. The two states have nearly identical populations — 11.18 million for Georgia versus 11.05 for North Carolina — and North Carolina has managed to cut the number of people living in bottom quartile counties to just under 530,000.

Meanwhile, 14 of its counties — and the 4.3 million people living in them — made the top quartile. That compares to 3.5 million Georgians living in 11 top-quartile counties and 3.3 million in the bottom-quartile counties.

This contrast with North Carolina holds clues of something deeper than two neighboring states simply trading places on an income chart. It begs a string of questions about why and how these patterns have evolved and taken hold.

Georgia's "Top State for Business" reputation may be good for press releases and political chest-thumping, but the apparent inability to lift nearly a third of the state's population out of the nation's economic cellar may well prove more costly in the long run — not just for the people left behind, but for the state budget that will have to cover their costs.

Charlie Hayslett, a retired journalist and public relations executive, researches and writes about the challenges of rural life in Georgia. Follow his blog at substack.com/@mortlach.



I urge city officials and public works departments to prioritize regular landscaping maintenance and consider small-scale beautification projects. These efforts would go a long way in enhancing the appearance and spirit of our community.

Fred's flag needs to be taken down yesterday. This is outlandish. What has he done besides cause our taxes to go up?
Editor's note: Fred Williams does not have a Black History Month banner.

Can we get a Street sign at Southern Pines Rd and U.S. 80?

Why doesn't the City of Dublin decorate the river bridge and Jackson Street to the Federal Courthouse with Christmas lights and lampposts with flags?

I'm glad to see Stacey Abrams columns in the paper. She talks about improving access to health-care, improving financial stability for working families, housing affordability, gun safety and other issues important to Georgians. For those thinking she's promoting another run for governor, she's not running in 2026.

This is not acceptable. The county board of education needs to suspend those fighting on the basketball team. Whoever they are, they need two days suspension. If you can suspend people from West Laurens you can sure do it to those at East Laurens. That is just pure up being a heathen.

East Laurens shouldn't be just suspended from the basketball game, but from school too.

Hey Tell It!, why the critics? Don't hear nothing about helping the homeless.

The highlights I saw of what happened at East Laurens High School did not involve the players. Referees or coaches never had a chance to do anything because it was people from the stands who ran out onto the court. The players - from both teams - were trying to get away from the chaos.

Getting positive feedback from our county commissioners about consolidating county and city government. Please contact

your commissioner to help the whole community.

Let's work hard in letting our commissioners know how urgent and necessary the consolidation of city and county government is for the future of Laurens County.

Where is the flag downtown with Fred's picture on it? Is it on Madison or on the main street? It should be near the new medium downtown. Both are wastes of money.
Editor's note: See previous Editor's note

There has been one very clear lesson learned from the DCS making \$13 million disappear. If a person wants to steal tens of millions of dollars from tax payers, forget using state or federal political office. Move to the city of Dublin and squirm into the local government. You can steal all you want, no questions asked and even raise taxes to rake in more money. It's a gold mine, and no chance of getting caught or accused.
Editor's note: Deficits and missing money are two different things.

What happened to the paving project on Old Macon Road? It just stopped for some reason.
Editor's note: Work resumed last week.

Maybe if the county stops giving bonuses, our taxes will go down?

Laurens County School System talking about giving \$2,000 to employees. For what?

God is getting ready to tell his son, Jesus Christ, go bring my children home to me. People, all of this stuff happening in the world, is leading up to the greatest event in the world - the return of Jesus Christ.

I agree. Call or write your state representatives! But instead of asking them to vote no on Ga. SB 74, ask them to vote yes. This bill has nothing to do with librarians and everything to do with our children. Adults can choose the material they want to view or read, but those same adults have the responsibility to protect children from inappropriate material. A communist country doesn't protect their children, but America does!

OUR TAKE...

City school board should let the state decide about charter school

The Dublin City Schools' cash crisis has shed some light on the district's lax financial operations and oversight, as well as its propensity for overspending and overhiring.

The City Board of Education has been forced to make some tough decisions, the harshest being the elimination of more than 50 teachers and other staffers, and has managed to cut a deficit once projected to reach \$13.4 million by the fiscal year's end to about \$5 million. Having nearly exhausted its remaining state funding through a series of advances to make ends meet, the system is banking on property tax revenue to reach the end of the school year.

But the tough choices will not end there if the district is to survive, much less reach financial solvency. State officials say that despite progress, the school system will likely need to borrow advances from its QBE funding again next fall unless it reduces spending even more.

One of the first concerns – and, in some circles, suggestions – raised was about closing the Irish Gifted Academy. So far, the school board has not said the academy is on the chopping block, but some parents are concerned enough that they've joined an effort to start a new public charter school here.

The charter school would offer advanced classes and programs, much like the IGA. However, before it can become a reality, it must have an "authorizer," which in this case would be the Dublin City Board of Education. If that fails, organizers could turn to the state to back the new school.

The Irish Gifted Academy appears a worthwhile effort to expand offerings the system's brightest students. Parents have praised its teachers and curriculum, and community leaders even touted it as a draw for new industry. However, its detractors argue that the IGA is too exclusive and too costly, and serves as a recruiting tool to bring in outsiders.

The proposed charter school, Middle Georgia Preparatory School, has submitted an application to the Dublin City Schools. If denied, it can seek approval from the state. Either way, the students who attend there will bring their money with them. That means all state, federal and local funding for each student – which would have gone to the Dublin City Schools – would go to the new charter school.

A charter school operating independently, though still supervised by the city school board, might be a great idea, but now is not the time. It will certainly be a tough sell to Dublin taxpayers who are still stinging from back-to-back years of school tax hikes.

And it should be a tough sale to school board members who have spent the last few months cutting fat from its overstuffed central office and administrative staff.

There remain too many questions and not enough answers, both about the Dublin district's past financial practices and about how a new charter school might impact the district's plans for recovery. The state has offered hands-on help in sorting out the system's financial crisis, and is as familiar as anyone with the city schools' predicament. We suggest the local board punt the charter school issue to the state officials and let them sort it out.

– Rodney Manley

DAILY SCRIPTURE...

"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

– 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NIV)

EVERY DAY'S A HOLIDAY...

Feb. 24, 2026 is...

- National Tortilla Chip Day
- National Trading Card Day
- World Bartender Day
- I Hate Coriander Day

The Courier Herald

LOCAL MATTERS  Judged a newspaper of General Excellence 2024

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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.

'Annie' is the optimistic show we need

If there was ever a show I wanted to be a part of, it was "The Music Man." After all, that was the first musical I remember watching when I was a kid.

I can recall my parents telling my brother and I that we would like this movie, so we sat down in front of the couch and gave it a try. By the end of the movie we were excited about the possibility of playing trombones because of the song "Seventy-Six Trombones." Ironically, when I entered the sixth grade, I signed up to play that great instrument. Maybe that's one reason "The Music Man" is still one of my favorite productions.

A few years ago, Dublin Community Theatre had tryouts for "The Music Man." Unfortunately, because my wife was going through breast cancer treatments that summer, I decided not to be a part of that cast. We did watch DCT's production and came away impressed with the talent on the stage.

While "The Music Man" was the first movie I remember watching, it was not long before I was introduced to "Grease," and then a musical about a little orphan named "Annie," which I first saw on a Christmas Eve night on HBO. Our sister, who was about 4 years old at the time, would go around singing "Tomorrow" for weeks. For me, I have always liked the song "It's A Hard Knock Life." I was humming that catchy tune when I went to Theatre Dublin for auditions in January.

For some, trying out for a DCT production may be nerve-racking. If I had nerves I lost them when I saw former castmates from "Guys and Dolls" and "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever." As soon as I walked in the lobby I saw more familiar faces in "Annie" director Glenda Berry and assistant director Elaine Avery.

By the time my name was called to walk up on the stage and sing a song, I had sat in the audience and watched many adults sing about a minute's worth of a

MAN ABOUT TOWN...



By PAYTON TOWNS III

tune. Now it was my turn.

And what did I choose to belt out? "Luck Be A Lady Tonight," from "Guys and Dolls," a song I was comfortable with since I was part of the ensemble who performed that the previous July.

After singing, we all read from various parts of the upcoming musical. That ended tryouts. By that evening, the cast list was released. About a week later, we gathered for a reading and we are now working on bringing this fun, inspirational musical to the big stage. I look forward to the fun and work we will have in bringing "Annie" to our local community who will have four opportunities to converged on Theatre Dublin to watch this show at 7 p.m. on April 23 and 24 and 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. on April 25.

And this time, I am not the only person from The Courier Herald in the cast. My colleague and

award-winning columnist Kyle Dominy, will be on the stage making his DCT debut.

In the first act, I will be a homeless man, in which I get to be part of the ensemble of "We'd Like to Thank You Herbert Hoover." In the second act, I portray Cordell Hull, who was President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Secretary of State. In this act, I get to help with the reprise of "Tomorrow."

Sadly I will not be on the stage for "It's A Hard Knock Life." As much as I like that song, I will leave it up to our young ladies to sing and dance. From what I have seen of their practice, I would need oxygen when I crawled off the stage if I was a part of that number.

One of the things I like about "Annie" is the theme of hope coming from the lead character. The story is set in 1933. America was in thick of The Great Depression. There wasn't much to

be happy or thrilled about. And yet here comes this 11-year-old orphan who really brings out the best in everybody she comes across.

In what we call the Hooverville scene, Annie walks into a place where people have reached the bottom. They used to be someone, but because of The Great Depression, they have fallen into this makeshift community. And along comes Annie with her hopeful answers.

And later, she stands toe-to-toe with politicians who can't help but discuss all of the problems in the world at that time, including talks of the early days of what would lead to World War II. But the more we read through the script and listened to the dialogue, the more it became apparent to me that things have not changed that much.

Much of the show's dialogue sounds like conversations one would hear out in public today. While working on the play, it is easy to see how much we need this kind of optimistic attitude in our world today.

Everywhere we look is doom and gloom - especially in the news. But come this April, people will be able to turn off the TV, head to our theatre and watch the "Annie" cast bring the type of optimism that is needed to remind us that hope is only a day away.



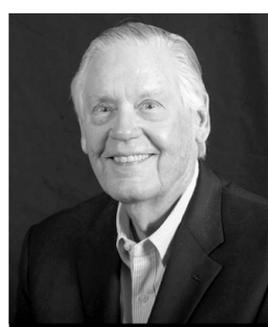
Immovable object vs. irresistible force in Okefenokee mining dispute

Let us revisit the matter of drilling for titanium dioxide in our Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge in order that the world as we know it never runs out of toothpaste whitener.

Although you have strongly expressed your concerns to our intrepid public servants under the Gold Dome and I have commented on the issue more than once, I will be the first to admit not much has changed as to getting permanent ban on drilling. Our irresistible force has not moved the immovable object. If you have gotten any response at all from the governor's office or your local legislator, it has been laden with political-speak. ("Thank you for sharing your concerns. I will carefully consider them in dealing with this important matter.") Translation? Go pound sand.

A few weeks ago, I received a rebuttal from Drew Jones challenging my "assertions and implications" on drilling in the Okefenokee "that require correction." It was a rather long letter and I suggested he shorten it a bit and I would share it with you. As of this writing, I have not heard back. It is probably just as well. Knowing how you feel about the issue, I'm not sure you would be much swayed by his own assertions. But that is up to him and to you. I promise I will pass them along as written.

Incidentally, Jones is



By DICK YARBROUGH

a Charlton County commissioner and lists his occupation as a forest land manager for Toledo Manufacturing Co and WC Hopkins and Sons LLLP. He is also the nephew-in-law of Joe Hopkins, president of Toledo Manufacturing, who is viewed as the real immovable object behind the proposed ban.

Hopkins owns 50,000 acres in Charlton County and frames the issue as one of property rights. He argues that laws to protect the Okefenokee from mining would infringe on his property rights. The government shouldn't be telling property owners like him what they can or cannot do with their property – like drag mining it for toothpaste whitener?

Attorney Josh Marks, who heads Georgians for the Okefenokee and worked to prevent mining near the Okefenokee in the 1990s

when DuPont proposed mining, is a perpetual thorn in Hopkins' side and says that's a specious argument.

"Prohibiting mining along the swamp's edge would in no way violate his constitutional rights," he wrote in an email to the publication, The Current. "The fact that I can't put a casino or commercial chicken house in my backyard doesn't mean that my constitutional rights have been violated."

Some people assumed that when the Conservation Fund bought out the woe-begone Twin Pines LLC and took back 7,700 acres that they had planned to mine that this ended any threat to potentially damage the Okefenokee. Not so.

Even though Twin Pines is gone, there are still large tracts of privately-owned land on Trail Ridge that are candidates for mining. At one time, chemical giant Chemours – a spinoff from Dupont – was thought to be a candidate to replace Twin Pines, but the company has said it is shifting away from doing mining itself and will stick to processing of minerals mined by others.

Of course, Chemours has other problems right now. They are being sued by local governments and families in the northwest Georgia area along with other chemical companies and carpet manufacturers for contaminating local water, air and soil with "forever chemicals."

That doesn't mean other companies couldn't come in and do a deal with Toledo or other landowners in the area to drag mine for titanium dioxide as long as there is no law preventing them from doing so.

As I have said before, political decisions can be made only one of two ways – the application of pressure or the absence of it. So far, our intrepid public servants have felt more pressure from the timber barons than from those seeking a permanent ban on mining the Okefenokee. That may be about to change.

The Garden Club of Georgia with 12,000 members in some 350 clubs is asking their members to write their local legislators urging the state to do something before "another landowner sells his property to a different mining company." (If I may offer a suggestion: Call them. Their numbers are listed on the website, www.legis.ga.gov. Otherwise, you are going to get the "Thank you for sharing your concerns" bromide.)

Gov. Brian Kemp, legislators and assorted bureaucrats need to accept the fact that we aren't going away. They may think they are the immovable object but we are an irresistible force.

You can reach Dick Yarbrough at dick@dickyarbrough.com or at P.O. Box 725373, Atlanta, Georgia 31139.

REGION 2-HIGH A CHAMPIONSHIP GAMES

Back-to-back, and better...

Lady Falcons return to full strength, roll past Raiderettes for second region title in row

By CLAY REYNOLDS
Sports Editor

SANDERSVILLE – The celebration in the East Laurens girls' locker room could be heard even over the music playing during warmups of the boys region championship game that followed theirs Friday night.

And the Lady Falcons had good reason to get a little rambunctious after defeating Northeast Macon 52-42 to capture their second region title in a row.

"Back-to-back, back-to-back," East Laurens head coach Danielle Lowther said with a big grin. "I've got to go back and check in the record books and see if that's ever been done."

A glance at the archives over the weekend revealed this year's team to be the program's first since 1999 and 2000 to pull off the feat impressive on its own, but even more so considering

what this group of players overcame to make it happen.

Early on, it was questions of the Lady Falcons' ability to reload after graduating three cornerstone seniors whose fourth year starting culminated in 2025's region crown and subsequent trip to the Final Four.

With an overhauled roster this season, they've not only matched the former's success, but arguably surpassed it, with more overall wins to this point than that team had altogether, and a region run (of just two losses in 15 games, including this week's) even more convincing.

"I feel like with us being a new team and everybody being so young, it took a lot for us to

come together and make sure that we all worked together and make sure we played together and make sure we made a good team," said senior Jameria Bing. "We are a great team, and you know, with us being a young team and having only like three seniors, it was great that we all could come together and all play as one."



NO DOUBT ABOUT IT: The postgame trophy presentation was twice as special as a year ago for this year's Lady Falcons, whose second region title in a row ran contrary to many predictions they'd struggle to duplicate the success of 2025 after graduating three key starters. East Laurens, taking the doubts as motivation, completed its latest championship run in even more commanding fashion with more wins in region and overall leading up to Thursday's and Friday's victories by margins of 10 points to win it all/**CLAY REYNOLDS**



TRIPLE PLAY: East Laurens guard Alasia Wiggins turned this sequence of three possessions into a major turning point late in the third quarter, sinking back-to-back 3-pointers (her first at right) to grow the Lady Falcons' lead from six to 12, and taking a charge (left) to nullify a basket by Northeast's Maliyah Little in between/**CLAY REYNOLDS**

LADY FALCONS
Continued on page 6

Irish impaired by long droughts in first, fourth as Southwest spoils last step of dark-horse streak

By CLAY REYNOLDS
Sports Editor

SANDERSVILLE – After a memorable week, Dublin's clock finally struck midnight on Friday as a 61-36 loss to Southwest Macon in the region championship game brought its Cinderella story to an end.

The glass slippers had held up quite nicely for the Irish as they continued dancing right up until the 11th hour of the 2-High A tournament, when the magic that had carried them through an unbelievable four-night win streak finally ran its course.

Though its carriage transformed back to a school bus for the ride home from Washington County High School, Dublin's season – which was on the brink only days ago – has not yet turned to a pumpkin.

The Irish, who earned the right to continue playing in the state tournament by advancing to the region semifinals, will get to play at least one more game as they host Jasper County in the first round later this week.

The Patriots, who prevailed to complete their wire-to-wire unbeaten streak in region play to repeat as champs, were again the better team on this particular night.

But the Irish, who had lost to them by 51 in the regular season, were never overmatched, and neither was the game – until Southwest ran away with it in the last several minutes – at any point un-winnable.

Still, the version of Dublin that took the floor in this game seemed tense and unsettled in comparison to the one that had played relaxed, fearless basketball, described by head coach Carlos Hope as "free and loose," with a nothing-to-lose demeanor in the four games leading up.

Whether it was fatigue, the stakes and magnitude of the moment, the stature of a top-rated opponent or some combination of the three, something caught up with the Irish on Friday.

"I didn't feel like we competed," Hope said. "I thought we played nervous. They're a heck of a basketball team."

Besides Chris Dixon's finish off a wind-



STARTING BLOCK: Southwest's Octavius Raglin blocks an early shot attempt by Dublin's Jaydon McRae to add to the shooting struggles that began and ended Friday's game for the Irish. They had only one field goal in the first five minutes, and made none in the last eight /**CLAY REYNOLDS**

ing drive for a lay-in to quench an opening drought, Dublin was without a field goal for the first five minutes of the game as even its most point-blank of routine shots and put-back attempts struggled to get in the hole.

The snakebit first half had the Irish trailing by 18 at the break. But they'd rebound to make it into a game, whittling the Southwest lead down to only nine points by late in the third quarter to ignite some hope in a comeback, and get some folks on the edge of their seats.

That momentum, however, would fizzle out completely as the early shooting woes reared their ugly head in the fourth quarter, and Dublin scored its only remaining three

points at the foul line over another field goal-less stretch in the final eight minutes.

Southwest – led by the 20 points of Chase Dupree and 13 of C.J. Howard – pulled back away with 14.

"Our goal was to get it down to 10 going to the fourth quarter, and we got it there to I think 11 or nine, and they pushed it back up there," Hope said. "Our kids fought hard. It's been a heck of a run, so we'll go back and rest up and get some work in this weekend and get ready for the playoffs."

Dixon's clutch shooting produced the

IRISH
Continued on page 6

GIAA STATE QUARTERFINALS

Trinity girls weather Windsor to reach third-straight Final Four

By JEREMY PAYNE
Correspondent

The Trinity Lady Crusaders advanced to yet another final four with a nailbiting 53-50 win over Windsor last Friday night in Macon to advance to the GIAA Final Four for the third-straight season, and a fourth time in five years.

The game was close throughout yet again, as Windsor held an 18-14 lead after one quarter, then outscored Trinity 13-12 in a close second quarter to stay up by five, 31-26, at the half.

The Lady Crusaders made some adjustments coming out of the locker room on both ends of the floor.

Maddy George scored nine third-quarter points, and the defense held Windsor to just six in the period. Trinity scored 15 total to take a 41-37 lead into the fourth.

The final quarter was back and forth as well, but Trinity played much better defense all night on Windsor superstar Kennedy Harris.

George and Brinley Vinson were able to make plays down the stretch, and also make key free throws, as Trinity held on for the 53-50 win.

George, who'd hit a pair of key 3-pointers in the fourth quarter, led all scorers with 25 and Vinson added 13.

Morgan Yuhas led the Lady Knights with 19. Harris, who scored a combined 72 in the two regular season meetings, was clearly frustrated by the Trinity defense all night. She was held to just 12 and did not make a free throw.

The Lady Crusaders will face No. 3 seed Southwest Georgia in the semifinals Thursday afternoon at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in Tifton.

REGION 4-AAA TOURNAMENT

Lady Raiders come up point short in third-place games; 2nd seeds win Friday's finals

From STAFF REPORTS

The West Laurens Lady Raiders made the bounce-back they needed in Friday's region 4-AAA consolation game, but suffered a heartbreaking loss to Hephzibah that came down to the final handful of possessions.

And a last of those misfired as they set up a full-court inbound play, but had an overthrown pass toward the opposite baseline get a step or two out of reach to give the ball back over to the Lady Rebels to run out the clock.

Ja'Halee Snead (14 points), Brooklyn Jackson (13) and Demmie Moss (10) led West Laurens offensively amid some wild momentum swings in what head coach Tyler Rogers described as a "legit back-and-forth game."

The Lady Raiders were ahead by seven after a strong first quarter, but lost a lot of that momentum as Jackson hit some foul trouble in the second, and Hephzibah gained a lead of three by the half.

A six-point swing in the third flipped it back to a West Laurens advantage of the same number entering the fourth.

The Lady Raiders, seeded 22nd, will go on the road as they open the AAA state playoffs at Luella Thurs-

4-AAA
Continued on page 6

LADY FALCONS
Continued from page 5

ell, was no seamless process early in Friday's title game. Members of the reassembled rotation took some time to get back on the same page, but got things to jell enough when it mattered down the stretch of the second half.

"It took a lot of teamwork and chemistry and us knowing our players and being where we should be and playing great defense," Bing said.

That last point — what's been a common denominator of wins all season in which the Lady Falcons often quietly took care of business — remained a theme in Friday's performance, which also wasn't all that flashy.

No single player or detail stood out, but the execution — in total — was superior across the board.

"We struggled this game," Lowther said. "Everybody chipping in and playing a little bit of a role helped us get this win."

Without the 3-ball that gave Central some life on Thursday (the Raiderettes, Friday, hit only two from deep before Indiasia Bell's half-court heave found the basket at the third-quarter horn for their only long-range make of the second) there was little Northeast could do besides try to combine enough baskets and stops to chip away at the double-digit lead East Laurens had built up by the fourth quarter.

Despite the Raiderettes' 11 made free throws in the last eight minutes, they couldn't get the deficit down to a number less than eight points, as Lady Falcon scoring leaders Deanna Lowther (12) and Mitchell (10) combined for nine buckets in the paint to keep the lead airtight for the duration second half.

"I was glad that we were able to get some rebounds,



UN-D-NIABLE: East Laurens senior Deanna Lowther pokes one away from Northeast's Kahnire Carswell (left) in transition and blocks a shot by the Raiderettes' Jada Smith (right) on a couple of the many important first-half plays that factored into the strong defensive effort that was at the foundation of Friday's win/**CLAY REYNOLDS**

box people out, move people out of the way just so we could put some points on the board," Deanna said.

Robinson, who scored 20-plus points to help fill the offensive void in the two games leading up, added eight to Friday's effort.

"I (had to be) really confident in leading my team," she said, "make sure I'm handling the ball, because I knew I had to step up, so I did."

DeAndrea Lowther joined Wiggins with seven in the final count.

The game ultimately hinged on the third quarter, as East Laurens matched the scoring pace of Northeast in a quick start to add to its halftime lead of five, and began to buckle down inside for key rebounds and stops, after a second quarter that had gotten kind of sloppy.

The Lady Falcons would lead the full eight-minute stretch 20-13.

"I think we started playing," Coach Lowther said. "I think Gary started getting a few extra rebounds and putbacks. Our defense turned it

up a little bit. 'Z' and Deanna kind of settled down a little bit more. But it was just a whole team effort. DeAndrea, I think, made a couple of shots, and Miyah (Smith). It was just a collective team effort.

At a major tipping point midway through, Alasia Wiggins knocked down 3-pointers on consecutive possessions, drawing a charge in between the two, to double East's six-point lead.

It'd be in double digits the rest of the period, and went up all the way to 15 as Mitchell put back a missed free throw with a few seconds to go.

Bell, however, would find the basket on a desperate try from just over the midcourt line to cut it back to a manageable dozen for the Raiderettes at the horn.

And that would've been a major swing if their comeback had gained any traction in the fourth quarter. But that never happened as the Lady Falcons continued to match points, and Northeast struggled getting some makable shots to go in the

next few minutes.

Bell would convert two chances at the foul line to get the Raiderettes within 10 with 5:40 to go, but they weren't able to break that barrier until a 3-point play by Jada Smith finally got the number down to nine with 2:40 left.

She'd answer a Zahmaria Robinson free throw with two during an ensuing sequence to trim another point off, and make the score 48-40.

But the very next possession, East's DeAndrea Lowther found bottom on a long 2-point try from the right corner to take the lead back to 10. And after a Falcon stop, Mitchell's tip-back on a rebound Northeast had conceded on a presumed shot clock violation tacked on some insurance.

Both teams did well what they typically do well in the first quarter, the Raiderettes emphasizing their speed in transition, and East Laurens its full-court pressure that picked up two early baskets off of turnovers.

Alaya Hooks had five

of Northeast's nine in the opening quarter, and very nearly a layup at the end of it that rattled off with a chance of giving the Raiderettes the lead.

East Laurens opened with a quick 10 highlighted by triples from Bing and DeAndrea Lowther.

But the Lady Falcons hit an offensive lull for the final few minutes, and descended into an even bigger slump lasting most of the second.

Northeast would take charge for a few early minutes that were marked by some overall sloppy play as East Laurens turned it over multiple times and gave up a lot of offensive rebounds.

The Raiderettes, though, were only able to take advantage to the tune five points from the field and seven total before a series of late baskets atoned, with Smith putting in a mid-range jumper and Bing knocking down her second 3 in the last minute for a 21-16 lead at the end of first-half play.

The Lady Falcons have already served up a heaping plate of crow to those who expressed doubts in their chances of a successful season, or a region repeat.

"They thought we were going to be sorry since we lost our big three last year," Robinson said. "But we had to show up and show them."

"We had to prove the haters wrong," Deanna Lowther said. "We had to make them feel that we were who we were."

For any remaining skeptics, it'd probably be unwise to question their odds of another deep playoff run. East Laurens will have the No. 3 overall seed, and a strong shot, as it opens the state tournament Tuesday night at home against No. 30 Dade County.

The Falcon boys, seeded 13th, will also be at home in the first round as they take on No. 20 Bremen Wednesday night.



BIG AIR: Chris Dixon gets some great hang time with the hesitation, to make Southwest's Jamarcus West miss in an effort to block this floating shot attempt in the second quarter, which he'd spin in for an Irish basket and another of his 11 first-half points/**CLAY REYNOLDS**

IRISH

Continued from page 5

top Irish point total, and, once they were able to get off the starting line and rolling, 11 of their 16 first-half points.

Southwest, though, came out firing on a 5-0 run, and put up as many after Dixon's initial basket to run the lead to 10-2 with a second 3-pointer by Alex Butts around three minutes to go.

Dublin had climbed back to within seven before a buzzer-beating layup put the Patriots back in front by a count of 16-7 at the end of the first. And they opened the second on just as much of a tear with six unanswered in the first three.

Big quarters by both Dupree and Howard made it 34-16 at the half.

Some halftime words seemed to get the Irish back on track. They got early 3s from both Kam Stanley and Jaydon McRae to quickly cut the Southwest lead to 12. Ar'Dreakius Taylor continued the unanswered run a few possessions later with a tough banker to make it 10.

Dupree knocked down a triple to break up the Patriots' scoreless streak, but a rapid answer from Dixon had some spring in Dublin's step.

He'd score again out of a timeout to make it 41-32, and get some folks in green around the room feeling the magic from earlier in the week making its return.

Sadly, that's where it all seemed to give out.

Southwest snapped back with



A SECOND-STRAIGHT FOR SOUTHWEST: C.J. Howard and a couple of Patriot teammates celebrate postgame after getting their hands on the region 2-High A championship trophy for a second year in a row. Southwest, which went a perfect 15-0 against region opponents in the regular season and tournament, will now have eyes on making it back-to-back state finals appearances as they begin another playoff run as the No. 4 seed, drawing Woodville-Thompkins Wednesday night/**CLAY REYNOLDS**

six points to close the quarter. The Irish answered with only one via free throw, and it was 47-33 headed to the fourth.

The Patriots only widened the lead from there. Dublin's Taylor and Quan Lovett had six points apiece. Lovett led the Irish in rebounds, with eight, and blocked shots, with two.

Though it fell a little short of a true fairytale ending, the inspiring comeback story has done a lot to bring redemption to this Dublin basketball season that, before a last shot to keep it going on Monday, was on track to finish as a pretty discouraging one.

After finishing 0-13 in the region, the Irish have doubled their overall win total, and also gotten back into

the state playoffs.

This team was a late-bloomer, but was rewarded for staying committed through the end.

"To God be the glory, man," Hope said. "God's been awesome to us here. The last this whole year, nobody gave us a chance. For our kids to continue to buy into the things we preach every day when we talk about culture and the way to do things the right way, I'm just thankful to be a part of it."

In next week's state playoffs, Dublin's boys will be at home for their first-round game against Jasper County Wednesday. The Lady Irish, 27th in the draw, will travel to face No. 6 Bacon County on Tuesday.

SCOREBOARD

BASEBALL
Friday
Dublin 10, East Laurens 0
WL at Richmond Academy /PPD

GIRLS HOOPS
Friday
East Laurens 52,
Northeast Macon 42
Hephzibah 48,
West Laurens 47
Trinity 53, Windsor 50

BOYS HOOPS
Friday
Southwest Macon 61,
Dublin 36

GIRLS SOCCER
Friday
EL 3, Hawkinsville 2
Harlem 1, WL 0

BOYS SOCCER
Friday
EL 4, Hawkinsville 1
WL 4, Harlem 1

PREP SCHEDULE

BASKETBALL
Tuesday
GHS A Playoffs, Round 1
Dade Co. at
East Laurens (girls)
Dublin (girls) at Bacon Co.
West Laurens (girls) at
Luella/6 p.m.

Wednesday
GHS A Playoffs, Round 1
Bremen at
East Laurens (boys)
Jasper Co. at Dublin
(boys)/6 p.m.

Thursday
GIAA Semifinals
Trinity (girls) vs.
Southwest Georgia
Academy (at ABAC)/3 p.m.

BASEBALL
Tuesday
Hephzibah at WL
(doubleheader)/4 p.m.
Southwest Macon at
Dublin/5:30 p.m.
David Emanuel at Trinity
EL at Bleckley Co./6 p.m.

Wednesday
EL at Treutlen/5:30 p.m.

Friday
Dublin at Southwest/4 p.m.
Bleckley Co. at EL/6 p.m.
WL vs. Franklin Co.
(at Lakepoint)/6:30 p.m.

Saturday
WL vs. Alexander
(at Lakepoint)/10 a.m.
WL vs. Heard Co.
(at Lakepoint)/12:30 p.m.
Tallulah Falls at Trinity
/2 p.m.

SOCCER
Monday
EL at WL/5 p.m.

Tuesday
Dublin (girls) at Johnson Co.
Washington-Wilkes at EL
/5 p.m.
WL at Baldwin/5:30 p.m.

Thursday
Jefferson Co. at EL/5 p.m.
WL at Richmond Academy
/5:30 p.m.

Friday
EL at Wheeler Co./5 p.m.

Saturday
John Milledge at Trinity
(boys) (scrimmage)/1 p.m.

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4-AAA

Continued from page 5

day.

In the rest of Friday's 4-AAA tournament action, Harlem's boys routed Hephzibah 72-49 for third place, and the second seeds won out in both the evening's fi-

nals.

Baldwin's girls scored the last eight points in a come-from-behind effort to defeat Cross Creek 40-35, and win their third region crown in a row.

The ball never crossed over into the Razorbacks'

offensive half over a sequence of three possessions in the final half-minute that saw Baldwin hit three consecutive field goals and two free throws to capitalize on a technical foul.

Conniya Reaves, who hit the go-ahead jumper

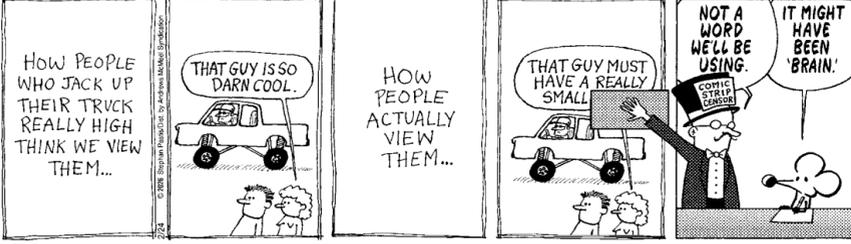
and both ensuing foul shots above, led the Bravettes with 17 points.

In the boys' title game, the last word belonged to Cross Creek, whose Frashad Tisby made a shot to tie, and two to put the Razorbacks ahead in the last two min-

utes before getting a hand on an attempt by Baldwin's Josiah Billups at the buzzer to seal the 53-51 victory.

Karez Demory scored 19, including two for the Braves' last-minute equalizer, and Zion Grant chipped in 14.

PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



GARFIELD



OVERBOARD



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ZIGGY



PLUGGERS



The pluggers vacation: A week without a doctor appointment.

Employee thinks loss of pet equates to loss of child!



DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

SUPERVISOR IN CALIFORNIA

DEAR ABBY: I supervise a group of six mid-level professionals. Usually, we manage fine, but a current conflict may push me over the edge. "Lauren" lives alone with dogs that seem to be her only family. One of them (age 11) had been sick. She kept asking for sick leave to take him to the vet. I told her she had to use vacation time for that.

Well, the dog died, and now Lauren wants to take bereavement leave. When I refused, she had a fit and started yelling about unequal treatment because another co-worker, "Jenny," was allowed to take bereavement leave earlier this year.

Jenny's toddler son died in a drowning accident. It was a horrific tragedy. Jenny was traumatized and incapacitated for weeks. The situations are not comparable. But Jenny heard Lauren yelling and comparing Jenny's child to her elderly basset hound. This is causing all sorts of interpersonal problems that HR has flatly refused to get involved with.

I understand that Lauren loved her dog, but I also think she needs to get a grip, apologize to Jenny and take a vacation if she needs to. Is it unreasonable to expect an adult to know the difference between a human and a dog and act accordingly? -- STRESSED

seniors' complex with independent, assisted and continuing care phases. All meals are prepared there.

I do not want this move and have told her so. When I do, she goes silent for days, telling me it's time for the change. I disagree. We are at an impasse. I am so upset about this I am considering divorce after 55 years. What do you recommend we do? -- STILL YOUNG IN NORTH CAROLINA

DEAR STILL YOUNG: I recommend you discuss this with your CPA and your attorney before making any decisions. If you could afford it, an assisted living facility for her while you remain in the condo might be ideal. However, if that's not possible, would you be willing to send her to the facility while you rent a one-bedroom apartment for yourself?

One thing I am pretty sure of: Your wife is signaling that she's shutting down. Her world is now smaller than it was. You haven't aged at the same rate, and it may be time to do for her what you would like her to do for you if the situation were reversed.

DEAR ABBY: My wife and I are seniors and live in a one-floor condominium. I am in good health, but she has several medical issues, including impaired balance and mobility. She refuses the recommended physical therapy and rarely uses the walker I bought for her. She hates cooking now and wants me to drive almost daily for takeout, which is expensive and time-consuming. Now, she's talking about selling our condominium to move into a

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.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH BOB JONES
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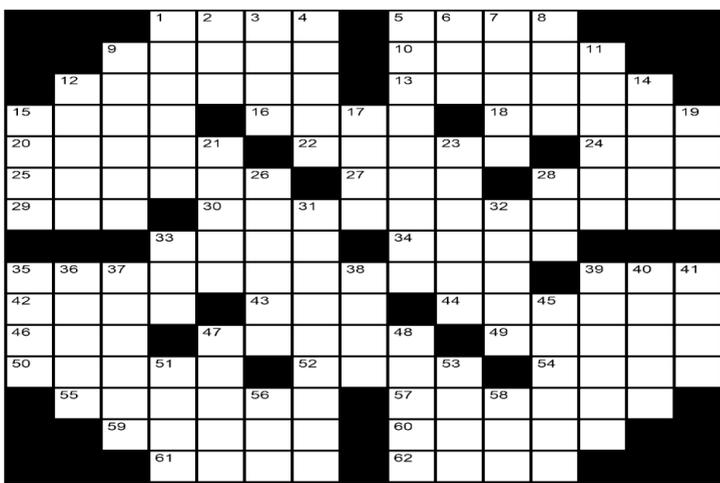
WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ ANSWERS

- Q 1 - Neither vulnerable, as South, you hold:
♠ J 7 ♥ K 10 8 ♦ A Q J 6 ♣ 9 8 6 5
As dealer, what call would you make?
A - Some balanced 11-point hands are worth an opening bid, but they should include, at a minimum, a 5-card suit. Pass.
- Q 2 - North-South vulnerable, as South, you hold:
♠ 5 ♥ 9 7 5 4 3 ♦ Q 7 ♣ A 9 7 6 3
Partner opens 1D and right-hand opponent overcalls 1S. What call would you make?
A - The only possible call is a negative double. Is this hand good enough for that? We think it is. Double.
- Q 3 - East-West vulnerable, as South, you hold:
♠ K 9 5 ♥ K 7 6 3 ♦ A J 10 6 5 ♣ 8
As dealer, what call would you make?
A - This hand can raise either major or pass a 1NT response (partner must have clubs). Open 1D.
- Q 4 - Both vulnerable, as South, you hold:
♠ 6 5 3 ♥ Q 7 5 ♦ A K J 6 ♣ A K 7
- SOUTH INT Pass
WEST 20* Pass
NORTH 20* Pass
EAST Pass
*Transfer to hearts
What call would you make?
A - Just accept the transfer unless you have 4-card support. Bid 2H.
- Q 5 - North-South vulnerable, as South, you hold:
♠ A K 4 ♥ K 9 8 6 ♦ 9 4 2 ♣ A 10 5
Right-hand opponent opens 4S. What call would you make?
A - Double here is not penalty. It is card showing and partner can take it out with a decent hand and a long suit. This hand isn't good enough to start that ball rolling. Pass.
- Q 6 - East-West vulnerable, as South, you hold:
♠ J 5 ♥ 3 2 ♦ 6 4 2 ♣ A K J 9 8 5
Right-hand opponent opens 1H. What call would you make?
A - 2C is for wimps. The suit is great and the vulnerability is favorable. Bid 3C.

(Bob Jones welcomes readers' responses sent in care of this newspaper or to Tribune Content Agency, LLC., 16650 Westgrove Dr., Suite 175, Addison, TX 75001.)

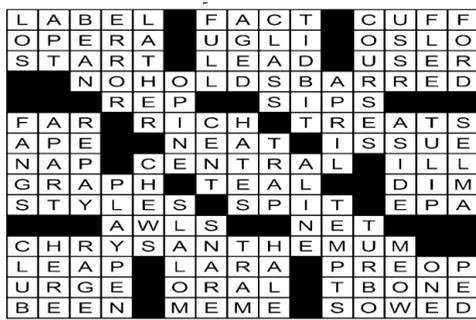
THE Daily Commuter Puzzle by Stella Zawistowski

- ACROSS**
- 1 Uppercase letters
 - 5 Address for a lady
 - 9 "The Super Bros. Movie"
 - 10 Beehives and chignons
 - 12 Spread made from cream
 - 13 Tilted
 - 15 Aussie friend
 - 16 Spreadsheet number
 - 18 Strong winds
 - 20 Morning waker-upper
 - 22 Playground fixture
 - 24 Genetic material: Abbr.
 - 25 Gets the feeling
 - 27 Had a meal
 - 28 Sports defeat
 - 29 Former fast plane: Abbr.
 - 30 Diana Ross's group: 2 wds.
 - 33 ___-purpose
 - 34 Accomplishment
 - 35 Very widespread
 - 39 "That's all ___ wrote"
 - 42 Shed tears
 - 43 Adam's spouse
 - 44 Drive off, as rumors
 - 46 ___ of Good Feelings
 - 47 Newton of physics
 - 49 Gets through hard work
 - 50 Ambulance noise
 - 52 Ensnare
 - 54 Shoestring
 - 55 Gas brand with a star logo
 - 57 Make pure
 - 59 Vacuum flask
 - 60 Take with you
 - 61 Hardens
 - 62 "No problem!"



Created by Stella Zawistowski 10/2/25

- DOWN**
- 1 Provides food for
 - 2 Painting or sculpture
 - 3 Crusty desserts
 - 4 Puts into piles
 - 5 Vast number
 - 6 King Kong, e.g.
 - 7 Wise saying
 - 8 ___ Lisa (Louvre painting)
 - 9 Genetic anomaly
 - 11 Not often
 - 12 Bundles of hay
 - 14 Tightly packed
 - 15 Catholic service
 - 17 "Sorry to say..."
 - 19 Impertinence
 - 21 Got together: 2 wds.
 - 23 Rely (on)
 - 26 Units of company stock
 - 28 Headed up
 - 31 Skyscraper conveyances
 - 32 Knot again
 - 33 Guacamole or tzatziki



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- 35 Is indebted to
- 36 Worthiness
- 37 Got close
- 38 Cook in a hot pan
- 39 Leaped
- 40 Therefore
- 41 "What ___ is new?"
- 45 Salty solution
- 47 Utterly amazed: 2 wds.
- 48 Pasta and potatoes
- 51 Former lovers
- 53 Lima's country
- 56 Pet that purrs
- 58 Christmas tree type

SUDOKU



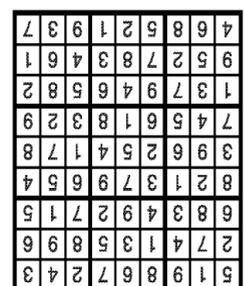
Fun By The Numbers

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!

Level: Beginner

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!



ANSWER:

CITY COUNCIL

Continued from page 1

community. It would give a sense of neighborhood to the people who are living there. There will be a lot of amenities and tie in with this development to the surrounding neighborhood and community.”

There will be some covenants for the subdivision.

“Those are not finalized,” Curry said. “We want to make sure this is a long-standing project that is held to a very high standard, especially with all of the funds the city has placed in the surrounding area.”

When asked about the square footage of the homes, Curry said the initial framework they are looking at is 1,300 square feet as a minimum and they did not currently have a maximum.

“That will depend on the lot configuration,” he said. “Two stories would be permitted with a minimum of around 1,100 square feet on the first floor with two car garages required. That is the framework we are going through, but it has not been set in stone through the covenants, which will be similar to a HOA.”

After the ordinance passed, Dublin Mayor Joshua Kight told Curry that the city looks forward to continue to working with the developers.

“It is fantastic to have 65 new single-family homes in our town, especially at an affordable level and in a nice neighborhood,” Kight said. “Appreciate all of the work you have done to keep pushing this towards a reality.”

Later in the meeting, Councilwoman Sara Kolbie addressed the issue of trash seen in various parts of town.

“Everything is not greened up quite yet for spring. But instead of flow-

ers we are seeing a lot of trash,” Kolbie said. “Please, everybody do your part to keep your area of our community cleaned. It is not welcoming to visitors and certainly degrading to our current investors within the community and homeowners for the amount of trash.”

She thanked the city employees who were seen picking up debris Thursday morning.

“Thank you to our hard-working employees who work in our street department,” Kolbie said.

Thursday’s meeting was held early in order to allow the council to hold a strategic planning workshop that was held that day at Palmetto Farms in Montrose.

“We do this every year,” Kight said. “We get together as a team and talk about major issues facing the city, and we look back at what we’ve accomplished the prior year and our goals for this upcoming year. We’ll spend the rest of the day in meetings going over those items and will work to prepare for a great 2026 for the city of Dublin.”

In other meeting news, the council:

- Approved the purchase of an Envirosight VC500 controller for the Rover X system from Environmental Products Group out of Atlanta in the amount of \$16,695.

“The camera is remotely controlled to access, view and inspect sewer lines and storm water lines throughout the city,” Powell said. “The controller for that device, the software is out of date and needs to be replaced.”

- Approved Warnock Brothers to repair the bathrooms at the Riverview Golf Course at hole No. 5 and hole No. 12. The cost will be \$41,408.

“The bathrooms, which are both on the course, have

been deteriorating over the years,” Powell said. “We have gotten approval from FEMA, because of some damage from Hurricane Helene, to make some repairs to those facilities. ... We should have some pretty nice restroom facilities on the golf course.”

Kight added that more than 75 percent of the cost will come from the FEMA grant.

- Heard a first reading to amend an ordinance regarding fire safety for mobile food service units. When the city adopted the current food truck ordinance, there were specific provisions about fire code requirements.

“There are some conflicts between that and the general fire codes,” Powell said. “To simplify that, we wanted to make sure we are consistent between our ordinances.”

The second reading and public hearing will be held at 5:30 p.m. on March 5.

- Tabled an agreement with Georgia Power for new street lights installation on Lawrence Street. Powell said the Downtown Dublin Authority requested these lights on behalf of Miller Soul Food.

“Currently there are no lamp posts on that road,” he said. “This will provide some additional light to this corridor.”

The council brought up looking at adding street lights on both sides of Lawrence Street, which led to them tabling the resolution until the March 5 meeting.

“For Miller Soul Food’s sake, we need to let them know we are in agreement to do this, we just need to discuss this a little bit more,” said Councilwoman Tess Godfrey.

- Declared two lawnmowers as declaration of surplus.



First responders at last week’s luncheon at Dublin Nissan/PAYTON TOWNS III

FIRST RESPONDERS

Continued from page 1

Bakery brought in some doughnuts, and AB Lee helped them with a steak lunch in June.

“We’ve had a bunch of folks in the community help us,” Carswell said. “We had a great turnout for the steak lunch. The word got out for that one. But in all, that’s all about the community. The other companies are not always here with us, but these guys are our partners in this. And we want to expand it this year by bringing in more people to help us with it.”

Sometimes the first responders can come by while sometimes, because of the nature of their job, they may not be able to.

“They are out doing their job, but we’ll have one come by here and get meals for several folks and take them back,” Carswell said. “We just want to have a good time because this helps us build relationships.”

The setting is more relaxed. Cpl. Brian Evans has



been serving with the Dublin Police Department for 18 years. He enjoys coming out to these First Friday lunches.

“It’s always nice to have the support of your community,” Evans said. “They have been generous for close to a month. We greatly appreciate everything they have done for us. We get together and socialize and network with each other for a little bit.”

What the dealership does means a lot to Dublin Fire Chief Matthew Cutler and the city’s firefighters.

“A business is in business to make money,” Cutler said. “For them to

take on a cost like this is something because I know it can’t be cheap. I don’t know how much they are feeding when it comes to officials in the city and the county.”

Anywhere between 12 and 15 firefighters travel out to Dublin Nissan every month.

“It’s typically a different shift that’s on duty on the first Friday of each month,” Cutler said. “The whole department gets to enjoy the benefit of it. For them to spend their money, when they could keep it or do something else, is a token of their gratitude to what public safety does.”

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GA pricing shown. Pricing may be different in some areas, subject to change, and does not include any land allowances or wind zone requirements.