

DCS ends January with \$5.1M deficit

By **RODNEY MANLEY**
Staff Reporter

The most recent financial shows the Dublin City Schools finished January with a \$5.1 million deficit as the district waits for millions of delayed local tax dollars to be collected.

Delays requiring four extensions from the state pushed the tax deadline back two months – from December to this week –

putting the cash-strapped school system in an additional pinch. The City Board of Education had budgeted \$6.7 million in school taxes for January, but collected only \$440,000, Betty Corbitt, interim chief financial officer, said Monday night.

"As we make adjustments to other funds, this might go up or it might go down," she said. "It's a reflection of not having any tax revenue this year."

The board has another \$13.9 million in local tax revenue budgeted for this fiscal year, which is expected mostly this month and next.

Corbitt, a former finance director from Jeff Davis County who also worked for the Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts, was hired earlier this month as the district searches for its next finance director. Her first monthly report included for the first time in

months a balance sheet, which she described as having been "hard to come up with."

"We had the help of the (Department of Education) personnel, myself and a lot of a prayer, a lot questions asked and answered. ... It's been a work in progress. I didn't know how to use this program."

"They didn't either," board member James Lanier quipped about the district's previous finan-

cial personnel.

After borrowing several advances on its monthly allotments of state funding to pay bills, the district has counting on tax revenue to finish out the final months of the school year. The taxing process was met with several delays last year, starting with late assessment notices sent to

CITY SCHOOLS
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Ossoff visits Dublin on campaign swing

Senator touts local projects, help for veterans during his first term

By **RODNEY MANLEY**
Staff Reporter

Jon Ossoff says the job of a U.S. senator should not be about grabbing national headlines.

"Most of what an effective Senate office does has little to do with whatever is leading the national political headlines, and for this part of Georgia I've really tried to focus on public safety and public services, infrastructure and on supporting veterans in Middle Georgia," Ossoff said Friday on a campaign stop in Dublin.

Ossoff, a 39-year-old former documentary and investigative filmmaker, is seeking re-election to a second term. He brought receipts, as they say, pointing out several federally funded local projects he helped secure over his first term, including money for a long-awaited fire station on Dublin's north side.

He has also been a staunch supporter of veterans and a watchdog over their health care, publicly calling out serious safety concerns at VA hospitals, specifically here at the Carl Vinson VA Medical Center about unsterilized medical equipment.

"The Carl Vinson VA in Dublin has been really troubled. I've tried to shine a

bright light on the VA to get their act together and to make sure there's real accountability for unforgivable errors that put veterans' health at risk.

"I'm going to keep working to keep the facility here, but there also has to be accountability for the failures in the surgical theater that exposed veterans to these blood-borne diseases. It's unacceptable, and they've got to clean up their act."

Ossoff worked to help pass the bipartisan PACT Act, which he called the "most significant strengthening of veterans' health care in decades." He also wrote and passed the Access for Veterans to Records Act to help veterans qualify for benefits.

"There was a tens of thousands-long backlog at the National Archives for veterans seeking their service records. Now there's a bunch of VA benefits that you can't get without your service records. It's a huge deal.

"So I wrote this bill, passed it into law, cleared out that backlog at the National Archives, so that now veterans have much more timely access to their records. And that's the kind of real legislative work that's never going to lead the headlines but makes a real difference in people's lives."



U.S. Sen. Jon Ossoff hugs friend and Hometown Grill employee Lucy "Nana" Edmond during Ossoff's visit to Dublin on Friday/**RODNEY MANLEY**

Ossoff visited Dublin before heading to the coast on Friday during a campaign swing through the state after stops in Valdosta and Warner Robins the day before. He paused for an interview with The Courier Herald at the Hometown Grill on Telfair Street, a regular stop when in town to visit with cook Lucy Edmond, also known as "Nana."

"Nana's granddaughter worked for me for a while. Whenever I come through here I try to stop and get a plate. It's great to be back."

Ossoff said the swing was about "meeting with folks and figuring out what next we can achieve in each of these communities across the state."

"The time I spend out across Georgia is the most valuable time I have in my schedule," he said, "because I hear directly from communities on what they need, and I can take that back to Washington and get things done."

"Small cities and towns across Georgia haven't gotten a lot of love from Washington for decades, or attention from their

senators, so I've dialed in on what Dublin needs, what Laurens County needs, what Middle Georgia needs, to try to deliver tangible results."

Those results, Ossoff said, included securing federal funds for the new Northside Fire Station on U.S. 441 North, a project in discussions for almost a half-century.

"Sen. (Raphael) Warnock and I together delivered millions of dollars for sewer and water upgrades

OSSOFF
Continued on page 8

Habitat looking for a new homeowner

By **PAYTON TOWNS III**
Senior Reporter

Dublin-Laurens County Habitat for Humanity is looking for a new homeowner.

From March 1 through April 30, Habitat will be taking homeowner applications for House No. 44. People can find the applications on Habitat's website (www.dublinhabitat.com), where they can fill it out online.

"Instructions are on there or they can contact us and receive a hardcopy because we know some people don't have access to a computer" said Habitat Executive Director Tracy Kinney. "They have to have lived in Laurens County for the last 12 months, have the ability to repay a no-interest mortgage and be willing to perform a set number of sweat equity hours to help build the house."

There is more criteria people can read on the website. The applications will not be able to be submitted until March 1.

"I want to encourage people to apply, even if they have applied in the past and were denied," Kinney said. "Your situation may have changed so we need people to re-apply."

Anyone with questions can call (478) 275-1818.

Gubernatorial candidate Thurmond to speak at Black Festival luncheon

STAFF REPORTS

The annual Dublin-Laurens Black Festival Community Committee luncheon will feature one of the candidates who is running for Georgia governor this year.

Michael Thurmond will be the guest speaker for the sold-out event that will be held at 1 p.m. Saturday at Dublin Middle School. In addition to Thurmond, the event will honor citizens of the year for their meritorious contributions in Dublin and Laurens County.

Thurmond grew up in rural Clarke County. He was the youngest of nine children. While his parents had hoped he would become a preacher, Thurmond dedicated his life to helping others rise out of poverty, improving schools and making Georgia a safer and more affordable place to raise a family.

Thurmond graduated



THURMOND

from Clarke Central High School in Athens. He graduated from Paine College in Augusta, then earned a law degree from the South Carolina School of Law before returning to begin a law practice in Clarke County. When he was 33, Thurmond was elected to the Georgia Legislature, defeating a long-

time incumbent to become the first African American to represent Clarke County at the Capitol since Reconstruction.

Thurmond led Georgia's Division of Family & Children Services where he created the Work First program that helped 90,000 Georgians move back into the workforce.

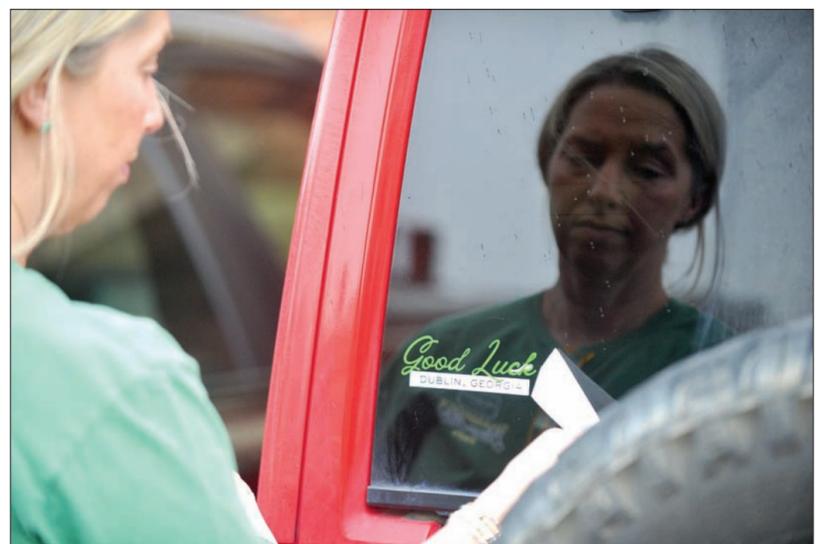
He later served as Georgia's Labor Commissioner, where he transformed outdated unemployment offices into state-of-the-art career centers that facilitated the employment of more than 300,000 Georgians. As commissioner, he created the Georgia Work\$ model that was copied by more than 30 states.

When DeKalb County schools were in a crisis, they turned to Thurmond. As interim superintendent,

THURMOND
Continued on page 8

SHAMROCK YOUR RIDE: MORRIS BANK HOLDS ANNUAL ST. PATS FUNDRAISER

Morris Bank got motorists ready to roll into the St. Patrick's Festival with its Shamrock Your Ride fundraiser last weekend. Proceeds from its sales of shamrock and other festive auto decals benefited the City of Hope Homeless Shelter. For more on upcoming St. Patrick's events, see our annual preview guide in Saturday's edition /**CLAY REYNOLDS**



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OBITUARIES



Burnell Joyceann Washington

Funeral services for Ms. Burnell Joyceann Washington of Dublin, Georgia, will be held on Friday, Feb. 27, 2026, at 1 p.m. at the Sandy Ford Baptist, 2614 US Highway 80 West, Dublin. Rev. Darryl Moore will deliver the eulogy.

Burnell Joyceann Washington was born on Sunday, Feb. 8, 1953, in Dublin, Georgia, to the late Rev. Wilson Washington Sr., and Sister Inell Washington. She was raised in a home grounded in faith, respect and community values she carried with her for the rest of her life.

Burnell attended Dublin City Schools, and at a young age, joined Green Grove Baptist Church. She attended Sandy Ford Baptist Church alongside her parents, where her faith continued to grow. Burnell lived a simple but meaningful life. She loved cooking, baking her famous potato pies and cakes, hosting yard sales and spending time surrounded by family. One of her favorite traditions was celebrating Mother's Day under the carport, where the weather always seemed perfect, and the laughter of family filled the air. She was also quietly philanthropic, receiving certificates for donating to several charities over the years including the Veterans Administration, the Law Enforcement Association, St. Jude and the Special Olympics.

Together with longtime companion, Grover Davis, affectionately known as "Champ," she raised two beautiful daughters, Chiquita "Quita" Jones (Leroy) of Valdosta, Georgia, and Lakeisha Washington (Eric) of Dublin, Georgia, as well as a daughter-in-law, Tiffany James.

Ms. Washington passed away on Friday, Feb. 20, 2026. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her baby sister, Evelyn Washington; brothers, Sherman Washington, Leroy Washington, Wilson Washington Jr. and Carey Washington; sister-in-law, Gloria Washington; and her companion, Grover "Champ" Davis; and a host of beloved aunts and uncles who welcomed her into eternity.

Her legacy continues through her five cherished grandchildren, who were her life: Tatiyana Mitchell of Dublin, Jaiden Washington of Swainsboro, Keigan Lowe of Dublin, Noah Jones of Valdosta and Nicolas Jones of Valdosta. She is also sur-

vived by her loving siblings, her sisters, Ann Golden and Annese Washington, both of Dublin, along with sisters-in-law, Rae Helen Washington, Bonnie Ruth Washington, Dessie Washington, Joyce Smith (Don), Lenora Barlow (Curtis), Eva Florence (Benjamin), and Claudia Davis (Henry Sr.) of Dublin, Mary Davis and Dollie Jefferson (Robert) of Florida; her loving aunt, Addie Washington of Dublin; and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins and a community of people who loved her dearly.

Her love will continue to live on in her children, her grandchildren, and every life she touched.

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

Services by Dudley Funeral Home and Cremations of Dublin.



Gerald Lynn Fordham

Gerald Lynn Fordham, 88, of Dublin, passed away peacefully on Sunday, Feb. 22, 2026. Born in Dodge County, Lynn attended Dodge County High School and spent many meaningful years in both Dublin, Georgia, and Titusville, Florida.

A dedicated professional, Mr. Fordham enjoyed a distinguished career spanning over 55 years. Throughout his tenure at Friedman Jewelers, Marks & Morgan and Kay Jewelers, he served with excellence as director of operations, district supervisor, store manager and sales associate. He was a man of faith and a valued member of Poplar Springs North Baptist Church and First Baptist Church of Aurlantia.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Abner Lamar Fordham and Estelle Pirkle Fordham; his sister, Maxine Morton; and his wives, Myra Dominy Fordham and Sara Radney (Dominy) Fordham.

Lynn's legacy continues through his loving family. He is survived by his sisters, Gwenett Evans of Hinesville, Georgia, and Faye Wright (Edward) of Eastman, Georgia. He was a devoted father to Deanne Mance (Ben) of Springhill, Tennessee, Stephanie Young (Kevin) of Titusville, Florida, and Paul Fordham (Deanna) of Viera, Florida. He also leaves behind five grandchildren—Stacey Blackwell (Brian), Justin Neth, Jay Vinson (Hannah), Jacob Fordham, and Joshua Fordham—as well as five great-grandchildren: Levi, James, Ryelyn, Allie, and Bennett.

Funeral services will be held at 11 a.m. on Monday, March 2, 2026, in the Mary Whitaker Townsend Memorial Chapel at Townsend Brothers Funeral Home in Dublin. Rev. Rusty Stewart and Rev. Wes Pinkley will officiate the ceremony. For those who wish to pay their respects prior to the service, a visitation will be held from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the funeral home. A private interment will be held at Woodlawn Cemetery in Dodge County.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that memo-

rial contributions be made to Poplar Springs North Baptist Church.

Arrangements are under the care of Townsend Brothers Funeral Home, Dublin, Georgia.

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



Helen Taylor

Funeral services for Mrs. Helen Taylor, of Dublin, Georgia, will be held on Saturday, Feb. 28, 2026, at 11 a.m., at the Holly Springs Baptist Church, 705 Buckeye Road in East Dublin. Interment will follow in the Dudley Memorial Cemetery.

Helen Taylor was born on Wednesday, Sept. 21, 1960, in Pompano Beach, Florida. Helen was united in marriage to her loving husband, Ronnie Taylor. Together they built a family grounded in love, strength, and resilience.

She was a proud and dedicated member of Zion Hope Church of God in Christ, where she worshipped faithfully. Her faith was an important part of her life, and she carried herself with conviction, honesty and strength.

Helen was known for being honest and telling it like it was. She spoke her mind, stood her ground, and loved her family fiercely. She also had a special gift in the kitchen. Her cooking brought everyone together, and she was especially proud of winning the Collard Green Contest last Thanksgiving a title she wore with joy and bragging rights.

Mrs. Taylor peacefully entered eternal rest on Wednesday, Feb. 18, 2026. She was preceded in death by her parents, Lena Mae Anthony and Wallace Harris; her son, Ronnie Taylor Sr.; her sister, Lela Marie Harris; and her brother, Robert Harris.

Helen leaves to cherish her precious memories her husband, Ronnie Taylor, her loving children: Jason (Alexandra) Taylor, Jasminda Taylor, and Alexandria Taylor. She also leaves a devoted daughter-in-law, Kye Taylor. She was a proud grandmother to Akireya (Carson) Morris, Antwann Wiggins, Antonio Wiggins, Dallas Linder, Amaya Taylor, Ronnie Taylor Jr., Ra-

mello Taylor, Kyron Taylor, Makayla Taylor, Jaxson Taylor, Cason Taylor, and Chase Mack. She was also blessed with two great-grandchildren, Crue Morris and Colson Morris, who brought her tremendous joy. She is also survived by her siblings: Gail McNabb, Elliot (Elaine) Harris, Tunita Harris, Michael (Toni) Harris, Angelena Harris, Gregory (Sandra) Harris, Christopher Harris, Wallena Harris, Vanessa Harris, Napoleon (Cantrell) Harris, Joseph (Latosha) Harris, Vanessa Harris, Faith (Travis) Stuckey, Willie (Lashondra) Harris, Nicole (Dion) Sawyer, and Sherry Harris.

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

Services by Dudley Funeral Home and Cremations of Dublin.

Though our hearts are heavy, we find comfort in knowing that Helen's love, strength, laughter, and unforgettable spirit will live on through her family. Her legacy of honesty, faith, and good cooking will never be forgotten.



Gennie Mae Stevens

Funeral services for Mrs. Gennie Mae Stevens, of Dublin, Georgia, will be held on Saturday, Feb. 28, 2026, at 12 p.m. at the C.D. Dudley Memorial Chapel at the Dudley Funeral Home, 617 East Jackson Steet, Dublin.

A beloved mother and grandmother, Gennie Mae or "Jean" as she was sometimes affectionately called, was born in Dublin, Georgia, to Nelson and Jeanie Smith. She was the oldest of the couple's six children.

Gennie Mae enjoyed serving others, especially children, and spent most of her professional career caring for kids, mostly through her work at the day care center of the First African Baptist Church of Dublin, Georgia. She later worked in the Department of Children and Family Services, also in Dublin.

She passed away on Valentine's Day, in the year of our Lord 2026, at the Dublinair Health Care & Rehab Facility, in Dublin, Georgia. In addition to her parents, Gennie Mae was preceded in death by brothers, Tom, Elson, Nelson and Henry.

She is survived by daughters, Duche Marie Stevens and Sebrena Le'Trese Bart-

ley, both of Jacksonville Florida; son, Ernest Paul Stevens III, of Windsor Mill, Maryland; daughter and son in Christ, Claire and David Boston, of Dublin Georgia; sisters, Willie Mae and Pamela; and brothers, Norman and John.

She has two granddaughters, Markia (Kelvin) Green, of Montgomery, Alabama, and Marissa Bartley, of Jacksonville, Florida, as well as great-grandchildren, and many other countless family and friends who will all dearly miss the profound love-greeting of "HELLO SUGAH!"

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

Services by Dudley Funeral Home and Cremations of Dublin.

Melvin A. Graham

Melvin A. Graham, 86, of Eastman, Ga., passed away on Monday, Feb. 23, 2026.

Funeral services will be held at 2 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 25, at Southerland Funeral Chapel, with interment in Woodlawn Cemetery.

He is survived by his sons - Malone Graham (Tammy) and Milton Graham (Melissa); daughter-in-law - Brenda Ann Gra-

ham; 11 grandchildren; 19 great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren; Sister - Mizelle Graham Bussell; Sisters-in-law - Margie May and Dorothy Smith.

The family received friends in Southerland Funeral Chapel from 6 p.m. - 8 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 24.

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

Sonja Conner Bryant

Sonja Conner Bryant, Rph, 78, of Milan, Ga., passed away on Wednesday, Feb. 18, 2026.

Funeral services were held at 12 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 24, at Rockwell Baptist Church, with interment in Rockwell Baptist Church Cemetery.

She is survived by her brother - Tracy Conner; first cousins - Charles Conner (Wilma), Bruce Conner (Gretchen) and Toney Conner; and several extended family members including, Jim Conner (Melissa).

The family received friends in Rockwell Baptist Church from 11 a.m. - 12 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 24.

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

AT THE LOCAL LIBRARY

- Coloring, Crafting & Coffee on Monday, March 2, from 10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. in the library auditorium. Take time to unwind and let your creativity flow. Bring your own craft or enjoy the library's adult coloring supplies. Coffee and tea provided.

- Mechatronics Monday on Monday, March 2, from 3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. in the Learning Lab. Drop by your LEGO Technic lab every Monday. Build with LEGO gears, motors and more! Learn coding, too. Ages 8-plus recommended.

- Children's Storytime on Tuesday, March 3, at 10:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. in the library's Children's Center. Join us for our weekly storytime where little ones can enjoy stories, dancing and crafts.

- BUILD! on Wednesday, March 4, from 4 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. in the Children's Center. For teens to toddlers, it's a weekly LEGO and Duplo building event!

- DLCRA Senior Bingo at Southern Pines at the indoor complex on Thursday, March 5, from 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. Free to play! For Blackout Bingo: a \$1 buy-in. Winner takes the pot! You must be 52 years of age or older.

NOW HERE'S A TIP

ByJOANN DERSON King Features

* Do you have a screw loose (in your eyeglasses)? This is an easy fix. Paint the screw with a dab of clear nail polish and quickly rescrew. It works like glue. Dab the top of the screw for a little extra insurance.

* "Snow will better slide off a shovel that has been sprayed with furniture polish." -- T.L. in Minnesota

* Here's an old tip but a good one: Before going away on vacation, put a couple ice cubes in a plas-

tic baggie, set at the front of the freezer. When you return, if there is any evidence of melting, you will know you've lost power while you were gone. If the bag is one big, flat cube, you lost power long enough to suspect all your refrigerator items of being spoiled.

* Cut your kitchen sponge in half or even thirds. You can clean just as well with a smaller sponge, and you will extend its life, saving you money. A smaller sponge dries out more quickly.

BIRTHDAYS

- Feb. 27
- Cecily Craft
- Hunter Foskey
- Brittanie Pooler
- Hannah Portwood
- Patricia Rozier

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Notice of Public Hearing

The Dublin Housing Authority has developed its Agency Plan in compliance with the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998. It is available for review at the Authority's Administrative Northside Office located at 500 West Mary Street beginning February 26, 2026. The hours of Plan availability are Mondays through Thursdays from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm. These administrative offices are closed daily from 1:00 to 2:00 pm.

The Public Hearing for the 2026 Annual Plan will be held on April 9, 2026, at the Verline P. Copenny Center, 2B(C) West Mary Street, Dublin Georgia beginning at 5:00pm.

All citizens are invited to attend this hearing to discuss this plan. Should special requirements for foreign language interpretation or accommodation related to disabilities necessary, please contact Brenda B. Smith, Executive Director, before 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 2, 2026, to ensure that necessary arrangements can be made.

The et cetera chronicles - vol. 126

OLD AUNT SUKEY - Sukey Coates, reputed to be very old, worked as a midwife and nurse up to the day of her death. The old and beloved woman had just returned from treating a patient. When she returned, she laid down and died. Sukie was said to be 110 years of age. Pittsburgh Dispatch, March 4, 1892.

ALL MY SIBLINGS - A negro farm hand who worked turpentine on the farm of J.M. Williams in the Grimsley community near Rentz, proclaimed that he was one of his mother's 40 children. Twenty-seven of the children of his mother were boys and 13 were girls. His mother was married four times and lived in North Carolina. The Times, Shreveport, Louisiana. June 27, 1897.

GET OUT JAIL NOW! - It was in the winter of 1899 that the chief of police was ordered to leave the Dublin City jail. There had been some consternation between the city council and the police department. The council had grown tired of the chief's ability or reluctance to collect the outstanding fines. The council also gave "the boot" to the entire force, which was composed of the chief and three subordinates. North Adams Transcript, Mass. Feb. 22, 1899.

THE BOLD BIGAMIST - J.E. Barber had a passion for women. He married at least 30 of them. In the summer of 1895, he reached a total of approximately 22 wives. Barber carried written proof of at least a score of brides. Barber did not see anything wrong in his taking the plunge over and over again. Most of his marriages took place in Florida. Barber loved and left his brides with no apathy for their lives after he went away. Barber and bride No. 30 left Lothair, Georgia, in Montgomery County and were off to

see the world, at least until No. 23 came along. Anaconda Standard, Montana. Sept. 9, 1895.

THE COURTHOUSE HOTEL - Before the construction of a new Laurens County courthouse in 1895, the old one had to be transported across the street. Dublin hotelier T.B. Hicks moved the structure, which had been in place since the 1840s, from its site in the middle of the Courthouse Square across the terminus of South Franklin Street to the southeast corner of the square. Hicks renamed the building the "Artesian House." Until it was razed, the two-story building was used as a hospital, a hotel, a doctor's house and a house of ill repute. Atlanta Constitution, Nov. 29, 1996.

SIX SCORE AND MORE - Rachel Darly was known by many as the oldest woman in the South. Born in 1776, Darly, a resident of southern Laurens County, accompanied her 78-year old and oldest daughter into Dublin on her 120th birthday to see how it looked. Darly was astonished at the progress in the county seat. The Atlanta Constitution, April 23, 1996.

HOLDING HIS PEACE - Andrew Barber wouldn't hold his peace. He didn't want to. Barber was so in love with Miss Rebecca Henry of southern Laurens County. He courted Miss Henry on several occasions.

Every time, Rebecca spurned his advances. Desperate and even more in love with Rebecca, Barber began to hold church meetings and revivals to prove that he was the right man for his beloved. After learning of Rebecca's wedding to another man, one Josh Branch, Barber lost his reason, whatever he ever had, and set out to reach the scene of the

PIECES OF OUR PAST



By **SCOTT B. THOMPSON SR.**

marriage post haste. Upon his arrival, Barber began to berate and curse the occupants of the C.G. home. The groom attempted to calm the maniacal wanna-be groom. Barber, Branch and Young Beacham left the house to go outside and settle the matter once and for all. The men dropped the weapons on the ground and commenced to have a knock-down, drag out melee. Branch came out on top. The wedding was postponed to a later date. Apparently, Josh and Rebecca never tied the knot, at least in Laurens County. The Philadelphia Times, March 23, 1896.

THRIFTY COOK - O.S. Ware, a Lothair, Georgia resident, kept an old dish in his cupboard. It had served many a meal in the Ware family. Nearly everyday a member family ate off the attractive heirloom. Ware was always careful with the dish. For you see, the dish was much older when Ware obtained it at a sale. Ware believed that his favorite plate was actually 134 years old and was made in 1752. Atlanta Constitution, July 30, 1896.

DID YOU KNOW ...?

Did the man credited with inventing the game of Monopoly actually invent it?

By **JACK BAGLEY**
GTLN

Now we're ready to close out February!

The second month of the year (and the shortest) is about to be history. Was yours a good one? I certainly hope that it was.

Spring is right around the corner, you know. Three more weeks or so, and we'll celebrate the annual renewal of the world, at least in the Northern Hemisphere. Those south of the Equator will be entering autumn.

Interesting, that. So is trivia - interesting, I mean. Enjoy!

Did you know ...
... figs are not fruits? Not technically, anyway. A fig is actually an inflorescence. What's that you say - you don't know what an inflorescence is? Well, an inflorescence (okay, I just like saying it) is a cluster of flowers and seeds around a stem. In other words, when you eat a fig, you're actually eating flowers. (Makes me think the cows have something going there.)

... the word "money" is relatively new in English? While the concept of money has been around since humans first figured out exchange systems, the actual word didn't appear in English until the 14th Century. It was derived from the Latin word moneta, which was another name for the Roman goddess Juno. Why Juno? Because the Romans first minted coins near Juno's temple around 300 BC. (Money is also relatively

rare in my wallet.)

... television productions can sometimes go overboard with regulations? Consider: During 2014, the television series Downton Abbey showed a plastic water bottle in the background of a promotional photo for the show. Downton Abbey was set in the 1910s and 1920s, long before plastic water bottles existed. Made aware of the goof, the producers issued an edict for the set: all things modern were banned on the business side of the cameras. The ban extended to water bottles, of course, along with modern watches, modern jewelry, and even actors' underwear. (Jeez, you make one little mistake, and then ...)

... three presidents died on July 4, and one was born that day? Presidents John Adams (1735-1826), Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), and James Monroe (1758-1831) all died on the fourth of July in their respective years, while Calvin Coolidge (1872-1933) was born on Independence Day. (A popular day for more than one reason, it seems.)

... the first observance of Memorial Day was in 1868? The first official ceremony was held May 30, 1868 at Arlington National Cemetery. It was then called Decoration Day and the first observance was presided over by General Ulysses S. Grant (1822-1885). Grant recorded that about 5,000 people attended on a day that was "too warm for comfort," and those in attendance endured a two-hour speech

from another general and future president, James A. Garfield (1831-1881). (What could he possibly have had to say that took two hours?)

... the man credited with inventing the popular board game Monopoly didn't actually invent it? Charles Darrow (1889-1967) is credited with inventing the game, which he sold in 1935 to Parker Brothers and thus became a millionaire. But Darrow did not invent the game. Rather, he found a game made in 1904 called The Landlord's Game, created and patented by Elizabeth Magie (1866-1948), and developed his own version based on it. The games are very similar in many ways (both, for instance, have railroads, utilities, and even a jail), but when Magie tried to sell her game she was told it was too complicated and too overtly political. Magie's game was created to illustrate the economic teachings of Henry George (1839-1897), a progressive economist who felt that unchecked capitalism was dangerous. Darrow discovered Magie's game when a friend taught him to play, and he made several cosmetic changes to it, then patented it and sold it as Monopoly. While the game made Darrow a very wealthy man, Magie only received \$500 for her original work, and no credit toward the creation of Monopoly. Additional trivia note: Lest you think Darrow a thief for taking Magie's original game and using it to make his own, you should know

that her patent on The Landlord's Game, issued in 1904, had expired by the time Darrow patented his version in 1935. (No good deed goes unpunished, it is said.)

... penguins swim faster than they walk? Birds, of course, fly faster than they walk, but penguins cannot fly. So they make up for it with their swim speeds. A penguin can swim between five and six miles per hour, with bursts of up to 15 mph. Their walking (waddling?) speed is between 1.7 and 2.4 miles per hour. (Well, what's there to walk to in Antarctica?)

... a businessman once made half a billion dollars in one day? Howard Hughes (1905-1976) sold his 75% holdings in Trans World Airlines in 1966. Hughes received a bank draft for \$546,549,171 in return for the holdings that day. (Some guys have all the luck.)

... the fire extinguisher was invented in the early 19th Century? Captain George William Manby (1765-1854), a British author and inventor, created the first portable fire extinguisher in 1818. Manby's design held three gallons of potassium carbonate under

compressed air pressure. (Buckets of water were used prior to 1818.)

... a breed of shark can live in fresh or salt water? The bull shark is able to live in both kinds of water because it is able to regulate salt and other substances in its blood. A shark attack in a freshwater creek in New Jersey in 1916 is attributed to a bull shark. Bull sharks have also been found in the Mississippi River.

... kilts are not native to Scotland? They originated in France. (I'm glad they migrated.)

Now ... you know!

ATTENTION READERS

I respectfully call for the immediate resignation of Ms. Francis Wells from her role as Chairperson of both the Dublin-Laurens MLK Birthday Celebration (MLKBC) and the Dublin-Laurens Black History Festival Celebration (BHFC). The MLKBC is held in January and the BHFC in February. Due to ongoing concerns about her leadership, I am compelled to write a second editorial to the Courier Herald within a month. I am seeking her resignation as an alternative to pursuing legal action.

In my first editorial, I raised concerns about the chairperson's decision to arbitrarily designate the 2026 MLK Birthday Celebration as a fifty-year milestone, disregarding fourteen years of local Black history without clear reference points. Additionally, this year, the chairperson changed the name of the Dublin-Laurens County Black History Festival Celebration without following established protocol. This organization has existed for fifty years, and such changes should be handled with care and respect for its history. The lack of adherence to protocol prompted this second editorial.

The chairperson published a flyer announcing the BHFC Awards Banquet under the new name, The Dublin-Laurens Black History Festival Community Committee, Inc., without obtaining documentation of the name change from the Secretary of State.

I wish to inform the Dublin-Laurens community that the new name is not legally recognized. According to the Secretary of State, changing an organization's name requires board approval and filing official articles of amendment with the state. If incorporation is sought, articles of incorporation must also be filed. The chairperson did not follow these procedures and may be held liable. While such matters are typically civil, this situation may have criminal implications.

The chairperson's actions raise concerns regarding both professional ethics and respect for the organization's legacy. At the recent MLKBC, she posthumously awarded the late Mr. Willie Burke a plaque for his contributions to the Black History Festival, twenty-seven years after his passing. To my knowledge, Mr. Burke did not participate in Black History Festival activities. However, he was a progressive leader who promoted diversity through education, sports, and recreation during the 1970s and 1980s. His influence helped foster inclusivity in the community, and his name was often referenced in formal meetings to encourage unity.

I am also concerned about the lack of financial transparency regarding the MLKBC and BHFC events, which are held at Dublin Middle School and generate significant revenue each year. Despite combined annual proceeds exceeding \$30,000, there is no visible evidence of these funds benefiting the community. Neither organization appears to support local campaigns or charities. Greater accountability is needed to ensure responsible management of these resources.

In addition to outlining my concerns, I hope members of the Dublin City Council will consider relocating the MLKBC and appointing a chairperson from within the community. The chairperson should be responsible for submitting all required documentation and reports to the Council, in accordance with protocol. I intend to make a formal request to the Dublin City Council to coordinate the MLKBC in partnership with the community.

Dublin is known as the first place Dr. Martin L. King delivered his first oratorical speech. And that place was the First African Baptist Church. Across the street, a majestic park stands in his honor, Downtown Dublin, Where the Dream Began.

This significant history places Dublin on the world stage, as Dr. King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. The celebrations should be appropriate, prestigious, and inclusive. The MLKBC would benefit from an official website and a comprehensive archive of documents. Additionally, I recommend that the Dublin City Council and the community establish a memorial program at the First African Baptist Church on MLK Day, with strong invitations extended to local and county governments and stakeholders.

As a community, we should strive to uphold higher standards.

Dr. Maudine Jefferson-Wood
Founder of the Dublin-Laurens Black History Festival
121 Marion Street
East Dublin, Ga 31027
404-539-9388

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

COMMUNITY NEWS

City celebrates 50 years of Easterseals



Mayor Kight joins Easterseals staff in proclaiming February 2026 as the 50th Anniversary of Easterseals Middle Georgia. For five decades, the organization has empowered individuals with disabilities through vocational training, support services, and opportunities to live, work, and participate fully in the community/SPECIAL PHOTO

OUR TAKE...



Be on the lookout for Lucky, the official leprechaun of the Dublin-Laurens County St. Patrick's Festival, from now until the end of March/File Photo

It's the most wonderful time of the year in Dublin

Dust off your shamrock decor and take your green jacket to the cleaners because the most wonderful time of the year for Dublin-Laurens County is here.

Our community's signature event, the St. Patrick's Festival, has begun and geared up for month-long itinerary of all things Irish celebrating the people, places and customs that make our area the best place to live, work and play in Georgia. Miss St. Patrick's has already been crowned, cars have been shamrocked and green bows are popping up on homes and businesses around town, but that's just the beginning.

As the festivities get into full swing, you'll see the tried and true events that have made the St. Patrick's Festival a mainstay such as the Leprechaun Contest, the tennis tournament and the pancake supper. There are also new events, making the festival a little more dynamic, such as a tour of homes and historic places and a soccer tournament.

Yes, there are events for the whole family during the 2026 festival, and as always The Courier Herald is your source for all things St. Patrick's. Be on the lookout for our special preview section and the official festival brochure, releasing in the Feb. 28 edition. Erin go bragh!

— Kyle Dominy

THOUGHT FOR TODAY

"Either America will destroy ignorance or ignorance will destroy the United States."

— W.E.B. DuBois

DAILY SCRIPTURE

"For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

— Philippians 3:3

EVERY DAY'S A HOLIDAY

- February 26, 2026 is...
- Letter to an Elder Day
- Tell a Fairy Tale Day
- National Pistachio Day
- Levi Strauss Day

Senate budget asserts priorities, highlights change

The Georgia Senate passed their amended budget last week, marking a customary milestone in the forty day session of the Georgia General Assembly. As the yet to be passed annual budget sets spending for the fiscal year that begins July 1st, it is customary for legislators to amend the budget passed last year for this current year to reflect unforeseen spending needs and/or create tax rebates in years of surpluses, or make spending cuts and adjustments if tax revenues are falling below projections.

State budgets begin with a spending plan submitted to the legislature by the Governor, which can be considered a "very strong suggestion". Officially in the legislature's eyes, the budget begins with the House under the supervision of Appropriations Chairman Matt Hatchett of Dublin. Once passed by that chamber, the Senate takes their turn with a plan demonstrating their priorities with stewardship from their Chairman Blake Tillery of Vidalia.

The details are then negotiated by a conference committee of both chambers with input by the Governor's office. While officially a product of the legislature, conferees never forget that the Governor — even in his lame duck year — holds a line item veto pen.

A big ticket addition from the Senate is getting a lot of attention, as it is large enough to change both the budget discussion as well as the state's current and future spending priorities.

A capital outlay for a new state mental hospital was added in the Senate's spending plan, at a cost of \$409 million. The need for this hospital and the politics surrounding it will be the subject of a future column. If you can't wait for that, ask a local law enforcement officer or medical first responder what they deal with almost every day and you'll likely get a full throated preview.

Today, however, we're using this major addition to highlight the politics and process of the budget and the legislature itself. Change is begetting change.

While his veto pen keeps the folks who understand power shifts from considering Governor Brian Kemp a lame duck, forces remain in play for a transition of power before a new Governor submits the next budget plan. Lieutenant Governor



By CHARLIE HARPER

Burt Jones who presides over the Senate hopes to be the one drawing up that plan.

Appropriations Chairman Tillery is one of four Senators elected for this legislative term who wish to move into the Lieutenant Governor's office and wield his gavel, including Senators Steve Gooch of Dahlonega and Greg Dolezal of Cumming, as well as former Senator John Kennedy who resigned earlier this year to focus full time on his campaign. Kennedy and Gooch served as President Pro Tem and Majority Leader respectively but ceded those titles under GOP caucus rules to run for higher office.

Budgets must be balanced, and new spending means other priorities for new spending must be cut or eliminated. While keeping the Governor's proposed income tax rebates up to \$500 per household and the House's added property tax rebates to homeowners, the Senate trimmed a proposed one-time bonus of

\$2,000 for state employees to \$1,250.

While it's easy to draw some lines between the aspirations of those looking to higher office and the assertion of Senate priorities, it's important to look at the Senate as a whole, including those who will qualify next week for the offices which they currently hold — and plan to keep for at least two more years.

The Senate, after all, is viewed as a "collaborative" body, as its constitutional structure and rules grant less autonomy to one leader as the House does to the Speaker, and instead disperses power among the members and the Lieutenant Governor.

Senator Larry Walker III of Perry is the President Pro Tem, and is elected by Senators of both parties. As such, he represents the entirety of the Senate when he presides and is officially a bipartisan leader.

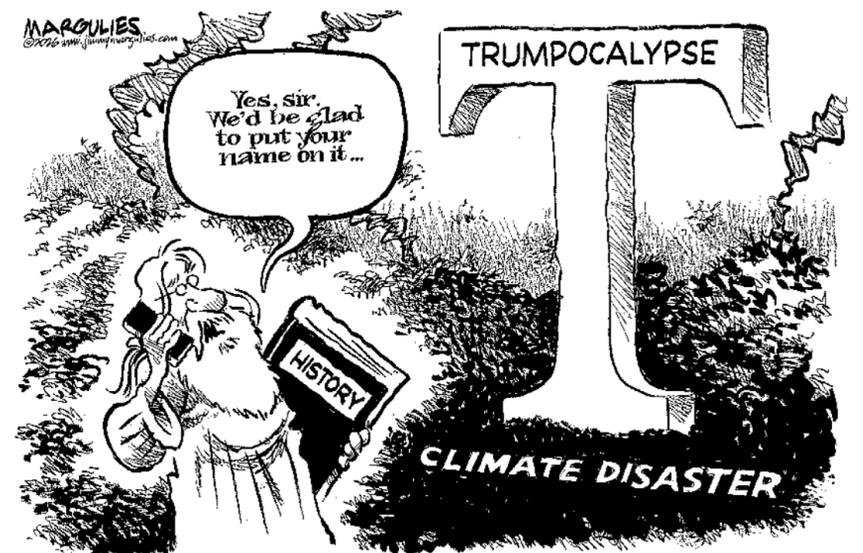
Enacting a Republican agenda is the official responsibility of Senator Ja-

son Anavitarte of Dallas. One should add that this responsibility includes the re-election of caucus members who help enact GOP policies.

The other Senator with outsized responsibilities in a committee authorized structure is Senator Matt Brass of Newnan. Brass chairs the powerful Rules Committee, which determines which bills will see the floor for a vote, or die in committee. Senators often will rely on the Rules Chairman to flex institutional power when they want the House to take up a certain bill, or wish to hold a controversial bill until there is consensus on how best to proceed with a floor vote.

Many will rightly be following those campaigning for higher office for both motivations and to measure success. Key to understanding how this will work, however, is following the two elected this year to lead the chamber and the majority caucus, as well as the one Chairman who has been granted the authority by his peers to make, brake, or break a bill as the main gate keeper.

The collaboration so far has held. The Senate passed their version of the amended budget 49-1, with the House then making the customary vote to disagree and move to conference. The variables at play are the level of spending for each line item, or if some of the big ticket items get moved to the next annual budget when new checks can be cut on July 1.



Firmer Ground: Black history is American history

"We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny." — Martin Luther King, Jr.

Telling our stories is the way we know who we are and who we are becoming. History helps orient us in the present and for the future. Black history month has been a time to highlight and celebrate the essential part people of color have played in the American story. It would be impossible to tell that story, for instance, without reference to the institution of slavery and the slave economy, to the Civil War, to the ensuing era of Jim Crow, and the long struggle for civil rights, as well as to the broad and deep participation of African Americans in every aspect of American life today.

Attempts to deny any part of this history are a national betrayal. And especially to deny the unseemly, the painful parts, is to miss our chance for living the truth, for learning, for growing up. Indeed, one of the great gifts of people who have been oppressed is to have kept the American dream alive for all of us.

The promise that was there in the beginning, the ideals that have in the past made American a beacon of hope, "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."

Black history month is a time to be recalled to the best of who we are as a nation. A time to remember and honor the courage and sacrifice of folks who have endured and continued to believe. Moreover, this month is an occasion to savor the incredibly rich contributions of African Americans in every field of human endeavor, in science and the arts, in government and religion. Historians, journalists, and storytellers in every corner of the land continue to inform and inspire us, helping us recognize again the gift in being part of a so beautifully diverse nation. And in terms of opportunity and human flourishing, there is much progress to be thankful for. At the same time, the effects of past injustices are still

GUEST COLUMN

By STEVE BULLINGTON

with us, and racism persists as a salient feature of our common life. In this regard, it's hard to understand the current administration's preoccupation with eliminating DEI programs and language except as a desire to turn back the clock, as if there was no longer enough freedom to go around. And I thought these — diversity, equality, inclusion — were supreme American values, things about America that we were proud of, and the very kind of values we hoped our children would learn.

In the face of a lack of moral clarity at the top and outright retrenchment, local and state entities must redouble their efforts to work and teach toward a just and civil society. And hats off as always to the

critical role that parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles play in character formation. To the fidelity of teachers and administrators. To faith leaders and visionary business leaders. Nearly two hundred and fifty years down the way and recalling that together we are the makers of our history, we may ask "what new American story am I writing today?"

The last word here comes from one embattled and courageous group in Georgia. From Fulton County's Department of Registration and Elections and from Registration Manager Kathryn Glenn. At their first meeting since federal officials seized the already thrice scrutinized files from the 2020 election, and as they prepare for early voting for this year's midterm election, an emotional Mrs. Glenn said, "Our responsibility is to get it right. We are committed to the mission and will continue to carry out the duties with professionalism, accuracy, and integrity." Here's to freedom-loving, country-loving citizen actors in every place.

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.

Dublin Police Department

- Rickey Kemp, 64, was charged with theft by shoplifting at Dollar General on South Jefferson Street around 4:05 p.m. on Feb. 11.

Dispatch informed police that a man wearing a red hat and a red jacket had left the store without paying for several items. The person left the store and turned right, heading toward downtown. An officer saw a man matching that description, who was later identified as Kemp, at the intersection of South Decatur Street and East Madison Street. He was wearing a red hat and red jacket and carrying a Dollar General bag.

The officer asked him if he had just left the Dollar General and he said, "Yes, I did, but I had this candy bar before I walked in the store."

It was determined that Kemp had taken \$50.18 worth of sausage and bacon from the store without paying.

- On Feb. 11, around 6:33 a.m., an officer was dispatched to Rowe Street regarding a domestic disturbance. Once on the scene, other officers were already talking with a woman while other officers were talking with a man, later identified as Terence Johnson, 38. Johnson said nothing had happened and that he, "doesn't answer questions."

Johnson tried to walk away from the officers, who stopped him and told him he was not free to go yet. But, he kept trying to leave the scene. Johnson was arrested and patted down for weapons. A screwdriver was discovered in his front right pocket. He was transported to the sheriff's office and charged with pedestrian under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

- A man was charged with disorderly conduct around



POLICE BEAT...

12:45 p.m. on Feb. 10, after officers responded about a person experiencing suicidal thoughts.

The man made threats toward the officers and officials with the Mental Health Crisis Unit. He was transported to the sheriff's office and turned over to the jail staff.

- Robert Gene Walker, 50, was charged with theft by shoplifting at Dollar General on South Jefferson Street around 6:30 a.m. on Feb. 12.

An officer responded to the location and talked with an employee, who said she had just started her break when she saw a man wearing all black clothing and white shoes enter the store and walk around suspiciously.

The employee watched the man on video and saw him take items on the cleaning aisle. After taking the items, he walked out of the door, got on a black bicycle and left the area heading toward Jones Village without paying for the items.

Officers made contact with the man at the intersection MLK Drive and Franklin Street. He was arrested due to an outstanding warrant. During a search incident to arrest, the officers found item that had been taken from Dollar General. Officers returned the items to the store.

Walker was transported to the sheriff's office on the outstanding warrant and was later released on a shoplifting citation.

Laurens County Sheriff's Office

- Around 9:30 a.m. on Feb. 10, a deputy received a call about a walk in in reference to an incident on Emilys Drive.

- William Wilcox, 56, of Montrose, was charged with possession of methamphetamine around 4:06 a.m. on Feb. 10. A deputy was dispatched to the intersection of Main Street and Second Street in reference to a vehicle in the ditch.

- Dalton Jayce Sears, 26, of Kathleen, was charged with driving under the influence of alcohol on I-16 at mile marker 41 on Feb. 6 around 2 p.m.

- On Feb. 6, around 8:58 a.m., a deputy was dispatched to Honeysuckle Road in reference to a report.

- On Feb. 5, around 3:30 p.m., a deputy responded to Shannon Drive for a property damage report.

- On Feb. 5, the deputy met with a man at the sheriff's office who needed a report on a stolen trailer at mile marker 42 on I-16 in Dudley.

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.



TELL IT!

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

Question: Will all K5 - 8th grade students enrolled in Dublin City School System be allowed to choose to attend this tuition free public charter school? If not, what's admission criteria?

What is going on with the G.B.I. investigation on the Dublin City School board? The taxpayers want justice! It is time to give Fred a new suit ... black and white stripes with no tie! A perfect fit!

I have asked this before and got no answer. I am asking again because I am desperate. How can I get rid of the armadillo in my yard. I've been told to shoot them and I wish I could. I live alone and I'm handicapped. Is there any other way?

Editor's note: Several manufacturers offer repellents for armadillos and other animals. They are available in stores and online and are easily administered.

Could someone explain to me how the city of Dublin, the Dublin City School Board is going to afford two charter schools? I was totally surprised to see that article in the paper (Thursday, Feb. 19).

I sure hope the Laurens County Board of Education does the right thing by these 157 employees that the governor left out of the bonus that were given out. These people deserve it too. I hope the county board of education will give them at least half of the amount.

Here we go again. From what I am reading in the paper, a proposed group is trying to start another charter school, tuition free. Does this mean we would have two charter schools in Dublin?

Thanks to the person that posted about Senior break on school taxes. I just paid mine and it set me back. I'm sure it will help a lot of people if they know about it. Keep posting it Courier Herald.

To the Laurens County Board of Education, paraprofessionals need a raise too. Without us, your certified teachers would not survive. We work harder than some teachers!

If the proposed charter school will be anything like ACE Academy in Macon it needs to be fast tracked. Their success sto-

ries (shows they) are the top Georgia middle school public or private. They started PreK through 8th grade in an old school and grew from there to 1,800 students and now have PreK through 12. Like Irish Gifted Academy, students must maintain an 80 or better average. They have a waiting list for all grades and have to hold an annual lottery to see who gets in. Student dress and behavior codes are strictly enforced. The school was established in 2014 and in 2019, it separated from local school district oversight to become a State Commissioned Charter School. While this led to improvements in budget and curriculum, it also led to changes in admission and eligibility. In 2021, U.S. News recognized it as one of the best charter schools in the country.

A 10-year-old school bus departed NWLE taking students on an out of county field trip. Unacceptable. Only the pride of our fleet should embark on such an adventure. We have plenty of newer busses.

The city shouldn't be picking the low-hanging fruit. Is it easier to send a letter to a single mom about

her grass and overgrown sidewalk than it is to track down a large out-of-town property owner?

I am really sick of Dublin City Schools. Last week they were celebrating themselves for solvency by 2028 and making great strides this year in debt recovery. Just one little detail they left out ... they have to borrow more in advances from the state and go into more debt in 2027 but will magically be out of debt 2028. The accounting games continue. Transparency? Like a black hole. Try starting by answering one simple question. You took, stole, mismanaged \$6 million meant for state health benefits from employees. You kept it instead of paying to the state. Where did that \$6 million go? To whom did it go? That is accounting 101. Answer that one question and you'll start on the path to transparency. So far it's still the same pack of lies. The BS that you didn't know about the situation won't fly. Answer the question.

We think it is a very bad decision that the city has plans to put in a roundabout at the intersection of Woodlawn and Claxton Dairy Road. It appears not to be based on facts or statistics. We have been asking for years to have a roundabout put at the intersection of Claxton Dairy and the 441 North bypass, which has been the site of many accidents and injuries due to

Local 7-day Forecast:

The next 48 hours:

THURSDAY: 72° Cloudy, becoming breezy in the afternoon. Sunrise: 7:03 a.m.

THURSDAY NIGHT: 59° Periods of rain and a thunderstorm. Sunset: 6:27 p.m.

FRIDAY: 69° A couple of morning showers; otherwise, clouds breaking for some sun. Sunrise: 7:02 a.m.

FRIDAY NIGHT: 53° Increasing clouds. Sunset: 6:27 p.m.

Saturday 2/28 HIGH/LOW 72/51 Mostly cloudy with a brief shower or two Sunrise: 7:01 a.m. Sunset: 6:28 p.m.	Sunday 3/1 HIGH/LOW 77/49 Pleasantly warm with more sun than clouds. Sunrise: 7:00 a.m. Sunset: 6:29 p.m.	Monday 3/2 HIGH/LOW 73/48 Pleasant with periods of clouds and sunshine. Sunrise: 6:59 a.m. Sunset: 6:30 p.m.	Tuesday 3/3 HIGH/LOW 69/48 Intervals of clouds and sunshine. Sunrise: 6:57 a.m. Sunset: 6:31 p.m.	Wednesday 3/4 HIGH/LOW 73/50 Sun and some clouds. Sunrise: 6:56 a.m. Sunset: 6:31 p.m.
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River levels...
Oconee (at Dublin) 6.43'
Ocmulgee (at Macon) 8.01'

lack of traffic control. We pass this crossing every day and going across the bypass from either side of Claxton Dairy Rd takes a leap of faith when traffic is heavier and in times of bad weather when visibility is poor. When cars are in the turn lanes, they obscure on-com-

ing cars. We ask the city to reconsider Woodlawn/Claxton Dairy in favor of the 441 bypass and Claxton Dairy. We hope this will not fall upon deaf ears. Georgia Department of Transportation makes the call on what is built on the bypass.

NEWS DIGEST

The regular meeting of the board of commissioners of the Dublin Housing Authority will be held on Thursday, Feb. 26 at 5 p.m. at the administrative building in the James W. Strickland boardroom located at 500 W. Mary St. The agenda follows:

- Call to order
- Roll call of members
- Invocation
- Pledge of Allegiance
- Recognition of guests/presentations
- Approval of the regular minutes of Jan. 22
- Financial reports
- Check history reports
- TAR reports
- 90 day forecast
- Old business
- Update on RAD Development
- New business
- Executive director's report
- Executive session
- Commissioner's comments
- Adjournment

The Laurens County Board of Elections and Registration will hold their regularly monthly meeting on Monday, March 2 at 5 p.m. in the board of elections and registration office at the Laurens County Courthouse Annex building, located at

117 E. Jackson St., Suite A. The agenda follows:

- Call to order
- Invocation
- Roll call
- Recognition of visitors
- Minutes of previous meeting
- Old business

- Discussion of office procedures

- Revenue expenditures and outlay
- Roll call
- New business
- Preparing for the 2026 election year
- Executive session

The Town of Cadwell will hold a council meeting on Monday, March 9 at the Cadwell Town Hall. The agenda follows:

- Call meeting to order
- Invocation
- Approval of minutes
- Approval of financial

statement

- Old business
- New business
- Comments
- Acknowledge visitors
- Adjourn

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Classifieds

Employment

MECHANICAL MAINTENANCE SUPERVISOR
The City of Dublin is accepting applications for a Supervisor of the Mechanical Maintenance Department. This employee Supervises and participates in servicing and maintenance of a variety of automotive and industrial equipment. Work involves the supervision of mechanics and automotive service workers engaged in the servicing of automotive and industrial equipment. The position is responsible for managing the maintenance shop including the scheduling of incoming work and determining how work should be done within established policies and procedures. Work is performed under the direction of the Public Works Director. Applicants must have a valid Georgia commercial drivers license, high school diploma or General Equivalency Diploma (GED), and will be required to furnish own tools. Successful applicant must pass a drug screen. Salary range is from \$48,864.00 - \$75,740.00 and will be based on experience. An extensive fringe benefit package including health, dental and life insurance is also offered. Applicants may apply online through our www.cityofdublin.org website until position is filled. The City of Dublin is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

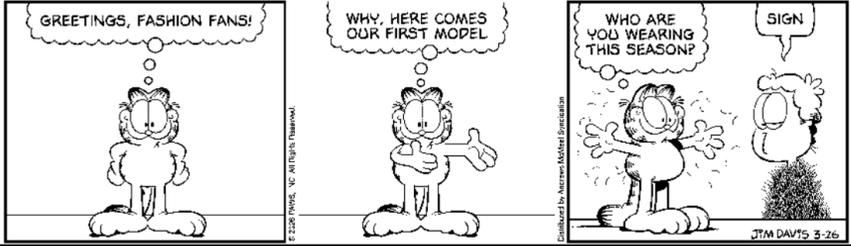
Real Estate

Land For Sale
4- 25+ ACRE Tracts on hwy 80 East, Adrian GA: 2 parcels with pond. 2 parcels with pecan orchard and pasture. Abundant Deer & Turkey: \$225,500. Brokers welcome 478-957-9734 owner

PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



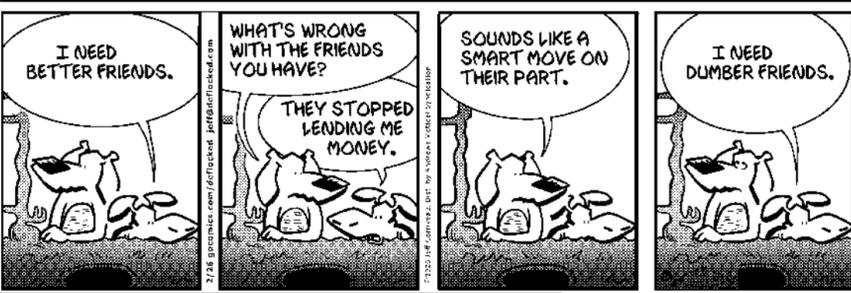
GARFIELD



OVERBOARD



DEFLOCKED



ZIGGY



PLUGGERS



A plugger can't wait to get a telephone call that isn't a scammer.

Family's black sheep could use a little help now and then!

DEAR ABBY: I was always the wild child and did pretty much what I wanted. My four siblings stuck to the straight and narrow. We stayed close and loving, though. We are old now, and they all lead very comfortable lives. I, however, became injured and gravely ill. I could no longer work and now live on supplemental security income and food stamps.

My siblings all give generously to food banks and homeless charities, even putting some homeless people up in hotels, which is great. But not one of them thinks to ask me if I have enough food or anything. I'm really hurt. Luckily, my affordable housing will offer some food for the residents, so I'm OK.

Should I say anything to my siblings? Occasionally, in the past, they have helped me, like buying me a chest of drawers or some other minor thing. They could easily support me if they wanted to. Should I just be grateful for that? -- UNDERPERFORMING IN CALIFORNIA

DEAR UNDERPERFORMING: Your relatives are not mind readers. If you need help, speak up, explain the problem and ask for help in plain English. The worst they can do is refuse, and you will be no worse off than you are.



DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

DEAR ABBY: I'm worried about my husband's grief response. His mom collapsed and died in our driveway. At the time, I responded quickly. I made sure everyone was fed and paid for the funeral service. That was all fine. But now, I don't understand why he's not grieving. I love my husband very much, but this has me confused. Please advise. -- LETTING IT OUT IN OREGON

DEAR LETTING IT OUT: Please accept my sympathy for the shocking loss of your mother-in-law. We are not clones in the way we respond to death. Everyone does it differently, including your husband. If his mother was a strong influence in his life, he will feel her absence. If he's still eating and sleeping well and is able to concentrate, do not let this absence of emotion worry you. This is his journey,

and if anything changes, your doctor can refer him to a grief support group.

DEAR ABBY: I am a disabled person. When I go to doctors' offices or restaurants, there are usually two doors to get in. Sometimes, if someone is coming in or out, they will hold the door open for me. However, when they do, almost every time, another person will push past me, almost knocking me down.

What can I say to them about their rudeness? One of these days they might be in my position and need someone to hold the door for them. The next time it happens, I'm going to tell them "The door was held open for the disabled person, not for you. Be glad you can walk well!" What would you say, Abby? I can't believe how rude the country is getting. -- TRYING TO GET THROUGH IN VIRGINIA

DEAR TRYING: A better word than "rude" to use would be "entitled." If it happened to me, I would say loudly that the door was held for me because of my disability. Then I would add how fortunate I felt not to have been injured again this time.

Thursday, February 26, 2026

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH BOB JONES

BRAVE BIDDING, GREAT PLAY

Neither vulnerable, North deals

NORTH
 ♠ A 5 3
 ♥ A K 10 9 3
 ♦ J 10 9 6
 ♣ 8

WEST
 ♠ J 4 2
 ♥ 7 6
 ♦ K Q 4 3
 ♣ A K 6 2

EAST
 ♠ 9
 ♥ Q J 8 5
 ♦ A 8 7 2
 ♣ Q 9 7 3

SOUTH
 ♠ K Q 10 8 7 6
 ♥ 4 2
 ♦ 5
 ♣ J 10 5 4

The bidding: NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
 1♥ Pass 2♠* Pass
 3♣ Pass 4♠ All pass
 *Weak jump shift

Opening lead: Ace of ♣

Today's deal is from a recent team match in Sweden. South was Sweden's Per-Erik Malmstrom. North-South bid aggressively to reach game with only 18 combined high-card points. A trump lead, or a high diamond followed by a trump shift, would have defeated

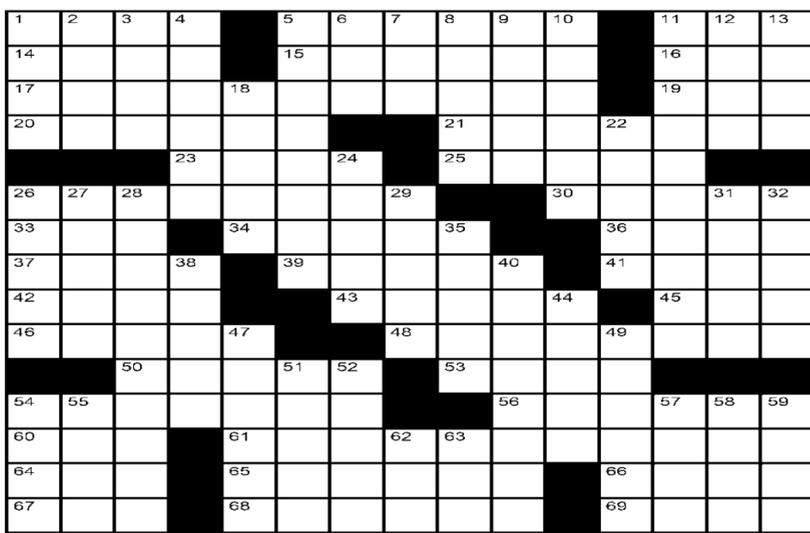
this contract. West, however, cannot be faulted for leading from his aching combination. West, in response to partner's suit-preference three of clubs at trick one, shifted to a low diamond. East took his ace and returned the suit.

Malmstrom ruffed the second diamond, ruffed a club in dummy, and cashed the ace and king of hearts. He ruffed another diamond as West played the king and then ruffed another club with a low trump in dummy. He now ruffed a heart with the king of spades and ruffed his last club in dummy with the ace of spades. In this three-card ending, South had queen-10-eight of trumps. He led a heart from dummy and ruffed with the eight of spades. When West over-ruffed with the jack, Malmstrom claimed the last two tricks. Had West been able to over-ruff with the nine, any return by West would give Malmstrom the last two tricks with the queen-10 of trumps, regardless of who held the jack. Nicely played!

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

THE Daily Commuter Puzzle by Stella Zawistowski

- ACROSS**
 1 "the Water" (Paula Hawkins novel)
 5 At no charge
 11 "Ghosts" network
 14 Noticed
 15 Indo-European language
 16 Flamenco cheer
 17 Fall foliage activity: 2 wds.
 19 Decay
 20 Have respect for
 21 Inside parts of jackets
 23 Orange's outside
 25 Burpee products
 26 Firmly attached
 30 No longer current
 33 Spanish indefinite article
 34 Mortise joint
 36 Rabbit relative
 37 Hoarse sound
 39 South American range
 41 Spoken exam
 42 "The Lion King" villain
 43 Cries of pain
 45 "___": Miami (11-Across show)
 46 Moral tenet
 48 "Snitches get ___"
 50 Major blood vessel
 53 Celebrity
 54 Toted around
 56 Temporary break
 60 Boxer Muhammad
 61 February 14 honoree: 2 wds.
 64 Actor Howard
 65 Introductory book
 66 Singer James
 67 Whale's home
 68 Leafy green dishes
 69 Entryway
- DOWN**
 1 Actress Fisher
 2 Have to have
 3 Nets, Mets, or Jets
 4 Burning up: 2 wds.
 5 Japanese brewed beverage: 2 wds.
 6 Fish eggs
 7 Concert sound booster
 8 "Heads or ___?"
 9 Kind of belly button
 10 Endorsed
 11 Argo product
 12 Online journal
 13 Tennis match parts
 18 Ctrl-P
 22 Boise's state
 24 NASCAR driver Hamlin
 26 Swear word
 27 Pass into law
 28 Tortilla flour: 2 wds.
 29 Extinct birds
 31 Wipe chalk from
 32 Sandwich shops
 35 Small salamanders
 38 Earlier
 40 Moves like a snake
 44 Smudge on clothing
 47 Potato chips, in the UK
 49 Packed for shipping
 51 Aquarium fish
 52 Pain-relief brand
 54 Coupes and sedans
 55 Lotion additive
 57 Puente of mambo
 58 "Do ___ others..."
 59 Lightly blacken
 62 Reddit Q&A: Abbr.
 63 Was in front



Created by Stella Zawistowski

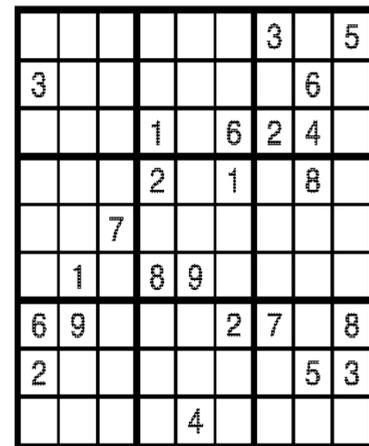
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SUDOKU

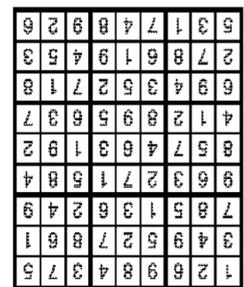


Fun By The Numbers

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!

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:

Girls hoops playoffs: Lady Falcons run away from Dade Co. to advance Dublin, WL girls eliminated in first-rounders on road

From STAFF REPORTS

This week's GHSA state basketball tournament action tipped off Tuesday night with first-round games for the East Laurens, Dublin and West Laurens girls. Here's how each fared in their playoff debuts...

East Laurens 65, Dade Co. 38

The Wolverines' full-court pressure was disruptive, but hardly airtight, and only caused enough issues to delay an East Laurens breakaway until the third quarter when the Lady Falcons finally began to maintain some offensive rhythm.

For Dade County, it didn't seem the points needed to keep up were in the cards, though a 10-point second quarter did get its early deficit back to a single possession a handful of times before Jameria Bing scored five, and Deanna Lowther two on a 7-0 Eastside run to finish it out, and take a 25-15 lead into the half.

The Falcons led the scoring 18-9 in the third and 22-14 in the fourth to pull away.

East (24-4, 13-2 region 2-High A) will have No. 14 Brantley County (a 47-25 winner over Northeast Macon) at home in its second-round matchup Friday.

Bacon Co. 47, Dublin 43

The second-half gap stayed just slightly out of reach for the Lady Irish, despite their efforts to reduce



BREAKING IT OPEN...: Jameria Bing connects on a 3-pointer that sparked a 7-0 East Laurens run to close the first half with a lead of 10/**ZACH DAWSON**

it to four points early in both the last two quarters and just before the final buzzer.

They couldn't get Bacon County off serve after falling several baskets off the pace during a mid-first half lull, over a six-minute stretch between the first and second quarters that the Raiders led 10-2. They'd go on to maintain their seven-point edge at the half all the way through a 10-apiece third quarter.



... AND PUTTING IT AWAY: Garyunna Mitchell scores one of her multiple second-half baskets inside that helped the Lady Falcons outrun Dade County by a count of 40-23 over the duration of the third and fourth quarters/**ZACH DAWSON**

Zoey Bell had 13 points, including three 3-pointers, and Khalil Maddox added a double-double, with 11 points and rebounds, to keep Dublin (13-16, 7-9 region 2-High A) in the exciting ballgame all the way to the end.

Luella 64, West Laurens 14

The Lady Raiders scored six to jump out to a very early four-

point lead, but would get stuck after reaching eight, shortly after a roughly even first quarter, as Luella rattled off about 20 in a five-minute stretch of the second to develop a huge halftime lead.

The Lions' open-court speed and length around the basket got West Laurens (13-15, 10-9 region 4-AAA) worn down as their advantage grew to over 40 by the end of the third quarter.

SOCCER ROUNDUP...

Raider boys stay unbeaten; Lady Irish win first at Jefferson Co.; Falcons sweep Hawkinsville, but swept on Westside

From STAFF REPORTS

The 2026 soccer season gained steam as local teams covered some good ground in matches, both region and non-region, over the past two weeks.

The West Laurens boys improved their record to 4-0 by defeating Howard 2-1 Feb. 12, Harlem 4-1 Feb. 20 and East Laurens 10-1 this past Monday night.

The Lady Raiders suffered their first region loss in a 1-0 heartbreaker against Harlem, but posted two other shutouts, 7-0 of Howard and 8-0 of East, in the sequence of matches.

Both close out this week on the road with region games at Baldwin and the Academy of Richmond County.

While the Falcons' cross-county trip to start the week didn't go as well, both their clubs picked up wins in a sweep at Hawkinsville last Friday, the girls by a final of 3-2 and boys 4-1

East will host Washington Wilkes for two on Tuesday before continuing the homestand with its region opener against Jefferson County on Thursday.

Dublin's girls picked up their first win of the season as they traveled to take on the Warriors last Tuesday, and grabbed a 1-0 victory. The Irish boys fell to JeffCo in a penalty kick shootout after preserving a 2-2 draw through the end of regulation and overtime.

The Lady Irish visit Johnson County Tuesday night in Dublin's lone match before its teams' home debut Feb. 3 against Swainsboro.

A goal with just under three minutes left in the second half broke a late 1-1 tie to help the West Laurens boys avoid overtime, and edge Howard last Thursday week.

A long free kick, which bounced just right at the top of the end zone blue to get past the Huskies' keeper, was guided into the open net by Dalton Oxford for the winning score.

It came more than 55 minutes after an initial score by the Raiders in the first



BOUNCING BACK: West Laurens' Landry Hall, shown tracking down a ball between defenders in Friday's tough loss to Harlem, had a pair of goals in the following match Monday vs. East Laurens/**DANNY SCARBORO**

six of the match, as Oxford ran down a long ball in the upper left corner and hammered it in.

Howard's Emanuel Kiza would even the count at 1-each on a penalty kick around the 30-minute mark of the second half.

Earlier in the night, the Lady Raiders scored their first goal before the clock could even get started, as Malone Poole punched in a cross from her right seconds from the kickoff amid some technical difficulties for the scoreboard timer.

Selah Lanton stretched their lead to 2-0 around the 23-minute mark of the first half, then Poole found the net again on a 25-yard firecracker a little under 60 seconds later.

A third consecutive goal, on Jiya Patel's towering free kick from distance, followed in about three minutes' time.

The lead went to 5-0 via own goal just after the half, as a West Laurens corner kick was deflected awkwardly toward the Howard keeper, and she couldn't get a handle as it rolled by with 37 minutes still to play.

Goal 6 came at 10:45 to complete a Poole hat trick from roughly 20 yards away in the middle. Raidyn Joiner dribbled and scored from the left a little more than a minute later for the seventh and last.

The difference in the Lady Raiders' 1-0 loss to

Harlem the following Friday was a penalty kick by Kamryn Simmons, which resulted from a whistle for a glancing handball in the box.

She curled the ball into the left side net to put the Lady Dogs on top with just under 17 minutes left in the match, and it remained scoreless for the home team the rest of the way.

The defensive trend continued as the boys match began in a downpour, though West Laurens broke it up with several consecutive goals out of halftime.

The Raiders dented the scoreboard within five minutes as Judd Walker headed in the corner kick of Corban Kersey. After 20 more minutes, Jack Yearwood made it 2-0 with a putback shot, banging in the rebound after his initial shot bounced back off the hands of the Harlem keeper.

Oxford got bumped into and sent to the line for a penalty kick at the 13-minute mark, and scored on a left-footer to stretch their lead to a commanding 3-0.

Harlem would get on the board shortly after as a free kick by Liam Albuquerque from up the line in the corner floated home.

West Laurens answered it in the last 90 seconds, as Yearwood played the ball ahead to Payton Everly for a one-on-one shot to regain the final three-goal margin.

It was all Raiders, and



EVERLY AFTER: Payton Everly scores (above) and celebrates (right) a fourth West Laurens goal, in response to Harlem's lone score late in the second half of Friday's 4-1 victory. It was his first of three in two matches/**DANNY SCARBORO**

Lady Raiders, in Monday's matches with the Eastside.

Poole scored the first two for the girls, punching in a ball that rolled to the left of the box eight minutes in, then sending home a rocket from the right sideline to make it 2-0 in the last few minutes of the half.

The Lady Raiders added another score in the first three minutes of the second half, as Hadley Green dribbled one unchallenged all the way down before rolling one in to the left side. She crossed it for Kristin Ivey's shot to make it 4-0 with 29 to go.

A long left-footed strike, likely by Poole, followed to increase the lead to five with 22 minutes left. And it grew to seven as Hall found the net twice in a row on shots about 10 minutes apart.

Oxford crossed the ball for two goals, on a Truett Bainbridge header and Bryson Morgan shot, to stake the Westside boys to their early lead in the first 12 minutes. Everly buried a shot from the left side to tack on quickly, and it was 3-0 in advance of a lone East Laurens goal via PK.

Jamari Harvey was brought down on a slide tackling foul that brought about the free chance, and



John Thang banked his shot in off the left post to get the Falcons within two going into the break.

But the Raiders added seven unanswered goals upon their return, as corners were headed in by Everly, then Chase Dudley. Clark Nelson made it 6-1 with a left-footer, then hit a long bomb from nearly 40 yards out on the right side to get the home total of seven.

Dudley got a left-footer to curl in for the eighth, and finished off a deflection in the box for the 10th, with Walker heading home a corner in the middle to round out the scoring.

The East Laurens girls captured their first win of the year in sudden death penalty kicks Friday night at Hawkinsville, after regulation ended with a 2-2 score.

Both Hawkinsville goals were by Ellie Romero, one in the first few minutes and the last on a penalty kick to tie it back up with 26 minutes to go in the match.

In between were two scores within about three minutes to put the Lady Falcons in the lead. Joselin Ramirez knocked home a left-footed equalizer with 6:35 left, and Maggie Foskey put in a go-ahead with 4:11 to go.

The East Laurens boys'

SCOREBOARD

BASEBALL
Tuesday
West Laurens 16, Hephzibah 1
WL 15, Hephzibah 0
Trinity 3, David Emanuel 2
Dublin 24,
Southwest Macon 0
Bleckley Co. 12,
East Laurens 2

GIRLS HOOPS
Tuesday
EL 65, Dade Co. 38
Bacon Co. 47, Dublin 43
Luella 64, WL 14

GIRLS SOCCER
Monday
WL 8, EL 0

Tuesday
Dublin 1, Johnson Co. 1
(4-3 PKs)
EL 1, Washington-Wilkes 0
WL 7, Baldwin 0

BOYS SOCCER
Monday
WL 10, EL 1

Tuesday
EL 5, Washington-Wilkes 0
WL 5, Baldwin 2

PREP SCHEDULE

BASKETBALL
Wednesday
GHSA 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.

Friday
GHSA Playoffs, Round 2
Brantley Co. at EL (girls)
/TBD

BASEBALL
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
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.

Luis Roman pounded one in off the head from a corner kick in the first five minutes for an early lead.

Hawkinsville's keeper got a fingertip on Thang's shot to knock it wide, but his ensuing corner kick would find a red shin to carom in for a second Falcon goal.

He'd go in again off a cross from the top of the box with 28 minutes left in the half. Kamari LaGroom scored off a PK with 15 left to give East a 4-0 halftime lead.

Hawkinsville's only goal came in response with 25 minutes left in the match.

Amariah Taylor scored off the assist of Brayleigh Edmond in the second half to give the Dublin girls Tuesday's 1-0 victory at Jefferson County. A shootout decided the boys' match for the Warriors, as the teams traded a goal each in regulation and one each in the second 10 minutes of overtime.

Alexander Ramirez scored both for JeffCo.

OSSOFF
Continued from page 1

here in Dublin. Something else I want to highlight, a few miles up the road I appropriated funds for Wilkinson County for their first ever public sewer system. The county had been entirely on septic, and it was flooding and was a health issue."

Ossoff also touted the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law as "the biggest investment in America's infrastructure since the Eisenhower administration," and said it has paid big dividends locally.

"Every seaport and airport in Georgia getting upgrades, lead pipes being removed from drinking water systems. It's launching a broadband internet expansion for rural Georgia that's unlike anything since rural electrification in the 1930s.

"So far that law has delivered more than \$13 million in infrastructure upgrades for Laurens County. And I'm working with local leaders here to make sure that it continues to deliver upgrades to infrastructure and quality of life here in Dublin and across the region."

Ossoff, the youngest member of the Senate, faces no announced Democratic candidate, but former U.S. Reps. Buddy Carter and Mike Collins and former football coach Derek Dooley plan to run as Republicans. Though he and Warnock took office the same day, Ossoff is considered Georgia's senior senator because he was elected to a full six years while Warnock won a special election to fill an unexpired term.

"I want people to know my office is here to provide service and solve problems. My goal since I was elected has been to set up the best constituent service that Georgians have ever had. Whether it's veterans who are having trouble with the VA, folks having trouble with the IRS, Medicare or Social Security, anything at all, my team and I are standing by to assist. We're highly responsive and eager to help."



Members of the Dublin City Board of Education look over paperwork during Monday night's meeting/RODNEY MANLEY

CITY SCHOOLS
Continued from page 1

property owners and ending with a wait for the city school board to hold tax increase hearings.

For the first time in recent memory, if not ever, the monthly financials also included an accounts payable sheet listing vendors who were paid by check.

"This is the best financial report we've had since I've been on the board," said longtime member Lanier.

The district at one point faced a projected deficit of more than \$13 million, but officials now believe – after job and spending cuts – the cashflow shortage will be closer to \$5 million when the fiscal year ends in June.

In a recent letter to the

schools, state School Superintendent Richard Woods said the district appears to be "on track to achieve solvency" by February 2028 – once it makes the final installment on more \$6 million in past-due payments to the State Health Benefit Plan and provided it continues to cut expenses.

State officials discovered last August that the school

district had not paid contributions for employees to the state health for more than a year. The school board will begin a repayment plan this month.

Woods' letter provided a glimpse ahead to this February's financial picture. As of Feb. 13, he wrote, the district actually had a \$3.4 million surplus as property tax revenue begins to come in.



YOUTH AND CAREER DAY: YOUNG PEOPLE SHOW OFF THEIR TALENTS AT ANNUAL BLACK HISTORY PROGRAM

Talent was on display during the Annual Youth/Career Day held last Saturday at Greater Macedonia Baptist Church. Young people recited poems and performed dances and song/PAYTON TOWNS III



THURMOND
Continued from page 1

Thurmond erased a multimillion deficit while improving test scores and raising graduation rates.

Recently, Thurmond served as CEO of DeKalb County where he ended a culture of corruption and debt, turning a \$27 million deficit into a

\$140 million surplus.

Thurmond is also an author. His most recent book is a biography of Georgia's founding father James Oglethorpe and his journey from slave trader to abolitionist.

Today, Thurmond, who lives in DeKalb County with his wife, Zola, is running to be the state's next governor.

House OKs literacy bill, high school cell phone ban, slew of other education bills

By TY TAGAMI
Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA — Lawmakers in the Georgia House embraced a plan to send literacy coaches to elementary schools while also sending a high school cell phone ban to the Senate, as part of a package of eight educational bills approved Tuesday.

Georgia lawmakers' years-long focus on literacy instruction started with mandates for use of the "science of reading," a method based in phonics. Initially, they focused on teacher training and tests to identify children with dyslexia. House Bill 1193 seeks to expand on that strategy by sending state funding to school districts to hire an estimated 1,300 literacy experts in schools with K-3 classrooms.

The legislation, which Senate leaders have praised, also would bring new requirements for curriculum, teacher training and testing. And it would establish a more rigorous process for promoting students to the next grade.

"It's something that I think will be game-changing for this state," said Rep. Chris Erwin, R-Homer, chairman of the House Education committee and the main author of the bill. It passed the House by an enthusiastic 170-2 vote, moving to the Senate.

State representatives had more mixed opinions about House Bill 1009, which seeks to expand the state's already-approved ban on cell phones and other personal devices in elementary in middle schools. That lower-grades mandate was signed into law last year, but it does not take effect until next fall. Even so, many schools have implemented it ahead of schedule, and it has proven popular among teachers, parents and even students.

That emboldened the author of last year's law, Rep. Scott Hilton, R-Peachtree Corners, to expand the ban to high schools starting in the fall of 2027.

He said Tuesday that Georgia was an outlier among states that have banned phones in schools while excluding high schools.

Some lawmakers said a high school ban would reduce fights and other disruptions, while others were concerned about communication between parents and their children during a crisis. Both views reflect the opinions reported in surveys by academics and education organizations last year.

But Rep. Jason Ridley, R-Chatsworth, said during Tuesday's debate that he thought it was too soon to in-

clude high schools in a "big government" ban.

"We ought to let it play out longer than a year," he said.

Hilton responded with the same arguments he has been using for months.

"I want to let teachers do what they do best and that's teach," he said. "By getting cell phones out of the classroom, they no longer have to manage all that."

Most House members saw it Hilton's way, voting 145-20 to pass the phone ban.

The House also took up safety, passing a bill that would mandate weapons detection systems at every entry in every school building, emergency exits excluded.

Democrats criticized House Bill 1023 as a bandage rather than a cure because it does not restrict access to guns.

"We've allowed guns and weapons of war to become more available than a pack of gum," said Rep. Bryce Berry, D-Atlanta. "We are installing metal detectors in our schools because guns keep ending up in our schools, because we have normalized the unthinkable."

Other Democrats agreed with him but said they had no choice but to vote for the measure, with one referring to the mass shooting that killed four at Apalachee High School in fall of 2024.

HB 1023 passed by a vote of 151-11.

Two measures addressed college affordability.

House Bill 310 focused on future teachers, establishing a program running from next July through 2028 that would give 500 student teachers who qualify for federal need-based aid up to \$5,000 to pay their bills.

Rep. Phil Olaleye, D-Atlanta, said he brought the legislation because the state is short at least 5,000 teachers, and this ready supply of future teachers is hamstrung by cost. Many must work two or more jobs while attending college and lack the time to teach as students, he said. HB 310 would also give former student teachers a \$2,500 signing bonus if they work at least 30 days under a state public school contract.

HB 310 passed 151-6.

The other college affordability measure, by Rep. Scott Holcomb, D-Atlanta, would extend HOPE scholarships to high-achieving students if they attend an eligible Georgia graduate school within 18 months of earning a degree. His measure, House Bill 385, passed 160-2.