

Commissioners sworn



Columbus County Commissioners taking their oaths of office Monday included, clockwise from top left, Charles McDowell; Jerome McMillian with his pastor Rev. Nathaniel Scott of Olive Grove Missionary Baptist Church and District Court Judge Ashley Gore; Ricky Bullard, right, with (from left) Rev. Donald Conway of Chadbourn Pentecostal Holiness Church, notary public Waitus Greene, Bullard's son Matthew, his wife Judy, and daughter Ashley B. Wilson.

(Top photos by Deuce Niven, bottom by Allen Turner, courtesy The News Reporter)



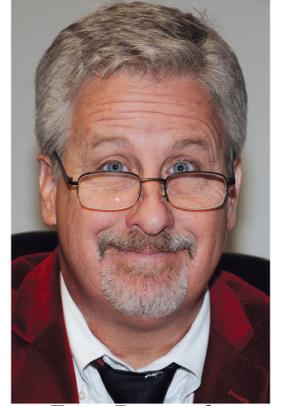
Burroughs chairs county commissioners

By DEUCE NIVEN
tribdeuce@tabor-loris.com

Trent Burroughs of Tabor City was elected chairman of the Columbus County Board of Commissioners Monday, Edwin Russ of Whiteville elected vice-chairman during the annual re-organization of the board Monday.

Jerome McMillian of Chadbourn was sworn for his first term as a commissioner Monday. He defeated 20-year veteran previous board chairman Amon McKenzie during the Democratic Primary earlier this year.

Also taking oaths of office after winning re-election were commissioners Charles McDowell and Ricky Bullard.



Trent Burroughs

Today's Tribune will enter mail tomorrow

Funeral services today (Wednesday) for President George H.W. Bush will prompt the closing of non-essential federal offices across the country, including the U.S. Postal Service.

That will result in a delay in receiving this week's Tabor-Loris Tribune for

mail subscribers. We have published on schedule this morning, and posted this week's edition for e-subscribers as usual.

Mail copies of the newspaper will be delivered to the U.S. Post Office in Tabor City first thing Thursday morning.

School systems merger conclusion: Columbus can't afford it (Continued from Page 1)

after two years if the districts are merged.

Significant losses would come from central office cuts, already struggling under state cuts that followed the recession of 2008.

Federal funding for the combined systems would see little impact from a merger, Price said, but the loss in federal funds would be beyond the county's ability to absorb.

"Since most local funding is used to cover the cost of utilities, a merger would result in little, if any savings of local funds," the study said. "Currently, Columbus County does not have the resources to make up for the loss in state funds and services that would be cut from central office staff budgets."

Unfair?

Commissioner Ricky Bullard presented documents to Price that he said showed the city schools getting an unfair level of state funding when compared to Columbus County.

That, Price said, is likely the result of minimum funding levels for some central office positions and rounding policies for teacher funding that benefits the smallest school districts, like Whiteville.

"State funding is generally guaranteed for some positions, and that's probably higher for Whiteville, but they are getting positions for guaranteed slots," Price said.

State funding for teaching positions rounds up liberally, Price said. For instance,

if the number of students in a grade level warrants 2.1 teachers, the state rounds up to 3, which benefits the smallest systems.

That, Bullard says, results in the Whiteville schools getting about \$374 per student more in state funding than the county.

That's OK, commissioner James Prevatte said.

"You don't penalize one for allocations that they legally were granted," Prevatte said. "I wish we could get the other one up more."

Community

Money matters, newly elected board chairman Trent Burroughs said, but there are other factors.

"There are other things," Burroughs said, sense of community, community

feeling that they are being treated fairly."

Burroughs said high school mergers that created South and East Columbus high schools, both opening in 1992, resulted in bitter debate at the time.

"Today," Burroughs said, "the majority of the people would say that it was a good thing, a better sense of community."

"That has value, but it may not be the overriding factor."

Atkinson said a merger of three school districts in Cleveland County crated a better "sense of community" but did not save the county any money.

Burroughs said the process of considering school system merger has clarified for commissioners the

idea that funding for school buildings should be based on need, not an equal allocation of money based on the relative student populations of the systems.

Atkinson said the commissioners have "a difficult task, it's difficult to please everyone," but that the study gives them the information they need to make an informed decision.

She said the study, and Emerald's mission, is to provide the best educational opportunities for all in the state.

"We are committed to kids all over North Carolina," Atkinson said.

Learning experience

Columbus County Schools Interim Superintendent Dr. Jonathan Williams

and Whiteville Schools Supt. Kenny Garland both expressed gratitude for the study and the effort in completing the \$19,500 report.

"It was a learning experience for us and we do appreciate the work that went into it," Williams said.

"You have a decision to make, the seven gentlemen up there," Garland said, pointing to commissioners. "I do believe a \$1 million loss in Columbus County is very significant, especially with the loss of the bond issue."

Voters in the county rejected a quarter-cent sales tax referendum in the Nov. 6 general election that would have provided about \$1 million per year to address school construction needs.



Columbus County Sheriff's Office deputies are sworn Monday morning just after new sheriff Jody Greene. (Deuce Niven, TLT)

Election protests dismissed, new sheriff is sworn (Continued from Page 1)

the town limits were not delivered to the polling place until nearly two hours after voting began on Nov. 6.

Voting hours were extended there for an hour and 50 minutes as a result, and the board

found that the problems were not sufficient to have changed the outcome of the sheriff's race or a mixed drink referendum on the ballot in Tabor City.

Protests from Hill and McKenzie listed both the mixed

drink vote and the sheriff's race, while Thurman and Smith only challenged the sheriff's vote.

Hill, Thurman and Smith said they plan to appeal the decisions on their protests to

the state Board of Elections and Ethics Enforcement. McKenzie said he would not.

The decisions from the county Board of Elections won't be formally certified until they receive written Find-

ings of Facts and Conclusions of Law from county attorney Amanda Prince. That is expected when the county board meets at 3 p.m. Monday, Dec. 10.

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