



End of School means lots of awards

Each year, the end of the Alexander County School Year means lots of awards for deserving students. Last week, Bethlehem Elementary School held its kindergarten and fifth grade graduations, along with other awards ceremonies. At the right, BES fifth grade grad David York accepts the prestigious Joy Bentley Character Award from Melinda Null, the daughter of the late counselor. Below, fifth graders Ava Fisher, Heidi Fox, and Isabella Sturgill are pictured after being selected as Fantastic Fifth Graders. ★



GRACIOUS GIVING

— Each year, the BES Gracious Giving Award is presented to one student and one adult at the school. This year, Zoe Norris was the student recipient and the adult honoree is Carol Teague.★

• See more photos inside

Constitution Party gets place on statewide ballot

By Julie Havlak
Carolina Journal
News Service

RALEIGH — Voters will see another minority party on North Carolina's ballot.

The Bipartisan State Board of Elections and Ethics Enforcement unanimously voted Wednesday, June 6, to officially recognize the Constitution Party.

The Constitution Party joins the Green Party and the Libertarian Party on North Carolina's ballot as third-party alternatives to Democrats and Republicans.

Originally formed as the U.S. Taxpayers Party in 1992, the party rebranded itself in 1999 as the U.S. Constitution Party to better express its commitment to the Founders' ideas, namely limited government, conservative morality, and a strict reading of the Constitution. The party appeared on 41 state ballots in 2004, but it never made it onto the North Carolina ballot until 2018.

Wednesday's recognition was a long time in coming, Constitution Party vice-chairman Kevin Hayes said.

It isn't a coincidence that 2018 alone has marked the introduction of two political parties to the state's ballot.

In 2015, North Carolina

ranked as the 14th most restrictive state for ballot access, according to FairVote. Law required third parties to collect 2 percent of the vote in the previous governor's election, and 200 registered voters had to come from each of four congressional districts in North Carolina.

Today, that's 94,222 signatures.

But in the Electoral Freedom Act of 2017, Congress dropped the requirements from 2 percent to .25 percent of the gubernatorial vote, and from four congressional districts to three. Any parties that appeared on the ballot in 70 percent of the states in the previous presidential election also could appear on the North Carolina ballot. The bill passed over Gov. Roy Cooper's veto in Oct. 2017.

The Green Party qualified for ballot access six months later, and the Constitution Party followed suit last Wednesday with 12,651 valid signatures.

"For many years I worked very hard at the General Assembly with a lot of other people to get the law lowered," Hayes said. "This is the first time we'll be on the ballot in North Carolina. We've never had the ability to do that before because the laws have been so restrictive. We're absolutely thrilled."

Five other parties have petitioned for ballot access, but so far no party has collected more than 20 valid signatures.

State law requires new political parties to nominate their candidates by convention, which the Constitution Party will hold in Charlotte on June 16. Candidates have until June 12 to apply to run for the Constitution Party's nomination.

The House of Representatives already would restrict minority parties potential nominees. The House passed Senate Bill 286, which will return to the Senate for concurrence. The bill contains a "sore loser" provision, which extends the law preventing losers from running as write-in candidates to block them from running under a minority party.

"Long story short, the Republicans in Raleigh felt threatened by the Constitution Party," Hayes said, adding that he believes the provision was a response to the interest Rep. Beverly Boswell, R-Dare, expressed in running under the Constitution Party.

Hayes said that he is sure the Constitution Party will challenge the bill if the "sore loser" provision is signed by the governor. ★

Alex property tax rate remains 79 cents, \$41.2M budget OK'd

Allocation to school system increased by \$488,951 for 2018-19

The Alexander County Board of Commissioners adopted the 2018-19 county budget at their Monday, June 4, meeting. The General Fund budget totals \$41,200,000. As passed last year, the 2017-2018 budget was \$39,500,000.

Commissioners voted 3-2 to pass the budget, with Chairman Ronnie Reese and Commissioners Ryan Mayberry and Dr. Jeff Peal in favor, and Vice Chairman Josh Lail and Commissioner Milton Campbell voting against.

County Manager Rick French said the budget has no property tax increase (remains same at 79 cents per \$100 valuation) or change in local fees, with the exception of a 2.1 percent increase in water rates from the City of Hickory. He said the county has approximately 5,100 water customers and 300 sewer customers.

French noted that property valuations in Alexander County have decreased \$99,443,599 from \$2,683,898,191 on June 30, 2014, to \$2,584,454,592 on June 30, 2017. Property tax revenues for 2018-19 are estimated at \$19,499,000.

Highlights of the 2018-19 General Fund budget include an appropriation of \$6,520,851 for Alexander County Schools, which is a \$488,951 increase from the 2017-2018 fiscal year. It was noted that Alexander County Schools received \$5 million in the 2012-13 budget, which equals an estimated 30 percent increase over a six-year period.

Other highlights include: \$243,000 for four vehicles for the sheriff's office; \$180,000 for two re-mounted ambulances for EMS; \$193,400 for a 2.5 percent Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for county employees; four full-time deputies; four quality assurance staff members for DSS; two building inspectors; two 911 communications employees; one public information/EDC employee; one Uniform Guidance Compliance



KEY TO THE COUNTY

— Alexander Central High School Principal Doug Rhoney was presented the Key to the County award by Alexander County Commissioners on Monday, June 4, 2018. Pictured above, left to right: Commissioner Dr. Jeff Peal and Principal Doug Rhoney. ★

employee; one tax mapping/revaluation employee, which replaces a part-time position; and one park maintenance employee.

A number of county projects are on the horizon, such as moving nine departments into the former Community One Bank building, a \$5 million water project, and a \$5 million sewer project, in addition to several projects which are currently underway.

"We are making great progress here in Alexander County, which requires tough decisions when it comes time to adopt a budget," said Ronnie Reese, Chairman of the Alexander County Board of Commissioners. "Many of the new positions in this budget are mandated by state and federal regulations, over which we have no control. Adopting a budget is never an easy process, but I believe this is a realistic budget that moves Alexander County forward."

Rhoney honored for service to ACHS, county

Doug Rhoney, outgoing Principal at Alexander Central High School, was presented a "Key to the

County" by Commissioner Dr. Jeff Peal on behalf of the board. Dr. Peal expressed his appreciation to Rhoney for his dedicated service to the high school and the community. Rhoney, who served as ACHS Principal for the past seven years, said that ACHS has been the best place he's been during his 28-year career. Rhoney will assume the role of Secondary Education Director for Catawba County Schools, effective July 1.

Board of Commissioners meetings available on TV and online

Each meeting of the Alexander County Board of Commissioners is streamed live on WACB 860 AM, and recorded for the county's YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/AlexanderCountyNC) and the Government Channel (Spectrum Channel 192).

Next meeting

The next meeting of the Alexander County Board of Commissioners will be held on Monday, June 18, at 6:00 p.m. in Room 103 at the CVCC Alexander Center for Education. The meeting is open to the public. ★



CVCC MATH WINNERS

— Alexander County Students were recognized at the Board of Education meeting held on Monday, June 4, 2018, for placing in 25th Annual CVCC Jeanette L. Staley Mathematics Tournament. Pictured above left to right: Superintendent Dr. Jennifer Hefner, Emma Maltba, Hannah Maltba, and School Board Member Harry Schrum. ★

Beth. Baptist's 2018 VBS theme is "Game On!"

This summer, Bethlehem Baptist Church invites children, ages 4 to grade 12, to grab their megaphones, lace up their cleats, and tune up their instruments.

As they fill up the offensive line, sideline, and drum line, your players, cheerleaders, and band members will realize God has given them His ultimate playbook. He wants them to join His team, train hard, celebrate salvation, and encourage one another.

"Get in the spirit with 'Game On' VBS!" says Dr. Wayne Caviness, pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church. "Please join

us June 17 through 21, from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m., for Vacation Bible School. We are looking forward to a great week!"

Register your child for VBS online at www.bethlehembc.org or call 828-495-7250.

Getting into the church building may look a little confusing due to construction, but just follow the signs to park behind the building. Entrances from the parking area are to the far left and far right. Guest parking is available near the building, and greeters will welcome you just inside the door.

For more information about Bethlehem Baptist Church, call 828.495.7250, visit www.bethlehembc.org, or like them on Facebook. ★

Next Star prints July 12

The next issue of The Bethlehem Star will be printed on Thursday, July 12, 2018. The deadline for advertising and correspondence is Tuesday, July 10, 2018, before 5 p.m.



WAMS PRESENTS ATHLETIC AWARDS AT MAY 21 CEREMONY

• SEE PAGE 3

