

Funds acquired for MOWA museum

BY WILLIE GRAY
williegray@thecallnews.com

Holding onto their tribal history has been a major part of the MOWA Band of Choctaw Indians for decades. One of the buildings at the tribal grounds has been in need of repair for some time but due to lack of funding, tribal leaders have not been able to properly maintain the facility. But that will soon change, thanks to the efforts of tribal leaders.

Earlier this week, tribal leaders of the MOWA Band of Choctaw Indians announced they received a three-year Social and Economic Development Strategies grant from the Administration of Native Americans. According to information released by tribal officials, funds from the grant are purposed

for the preservation of tribal culture and history and will be used to transform the tribal museum into a community facility. As part of the program the facility will be a site where cultural and historical resources can be generated, stored, curated and accessed through community-driven programming and outreach.

The MOWA Band of Choctaw Indian Museum is located on the MOWA Band of Choctaw Indian reservation on Red Fox Road in Mount Vernon. The building that houses the museum is a historic structure which once served as the home and office of a doctor who treated tribal members. The building was donated to the tribe in 1990 and moved to its present site on the reservation. However,

a lack of necessary funding and security has prohibited the museum from reaching its full potential of becoming a “hub” for tribal members to assemble to access their history and share their culture.

In a written statement about the grant and the museum, Dr. Lebaron Byrd, chief of the MOWA Band of Choctaw Indians, said the grant for the museum was well needed as the collection of historical items plays a major role in sharing the tribe’s history with future generations.

“A lack of infrastructure to support the preservation and sharing of MOWA Choctaw history and culture poses a critical threat to the tribe’s overall social well-being and impedes the development of future generations

of tribal leaders,” Byrd said.

Noted in a press release by tribal officials, funding for the project will address the tribe’s long-range goal of preserving the cultural and historical resources that the community already has, to revive those areas which may have lapsed, and will organize a system by which new generations will be able to carry and transmit this knowledge forward.

During the first year of the grant, funds will be used primarily to renovate the museum. Renovations will include a new roof, new siding, repairing the bathroom, the sidewalk, the porch and walkway ramp.

An open house will be held following the renovations to introduce the new museum to tribal members and the general public.



A boom truck picks up hurricane debris in Satsuma.

Photo by Emmett Burnett/Call News

SATSUMA: City will try cleanup alone

FROM PAGE 1A

save time and money (approximately \$70 per load to the landfill).

Satsuma currently has two boom trucks available for removing the aftermath of two storms, Sally and Zeta. The council praised city employees for working six days a week in removing the trash but noted that with just the two trucks, the cleanup could take months. Additional trash cleanup vehicles could be on the streets within days.

A Satsuma resident addressed the council about trespassers and their arrests on his property and not being able to receive notifications, names and photos of those involved. Mayor Barlow and Police Chief Clint Harrell will address the matter.

In other news from the Nov. 17 meeting: Mayor Barlow said he is looking for a system that would be in place for live social media and streaming of City Council and other city meetings and events. He hopes to have information by the next City Council meeting and a recording system in place in

by early New Year.

- Heather Davis was approved as the new Satsuma city clerk, replacing retiring clerk Vicki Miller.

- Crystal Johnson was promoted to crew chief, effective Nov. 21, 2020.

- The council approved monthly bills: \$41,804.94.

- The council approved appointments and reappointments to city boards including the Planning Commission, Water and Sewer, Public Library, and Board of Adjustment.

- The council approved the company Avenu to continue in the collection of the business license fees.

- City employee Travis Jones was promoted to Public Service W I.

- The Satsuma Christmas Parade is Dec. 5 at 2 p.m.

- The Reindeer Run is Dec. 12, starting at 8 a.m., in Baldwin Square.

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Satsuma City Council is Dec. 1, 7 p.m., City Hall, on Old Highway 43.

Semmes to expand splash pad

BY ARTHUR L. MACK
alouisimack@aol.com

SEMMEs — One of the most popular attractions of the city of Semmes has for families with young children is its splash pad. During last week’s meeting of the city’s mayor and council, approval was given for an expansion of the facility.

Members of the council passed a resolution during its Nov. 19 meeting to award a bid worth \$84,500 to Aeiker Construction Co. for an addition to the splash pad located at Semmes Municipal Park.

The expansion is noted to include the addition of another wet area as well as a dry area. Officials also said a plan is also being developed for the splash pad to include sections designed for small children as well as large children.

Semmes Public Works Director Jason Franklin said a similar proposal for the expansion of the park was presented last year but due to the timing of the project it wasn’t put into place.

“Last year, we presented the same type project, and we waited a little bit too late,” said Franklin. “We didn’t have quite enough time to build the projects prior to the opening of the season. Not only that, the bids came in a little bit higher than we wanted, so over the last year we worked to cut down a little bit to shave some off the price.”

Franklin went on to say city officials had hoped to keep the cost of the project in the \$75,000 to \$85,000 range. When last year’s bids came in higher than expected, the decision was made to let the bids again this year in hopes of getting a lower price and to have the project started prior to the scheduled opening date.

“The bids came back

and what it’s going to do is double the size of the existing splash pad,” Franklin said. “We will probably remove all the resurfacing off the existing splash pad, build a new pad, and put a new paint scheme that’s aesthetically pleasing.”

Franklin went on to say that he plans to present ideas for the paint scheme to the members of the Parks and Recreation Committee as well as to members of the council in an effort of getting their opinion, once a plan for the paint scheme is complete. The paint scheme will be used to designate the section for smaller children and larger children. In addition, Franklin said signage will probably be placed on the pad to designate areas for each.

Councilmembers also approved a resolution authorizing the expenditure of funds for the city to become an affiliate of Keep America Beautiful and to authorize Mayor Brandon Van Hook to request certification. The total cost of the certification is \$1,000.

Councilmember Helen Joyce, who introduced the resolution at the Nov. 17 work session, said the city paid \$1,000 in 2013 to be an affiliate, but the program never moved forward. When the idea came up again, Joyce asked Keep America Beautiful officials if Semmes could be grandfathered into the KAB affiliation. By that time, affiliation fees had increased to \$1,500, but KAB officials allowed the city to be grandfathered in for \$500, thus the current \$1,000 certification cost.

“Going forward, it can take three to six months to get certification,” said Joyce. “There will also be a network service fee of \$60, which will be required a year after certification.”

The city’s 2021 city council meeting dates (work sessions and regular meetings) were also approved. Because of President’s Day and Mardi Gras Holiday, the Feb. 16 meeting will be cancelled.

During the Nov. 17 work session, councilmembers received the police and fire reports for the month of October. The police report indicated 1,236 calls for service in the month of October, up from 1,104 for September.

Calls on the rise were commercial alarms (52 for October from 46 in September), commercial burglaries (two in October, one in September), residential burglaries (seven in October, five in September), vehicle burglaries (nine in October, one in September), vehicle thefts (five in October, four in September), thefts (20 in October, 15 in September), assaults/harassments (23 in October, 22 in September).

Police calls that were noted as being on the decline included 911 hang-ups (46 in October, 64 in September), residential alarms (57 in October, 72 in September) and domestic violence/disputes (24 in October, 28 in September).

Joyce asked Lt. Terrie Hall of the Mobile County Sheriff’s Office about the increased calls for service in October.

“Was there any particular trend or any particular area or reason?” Joyce asked.

“Month to month, it could be anything,” Hall said. “You may see a lot of calls in a certain area on a certain day. People like calling us more because they like seeing us out in certain areas, so they’ll call the close patrols or things of that nature.”

Crenshaw sworn in, gives warm welcome to new school board member McDade

BY ARTHUR L. MACK
alouisimack@aol.com

MOBILE — One of the first orders of business last week for the Mobile County School Board was to swear in one of the board’s longtime leaders for another term while welcoming the board’s newest member. District 3 Commissioner Dr. Reginald A. Crenshaw was sworn into office for his third term while Sherry D. McDade was sworn into office for the first time as the commissioner for MCPSS District 4. Both commissioners were given their oaths of office during a ceremony held at the Mobile County School System’s Professional Development Building on Nov. 18.

Crenshaw was sworn into office by Municipal Court Judge Shelbonnie Hall. During his remarks, Crenshaw said he enjoyed working with his colleagues and in addressing members of the audience about growing up in Prichard.

“It’s not about where you were born, it’s where you’re going that makes the difference,” Crenshaw said. “Children are our future and we have to love them.”

“I think we have some of the best administrators, teachers and parents in Mobile County,” he said.

During an interview following the ceremony, Crenshaw told the Call News that serving a third term was rewarding and added that he believes McDade will make a great addition to the board.

“It’s a blessing to be elected by the people to serve a third term,” he said. “I’m looking forward to it. Ms. McDade is a wonderful woman and she’s going to do a great job and we’re looking forward to having her work along with us.”

The COVID-19 crisis is still posing a challenge for MCPSS, but Crenshaw said recent developments, especially with the development of vaccines, are expected to ease some of the issues the school system is facing.

“Thank God there are two vaccines that are seeking approval from the FDA. We hope we can get them into the system and individuals so we can get some relief from this pandemic and we can get back going straight,” he said. “It’s a challenge for the Mobile County Public School System, the largest school system in the state of Alabama, but we’re looking forward to getting past that and getting some normality in the system.”

“We’re hoping that our virtual learning will keep the students on pace in terms of the learning process. We also hope that we can keep all our kids safe. We also have to thank God we have not had any serious injuries or health problems with our young people. That’s what



Photos by Arthur Mack/Call News

Reginald Crenshaw, above, is sworn in for his third term as a member of the Mobile County School Board. Sherry McDade, below, is sworn in for her first term on the board.



our goal is now, to get back into some normality.”

McDade was sworn in by Municipal Court Judge Carlos Finley.

McDade, elected on July 16 to take over the District 4 seat, previously held by Robert Battles, told the audience she believes in dignity and humankind that demands respect.

“My goal is to serve to the best of my ability,” she said. “I feel there is a need for those who make up our community to serve and the Mobile County School Board is in good hands. We’re striving for leadership and direction which will result in educational opportunities for all children in Mobile County.”

McDade later told the Call News her primary concern was making sure her schools were in better shape to ensure education and safety for the students. The goals, even with the COVID-19 crisis, are to make the schools successful.

“What I want to make sure of is that after visiting my schools, especially by my schools being inner city schools, there are some

things we need to take care of in-house as far as the structures. This includes the buildings throughout the school system and the schools in District 4,” she said. “There are some plans to go in there to make sure everything is up and running for the safety of our children.”

“That’s what my major concern, making sure nothing is unsafe and everything is above board for our schools. Another thing we’re interested in is that the high schools are getting the information and supplies they need to make our kids successful. We need to make sure our kids have the materials they need and they are not being overly exhausted going to virtual and then teaching brick and mortar. It’s overwhelming to them because it’s the first time they’ve been exposed to it.”

Other MCPSS board members include Doug Harwell in District 1, Don Stringfellow in District 2 and Dr. Bill Foster in District 5. None of these three districts were on the ballot for 2020.