

Inside this week

Development project breaks ground in District One

...Page 3

Arrest reports for the month of January

...Page 13

Washington receives grant from Georgia Munciple Association

...Page 12

See our special feature on page 6 by Rev. Ed Anderson honoring...

The News-Reporter

Serving Wilkes County

75¢ per copy sales tax included

www.news-reporter.com

Vol. CIV, No. 5 Washington, Georgia • Publication No. 357-530 • 1 Section, 14 Pages • February 3, 2022

Parks and Recreation chairman blocks vote for successor

By MICHAEL BOWEN
Editor and Publisher

Support for Chairman Larry Hill's leadership of the Parks and Recreation Commission has collapsed.

At the January 25 meeting, Commissioner Ed Geddings nominated Troy Anderson to succeed Larry Hill as chairman of the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Commission member Esper Lee seconded the nomination. However, Hill refused to allow the nomination to come to a vote, leaving the Commission in a gridlock. No further business was conducted that evening.

According to Geddings and Vice Chairman Amy Johnston, the decision to replace Hill stems from several factors and

incidents.

According to Johnston, in the summer of 2019, the Commission had decided not to have an afterschool program. At their regular meeting however, which was attended by TV media outlets, Hill apparently contradicted the decision of the Commission. Johnston also referenced the recent payment of Christmas bonuses, which she stated were not

budgeted or authorized. "Again Mr. Larry, I love you, but you have got to stop acting on behalf of the whole board. You can't do things without getting the approval of the board," Johnston said. She continued when asked for specifics. "First and foremost, the meeting in the summer of 2019, when we met the day before and said that we were not going to have an afterschool

program, and then the next day, in front of the TV cameras and everything, you decided, 'Yeah we are.' And then, just recently, giving bonus checks without board authority, without board approval. You said you got one person (to respond), and 'Oh, well I didn't hear from anybody else, so I figured y'all just didn't care.' You can't do that," Johnston said.

Continued on page 12



Kevin Tyrone Brittain

Shooting suspect arrested on murder charges

Shooting suspect and 35-year-old Washington resident Kevin Tyrone Brittain has been arrested by the Wilkes County Sheriff's Office.

According to Chief Investigator Thomas Bailey, Brittain is a suspect in the January 14 shooting of 29-year-old Tamekia Flint, a resident of Elberton. When the shooting occurred, Flint was airlifted to Augusta University Hospital for treatment. She passed away January 25, according to Bailey. Authorities are now charging Brittain with felony and malice murder. Brittain, who had been released on bond, turned himself in to Wilkes County Law Enforcement January 30. No bond has been posted yet as Brittain is awaiting his bond hearing.

BOE discusses sagging graduation rates and more at January meeting

Driver shortages, sagging graduation rates, budget amendments, and bank deposits were among the topics addressed by the Wilkes County Board of Education at their meeting January 24.

A shortage of bus drivers caused the school to go to learn from home status last week, School Superintendent Dr. Rosemary Caddell revealed. Explaining that 28 drivers are typically sufficient to run the school's 30 routes, she revealed that driver shortages have forced the bus mechanics and the school transportation director to drive full time. A lack of substitute drivers has further complicated the situation. Dr. Caddell explained that the school must run all the bus routes to allow all students to attend school and to provide equity. She expected to return to normal session with one late route Wednesday, January 26.

The board approved Farmers and Merchants Bank's proposal of a 0.40 percent interest rate on a 3-million-dollar deposit for 9 months. Dr. Caddell stated that the collection of taxes is at eighty two percent. She further emphasized that these are not excess funds, but operating funds for July through

December.

The board also amended the FY22 current budget. The amendment increases the budget from \$20,147,219 to \$20,878,841. According to Dr. Caddell, the CARES funds are still in the board's account. She stated that they are proceeding cautiously with the allocation and use of the funds.

Mr. Horace Johnson was elected as the Board Vice-Chairman.

A \$5,480 HVAC unit for the Board of Education building was approved for purchase.

The board approved a corrective action plan from the FY 20 audit. One of the main findings of the audit was a difficulty with software conversion. Dr. Caddell explained that everything has been corrected.

Dede Broome reported that financial statements should be completed by Monday, January 31.

Considering the school's sagging graduation rate, Glenn Wilson, W-WCHS Principal, gave a presentation to the board. He explained several solutions that are currently in the works.

The purchase and use of a program called Edgenuity is already in action and, "paying dividends,"

according to Wilson.

Vertical collaboration communication is another aid. Middle and high school teachers will work together to better tailor instruction to each student's needs through the transition from middle to high school.

Allowing students to catch up on necessary classes that fit their schedule is anticipated to aid as well. Wilson said 76 credits were distributed last summer. These constituted classes that students received credit for when they may not have otherwise. Students maintaining hope of and continuing to move toward graduation he said is vital.

Wilson explained an additional implementation. Where students have been limited to graduating or dropping out, they can now earn a GED with Athens Tech. Further, the Athens Tech enrollment will not subtract from the school's graduation rate.

Wilson also noted pre-covid testing scores surpassed state standards in every subject except math. While Covid caused scores to drop, they have resumed ascending, according to Wilson.

Wilson added that teachers now

have time for training and are further enhancing their classroom skills.

Dr. Caddell reported the Special Education Department's evaluation score to be excellent, stating the score to be 100 according to the rubric. The School Nutrition Department received high marks as well during its 5-year onsite review, according to Dr. Caddell.

The Wilkes County Recreation Facility Use Agreement was reviewed and approved. The agreement allows Little League to use the elementary school softball and baseball field behind Tiger stadium. Information regarding the use of school facilities can be found online in the board policy.

The board also approved the Tiger band director's request to take two students to the Jazz Honor Band Clinic in Columbia, South Carolina, provided she can overcome transportation and financial difficulties.

The board adjourned to executive session.

A summary of executive session was not supplied to this newspaper in time for publication. This information will be included in the next edition.

Washington resident saved from house fire on Peachtree Street

By MICHAEL BOWEN
Editor and Publisher

Sunday, January 30, firefighters rescued an unresponsive victim from a house fire on 403 Peachtree Street in Washington.

According to a report from Washington Fire Chief C.J. Gilland, the firefighters were informed that the residence was vacated. Volunteer firefighter Ray Owens made a different discovery. First on the scene, Owens found an unresponsive victim lying in the doorway of the residence and called for EMS. When Engine two from the Washington Fire Department arrived, firefighters Chafin and Echols removed the victim from the doorway of the house to the yard. They detected shallow breathing and began treatment accordingly. More advanced medical care was provided by Assistant Fire Chief Tucker, as well as firefighters Duggan and Cofer upon their arrival. When EMS arrived, they assumed care of the victim.

In the meantime, Owens had entered the residence with a fire extinguisher and sprayed the

flames in the kitchen area.

As more firefighters arrived on the scene, teams formed, geared up, and entered the residence with a water line to ensure the fire was out and to neutralize any additional flames. Once the search was done, the firefighting units stood down, disbanded, and dispersed.

"Owens prompt arrival played a major factor in getting the victim out fast and the extinguishment of the fire," Chief Gilland said of the incident. "All fire personnel did an outstanding job showing up and working together." He continued, "We weren't shorthanded this shift as we are sometimes, we had three personnel on shift, which made a big difference, allowing for one firefighter to operate the engine, one to start patient care, and one to make preparations to enter the house." Gilland explained that having at least three firefighters on duty at the station is critical when seconds count. "The ability to have at least three personnel on duty per shift to perform all these tasks at once is a huge benefit in

Continued on page 12



Photo by JOAN BOWEN

A Volunteer Firefighter douses flames at the Metasville residence



A Washington Firefighter assists in controlling the fire

Firefighters battle blaze in Metasville community

By JOAN BOWEN
Managing Editor

Metasville and Washington Fire Departments responded to a barn fire on Wednesday, January 26 at 3738 Metasville Road. Engine 8 and Tanker 8 from the Metasville Volunteer Fire Station and Engine 2 and Tanker 1 from the Washington Fire Department responded to the call. When the trucks arrived, the structure was already engulfed in flames. Firefighters contained the flames, but the structure and its contents were destroyed. The home nearby sustained no damage.