



Boxing was big depression-era entertainment

See Gilmer Living 1B



Horton reaches career milestone

See Sports 1C



Ellijay's Scott and group receive Grammy nod

See Around Town 1D

Times - Courier

Your Hometown Newspaper Devoted To The Progress Of Gilmer County

VOL. 135 • NO. 11 • U.S.P.S. NO. 630-280

March 18, 2010

EST. 1875 • CONSOLIDATED 1916 • 50 CENTS

Commissioners allocate bond money

Large crowd attends work session, meeting

by Ryan R Rees

rees@timescourier.com

The Gilmer County Board of Commissioners agreed to allocate some \$4,580,000 on various capital improvement projects from the remaining \$8.9 million of a \$30 million general obligation bond that must be earmarked by November at its board meeting March 11.

The remaining funds will be earmarked for road projects, which the commissioners hope will be aided by state funds that could expand the remaining \$4,320,000 on an 80-20 basis.

Facing an overflow crowd of nearly 80 people at a work session in the commission conference room before the regular meeting, the work session was moved to the jury assembly room after about 20 minutes.

The two-hour work session was followed by another two-hour regular meeting with more than 120 people in attendance.

During the work session, the commissioners made several concessions after hearing from the citizens in attendance.

A proposed \$40,000 pavilion near Whitepath Golf Course in the Buckhorn Estates area was declined after several residents expressed their displeasure with the plan. Instead, the county will add gravel to a parking area and install signage noting that the tract is county-owned property. Buckhorn residents have maintained the land along the Ellijay River for several years, cleaning trash and having the field mowed on a regular basis.

However, the biggest concession was changing the location for a proposed \$1.2 million recreation department gym and baseball/softball field complex. Instead of building the facilities at the existing park south of downtown, the new gym and a four-field complex will be built on

25 acres the county owns near Clear Creek Middle School. The land was to be turned back over to the board of education, but that decision was reversed and the county will now use the property for the new recreation facilities.

The ball field proposal includes a cloverleaf design with concessions, rest rooms and press box facilities. The ball fields would have had outfield fences with 225-foot dimensions.

However, after hearing from several parents in the audience, it was agreed that the fields would have 300-foot fences to accommodate baseball, as well as softball. The estimated cost of the complex is \$685,000 but may be more because of water and sewer connections that will be needed at the Clear Creek site.

The original plan called for building the two-court gym adjacent to the civic center and would have eliminated one of the existing ball fields.

Other items approved for further action included a \$1.7 million expansion of the county jail, \$437,000 to complete renovations to the civic center, \$400,000 for a new road department maintenance shop, \$60,000 for two fire truck bays adjacent to the Boardtown fire station and \$35,000 to develop projects on Yukon Road.

Funds for the county airport

See **Commission** page 4A

County, cities receive first installment of AEDs



Photo by Al Summers

The first round of AEDs were delivered to public safety officials last Thursday, March 11. Shown left to right are DHR representatives David Foster and David Loftin, Gilmer EMS Coordinator Leslie Hightower, Gilmer Fire Chief Tony Pritchett, Gilmer County Commission Chairman Mark Chastain, Ellijay Fire Chief Sam West and Gilmer County Sheriff Stacy Nicholson.

by Al Summers

alsummers@timescourier.com

Public safety agencies from Gilmer County and the cities of East Ellijay and Ellijay received their first installment of automatic external defibrillators (AED) last Thursday, March 11, at Gilmer Fire Station 1. The devices were handed out by David Loftin, regional emergency medical services director for the Georgia Department of Human Resources (DHR), and David Foster with DHR.

An AED is a portable electronic device that automatically diagnoses a potentially life-threatening irregular heartbeat, and, when applied to the patient, it delivers an electrical shock to the heart,

allowing the heart to re-establish an effective rhythm.

The AEDs are courtesy of a grant of \$200,000 over a two-year period. The grant was applied for by Loftin and Rhonda Payne and was granted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The public safety agencies in the county are scheduled to receive a total of 76 AEDs over the two-year span, with a delivery of the first 50 last Thursday. The goal is to place an AED in every law enforcement car and every fire truck.

All of Gilmer County's schools will get AEDs next year. Distributed Thursday were 28 to the Gilmer County Sheriff's Department, nine to

the Gilmer County Fire Department, five each to the East Ellijay Police Department and the Ellijay Police Department and three to the Ellijay Fire Department.

Leslie Hightower of Gilmer County Emergency Services will conduct the training for those who will be carrying the AEDs.

In a press release from the health district, it said, "The goal of this program is to provide defibrillation to victims of sudden cardiac arrest before brain death occurs so that the patient can make a complete recovery. Gilmer County Emergency Services will be conducting public information events to educate the public on the early warning signs of heart attack and stroke soon."

Check the census for accuracy

by Whitney Crouch

wcrouch@timescourier.com

The 2010 Census is currently being distributed to every household in the nation.

Censuses have been conducted in North America since the early 1600s and provide an important snapshot of the nation's size, health and needs.

Census counts are used to determine the number of seats in Congress that each state receives and the boundaries of congressional districts. They are also used to distribute more than \$400 billion in federal funds each year.

Unfortunately, many peo-

ple do not take the time to answer the 10 short questions on the census form.

In fact, according to the 2010 Census Web site, only 53 percent of households in Gilmer County responded to the 2000 census. This figure was well under the Georgia participation rate of 69 percent and the national rate of 72 percent.

According to census officials, "it is imperative that our counts are accurate in each geographic location." Without correct information, the federal government might incorrectly allocate funds, such as the more than \$26 billion dollars earmarked year.

See **Census** page 4A

BOE finalizes bond resolution

by Whitney Crouch

wcrouch@timescourier.com

The Gilmer County Board of Education had a lot to discuss this month.

A called meeting was held at 5:30 p.m., Thursday, March 4, and was followed by a previously scheduled work session.

The final papers for the \$9 million bond resolution were signed after the BOE approved the bond purchase agreement, an intercept resolution and a tax levy resolution.

The school board agreed to purchase four serial bonds. The funds are scheduled to be dispersed March 23, and by January 2016, the school system will be completely out of debt as far as bond issues are concerned.

The intercept resolution is based on the state aid intercept law. Essentially, it means that the district has authorized the Georgia Board of Education to intercept appropriated state aid funds from the system's budget and forward them to the paying agent. This action is only taken if the school system is unable to make a bond payment on schedule and acts as an important safety net.

The tax levy resolution asks the Gilmer Board of Commis-

sioners to levy a tax on behalf of the BOE.

These two resolutions had to be approved before the bond resolution could be finalized.

Bucky Kimsey of Morgan Keegan and Company expressed his appreciation for all the "help and support" he received during the paperwork process of finalizing the bond. He also commended finance director Julie Swindle for helping to secure a low true interest cost of 1.92 percent.

During the BOE work session, facilities director Wes Clappitt presented a list of estimated costs for priority SPLOST projects, which will be covered by the bond resolution. He particularly focused on the need for upgraded lighting systems, repairs to two mobile units and awnings at Oakland Elementary School and renovation work at Gilmer Middle School. At the next meeting, he hopes to present a priority list of paving repairs for the entire school system.

At the last BOE meeting, the board members heard a report about the need for an increased focus on literacy in the county's middle and high schools.

In the March work session, Superintendent Randy Parson reported that the literacy pro-

gram is moving forward. He also stressed that using the system's literacy coaches half-a-day at the middle and high schools does not mean that they will stop working with the lower grade levels.

"We've made too much ground to lose it," he explained.

Parson further noted that there is still a need to redesign how new literacy strategies will be implemented in sixth through twelfth grade. In the upper levels, coaches will only be "targeting struggling readers" and are developing strategies to specifically reach those students.

Director of personnel Danette Ozment noted, "We have done a great job in K-3 — an excellent job in fact." She emphasized the need to look at the new approach to literacy as a collaborative effort and to remember "if we make a literate community, we've been a success."

Ozment further noted, "We were in the bottom third of the state when we started [the K-3 program] six years ago." Since that time, Gilmer students have made phenomenal gains in reading.

In past years, the school system used the ITBS, a national normed test, to determine

eligibility for the gifted program. Now Gilmer students as a whole are scoring so high on this test that it can no longer be used to judge gifted criteria. Last year alone, 90 percent of Gilmer students passed the ITBS test. Such excellent test scores reflect good instruction and a thriving literacy program.

Ozment believes that Gilmer can achieve the same success at the middle and high school level. She predicts that in a few years other schools will be coming to observe the Gilmer program for older students.

The regular BOE meeting was held at 6 p.m. Tuesday, March 9.

Swindle reported that by the end of February, 84 percent of the property tax revenue had been collected for the year, and the school system's expenses for the year are still well below budget. With frugal planning that trend should continue for the rest of the year.

The system currently has about \$13 million on hand, but Swindle noted that the schools will need to start using those funds soon as the tax revenue begins to taper off and the time comes to order supplies for

See **BOE** page 4A



In this issue...

National/State Roundup2A
Editorial3A
Arrests5A
Obituaries6A
Religion/People8-10A
Gilmer Living1B
Legals3-9B
Dixie Divas10B
Sports1-3C

Focus on Education4-5C
Health & Fitness6-11C
Scenic Photo of the Week ..12C
Around Town1D
Movies/Calendar2D
Crossword Puzzle2D
TV Guide4D
Classifieds5-10D
Chairman's Report9D