



New old bridge

Lancaster Covered Bridge, located on CR 500W, near Owasco, was re-opened for travel in late 2006 after undergoing historically accurate rehabilitation. Its official opening date was Jan. 30, 2007. Carroll County Commissioner Bill Brown said residents living close to the bridge were invited to help choose roof and siding colors and other fine touches. "We're very grateful for their patience and help," Brown commented. "It's a beautiful bridge because people cared to make it so." Comet photo by Kevin Schnepf

Lancaster Bridge served new life by history, heroics

By Kevin Schnepf
 Staff writer

covered bridge was built.

Lancaster is one of two covered bridges remaining in the county. The other covered bridge is located at Adams Mill. Both were built simultaneously by the same company. They were virtually identical upon construction and featured cast iron abutments patented by Alpheus Wheelock on Feb. 15, 1870.

More than 137 years have passed since Lancaster Bridge was approved for construction by county commissioners. Current commissioner Bill Brown said the commissioners in office then got more than they expected when they had the bridge built.

"When the commissioners ordered Lancaster to be built, they didn't know they were getting

also replaced floor beams and decking. Brown said previous rehabilitation projects were helpful in keeping the bridge operable for so long, but serious issues persisted. He said major flooding in 2003 did not help matters.

"The flood waters were 18 inches above the bottom of the bridge in 2003," Brown said. "It was tearing the bridge apart. We had to do something, or it more than likely would not have survived the night."

Brown said all he, his son, Ross Brown, and fellow commissioner Loren Hylton could think to do during the flood was add more weight to the bridge.

In 1981, Howard Heavilon added a steel support structure to the underside of the bridge. He

also replaced floor beams and decking.

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Every historic bridge has a story to tell. And if we listen to its story, we will find it mirrors our own life experiences in many ways.

Through the story of Lancaster Covered Bridge, we are reminded that we nurture what we love and sometimes must fight to keep it alive.

Spanning 128 feet across the North Fork of the Wildcat Creek on CR 500W near Owasco, the bridge was built in 1872 by Smith Bridge Co. It was named after the town of New Lancaster, formerly located atop the hill on the north side of the creek. But the town disappeared before the

Judge rules against defense motion in Sprinkle case

By Debbie Lowe
 Staff writer

the part of the house occupied by Keith Munson. Munson was also charged with crimes against children in June 2006.

Manahan said state and federal laws gave his client the right to be

free from unreasonable search. He said all of the evidence introduced for the probable cause hearing was related to the bedroom occupied by Munson, not the room Sprinkle slept in.

Chief investigator in the case, Carroll County Sheriff's Detective Steve Mullin, testified that he received permission from Sprinkle to search his room. Mullin

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Accused pleads guilty to child molestation, child exploitation

By Debbie Lowe
 Staff writer

Life is about the choices a person makes. There are times in every life when a direction or path has to be decided upon.

That was the case when Keith O. Munson, 31, of rural Carroll County, appeared Feb. 21 in Carroll Circuit Court for an omnibus hearing. The omnibus hearing is a time for a defendant to choose to either plead guilty or go to trial.

Munson was charged with child molestation and child exploitation in Carroll County on June 26, 2006.

Munson's court-appointed attorney Curtis Fouts informed Judge Donald Currie at the hearing that his client decided to change his former plea of not guilty to guilty. He said Mun-

son would accept a plea agreement offered by county prosecutor Tricia Thompson.

Munson admitted, under oath, he had deviant sexual conduct with a child he knew to be under the age of 14 and that he possessed digitized photographs of children engaging in sexual acts who were under the age of 14.

The agreement calls for Munson to forgo a trial, waiving his right to appeal and serve 22 years in prison plus six additional years on probation. He would not be allowed to have

contact with or live within one mile of the victim after being released from prison. Although no restitution was requested, Munson agreed to no unsupervised contact with anyone less than 18 years of age after his release.

In exchange the prosecutor agreed to dismiss counts II, III, and V and amend count I, a child molestation charge, from a Class A to a Class B felony.

Currie found Munson guilty and accepted the plea agreement. Munson will be formally sentenced April 3 at 2 p.m.

Munson is listed as a witness for the prosecution in the child pornography case of Leon Sprinkle, scheduled for trial March 19 at 9 a.m. Munson and Sprinkle shared a residence in rural Carroll County before both were arrested in mid-2006.



Munson



Sprinkle

Pushing the issue Council to address personnel policy handbook issues with commissioners

By Debbie Lowe
 Staff writer

Carroll County leaders do not see eye-to-eye about how to manage some county personnel issues. Council members made it clear at their Monday morning meeting they are not happy with a recent decision by the commissioners and intend to work with the executive branch of county government to avoid conflict in the future.

The conflict arose when county highway supervisor Ramzi Awwad was granted an exemption, allowed for in the personnel policy, which forbids nepotism when hiring. The exemption was granted at the Feb. 19 commissioners' meeting.

Awwad told commissioners he received between 10 and 12 candidates for a vacant truck driver position. He said he felt one candidate interviewed, who is the brother of a current truck driver, was the best candidate, although there were two others qualified for the position.

At that meeting, Awwad cited a stipulation in the county personnel policy handbook, which permits commissioners to grant an exemption to the policy, which is what they did.

"We approved filling the position as long as it followed the personnel policy," council president Rob Baker said.

"Why would you choose somebody that went against the policy?" he asked Awwad. "You're making it so we have to have stricter restrictions."

Awwad insisted he followed the policy. He said his goal was to run the department the best

way he could.

"If we disagree with the way the policy reads, we need to address it with the commissioners," council member Ron Slavens suggested.

"It's just not right for the other department heads," council member Carl Abbott added.

"As far as personnel issues," Awwad said, "I take my direction from the commissioners."

"I think you're pushing the issue," Baker concluded. "You know where we stand on this."

In other highway business, the council approved an additional \$47,722.86 to the Carrollton Bridge project and \$30,000 to Bridge #36.

The additional money for the Carrollton Bridge was a reimbursement by the state for construction, which was deposited into the county general fund.

Awwad explained the additional amount for Bridge #36 was budgeted for 2006, but not used due to the inability to reach an agreement with the design engineer in 2006.

Council members granted \$3,500 of a requested \$7,000 encumbrance into the cumulative bridge GIS project fund.

Historically, the highway department and E911 each paid the total amount, \$7,000, for the GIS service every other year. However confusion arose in 2006 and the money was paid out of the county general fund.

To end the confusion, council members directed the highway department and E911 to split the cost of the service in 2007.

A plan to evaluate the need for the GIS service by other departments

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Full steam ahead in Carroll County Sewer district receives promise of federal funds

By Debbie Lowe
 Staff writer

Although it was not announced at the Thursday night meeting, a letter approving a funding commitment for Phase IIB, the Carroll County portion of the proposed service area, was received from the Office of Rural Development by the Twin Lakes Regional Sewer District last week.

In a letter dated Feb. 13 to the sewer district from USDA Rural Development in Columbia City, a \$12,022,000 loan was formally approved on that date.

Carroll County representative Wayne Garrison said he first received word of the award in the board packet received Feb. 21, but verified there was no formal announcement at the Thursday night meeting.

"It surprised me that we got the authorization this quickly," Garrison said. "However, I am glad we are able to move on instead of being in limbo with this project."

Board members set March 23 as the target date for construction bids to be advertised. They urged GRW Engineering representative Joe Tierney to be ready to begin the bidding process by that time.

Jonathan Borgers, project manager for BioTown, provided a brief overview of the project for

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board members as information only.

"I'm not looking for you to approve anything tonight," he said. "Don't worry about that," Anderson replied.

Borgers said the BioTown Authority is working to develop a wastewater master plan to help the current need in Reynolds, and with Monticello and Monon.

"Monticello is very interested in this," he said.

Borgers said a feasibility study would cost \$40,000 and suggested the TLRSD contribution would be approximately \$2,500, if it chose to participate.

"We're very interested in Monticello and what they're going to do about it," TLRSD president Jim Smith said. "I think the board should consider the request."

Smith said he wanted to avoid public criticism for not considering all options.

"I don't even want to spend \$2,500 of these people's money and then give them a price increase down the road," Anderson said.

Borgers said the goal of including the sewer district in the study would be to gather all pertinent information to make informed decisions about how to proceed.

Garrison suggested a project time-line be developed and continued contact with TLRSD superintendent Mike Darter by Borgers.

Smith welcomed BioTown representatives to visit board meetings and provide updates at any time.


The next meeting will be March 8 at 7 p.m.

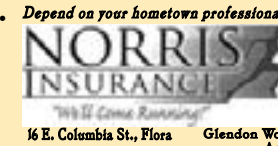
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