

Commissioners take a long, hard look at treasurer's report

By **Debbie Lowe**
Staff writer

Although not on the agenda, Carroll County Treasurer Jane Brewington was asked to provide a financial report from her office to the commissioners at their Tuesday morning meeting. The commissioners struggled to understand why the county is reportedly out of money in the general fund.

As Brewington's report was digested by the county leaders, answers to questions were sought from two county council members, Steve Ashby and Ann Brown, in the audience. When answers and clarification were provided, commissioners began to fully comprehend the critical fiscal situation facing the county. And when auditor Beth Myers advised them the county would not be

able to pay the next set of claims after paying payroll approved at the beginning of the meeting, the gravity of the situation was apparent. Myers said another inter-departmental loan would likely be necessary by the end of January.

"What should we do as commissioners?" Commissioner George Mears asked. "How can we get more money in county general?"

"We have to make receipts and disbursements match," Ashby responded. "We can't do a lot of things we've been doing."

Ashby recommended commissioners look at the 2004 budget appropriations. He said that was the last year the county appropriated according to the level of income. He suggested the leaders go line-by-line and compare those numbers to a

later budget to discover what employees and services were added without supportive income.

"It means you have to do without some things," Ann Brown added.

Discussion arose about the reasons for the deficit spending. Suggestions about how to improve the situation long-term were proposed. However, the immediate need was not forgotten by Ashby.

"We are two quarts low on blood in the general fund right now," he said. "We have to stop the bleeding now. We have to raise fees and cut expenses."

Commissioner Loren Hylton stated it would be necessary for commissioners to maintain adequate communication with the council to resolve the fiscal issues after Ann Brown reiterated that the 2008 budget submitted to the Indiana

Department of Local Government Finance would not be approved. She said DLGF has indicated the budget would have to be reduced by approximately \$1 million to be approved. Neither council representative was willing to stipulate personnel would be released to satisfy the reduction figure. However, she said it was possible.

Extension Office contract

It was announced there has been no lease contract since 2000 with the owners of the building which houses the county extension office. Building owner Gerry Underhill reported a rent increase was unexpectedly received in 2002. He said no increase was requested but commissioners at the time decided an increase was in order and put the increase into their budget, which was approved

by the county council.

Myers said the Indiana State Board of Accounts required a lease or contract before money is paid for the service. Underhill was directed to present a lease at the Feb. 4 commissioners' meeting.

Underhill said the county occupies approximately 27 percent of the building and is charged less than market rate for the 1,200 square foot space. He said the county is getting a bargain for the space.

"We have always paid all the expenses for the county," he said.

According to Underhill, the expenses provided include custodial, trash removal, building maintenance, utilities and grounds keeping.

"I think we have a wonderful deal,"
Continued page 5A

Burlington woman claims million dollar scratch-off prize

Comet staff report

Regina Kennedy of Burlington is the third Hoosier Lottery millionaire of the year. Tuesday she and her fiancé Roger Rush claimed \$1,000,000 at Hoosier Lottery Headquarters after playing Scratch-off game Cash Blowout.

"I kept looking at it and asking if this was real," said

Kennedy. "It still hasn't sunk in yet."

Kennedy's fiancé purchased the winning-ticket for her from Village Pantry at 3636 West Sycamore Lane in Kokomo.

"There was no special reason for purchasing the ticket, but it definitely was a special ticket," said Rush. "This is going to help out a lot."

Many questions... not so many answers

By **Debbie Lowe**
Staff writer

When a disaster like the recent flood experienced in Carroll County happens, there are a multitude of questions. As area residents affected by the flood are discovering, answers tend to be few and far between while inspectors, assessors and property owners gauge the damage.

In the past week, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) worked along side of the local EMA director, Dave McDowell, to assess the extent of the disaster up and down the Tippecanoe River in Carroll County. According to FEMA Public Information Officer Leo Skinner, FEMA's information will go to the Indiana Department of Homeland Security

after compilation. Homeland Security will then report to Gov. Mitch Daniels, who will in turn write a letter to President George Bush requesting a formal national disaster declaration. If granted, that act will allow FEMA to release funds on the local level to aid in rebuilding and restoration of homes and buildings destroyed or damaged in the flood.

When and if that declaration is made, FEMA will establish a local office and disaster recovery center in the area. That office would be operated by Sandy Jasmund. Jasmund worked in New Orleans after hurricane Katrina. Jasmund advised that property owners should apply for SBA loans to help with rebuilding costs. She said some grant funds

Continued page 5A

Flood relief – get help or give it

By **Kevin Schnepf**
Staff writer

Several area churches, businesses and organizations are still collecting donations and offering supplies to flood victims. The aid received by those who suffered losses was made possible because Carroll and surrounding counties' citizens showed they care through action.

Community members who are offering help realize many who

lost their homes may or may not have a place to put things yet. In either case, the community encourages those who need help to accept that help when they are ready for it.

Delphi United Methodist Church is offering to help flood victims clean out their homes. Members coordinated efforts among several area churches to connect volunteers to those who cannot do the work themselves.

A team from the church will visit the flood victim's home to assess the damage in person. The homeowner will fill out a form including a list of damages and other information. Items the homeowner does not want worked on also can be listed. Volunteer home assessors received training from the Monticello Southern Baptist Church relief team.

Once necessary information is gathered, the church and homeowner will schedule a date and time to begin the work. The homeowner will be asked to sign a waiver to indemnify the volunteers.

Those who need help cleaning or repairing items in their flood-damaged homes can call (765) 202-3935 or e-mail flood-relief@delphi.umd.org for more information or to begin the process.

The **American Red Cross Distribution Center** at Camp Tecumseh Equestrian Barn on Springboro Road will be open seven days a week from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. until further notice. Food, water, baby items and more is available. Call (574) 686-
Continued page 5A

Flood assessment and clean-up continue



Sitting down with county leaders

Congressman Joe Donnelly (center) met with county leaders and residents of Tecumseh Bend Sunday afternoon in the Schumann Lodge at Camp Tecumseh. Donnelly advised of relief efforts currently underway at the state level and plans for an application for federal disaster funds from FEMA. Those in the photo sitting, to the left of the congressman, are: Julie Kitchel of the congressman's office, commissioner Loren Hylton and his wife Karen, commissioner Bill Brown, Donnelly's district director Hodge Patel, commissioner George Mears and county council member Steve Ashby. Standing behind Ashby is Delphi Mayor Randy Strasser. After meeting with the county leaders and residents, Donnelly toured the Tecumseh Bend area for a first-hand look at the destruction. Present, but not pictured are Dave Wright of Camp Tecumseh and EMA Director Dave McDowell. Comet photos by Debbie Lowe



Assessing the destruction

County EMA Director Dave McDowell works with a FEMA team to assess damage done to the interior of his garage after the recent flood.



How high was that?

County EMA Director Dave McDowell illustrates how high the water rose in his kitchen to FEMA Public Information Officer Leo Skinner. A walk through the residence revealed nearly total damage and destruction to McDowell's possessions.



Working the clean-up

A county highway worker labors to load debris onto a front-end loader as part of the flood clean-up last week. County highway provided the manpower and the equipment to rid the area of unusable items.

Both political parties gear-up for the May primary

By **Debbie Lowe**
Staff writer

The Democratic Central Committee met Jan. 9 to choose a new leader after the resignation of Dick Roe. Former vice-chair Linda Huffer was chosen to head the party for the next year.

County positions to be filled in the November election include two commissioner seats, three council seats, the clerk, recorder, coroner, surveyor and three school board members in each school corporation.

Huffer said the night she was elected that she expects precinct committeemen to "shake the bushes" for candidates. She said she would be in contact with them to help organize the party and to fill ballots with qualified candidates.

"I hope the party can grow and become stronger again," she said.

Huffer said she understood how the Democrats could impact county government at this time in history.

"With all the problems in the courthouse, everyone is up in arms right now," she said.

The Democrats are not the only political group thinking and talking about county issues.

Republican Party Chair Sam Deiwert agreed there are problems in the courthouse and in county government. However, he added that he thought the current commissioners have gotten a "bum rap" about the



Huffer



Deiwert

county financial situation.

Deiwert said that the current county financial situation has significantly hurt the Republican Party. He said the problem "has fed into the public's dissatisfaction with performance" and that it has "increased discomfort" among citizens. Deiwert said the financial problems have "instilled a sense of fear and hopelessness" that is unfair, but real. He said those obstacles can, and must, be overcome.

Deiwert said it is the responsibility of the Republican Party "to make sure every office is filled with a competent candidate."

"The incumbent Republicans who run for office this time have a big job ahead of them. They are going to have to define themselves in such a way that restores confidence in the electorate," he said. "They must educate voters about their roles and must give a rationale for their decisions."

"I don't think it can't be done," he added. "But they are going to have to work to make their case to the public. Republicans have to convince folks why they should vote for them."

Deiwert said the community should look at the improvements in the last 12 months.

"They've hunkered down. It's been difficult to get through," he said. "They've stepped into the pail and there has been progress made."

Candidate filing begins today

Candidates began filing declarations of candidacy with the Carroll County Clerk's office today, for nomination to a local office by a major political party for the 2008 primary election.

The filing deadline for any of the offices is 12 noon on Feb.

22 at the clerk's office. For more information, contact the county clerk's office at (765) 564-6795.

The clerk's office is open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday,



and Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Wednesdays from 8 a.m. to noon.

Candidates filing for public office may submit a picture and announcement of their candi-

dacy to be placed in the Political News section of the *Carroll County Comet*. Submissions, up to 300 words, must be received by the *Comet* before the second Friday following a candidate's filing.