

Rainy Day Fund used for Feb. bills

Council urges commissioners to act on personnel policy changes

By Debbie Lowe
Staff writer

Carroll County Council urged commissioners at their Wednesday morning meeting to amend the county's personnel practices as soon as possible. Council members were forced to address compensatory time owed to E-911 employees as well as anticipated future comp. time issues. Commissioners set personnel policies for county employees.

E-911 director Jay D. Cree requested to hire a replacement full-time dispatcher. However, after noting the department owed 300 hours of comp. time to employees, which carries the threat of forced payment in the future, the request was tabled. Council member Carl Abbott made the motion to table the matter due to

the uncertain 2008 budget and the prospect of workforce reduction if budget reductions are required by the Department of Local Government Finance.

The Carroll County Personnel Policy allows for salaried department heads to receive 1.5 hours of comp. time for each hour worked over 40 hours.

The exact nature of the policy and the wording was questioned by council member Ron Slavens.

"Is it clear that department heads are entitled to comp. time?" Slavens asked.

Abbott turned to commissioners' president Loren Hylton in the audience and asked him if the commissioners had taken any action to review the personnel practices and specifically the comp. time issue as re-

quested by the council several months ago. Hylton said they had not.

"You can see how it (the issue of comp. time) trickles down, don't you," Abbott said to Hylton.

Council president Nancy Cripe urged Hylton to act "the sooner the better."

Auditor Beth Myers asked for an explanation of the difference between taking comp. time and getting paid overtime.

"Taking comp. time is one thing," council member Jerry Hendress said. "But if they don't take it, we've got to pay it."

Myers reported former museum director Phyllis Moore was claiming 832 comp. time hours. Some of those were accrued during Old Settlers events over the years. The question arose whether Moore had received

permission to work the overtime or not.

Although Abbott said the comp. time issue was already discussed with commissioners at a previous joint meeting, Myers was directed to put the matter on the agenda again for the next joint council/commissioner meeting, which is scheduled for Feb. 21 at 6 p.m.

Tioga Bridge

Council members and commissioners did not see eye-to-eye about the Tioga Bridge project. Commissioners agreed with highway superintendent Ron Francis at the Feb. 4 meeting to ask the council to transfer money from Bridge #129 to two other bridge projects. A bill for one of those, the Maxwell Bridge, was unexpectedly presented years after the closing of the project. Council approved a

\$15,811.24 transfer for that obligation.

However a request to transfer \$44,000 to the Tioga Bridge project was tabled by unanimous vote. Francis said the project was a joint federal aid project with White County. He explained residents in the local area wanted the project to be funded.

"The purpose (of the project) is to keep the county from having to pull it (the bridge) out," Francis said. "That's the issue."

Francis explained the bridge was to be rehabilitated and raised to become a walking bridge over Lake Freeman into Monticello.

Slavens said he thought Monticello would be the principle economic beneficiary of the project.

Francis said he would be requesting **Continued page 6A**

Debris to go – PLEASE!



This pile of flood-ravaged debris from the Clark residence in Horseshoe Bend is waiting patiently for county highway to haul it away. Many such piles, some larger and some smaller, line Horseshoe Bend Rd. in Carroll County. Comet photo by Debbie Lowe

New filings are announced

Comet staff report

The following recently filed their candidacy for the May Primary races:

Commissioner - Scott Ayres (R), District 3;

County council-at-large - Marion Huffer (D);

Delphi School Board - William Trueblood, Liberty Township; and Michael Shoemaker, Liberty Township;

Carroll School Board - Robert J. Kauffman, Monroe Township; and David Bordner, Democrat Township;

Republican precinct committee person - Donna Romein.

The filing deadline for any of the offices is 12 noon on Feb. 22 in the county clerk's office. For more information, contact the clerk's office at (765) 564-6795.

Candidates filing for public office may submit a picture and announcement of their candidacy 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.

Local talent goes national

Comet staff report

Former Carroll County resident Amanda Overmyer was in the running to become one of the popular singer-searching television show, *American Idol*'s top 24 contestants when the *Comet* went to press Tuesday. Depending on the outcome of Tuesday night's airing, she might appear on the show today, Wednesday, at 8 p.m. on Fox.

She auditioned for the show in Atlanta and moved to the Hollywood round with rave reviews from judges.

Overmyer was raised in Cam-

den and graduated from Delphi Community High School in 2001. She majored in nursing at Ivy Tech and Purdue University and now works at Lincare in Kokomo.

Her parents are C.J. Overmyer of Camden and Kathy Overmyer of Lafayette.

According to the show's official Web site, www.americandidol.com, the series "empowers viewers to discover America's next solo singing superstar by voting for their favorites to win the coveted American Idol title."

Five competitions this month will identify top ideas

Comet staff report

The inventor of an alarm clock that monitors sleep patterns, a would-be organic baby food maker, a designer of cargo trays for trucking, and the creator of a process that could detect early cancer cells through blood tests are among those who hope to impress judges with their new business ideas as part of Incubicity, an economic development competition. Eighty-eight innovators from north-central Indiana will present their ideas during five local "elevator pitch" competitions this month in Monticello, Wabash, Kokomo, Williamsport and Lafayette.

An elevator pitch is so called because it must be an idea brief enough to be described in a short elevator trip, meaning it must be dynamic, hit only the high points and hold the listener's interest.

Following this model, contestants in these competitions will have two minutes to make their pitch to a panel of successful entrepreneurs and economic development officials. In each local competition, the contestant with the most viable idea will win \$1,000. He or she will also have a chance to develop the idea fur-

ther and compete in a regional competition, where the top idea will win \$25,000 and a chance at becoming a real business. Second- and third-place winners in each local competition will take home \$500 and \$250 respectively, and will also have a shot at the regional event.

The competitions are part of Incubicity, a regional initiative to boost economic development in north central Indiana. Incubicity is a project of the Indiana Venture Center funded by a WIRED (Workforce Innovations in Regional Economic Development) grant.

The competitions are open to anyone 18 or older who lives or owns a business in Benton, Carroll, Cass, Clinton, Fountain, Fulton, Howard, Miami, Montgomery, Tippecanoe, Tipton, Wabash, Warren and White counties. The events are free and open to the public, and family and friends are encouraged to come out to support these local innovators and discover what ideas are growing in their community.

For more information on Incubicity, including videos and competition schedules and details, go to www.incubicity.com.

DCSC board dismisses teacher to accommodate administrator

By Kevin Schnepf
Staff writer

Delphi Community School Corporation Board of School Trustees cited reduction in force (RIF) as one reason for dismissing first-year middle school social studies teacher Thomas Murfitt during its Monday night meeting. Murfitt will be let go at the end of this school year, but would be first asked to be hired back if a position for which he was qualified opened in the school district.

Another reason provided by DCSC Superintendent Ralph Walker was that an administrator, later discovered to be athletic director Vince Burpo, asked to be re-assigned as a teacher. Burpo was recently

named high school head football coach. Walker explained administrators are licensed as teachers and are part of the seniority chain.

"Now we have an extra teacher," Walker said.

Walker explained the move had to be made according to rules of seniority and was not based on Murfitt's capabilities.

"This is not a reflection on Murfitt's teaching abilities," he stated. "It is merely a reduction in force because we cannot af-

ford to spend an extra \$40,000 on a teaching position that we currently do not need."

According to Delphi Community Teachers' Association Vice President Lori Schwarzkopf, Murfitt is a very good new teacher and is popular with students. She read a letter of opposition against the move before the vote and offered an option to the board which would allow Murfitt to keep his job.

Schwarzkopf said Burpo's teaching license included physical education and suggested he be moved to that department where there was "a need." That move, she advised, would have allowed Murfitt to keep his teaching position.

"It is extremely unfair to RIF a teacher early in his career," she told the board moments before the deciding vote was cast. During public comments, MOP Squad member Sharon

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DCSC taxpayers voice opinions about renovations

By Kevin Schnepf
Staff writer

Delphi Community School Corporation hosted another tour and public forum Monday night to update patrons of the corporation's plans to renovate many of its physical assets.

Larry Dawson of project consulting firm Envoy facilitated the forum after patrons were led on a tour of the high school's physical education facilities. Dawson was asked to facilitate the forum. He said it was important for patrons to be involved in the process.

"Nothing has been finalized or approved," Dawson began.

"That is why the board continues to hold these meetings."

Dawson introduced Gary Turner and Greg Drennen from architecture firm Lorenz, Williams and Clinton who summarized the project's scope and potential tax impact.

Brian Bingham of financial advisory firm Barnes and Thornburg was introduced. Speaking on behalf of Lonnie Thurber, the firm's usual representative at DCSC meetings, he said the corporation could issue a bond for approximately \$23 million payable over 20 years, or an \$18 million bond for 15 years, without raising the tax rate.

He suggested the board con-

sider "wrap-around financing," a method by which new debt payments are increased while existing debt payments decrease, as a means for funding the project without raising the debt tax rate.

Bingham also noted non-academic portions of the project would come under scrutiny by the Department of Local Government Finance (DLGF). He said that department could delete parts of the plan if they were considered not to be essential.

"Not that it isn't important or not a need," he explained about the DLGF's stance. "It's just not necessary."

Lastly he advised the is-

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