

County council hires finance pros

By Debbie Lowe
Staff writer

Carroll County Council has been meeting feverishly to make the drastic 2008 budget reductions necessary to stem the flow of more money appropriated than income expected. Struggling to formulate the spending plan that will serve the county, albeit with fewer services and fewer employees, council members also understand that state-mandated financial variables loom in the future for the county.

Council members realized months ago a bank loan would be inevitable to help them through short-term cash flow issues if they chose to not deplete what funds remain in the coffers. The council then decided it was time

to hire a professional CPA firm to guide them as they complete the long and arduous task of reducing the 2008 budget by \$1.8 million and at the same time be prepared for the future.

They consulted Lafayette Bank and Trust because the bulk of county money is secured in that institution. Bank vice president and Carroll County native Jay Bush advised it was prudent to secure a firm that provides services primarily to municipalities. Bush recommended the council hear a presentation from H.J. Umbaugh and Associates from Indianapolis to help them understand what services were available, necessary and helpful to the county in the coming months. Bush said Umbaugh

would not only assist with a bank loan but could also help steer the council through what could be a rocky fiscal road in the next few years.

According to council president Nancy S. Cripe, Umbaugh will do a preliminary analysis of the county financial situation within 30 days. They will recommend a plan of action no later than March 31.

"We needed professional advice and a professional plan to present to the bank for a loan," Cripe said. "We need the expertise of a firm that specializes in government entities."

Bush agreed with Cripe. LB&T formally recommended Umbaugh so the county would not "find itself in a similar situation in the future." He said

that his bank has worked with Umbaugh and had a high degree of confidence to make the recommendation.

"I think it's a step in the right direction for the county," he said. "Umbaugh and Associates can help them with borrowing situations."

Bush, who graduated from Carroll High School and then Purdue, said it was unrealistic to expect council members to know everything there is about their job. He said people in business use consultants for guidance frequently. He said the CPA firm has connections to the Indiana General Assembly and is knowledgeable about what directives and changes would be coming from the state as soon as those facts are able to be known.

"It's going to be a savings for taxpayers in the long run," Cripe said. "We need solid advice we can depend upon."

"We've learned a great deal in the past year," she added. "We would be negligent if we didn't act prudently to get going in the right direction now. This is serious business and we have to get it right."

Council will meet March 17 at 1:30 p.m. to possibly finalize spending reductions and adopt the revised 2008 budget. They will meet again March 31 to hear the report from Umbaugh and Associates and to discuss and possibly vote on an Economic Development Income Tax increase.

Rebate checks to be mailed soon

Comet staff report

According to the Carroll County Auditor's Office, the anticipated property tax rebate checks will soon be in

the mail. The information was sent to the vendor hired to write and mail the checks and the checks are expected to be mailed within two weeks.

Overmyer makes Top 12

Comet staff report

Indiana was initially represented by three talented singers in the American Idol competition, but now only one remains. Delphi Community High School graduate Amanda Overmyer is still in the running to be the next American Idol.

The 23-year-old wooded the audience and judges last week with her performance of Joan Jett's "I Hate Myself For Loving You." All three judges praised her after they were critical of her per-



Overmyer

formance and appearance the week before. And after America voted, she was included in the popular competition's Top 12.

Overmyer's bluesy-rock vocals have set her apart from her competitors.

After last night's performance where all 12 competitors sang Lennon-McCartney Beatles songs, only one will be eliminated tonight. The show will be seen on Fox at 9 p.m.

Overmyer is a Camden native and now resides in Mulberry.

Road repair – never ending job



Flora town employees Darrell Hoffman, left, and Greg Barnes, right, worked Tuesday repairing potholes on town streets with cold patch. They were making repairs on South Third Street in front of the County Highway Garage when this photo was taken. County workers are also out repairing roads this week. Comet photo

DCSC resolves to spend \$20M

By Kevin Schnepf
Staff writer

Taxpayers and voters of Delphi Community School Corporation received formal notification of the corporation's plans to spend more than \$20 million on school construction projects during a tax hearing Monday night.

After a final round of public and board comments regarding a proposed 2008 Facility Improvement Program, the DCSC Board of Trustees unanimously approved a list of resolutions it must abide by during the remainder of the process.

According to the resolution, the board determined "there exists a need for all of the projects included in the 2008 Facility Improvement Program." To address that need, the board made a "preliminary determi-

nation" to issue bonds or enter into a lease agreement with the Building Corporation to finance the project.

The board stated its "desires to proceed" with any or all of renovation, expansion or equipping projects listed on the resolution. Items included work at all of the district's academic facilities, miscellaneous repairs and renovations at DCSC-operated facilities, and all related projects.

The bonds will be issued for no more than \$20,465,000 and will be paid off within 20 years. Annual payments were projected to be \$2,013,000.

According to the resolution, a maximum estimated debt service property tax rate of 49 cents per \$100 assessed valuation was approved. The current rate is 54 cents.

Estimated completion of the project was set for August 2011.

In section five of the resolution, DCSC Superintendent Ralph Walker was authorized "to take any and all actions such person deems necessary or desirable in connection with fulfilling the intents and purposes of these resolutions."

A copy of the resolution may be obtained from the corporation office. Call (765) 564-2100 for information.

The passage of the resolution was one step in what could be a legal battle brought on by those who oppose the plan.

Continued page 5A

Two local groups unite for the good of all

Residents urged to help save county parks and Mother Earth

Comet staff report

For many generations it has been foretold the heartbeat of Mother Earth would come together as one voice. In the Native American Community this is becoming a reality as Native American drum groups invite local drum corps, school drum corps and other drummers to come together as one voice, beating in unity, a celebration and prayer for Mother Earth.

Drums will lift prayers and beat in unison throughout the U.S. and the world March 21 from 12 to 2 p.m. Part of this

event can be witnessed in Carroll County. The Eel River Tribe of Indiana's drummers, The Massassagans, and the Friends of Carroll County Parks are hosting a portion of "8,000 Drums Across the World" at Deer Creek Park. All area school drum corps and all drummers are invited to the park to play together as one common voice representing the "Heartbeat of Our Mother Earth."

The event is intended to bring awareness of the depletion of natural resources, the disappearance of open spaces,

and cultural unity and to highlight the potential loss of the county parks due to budget cuts. Available to all participants is an event tee shirt and a large overhead group photo.

The public is encouraged to attend and share in free hot dogs, chips and soft drinks. There is no admission fee but donations will be accepted. Proceeds will help with maintenance and upkeep of two county parks, Deer Creek and French Post. Contributions to support the event may be as little as spare pocket change. Shirts and photos will be avail-

able for a charge while supplies last.

All participating drummers and drum groups should be at Deer Creek Park by 10 a.m. to register for the unique cross-cultural event. All drums will begin to play at 12 noon all over the world to raise awareness of the need to preserve Our Mother Earth. The event is to remind everyone that solutions to the world's problems are up to all mankind regardless of race, creed or religion.

"We hope to have 100 drums, or more, of all types attend." Continued page 5A

New process for producing hydrogen fuel wins top competition award

Business owner hopes to build facility in Carroll County

Business owner Kurt Koehler took first place in a local business plan competition for a process that will make it easier to produce, store and transport hydrogen gas as an alternative fuel - an invention that could have a significant impact, given the skyrocketing cost of gasoline.

Koehler presented the process for producing hydrogen gas by adding water to an aluminum alloy to a panel of judges Feb. 8 at the Brandywine Complex, in Monticello. Koehler, whose company Al-GalCo plans to market the

product, said the invention has several applications, including in-home power generators, replacing lithium batteries, and even providing an alternative to gasoline and diesel fuel.

"North-central Indiana is the perfect place to implement this idea, because the process requires that the aluminum be recharged when the process is complete. Because the area has several wind generators, we would like to have a recharging center in Carroll County to utilize this resource," said Koehler, who is working with the Rural Electric Membership

Corporation (REMC) on the idea.

Koehler competed against several other inventors from White, Carroll and Cass counties, and in taking the top prize won \$1,000 and a shot at \$25,000 in a 14-county regional competition May 2.

"I think we won because we spent two-and-a-half years making this a very simple process," Koehler said. "And with gas prices over \$3 per gallon, the timing is just perfect."

Robbie Coffing of Monticello won the \$500 second-place prize with an idea for

rolled steel plant-support systems, and Delphi resident Thomas George took third place and \$250 with an idea for a card that tracks customer habits. Both will also have a shot in the final competition.

The competition was designed as an "elevator pitch," meaning contestants had two minutes to convince the judges their idea is viable.

Winners from this group will compete against winners from five other competitions held last month throughout north-central Indiana. They have Continued page 5A



Mailing label goes here

Carroll County Farm Bureau Incorporated Annual Meeting

March 18th, 2008, 6:00 p.m.

Canal Interpretive Center, 1030 N Washington Street, Delphi

Red, White, Blue, & YOU!

Speakers: Congressman Joe Donnelly & Senator Brandt Hershman

RSVP by March 12th - 765-564-2638

