

Council adopts LOIT

Property tax replacement effective Jan. 1

By Debbie Lowe
Staff writer

On a rainy Tuesday with little fanfare, Carroll County Council members adopted a total of .3 percent income tax to replace lost property tax revenue for the county general fund. Characteristic of months of discussion which led to the passing of two ordinances, one for each option chosen for adoption, only the vote for one was unanimous.

James Higgins of London Witte Group, hired to advise council members about the effects of the three options available to them for enactment, provided one last overview of each of the options and

the ramifications of the local option income tax (LOIT) before the vote.

A unanimous vote to adopt .10 percent for Option A was reached. The local plan developed by the council included Option A be used to guarantee county employee raises and health benefits in the future.

The state required doubling the taxation for the first year of enactment, making the income tax .20 percent until Sept. 30, 2009.

The additional tax income is to be held in a stabilization fund in the event the .10 percent income does not meet expectations at any time. It would then be used to supplement the income amount. The .10

percent income tax can never be reduced but may be increased in the future.

Option B, a .20 percent income tax, was adopted in a five-to-one vote. Option B was designed to be property tax relief to counteract the state imposed circuit breaker, which capped property tax revenue for counties.

Council member Ron Slavens voted against the tax. In a follow-up interview he said there was no guarantee from the state property owners would pay less tax.

"The state has promised relief for years," he said. "It has not happened for some of us."

"I am waiting for permanent and

actual property tax relief for people before putting another tax on them. This is a replacement tax, so there should be actual savings realized before adding another tax."

No action was taken on Option C, which would generate new tax money for public safety funding.

Higgins remarked Carroll County "looked at LOIT differently than any other county" in the state. He said other counties adopted the tax to produce additional revenue rather than the more conservative approach of "preserving what they have."

Council member Ann Brown said the council followed the recommendation of Larry DeBoer, a

professor of agricultural economics at Purdue University, who provided workshops and resource information throughout 2008 about LOIT.

"It was prudent that we took the time needed to educate ourselves before adopting the local option income tax," council president Nancy Cripe said after the meeting. "I am glad we were able to reach a decision that we all felt comfortable with. We don't always all agree, but we are all working for the betterment of Carroll County."

The next meeting will be Dec. 22 at 8:30 a.m. The proposed county personnel manual will be discussed with the adoption as the goal.

Best animal group



Jonella, Brooke and John Michael Beale won first place with their horse-drawn pony cart entitled "Beale Family going to grandma's house" at Saturday's Delphi Christmas Parade. See page 8A for more parade photos. Comet photo

Additional funds coming to DCSC

State tax board to approve money for faulty assessments

By Debbie Lowe
Staff writer

Good news about additional funding, from two different sources, was heard Monday night at the Delphi Community School Corporation Board of School Trustees meeting. Superintendent Ralph Walker announced full-day kindergarten would receive \$131,384 next year, which is an increase in funding from the current school year.

He also reported the state tax board agreed with testimony he provided last week about incorrect county property tax assessments which resulted in diminished revenue for the corporation. An award of an additional \$122,892 for the general fund and \$37,728 for the transportation fund is expected. Walker said the money would arrive in 2009.

Walker said the corporation had yet to receive the fall tax draw from the county, which put some of the fund balances in the negative numbers. He said

when the settlement arrives, the corporation would enjoy an approximate \$500,000 increase in cash reserves.

"We've had a pretty good year financially," he said.

Head football coach terminated in split vote

The board voted three-to-two to terminate the contract for Vince Burpo as head football coach. Board members Nick Cronk, Jim Garrison and Chris Nipple voted for the termination. Jerry Sparks and Bill Trueblood voted against the action. Melinda Rosseter was not present.

"I cannot live with the financial revenue (of the termination)," Sparks explained.

He said he supported the termination but not the money attached to the action due to one year remaining on Burpo's contract.

Trueblood said he "had a problem paying two coaches."

Burpo remains as a seventh-grade social studies teacher.

Other business

Farm ground recently

See DCSC page 5A

Alleged canal boat burner stands trial

By Debbie Lowe
Staff writer

The trial for Larry Farner, 62, Delphi, charged with arson in an Aug. 31 boat-burning incident on the grounds of the Wabash & Erie Canal Interpretive Center began Monday in Carroll Circuit Court. The trial is expected to last until Wednesday.



Farner

Testimony was given from chief fire investigator and Carroll County Sheriff's De-

partment Sgt. Dennis Randle Tuesday morning. A state police forensics expert testified Tuesday afternoon about igniters found in paint cans found at the crime scene.

While the jury of four females and eight males reviewed a forensic's report, the Delphi Community High School Choir sang Christmas songs on the second floor of

the courthouse rotunda.

The trial will resume Wednesday morning. The defense is expected to present its case Wednesday.

Logansport Memorial helps local food pantries

Comet staff report

Logansport Memorial Hospital delivered fresh fruit and cash donations to local food pantries in Cass and Carroll counties last Friday.

Brian Shockney, the hospital's president and CEO, said this donation is a way to help

communities face the challenges of the current economic downturn.

"Memorial Hospital and its employees are thankful for their jobs and the ability to work in an organization that cares for its employees as well as the community," Shockney said. "Our local

food pantries are feeling the pain as they have already served more people this year than last year."

The Salvation Army, Emmaus Mission Center, Walton Food Pantry, and the Carroll County Food Pantry in Delphi and Flora benefitted from the donation.

LMH and its employees partnered with SYSCO Foods, Inc. to make this effort possible. LMH Executive Leaders and SYSCO person-

nel made the deliveries to all the food pantries Friday afternoon. Employees of LMH also held a food drive during the week to collect provisions for the Our Daily Bread Food Pantry located at the East Main Street Church of God in Logansport.

"We trust that these gifts from our employees and hospital will make a difference in improving the health of those in need during this season of hope," said Kathy Shepler,

chairman of the LMH board of trustees.

"We are very pleased and happy to receive this wonderful gift of fruit and monetary donation," said Judy Ayres from the Food Pantry in Flora. "The sizable monetary donation will get us through the winter a lot easier."

Ayres said this and other donations received this month are greatly appreciated and will go far in meeting local needs.



Christmas giving

Logansport Memorial Hospital brought cases of apples, tangerines, and bananas, along with monetary gifts, to the Carroll County Food Pantry locations in Flora and Delphi last Friday. A crew delivered a total of about 120 cases to the two locations, partnering with SYSCO Foods. The two pantries also shared the fruit with churches and other community projects that help others during this Christmas season. Judy Ayres, pictured, received the fruit and check donation at the Flora location, and Bob Arney received them at the Delphi location. Both serve on the Food Pantry Board. LMH president and CEO Brian Shockney, pictured with Ayres, presented the checks. Comet photos by Jennifer Archibald



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