

Delphi and Flora to house ambulances in 2009

Brown blasts council...again

By Debbie Lowe
 Staff writer

Carroll County Commissioners, after a contentious discussion, decided to house the remaining two county ambulances in Delphi and Flora at the Monday night meeting. However the vote was split and came only after commissioner Bill Brown directed George Mears move to utilize the two locations. Brown then refused to provide a second, which forced commissioners' president Loren Hylton to enter into the vote to reach the conclusion. Brown then refused to vote with the other commissioners to approve the locations for the ambulances.

Commissioner-elect Pat Clawson

called housing the ambulances in Flora and Delphi a "no-brainer" and suggested it was time to plan to add another set of vehicle and staff by 2010.

"We really need to get back to three ambulances," he said. "We've got to get together on this."

"Get it done for this year and work on it for next year. We need to get focused on people in this community," he added.

Emergency medical director Mike Durr said it would take roughly \$200,000 to add another ambulance to the two left in service. The 2009 department appropriation is approximately \$673,000 down from roughly \$923,000 in 2008.

Brown lashed out at county council member Steve Ashby, the only council member in the audience. Brown said he could not sleep at night if he was one of the people who sat at the council table last fall to vote to fund only two ambulances for the county. He called the ambulance budget reductions "criminal."

Durr was granted permission to establish an EMS advisory group to brainstorm funding options for the department. Clawson volunteered to serve on the committee.

Highway superintendent named
 Paul Coats (pronounced Coats) was formally named county highway superintendent/engineer, effective Tuesday, Dec. 16. The employment contract was signed at the meeting. It was verified the state of Indiana

would supplement the county salary of \$38,120 another \$20,000 for the appropriately credentialed position. According to commissioners' attorney Barry Emerson, Coats will be a salaried employee with benefits, but will not qualify for overtime compensation.

Combined dispatch
 An inter-local agreement between Delphi and the county to join police and emergency dispatch services beginning Jan. 1 was endorsed. According to the agreement Delphi will pay \$50,000 per year to the county plus the cost of the transfer of telephone lines currently used by the city, the cost of transportation, installation and maintenance of the equipment presently used and monthly recurring costs of telephone lines during the term of the annual agreement. The

arrangement will automatically renew unless one party terminates it. Administration of dispatch will be vested with the E-911 coordinator, the commissioners and the county 911 advisory board.

Employee health insurance
 County insurance agent Cindy Finkenbinder reported 2008 health insurance claims were more than premiums paid for the service; \$1,289,423 to \$1,225,000. She said given that loss ratio, only one other insurance company would bid on the service contract.

"This is not a pretty picture," she said.

Finkenbinder said seven employees accounted for \$497,000 of the claims. She said it was not good business for a provider to take the group

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The changing look of county ambulance service

By Debbie Lowe
 Staff writer

Due to lack of funding the county ambulance service will look different in 2009 than it has in the past several years. Although the department budget was much larger in the previous four years, the county utilized surplus funds for some of those appropriations. Given the exhaustion of county surplus funds, funding for the Emergency Medical Service (EMS) was drastically reduced by the county council.

During the Dec. 1 commissioners meeting EMS director Mike Durr told county leaders money appropriated for 2009 would only fund two ambulances and 15 personnel - which include seven paramedics, seven emergency medical technicians, Durr and medical director Mark Estes.

Durr said Friday although the ambulance service will be running with fewer vehicles and personnel than in the past, the quality of service will not decline.

"Yes, we are hurt," he said. "But we will still respond like we have before."

"However, if both ambulances are outside of the county when a call comes in, there will be a longer wait," he added.

Durr said as of Friday, the department provided 1,830 runs in 2008. Approximately 597 of those did not involve transportation to a medical facility.

He said services will be reduced when 2009 begins. The department will no longer start intravenous lines in nursing homes or for diabetics and will no longer do blood draws for the jail. He said they would continue to provide transportation for residents who need to go to a doctor because there is no other provider in the county for that service. He said the patient pays the county for the transport service.

Durr said a committee was established last fall to explore the option of out-sourcing the service. He said it was concluded that option was not a viable one for Carroll County. He said an early proposal that he establish a company to provide the service did not seem reasonable after closer examination.

Durr said surrounding services have agreed to work in Carroll County. St. Joseph Hospital in Howard County will provide ambulance service to Burlington area residents in the event the Carroll County ambulance cannot. Monticello ambulance will respond if no other ambulance is available in the northern part of the county. Northeast Carroll County will be served by Cass County ambulance when they are available and the Rossville ambulance will respond whenever possible.

According to Durr, occupational standards are that EMS workers work 24-hour shifts. Although he is the head of the department and serves in an administrative capacity, he also serves as a paramedic. The flexible scheduling allows him to hold another like full-time position in Howard

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Christmas at the Canal



Diane Gee, pictured, demonstrated pottery making in front of the lime kiln exhibit at the "Old Fashioned Christmas at the Canal" on Sunday. Also shown is a window view from the 1844 Reed Case House as the horse-drawn carriage was awaiting its next passengers. Comet photos by Jennifer Archibald

May is elected to Land O'Lakes Ag Executive Council

Comet staff report

Angie May of Camden was elected recently to the Land O'Lakes, Inc. Ag Executive Council during the national cooperative's annual Ag Region Fall Meeting in Minneapolis, Minn.

She will represent 23 states in Region 4. Among her duties will be serving on the



May nominating committee which is responsible for identifying, recruiting and developing candidates to serve as elected leaders for the cooperative. Her term will expire in 2012.

May, along with her husband, Steve, runs a third-generation farm that combines more than 6,000 acres of corn and soybeans in four counties. May's primary role in the operation includes financial management, including grain marketing.

She is a graduate of Butler University, Indianapolis, with

a Bachelor of Arts degree and an MBA in international business management. After college she worked as a commercial banker for eight years.

May was nominated for the position by Excel Co-op Inc. general manager George W. Green. In his letter of nomination Green cited both her strong roots in the farming

community and the cooperative system. Her father and grandfather both served as president and board members with the local Co-op.

May and her husband and two children attend the Flora United Methodist Church. She also serves on the board of the Carroll County Community Foundation.

Two area high schools are named 'Best Buy' schools

Carroll Jr.-Sr. High School and Rossville Senior High School have been named 2008 "Best Buy" high schools by the Indiana Chamber of Commerce.

The Best Buy designation signifies which schools offer the highest educational achievement levels for the lowest amount of tax dollars.

The Indiana Chamber examined 349 Indiana public high schools and charter schools with the appropriate available data. Using ISTEP+ pass rates, ISTEP+ Pass+ rates, graduation rates, SAT participation rates and average composite scores, and Advanced Placement (AP) passing scores, the Chamber developed a total school performance index for each school.

This index, called the school's quality index, was then compared to each school's total revenues per

pupil to determine Best Buy schools. From that list, "honor roll" schools were selected based on each school's at-risk student/poverty rate, as measured by participation in the federal free/reduced lunch program.

For 2008, 132 public high schools were designated as a best buy for giving taxpayers the most value for their money.

Two methods determined this honor. A school was named a best buy if it had a quality index above the state median and revenues below the statewide median of \$9,313 per student. The second method was by having a quality index ranking that was 20% higher than the school's revenues.

In addition, from the best

buy group, 23 high schools were given the "honor roll" distinction for excelling academically despite having at-risk student demographics above the statewide median. For their exemplary efforts, the top five schools from the best buy and honor roll lists were then selected as "head of the class" members.

The 2008 "head of the class"

selections are: Batesville High School, Ripley County; Castle High School, Warrick County; Center Grove High School, Johnson County; Hamilton Southeastern High School, Hamilton County; Hauser Jr.-Sr. High School, Bartholomew County; Monroe Central Jr.-Sr. High School; Randolph County; North Central High

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Delphi determines trash pick-up fee

Comet staff report

After months of discussion and contemplation Delphi City Council members adopted a \$10 fee for trash removal for 2009 at a special Monday night meeting. Residents will be billed for the service on their water bills beginning the first of the year. The Solid Waste Ordinance

will be presented to the council for passage at a special meeting set for Dec. 22 at 5 p.m.

The consolidated dispatch inter-local agreement with the county was approved. Delphi Mayor Randy Strasser said dual telephone service will exist between Dec. 29 and Jan. 9. After Jan. 9, all emergency calls will be transferred

to the county.

The city will pay two police officers for vacation time they were unable to use before the end of the year.

Strasser said copies of the updated city personnel manual will be available at the next meeting.

Council member Brian Garrison extended an offer of help from the council to

clerk-treasurer Janice Roe and asked for suggestions on how council members could make her job easier. Roe said her office needed a part-time person at least to help with telephones and customers which would then allow her the opportunity to focus on other city duties. She said her goal was to have a more private office in which to work.



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