

REGION

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Hobson City mayor explains attorney hiring

BY DAN WHISENHUNT

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MCCRORY

Hobson City's mayor cleared up some of the confusion created Monday when the Town Council hired an attorney but would not provide information about how he would be paid and how much.

In a letter faxed to The Star Thursday, Mayor Alberta McCrory said she did not know how much the town will pay Jake Mathews. She said he has an agreement with the town that he will be paid a "fair

value" for his work based on comparable rates for attorneys in similar cities. What the fair rate would be, or how the cash-strapped town would pay for it, was not contained in the letter.

Mathews said Thursday the rate would be decided by the council.

"Our conversations, which we did not record,' centered more around faith, not the city's finances," McCrory wrote in part.

Attempts to reach McCrory since Monday have been unsuccessful.

She said other names of other attorneys were presented to the Town Council before it hired Mathews. Attorney work is considered a professional service exempt from the state bid law, according to Alabama League of Municipalities assistant general council Tracy Roberts.

Roberts said any payments to Mathews would have to be authorized by the council and would be a public record.

The town's clerk said Tuesday there is no formal contract with Mathews.

Roberts said many Alabama cities hire attorneys without contracts, but it can lead to problems down the road.

"We run into problems with cities where every council member will be calling that attorney every five minutes, creating a bill," Roberts said. "That's the problem with not having a contract."

Mathews said his intention is to help Hobson City.

"Hopefully we can work together," Mathews said.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

House votes to keep teens who misbehave off roads

MONTGOMERY — The Alabama House has voted to give teenagers a good reason to behave in school — if they don't, they will have to wait before they can drive.

The House voted 96-0 for a bill by Rep. Mike Curtis that sets up a point system for teenagers 13-years-old and older. The teenagers accumulate points if they are disciplined in school. The points range from one point for in-school suspension up to 40 points if a student is expelled from school.

Curtis said the points would be added up and a student would have to wait one week for every point accumulated when he or she became old enough for a learner's permit or driver's license. Curtis is a Democrat from Florence.

The bill now goes to the Senate for debate.

Riley urges lawmakers to pass ethics law rewrite

MONTGOMERY — Alabama Gov. Bob Riley has urged legislators to pass a bill that would dramatically rewrite Alabama's ethics law.

The governor, at a news conference Thursday, wouldn't rule out calling lawmakers back to Montgomery for a special session if they do not pass the proposed legislation in the current regular session that ends in mid-May.

Rep. Mac Gipson of Prattville and Sen. Ben Brooks of Mobile have introduced identical versions of the bill in the House and Senate.

The legislation requires lobbyists to fully disclose any and all gifts to legislators and other public officials, including meals and trips.

Riley said the conviction this week of state Rep. Sue Schmitz on federal fraud charges should be a wake-up call to lawmakers that the legislation is needed.

House votes to establish state boxing commission

MONTGOMERY — The Alabama House has passed a bill that would set up a commission to regulate boxing matches in the state.

The House voted 95-1 for the bill by Rep. Gerald Allen of Tuscaloosa that sets up an Alabama Boxing Commission. A similar bill passed the Senate last week, but to become law both houses must pass the same version.

Allen said the bill is needed so the state can attract major boxing events. Allen said Deontay Wilder of Tuscaloosa, who won the bronze medal in the heavyweight division at the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, had to go to Tennessee for his first professional fight.

Allen said it's odd that Alabama would not have a boxing commission since legendary heavyweight champ Joe Louis was born in Chambers County.

— From wire reports



Event aims to encourage saving



Photos by Bill Wilson/The Anniston Star

TOP LEFT: One example of an entrant's piggy bank in the contest. **TOP RIGHT:** Shirley Morris judges the piggy banks. **ABOVE:** Shelley Phillips parades her piggy bank during the event.

This little piggy ...

BY MEGAN NICHOLS

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Pigs wore everything from Mardi Gras masks to frothy pink tutus at the Anniston City Meeting Center Thursday night.

Area children created piggy banks, dressed them up and paraded them in front of friends and family in the Calhoun County Saves Piggy Bank Pageant.

Haley Holmes, an 8-year-old second grader at The Donoho School, made her piggy bank out of a milk bottle. "Low fat," she's quick to clarify.

The pig, which she named Hannah Pigtana, was bright pink with pierced ears, curly blonde hair and a shiny black skirt.

"I like Hannah Montana so I wanted her to look the same as her," Haley said.

Harrison Hughston, also a Donoho second-grader, went for a timely approach

when dressing up his pig.

"When I made it, I knew it was near Mardi Gras, so I told my mom, we need to make a Mardi Gras pig," he said. "I just thought that was a real good idea."

Harrison's pig was covered in sparkly purple cloth and draped in green Mardi Gras beads. Its black eyes peaked out from a Mardi Gras mask.

The 62 area kids who competed in the Piggy Bank Pageant likely had fun making their pigs, and organizers hope they learned something, too.

"We believe it's never too early to teach young people the value of saving," said Isaac Chappell, of Calhoun County Saves and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. "Especially with the economy like it is, these are important lessons to learn early."

Contact Staff Writer Megan Nichols at 235-3549.

Knox to get 'Cats' instead of 'Chicago'

BY DEIRDRE LONG

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The Knox Concert Series has announced a production change for the season finale.

The musical "Chicago," scheduled for April 21, has been canceled and replaced with the musical "Cats," which will be performed on March 31 at 7:30 p.m.

In an e-mail to Patricia Smith, chairwoman of the Knox Concert Series Board, a representative for the production company for "Chicago" wrote: "Due to the difficult decision by the producers, the 2008 tour was concluded at the end of October and therefore caused the re-date to April 21, 2009 to the union tour. The 2009 tour, this past week, has now determined that the feasibility of playing two markets in one week is not possible."

The same company is sending "Cats" as the replacement.

"We really appreciate the company's earnest effort to get us the show we contracted for," Smith said. "Now we have a show we're equally proud to present. Out of trials and tribulations and adversity come good things."

The \$60 ticket price for "Chicago" will remain the same for "Cats," but it should be noted that the date has changed, Smith said. She also said an agent for the production company has assured her "Chicago" will be available for the 2011 season, should they want it.

"We're delighted we're able to replace (Chicago) with something we've been trying to get in our hall for years," Smith said. "It makes replacement less problematic. We hoped it would come to us and now it has."

For more information or to buy tickets, call 237-3897 or e-mail knoxconcert@aol.com.

Ousted House member Schmitz still getting paid

ASSOCIATED PRESS

MONTGOMERY — Ousted state House member Sue Schmitz is still getting paid for a two-year college system job that was at the heart of her conviction in a federal fraud trial in Decatur.

But federal prosecutors say they will go after the money that Sue Schmitz is getting, including back pay ordered by a state court judge in Montgomery.

The 63-year-old Democrat from Toney was convicted on Monday for wrongly taking more than \$177,000 in salary from a sham job with a youth-mentoring program.

But she is still on the payroll because the Montgomery judge found that she was improperly fired in 2006 and must be put back on the payroll and get back pay. Two-year college system officials say they are appealing that order.



SCHMITZ

Science in action: Local students show off knowledge in Olympiad

BY MICHAEL A. BELL

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Samuel Garner's jaw dropped Saturday when he stared at a sea of science-loving students — 507 of them to be exact.

Sure, the 11-year-old and his fellow Donoho School teammates had studied practically every day after school to prepare for the Olympiad, an annual science marathon of events that brought 26 schools to Jacksonville High. But he still got intimidated.

"When you first get there, you see all those teams ... You think you just get there, you're not going to win," he said.

They did. The Donoho School placed first in the competition, ending a multi-year run of Kitty Stone Elemen-

tary coming out on top.

"We were yelling and holding up our finger, like No. 1," said Garner, the sixth-grader re-enacting the moment.

It was the culmination of a lot of hard work. To do well, the students had to be fairly proficient in everything science-related and understand how it applies to everyday life.

Some events Saturday included the egg-drop, building a wooden glider that would fly the farthest and straightest, and building a bridge that would withstand heavy weight. There were also written competitions that tested the students' knowledge of clouds, weather, cutting-edge technology, marine life and wildlife, among other topics.



Bill Wilson/The Anniston Star

Teammates Samuel Garner and Sara Mason of The Donoho School work on a science project. The Donoho School placed first in the annual Olympiad at Jacksonville High School.

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