

MARCH 2015



# Scotland County, NC

A newsletter for the Scotland County community

## Residents defend viability of Laurel Hill Community Center

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board hosted a drop in March 5 to gauge community support and seek input into what should be done with the the Laurel Hill Community Center, its future use and how it would be funded.

More than 100 people stopped by the Laurel Hill Community Center to express concern about the fate of the structure and to affirm that it still has a future.

Concerned citizens also brought with them a petition signed by more than 200 Laurel Hill residents asking that the community center be preserved for future use.

Although the gym remains in use, the auditorium and four classrooms are not.

Cost estimates to repair the main building range from \$50,000 to \$100,000.

Heating units, which are 16 years old, would eventually need to be replaced. When the entire building was in use, the cost of electric and gas was \$8,000 to \$9,000 a year.

Laurel Hill residents contend that the building has many years of use ahead of it. Those who attended the drop in said Laurel Hill is a close-knit community and residents there would prefer to engage in activities close to home rather than travel to Laurinburg.

Many who attended said they share a bond with the building because it's where they went to school and where their children and children's children attended school.

Attendees were asked to put their thoughts on paper answering such questions as the best use for the building and what programs might be offered at the site.

From that prompt, a variety of activities were listed, some of which included bingo nights, Laurelfest Committee planning, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts meetings, exercise for seniors, after school tutoring, church revivals, receptions, singings, family-oriented occasions and renting the building for social events.

During the drop-in, a dozen people volunteered to serve on the Citizen Volunteer Committee, which will work closely with the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board to develop a plan for the use of the building.

Public Buildings and Grounds Supervisor Mike McGirt will get cost estimates for repair categorized by priority and indicate short-term and long-term fixes.



***Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Chair Leigh Carter fielded questions from the crowd, all of whom were concerned about the future of Laurel Hill Community Center.***

## Legislators asked not to shift unfunded mandates to County

Unfunded mandates and the provision of State incentives for low wage jobs were among top concerns Commissioners shared with State legislators.

Commissioner representatives focused on five priority issues to discuss with State legislators during an informal hour-long meeting at the Emergency Operations Center March 13.

Unfunded mandates topped the list as it has every year since 2005.

County Manager Kevin Patterson conceded that the State is under enormous budgetary pressure and often, when there is a need to reduce the budget on the State level, the burden is pushed onto counties.

"The demand for the services still has to be provided so the counties have to make up the slack," Patterson said. "We're asking for your continued awareness of those shifts because all it does is shift from income taxes to property taxes."

Patterson added, "We ask that potential program changes have a fiscal note attached to them on what the impacts are to the actual counties!"

[see Incentives, page 3](#)

## School funding concept gets nod from respective boards

The Board of Commissioners and Board of Education at their respective March meetings approved the concept for a formula that would fund the schools through FY 2018.

According to the formula, the schools would receive \$10,826,612 for FY 2015/2016, an amount established by mediation. The formula would be reduced by 2.25 percent for the next two years to \$10,583,014 in FY 2016/2017 and \$10,344,897 in FY 2017/2018.

The proposed formula was recommended by the Liaison Committee made up of three Commissioners, Bob Davis, Whit Gibson and Carol McCall, and three Board of Education members, Pat Gates, Rev. Darrel Gibson and Jamie Sutherland.

Attorneys for both boards will be tasked with crafting a Memorandum of Agreement that will be presented to both boards for approval.

The Liaison Committee was formed as a result of a June 2014 mediation between the County and the Schools regarding local school current expense.

[see Liaison, page 4](#)

## Pratt sworn in as Register of Deeds



Clerk of Court Philip McRae, right, administers the oath of office to Register of Deeds Lindsay Page Pratt III on March 2 while Pratt's wife, Addie, holds *The Bible*.

The Board of Commissioners, acting on a recommendation from the Democratic Party, appointed Pratt to the position of Register of Deeds on February 27.

Pratt replaces Debra Holcomb, who retired from the position on March 1 after 11 years of service.

## County's health ranking remains unchanged

Scotland County made little progress from 2014 to 2015, according to the 2015 County Health Rankings. As in 2014, the County remained 98 in Health Outcomes compared to all 100 counties.

While the County improved in length of life from 96 in 2014 to 95 in 2015, it dropped two spots in quality of life from 95 to 97. It remained 99 in health factors and improved from 96 to 91 in health behaviors.

In the overall Health Outcomes Rank, Halifax County was 99 while Columbus County ranked 100.

The Health Rankings are a collaborative project of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute.

The rankings indicate conditions that impact how well and how long residents lives are connected to a multitude of factors beyond medical care with 30 factors ranked including smoking, high school graduation rates, income inequality, employment, physical inactivity, access to healthy foods and more.

The County Health Rankings show that where we live matters to our health and provide counties with an annual check-up of their health.

Nationally, rankings show that the healthiest counties in each state have higher college attendance, fewer preventable hospital stays and better access to parks and gyms. The report also looks at distribution in income and the links between income levels and health.

## County emergency response put to the test in crisis situation exercise

The North Carolina National Guard recruited first responders across the County to participate in an exercise on methods to address a disaster situation. The exercise was conducted throughout the week of March 9 with Laurinburg Maxton Airport as the focal point for the exercise.

EMS Director Roylin Hammond said the County was prepared to do all it could to help the National Guard utilize all the resources at its disposal.

"It was a pretty intense week," Hammond said. "Things were going on almost every day all over different parts of the County."

Hammond said Scotland County and North Carolina weren't the only county and State participating in the exercise. "There were a lot of counties participating and interaction was going on between the North Carolina and South Carolina National Guard and North Carolina and South Carolina Emergency Management."

The scenario dealt with an explosive hazard on an aircraft that was diverted from RDU to Laurinburg Maxton Airport. At that point, EMS and law enforcement responded in an attempt to resolve the situation as best they could.

When their expertise and capabilities were exhausted, the next layer of response kicked in — the SBI and bomb squad.

The exercise helped first responders realize how quickly their resources could be consumed. It also reinforced the notion that it is important to maintain services outside the County.

Hammond said, "You have to interact with other agencies outside and maintain services across the board. It's a very good exercise to go through as a decision maker and as a local official."



**Left to right, Mac Tucker, Corrie Patterson and Wayne Mace set up for decon operations.**



**SBI Bomb Squad Robot approaches a suspicious package.**



**Laurinburg Police Department SWAT Team approaches the aircraft**



**The SWAT Team searches for terrorist as passengers disembark from the aircraft.**

**Photos by Roylin Hammond, EMS, and Sandra Locky, EMS, retired.**

## Job incentives, unfunded mandates concerns for County officials



**Commissioners and State legislators discussed issues of importance to Scotland County. Left to right, Chairman Guy McCook, Representatives Garland Pierce and Ken Goodman, Senator Tom McInnis, Commissioner John Alford and County Manager Kevin Patterson.**

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Representative Ken Goodman, who attended the meeting with Senator Tom McInnis and Representative Garland Pierce, agreed. “We do not need more mandates pushed down on counties. For me, we cannot afford it in our part of the State.”

Chairman Guy McCook explained, “Our tax rate is up against a ceiling. Going any higher than we are now, even for good reason, would be next to impossible.”

McCook added, “Every time the State does something that affects our budget negatively, we’re shuffling dollars, taking money away from an existing program or service to try and fund that.”

In talking incentives, the State legislators along with McCook and Commissioners John Alford, Bob Davis and Betty Blue Gholston, agreed that rural counties like Scotland require support from the State but cannot compete with the two largest counties of Wake and Mecklenburg for economic incentives.

Patterson said rural counties are in need of State incentives for hiring an unskilled workforce even though the salaries and jobs created would not meet a State-required threshold for such incentives.

“We need to find jobs for those people who didn’t take advantage of our school system and who don’t have the skill sets to find jobs that earn \$30 an hour,” Patterson explained.

“We need jobs for people who have skills that can earn \$10 an hour, but those jobs are not here,” Patterson added, explaining that an incentive plan is needed for rural counties that attract companies that hire fewer than 200 people and create low-skill jobs.

Patterson and the Commissioners for the fifth consecutive year asked the legislators to consider reinstating the full 40 percent distribution to counties from the State education lottery fund, which has been cut to 20 percent.

Scotland County used to receive an \$800,000 lottery distribution for school capital needs. Now it receives \$400,000 with \$300,000 pledged as the principal for the Wagram School expansion.

The Commissioners and Patterson also asked the legislators for support in dealing with Medicaid. “The lack of Medicaid expansion to rural communities is an economic issue and a health-related issue,” McCook said. “You show up at the emergency room, you’re going to get treatment. Without reimbursement dollars for that portion of the County’s population, in a small community, we can’t expect those who pay to cover those who can’t. There are 1,000 employees at the hospital. If you look at health care as an industry, they’re the single largest economic driver in our community.”

## News of Note

### Severe weather preparedness promoted

EMS Director Roylin Hammond said it’s that time of year when residents should consider how prepared they are for severe weather. “We need to be very observant about the weather,” Hammond said. “We need to be that way all the time to be particularly conscious of that.” On March 4, Scotland County had its annual tornado drill, an exercise conducted by schools, businesses and industry. “Entities that have a severe weather plan have the opportunity to exercise that,” Hammond explained. “In general, there’s all kinds of severe weather so we need to be conscious of that.”

### Progress made with litter pick up

Public Buildings and Grounds Supervisor Mike McGirt said August 2014 the road crew to date picked up 978 bags of trash, 371 bags of recyclable materials, 196 tires and roughly six and quarter truckloads of bulky items. The road crew covered approximately 80.45 road miles, which equates to 160.9 walking miles.

### General McArthur’s featured in *Elite*

General McArthur’s was the subject of a four-page spread in the March 2015 edition of *Elite*, a modern military living magazine based in Fayetteville. Entitled “Farm Boy to General,” the article traces Colin McArthur’s history from boyhood to supervising his own mess hall in South Korea to restaurant proprietor.

### April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

DSS will host several upcoming events in recognition of Child Abuse Prevention month in April. The Child Welfare unit is diligently working toward activities to engage the local community in the effort to end child abuse. The goal is to bring recognition and partnership to the ongoing issue of child neglect and abuse. Here in our small community it is essential to not only identify critical needs, but to act upon these needs as a whole. Tentatively scheduled, the agency’s first event, the blue ribbon and balloon release, will be 1 p.m., April 1, at Scotland County DSS. During the following weeks of April, DSS has scheduled various days where its social workers will share their dedication and devote time to reaching out to local schools and community affiliations. DSS Fun Day is scheduled for Saturday, April 25, and will include a partnership with various organizations to come together to give back to valued community members. DSS welcomes and appreciates any and all community support and cordially invites the public to join in the recognition of and efforts to end child abuse.

## Post Scripts

Welcome to those employees who were hired since January 16: **Erick Dutch, Joshua Medlin, Rhonda Patterson** and **Sharon McIntyre**, E-911 Center.

## Womanless Beauty Pageant a successful United Way fundraiser



**EMS Director Roylin Hammond**

Four County employees of the masculine persuasion got in touch with their feminine sides for a good cause — to raise money for the United Way.

EMS Director Roylin Hammond, County Manager Kevin Patterson, Parks and Recreation Assistant Athletics Director Justin McNickle and Sheriff Ralph Kersey were among 15 men who donned gowns, baubles and beads for the first annual Womanless Beauty Pageant.

Dubbed *Dude Looks Like a Lady*, the 15 contestants vied for attention, catcalls and cash in their purses and pocketbooks as they participated in the evening wear and talent competition.

By evening's end, when all the purses were emptied, the 15 contestants had raised more than \$3,000. The entire event raised more than \$6,000 for United Way and the 19 agencies it serves.

The County contestants were in good company. The remaining 11 contestants were also well known in the community: Cliff Sessoms, City of Laurinburg Assistant Police Chief; Danny Gallagher, Scotland High School Soccer Coach; Zim Townsend, Scotland Health Care System Director of Imaging; Hugh Dixon, NC State Trooper; Stevan Hernandez, St.

Andrews University Head Soccer Coach; Duke Williams, City of Laurinburg Police Chief; Eric Byrd, Byrd Insurance; Dave Wells, WLNC Radio; Jay Toland, Scotland County Schools Chief Financial Officer; Randy Gibson, City of Laurinburg Fire Chief; and Terry Chavis, Laurinburg Police Department Captain.

Volunteers are already lining up for the 2016 pageant.



**County Manager Kevin Patterson**



**Parks and Recreation Assistant Athletic Director Justin McNickle, left, and Sheriff Ralph Kersey**



## the April birthday list

**4** Daniel McClellan (Jail); **6** Shekesha McPhatter (DSS); **9** Berta Adams (Jail); **10** Jason Butler (Sheriff); **11** James McLean (Transportation); **12** Mike Alford (Parks and Recreation) and Tiffany Elliott (DSS); **13** Danilo Dirico (EMS); **14** Kisse Phy (EMS) and William Edge (Sheriff); **15** Nicole Grant (DSS); **16** Erica Hall (Health), Tammy Cole (DSS) and Alan Stewart (Parks and Recreation); **18** April Snead (EMS); **20** Sandra McNeil (DSS); **21** Patricia Campbell (Public Buildings) and Michael Woods (Sheriff); **22** James Britt (Sheriff), Madeline Peele (DSS) and Annie Van Hoy (Library); **23** Roger Alford (Sheriff); **24** Marty Pate (Tax); **25** Sandra Miller (Jail); **27** Tina Clark (Health); **28** Sandy McCrimmon (Transportation) and Sharon English (Cooperative Extension); **29** Debra Sandlin (EMS).

## Litter Sweep on the way

Gather a team and collect trash the week of April 13 to April 18. The winning team will receive the King of the Mountain cash prize of \$200. Second place team will win \$100. There also are various small prizes for the first 100 people to register to participate.

Participating teams can drop off their bags of trash at any of the five recycling centers by 3 p.m. Saturday, April 18. Be sure to notify the onsite volunteer of the number of bags collected.

Recycling centers include Stewartville South, Williamson/Livingston Quarters, Sneads Grove, Wagram and Palmer Road (Wednesday and Saturday only).

Vests, gloves and trash bags are available for pick up at the Chamber of Commerce on Atkinson Street between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday to Thursday, and 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Friday.

## Our condolences to ...

**Robby Hall**, former DSS Director, on the February 25 passing of his father, Jimmy Robert Hall.

## Liaison members outline school funding concept

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"It's a step in the right direction," said Chairman Guy McCook said of the funding concept. "We want to provide our schools with everything they need to educate our kids at the highest level."

McCook added, "We've done an extraordinary job providing funding for our school system, and it's come to the point where we really have to make some hard decisions about allocating resources within our community, including educating our kids."

He added, "We have to buy fire trucks. We have to buy ambulances. We have to make sure all those things are available to our community."

McCook said, "So we're asking the school system to work with us a little bit to balance those priorities and help us meet those obligations in the community."

The Liaison Committee also agreed to continue to meet in order to keep lines of communication open and to ensure goodwill between both boards.