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## Photo exhibits explores historic events in Neshoba

By Mark Randall

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County historian Robert Lee Long wasn't born yet when the murder of three civil rights workers who were killed in Neshoba County, Mississippi made national news in 1964. But as a native Mississippian, he grew up knowing about those tragic events.

Although it wasn't mentioned in the history textbooks when he was in school because it was too recent and still too raw, Long said the events that took place in the summer of 1964 during the civil rights movement was something that adults still whispered about.

"I wasn't born until 1965," Long said. "But I knew about the story because it was part of our history and our heritage. My grandfather was a Methodist minister during the civil rights movement. My grandmother marched with Coretta Scott King. I remember a church that was burned - not once, but twice - in my native Madison County. I remember the Klan having road blocks and my mother keeping her window tightly rolled up. So as a Mississippian, I grew up with a very different perspective."

Long is hoping that two new photo exhibits which open this week at the DeSoto County Museum and the DeSoto County Arts Council gallery that chronicle those murders and the Freedom Summer of 1964, will get people talking once again about race and civil rights, and how we can still learn from the events in 1964.

"We thought with all that has been going on in the last year, that this exhibit would be ideal to really recognize what's happening with all that has gone on recently, and to learn from the past," Long said. "Mississippi has a unique part in America's ongoing struggle with civil rights. History is unblinkingly honest. And hopefully that's what people will take away from this."

"Stand Up! Mississippi Freedom Summer of 1964," which is on display at the DeSoto Arts Council gallery at 2645 Hwy. 51 in Hernando, is a collection of 15 of

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## Bids for Fire Station 5 construction in Southaven come in \$1 million less than projections

By Mark Randall

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Bids to build the city's long-planned fifth fire station in Southaven came in over one million dollars under cost projections, and officials expect to be able to break ground on the facility within the next 45 days.

Mayor Darren Musselwhite told the Board of Aldermen at its Feb. 16 meeting that the bids were a lot lower than expected.

"We have some good news," Musselwhite said. "The bids came in less than we were expecting. It's about a million dollars less than I had budgeted."

The city awarded the job to Legacy Construction Services of Rossville, Tenn. whose winning bid came in at \$3,871,938. The next lowest bidder was C&M Builders at \$4,163,000. Seven other bidders ranged from \$4,199,000 to \$4,540,000.

Musselwhite said the city has long recognized the need to build Fire Station 5 to service the extensive growth in the southeastern part of the city, but plans stalled in 2008 when the housing market crashed. The city reinstated the project in 2014 and has secured the land and the financing to go ahead and award the bid.

"This thing has been talked



about long before I came to work for the city," Musselwhite said. "This is one we have been waiting on a long time."

Fire Station 5 will be located on Star Landing Road adjacent to the big curve just west of Getwell Road. The facility was designed by A2H with a dual front design to accommodate future road changes with Star Landing and will take 400 days to complete.

Musselwhite said he is pleased the bids came in lower than expected. The city originally estimated the project to cost about \$5.5 million. He expects the final cost to be around \$4.5 million with additional fees added in.

"We do a pre-bid estimate and we go with that number," Musselwhite said. "We've gotten some bad news over the years. So we were being cautious and over-estimated on the high side in many ways. The bids came in several hundred thousand dollars less than we were expecting."

Fire Station 5 - along with the city's aggressive fire hydrant expansion plan and adoption of the most recent building codes - will help improve Southaven's already excellent "Class 3" fire rating. Currently there are only five cities in Mississippi with a higher fire rating than Southaven. Moving to a "Class 2" would make Southaven the best

rated fire department in Mississippi comparable to only Biloxi and Hattiesburg.

"We fully expect to drop a class rating or move up a rating going from a 3 to a 2 upon completion of this station," said Fire Chief Danny Scallions.

Musselwhite said having a better rating reduces property insurance costs - especially commercial rates - and will make Southaven even more attractive to businesses.

"I'm extremely proud of the outstanding men and women in our Fire Department, and this new facility will help them continue with the highest standard of excellence," Musselwhite said.

## Byhalia pipeline has 96 percent of right of way needed in DeSoto County

By Mark Randall

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While plans for the controversial Byhalia Pipeline remain stalled in Memphis, officials say they have acquired 96 percent of the necessary right of way needed for construction in DeSoto County.

The Byhalia Connection Pipeline is a 45 mile crude oil pipeline that will run from the Valero facility in Marshall County, Mississippi to the Valero refinery in Memphis. The pipeline cuts through about 39 miles in DeSoto County and a portion of Memphis.

Plains All American Pipeline spokesperson Katie Martin said the company has about 94 percent of the land right of way agreements that they need to build the pipeline for the whole route and are actively working to secure the remaining land in DeSoto County and Memphis.

"We are working on a few more in Memphis and some in DeSoto County," Martin said.

Martin said the company recently received two key permits from regulators needed

to begin construction.

Earlier this month, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers approved a Nationwide Permit 12 that gives the company a fast-track process of a single federal permit for water crossings instead of having to obtain individual permits for each and to produce the environmental impact statements.

The other key permit, from Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, granted the company a state-level water permit in November.

"Both of those are for construction," Martin said. "We are hoping to start in the next couple of months."

The pipeline project is still dealing with opposition from Memphis. Last week, Shelby County Commission delayed a vote which would have allowed the company to purchase two pieces of land. Memphis City Council's Public Works, Solid Waste and General Services Committee will consider a resolution to condemn the pipeline and urge MLGW not to give an easement to the company.

Neighborhood and environmental groups opposed

to the pipeline argue that the pipeline will pollute Memphis's drinking water and negatively impact struggling African American minority neighborhoods in south Memphis.

Martin said the company has put measures in place to protect the aquifer in Memphis against health risks and that they have designed the route so that the pipeline will operate responsibly and be a long-term economic benefit to the community.

"We have been working on design and safety plans for this pipeline and working within the communities meeting with officials and land owners since 2019," Martin said. "We have a very locally focused approach tailored to meet the concerns of residents in those counties where the pipeline is in."

Martin said they have had several open house meetings in DeSoto County where they have answered questions from residents and land owners about what to expect from the pipeline.

"I was at the open house meetings at the Landers Center and met a lot of residents," Martin said. "They asked some

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## Marcos' Pizza raises \$4,000 for Deputy Eldridge

By Mark Randall

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A fundraiser held by the owners of two local Marcos' Pizza locations raised nearly \$4,000 for the family of DeSoto County Sheriff's Department Deputy Austin Eldridge.

Owners Tim, Lee and Mark Smith donated 20 percent of all sales during a fundraiser held on Feb. 22 at the stores at Goodman and Getwell Roads located in Southaven and Alexander Road in Olive Branch.

The event raised \$3,695.97, which the owners bumped up to \$4,000 with an additional contribution.

"Most successful fundraiser we have had by far," said Lee Smith. "So proud of our community's efforts and patience with us to get all of the orders, and our employee's dedication and hard work that went in to both operations and the prep to get through it."

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