



In Our 137th Year

Serving Oconee County

The Oconee Enterprise

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THE HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER OF Dr. Lisa Marie Hockaday, Happy Birthday!

THURSDAY • 15 APRIL 2021



Birds in bliss, gardens thrive
Oconee The Magazine features gardens, birding
Special insert



Local woman turned 100

Stella Norton lived a full life. Lifestyles, **A6**



Wolverines win on senior night

Prince Avenue soccer teams top ACS. Sports, **B1**

Coming next week

We'll report on tennis regional tournament wins.

Inside

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Candidates qualify for Mayor, Post 1

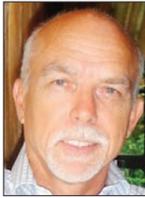
BY MICHAEL PROCHASKA

As of press time Tuesday—the penultimate day of qualifying for a Watkinsville special election—the mayoral seat and Post 1 were unopposed.



Brodrick

Acting Mayor Brian Brodrick qualified to run for mayor in the June 15 election, which was triggered by the abrupt resignation of former Mayor Bob Smith.



Garrett

Due to Brodrick relinquishing his Post 1 seat on the council, that seat became open. Earlier this month, Marvin Nunnally announced he would be running for that seat.

However, Nunnally dropped out of the race this week due to conflicts with his position at Athens Technical College.

On Monday, Oconee native Chuck Garrett, who is the asphalt sales manager at Pittman Construction, qualified for Post 1. “Unity is a big thing to me,” said Garrett. “You have to work together to get things accomplished.”

Garrett graduated from Oconee County High School in 1975 and moved to downtown Watkinsville in 2018. He’s been in the construction and paving industry for 45 years. Issues most important to him include

economic development, education, safety and traffic. He hopes that the city can partner with the state to improve public safety in Watkinsville.

He said helping people is at the core of public service.

“All my career, that’s what I felt like we are here to do—help people,” he said.

If any more candidates qualified on Wednesday, The Oconee Enterprise will have that information on its Facebook page. If no one else qualified, there will be no need for a June election. The unopposed candidates will win by default but will need to run again in November.



Reiny Hiss was a long-time volunteer for ACTS in Bogart. [File photo]

Hiss was backbone of local food pantry

BY JULIA FECHTER AND MICHAEL PROCHASKA

Reiny Hiss had a servant’s heart. The former chairman of Area Churches Together Serving, a local food and clothing pantry, died March 31 at the age of 90.

ACTS volunteer Larry Darnell said Reiny believed his calling was to help people in need.

“That’s what he did,” said Darnell. “He gave his life to it.”

Following the premature death of his father, Reiny and his siblings were raised by their grandparents in Wisconsin. Reiny met and married his wife, Sally, in Milwaukee, during a chance encounter on a train after an Ohio church retreat. They wed and enjoyed a long marriage of more than 70 years. At the age of 60, Reiny was a volunteer firefighter in North Carolina. When he and Sally moved to Bogart, Reiny became involved at ACTS and Watkinsville First United Methodist Church.

Joel Brodrick enjoyed regularly attending the 8:45 a.m. Sunday services with Reiny.

“He was the guy you could always count on being there for you...and he was always there to serve,” Brodrick said. “Anything that needed to be done, Reiny was there.”

ACTS co-chairman Randy Dawson said that when his parents had health issues, Reiny immediately gave his support.

Dawson and Dennis Clarke became co-chairmen of ACTS.

“It took two of us to fill Reiny’s shoes,” Dawson joked, before explaining that Reiny helped move

ACTS from the government annex building into its current location at East Thompson Street in Bogart.

Clarke praised Reiny’s “great focus” and commitment to “an expectation of doing the right thing by people.”

“He could really motivate people...and he was as nice as can be, but he would always correct you if you were doing something wrong,” Dawson said. “I liked knowing where I stood.”

Sally would often accompany her husband on the day their church was scheduled to be at ACTS.

Dawson said he learned from Reiny how to care for people and not take credit for it.

“That’s what he was so good at—working behind the scenes,” said Dawson. When Clarke was just starting as a volunteer, he quickly realized Reiny’s fortitude.

Reiny set the example of perseverance, because he was so passionate about his philanthropy and had high standards.

“In my opinion, his legacy for the time he lived here will be ACTS,” Dawson said. “No one even knew how many hours he put in...he was doing something for ACTS pretty much every day.”

Darnell noted that Reiny gave up his retirement to help feed those in need.

Reiny’s obituary last week asked citizens to consider making a donation to ACTS.

“We’re going to miss him,” said Darnell. “The whole community is going to miss him.”



There will be multiple flyovers around Ga. 316 later in the decade. [File photo]

Ga. 316 flyovers and other road work planned in 2020s

BY JULIA FECHTER AND MICHAEL PROCHASKA

By 2027, almost every grade crossing at Ga. 316 will be bridged.

The Georgia Department of Transportation has bundled multiple highway projects for construction between 2024-2027, according to Oconee Board of Commissioners Chairman John Daniell.

A full interchange, with flyover bridge access and on and off-ramps, will be added at the Oconee Connector. There will also be flyover bridges for Virgil Langford and Jimmy Daniell roads.

An interchange will be placed at the Dials Mill and Dials Mill Extension of Ga. 316 between 2024-2025.

Subsequently, GDOT will build

flyovers at 316’s intersections with McNutt Creek Road in 2026, Mars Hill road in 2027 and Julian Drive in 2028.

In other news, engineering is underway on two roundabouts. One will be at the intersection of Hog Mountain and Snows Mill/Rocky Branch roads. The other will be at the junction of Hog Mountain and Malcom Bridge /Ray’s Church roads.

There will be a U-turn lane just past the parent entrance to Malcom Bridge Middle School. Oconee Public Works Director Jody Woodall explained that there will also be a right-turn lane to the parent entrance of the school to be built over the summer.

Daniell said the intersection of Lavista Road and Macon Highway in front of Presbyterian

Village of Athens is under review for improvements.

Also, the Barber Creek Clotfelter Road Bridge will be demolished and rebuilt next summer. The North High Shoals bridge may be let in the fall of 2022. Daniell said there will be detours for both of those projects.

GDOT recently published a legal ad that it has approved design work for improvements to 6.4 miles on Ga. 24/129 from just north of the Apalachee River to Astondale Road. The project proposes to widen and reconstruct the existing two-lane roadway into a four-lane roadway with a 24-foot raised median with rural shoulders. Off-site detours will not be used, but several local side roads will require the use of off-site detours during construction for no more than 30 days.



A forthcoming Dollar General in downtown Bishop will have rustic and historic aesthetic, according to the concept plans. [Submitted rendering]

Bishop approves Dollar General

Mayor undercounts citizen opposition

BY MICHAEL PROCHASKA

Speaking about a proposed Dollar General off High Shoals Road, Bishop Mayor Johnny Pritchett said he “hadn’t heard anybody who lives in Bishop who’s really opposed to it.”

Another council member also said that everyone he spoke to in the community was in favor of it. However, while the town council meeting streamed live on Monday, dozens of people expressed strong opposition.

Classic City Clydesdales owners Mark and Shannon Martin have started a petition on change.org against the dollar store.

The Martins live several miles from downtown Bishop outside the town limits. Hedgerow Farm owner Lisa Douglas, who lives near but not within the town limits, has also expressed concerns about the precedent it will set with future development in the rural south side of the county.

“The plan of that company is to saturate once they get in an area,”

she said, adding that many residents of Townside, which is in the town limits, are against this type of development.

On Monday, the council approved an annexation and rezone for the store to be located just down the road from the former Golden Pantry, which burned down last year. Golden Pantry has submitted site plans with the county to rebuild its store in the near future.

Only two acres that was annexed was rezoned B-1. The remainder of the property, which is 27.78 acres, remains agricultural zoning.

Property owner Ezekiel R. Lambert said he will work hand-in-hand with the town of Bishop regarding the future of that property. He said that for more than a decade, he’s been unsuccessful with the county government on a myriad of land-use ideas, ranging from light manufacturer to commercial to residential.

The red tape he encountered with the Oconee Planning Department led him to request an annexation so that he could bypass the county and work exclusively with the town of Bishop.

“They got what they deserve,” he said, speaking about county officials. “It will be an exclusive partnership to make Bishop a special place... I think Oconee dropped the ball.”

The town council will still need to approve a business license and site plans, but representatives of the 8,960-square-foot Dollar General have already showed the council architectural renderings of a store that resembles an old-fashioned general store. Pritchett said the building will fit with the historical character of the town.

The new business will create up to 10 new full-time jobs and provide an increase in the tax base.

In addition to property tax, the company expects the retail store to generate over \$80,000 in sales tax receipts annually.

“[It] will be able to capture a large share of the daily shopping needs of the citizens, rather than those citizens leaving the community to shop at establishments located in surrounding towns,” according to the applicant’s rezone analysis.

SEE DOLLAR STORE PAGE A3

This issue was mailed Wednesday, April 14 from Watkinsville and Athens, GA. Please inform your post office if it arrives late.

