

INSIDE THIS WEEK

- Washington-Wilkes chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution is chartered. Next meeting is October 22. See page 3A.
- Dr. Scott Lind states the facts during Breast Cancer Awareness Month. His informative article is on page 5A.
- The Tigers are preparing for Lincoln County. See page 8A.

The News-Reporter

Serving Wilkes County since 1896



www.news-reporter.com

Vol. LXXXVIII, No. 42

Washington, Georgia • Publication No. 387-580 • 1 Section, 16 Pages • Thursday, October 15, 2009

Reassessment, data entry sure to delay Wilkes County tax bills past new year

It is a virtual certainty that Wilkes County taxpayers won't see a tax bill for their 2009 taxes before the end of the year. They may see their assessment notices as early as sometime in November but the time required to allow for appeals will prevent the

issuance of actual tax bills before the end of December.

In summarizing the current situation for the Wilkes County Board of Commissioners at their regular October meeting, Bill Steed, chairman of the Board of Tax Assessors

explained that the county has been under a court order to reassess all the residential properties for the first time since about 1992. Because of that, he said, there was an enormous amount of information that changed and all of that must be entered into

the system before notices can go out.

"We went statewide to try to get help to do the data entry," Steed said, "and we got only two people." He said that Ramona Powell and another qualified tax appraiser have been working long and extended hours. "They have a tremendous amount of the data entry done," Steed continued, "but it's going to be a month or maybe more before that have it all completed."

Steed went on to explain that at the beginning of the process, it was estimated that around 30 percent of the properties in the system would need some kind of update. It turned out that 94 percent are having to be updated "because over the years, people have taken houses down, put houses up, remodeled houses, and added things to properties that were not reported." All of that information has to be entered into the system before new assessment notices can be sent.

Once the assessment notices are sent, property owners have 45 days in which to appeal. Those appeals must then be settled until no more than three percent remain. Only then will the state consider approving the tax digest and only after the state grants approval may the actual tax bills be issued.

Commissioners also approved the county's Service Delivery Strategy update which determines how the various services and programs are funded and provided by the county and its three municipalities. The 10-year strategy is required by the state and helps to prevent duplication of services and to divide support of certain services among the governments.

"After quite a bit of discussion," County Administrator David Tyler reported, "the primary services that needed to be addressed for changes in this update were tourism, the Kettle Creek Battlefield, the Downtown Development Authority, veterans services, economic development, Family Connection, the Senior Center, and the Payroll Development Authority." Each one of those was addressed as to funding and other specifics.

The commissioners approved the Service Delivery Strategy which will in turn be presented for approval by the cities of Washington, Tignall, and Rayle.

All of the commissioners, Div-



Children's art activities will be a big part of the Washington-Wilkes Arts Foundation's Fall ArtFest 2009 set for November 7-8.

Councilman gets health insurance after mayor breaks a 3-3 split vote

By KIP BURKE
news editor

With Mayor Willie Burns breaking a tie vote, the Washington City Council has agreed to make city employee health insurance available to serving city councilmen at taxpayer expense.

In Monday night's regular meeting, Councilman Nathaniel Cullars finally succeeded in pushing through

the proposal that he had been trying to get for months, allowing city councilmen to be covered, at taxpayer expense, under the city's health insurance for full-time employees.

Councilmen Pamela Eaton, Ed Pope Jr., and Ames Barnett voted against the proposal. Rev. G.L. Avery, although he said he did not intend to get the insurance, voted for it, as did Maceo Mahoney. With the

council tied 3-3, Mayor Burns voted for Cullars' motion, passing it.

The city leaders also voted to accept the draft Service Delivery Strategy by which the county and city governments determine which entity pays for which service, and which keeps taxpayers from paying for services twice. Leaders from Washington, Wilkes County, Rayle, and Tignall have met for several months to develop of the comprehensive strategy document.

The strategy was to have been complete by June 2009 to be submitted with the county's comprehensive plan, but the deadline was extended. The revised plan clarifies several issues that have become contentious between city and county, including aspects of the Payroll Development Authority, Tourism, Kettle Creek Battlefield, the senior center, Downtown Development Authority, and veterans' services. It also renegotiated how the city is paid for Washington Fire Department's response to fires in the county.

In other action, the council approved two resolutions, one concerning MEAG combined cycle payments and one amending the MEAG generation trust agreement.

The council also approved requests from the Washington-Wilkes Arts Foundation to use part of The Square for the Fall ArtFest November 7-8, and from Wilkes Ministers United for a Veterans' Day observance November 11.

At the request of Main Street Director David Jenkins, the council also approved a resolution to apply for a gateway beautification grant.

At the opening of the meeting, Tourism Director Ashley Barnett said that the annual Mule Day event was a big success, and thanked city workers for their hard work in preparing Callaway Plantation for the event.



Old engines and tractors, as well as shady picnic tables, were a big attraction at Mule Day.

Mule Day festival big success with more mules, more locals

Saturday's 29th annual Mule Day Southern Heritage Festival was a big success, organizers say, with more mules, more local participants, and more exhibitors than in years past.

"People have been stopping me all day and saying how much they enjoyed Mule Day this year," organizer Carol Cartledge said. "I was very pleased at how many local participants we had, and at how many people came out to enjoy the events."

Along with the mules, the event showcased some 45 primitive craft demonstrators and 55 vendors, Tourism Director Ashley Barnett said. "Carol Cartledge did a great job and worked so hard at chairing the event this year," she said. "With about 2,000 people in attendance, we are so thankful to those who came out for the event. We had so many travel from all over to attend Mule Day from Tennessee, South Carolina, west and south Georgia, North Carolina, and so many other places."

In the day's mule events, Smith Wilson's 13-year-old Belgian mule Kit took Grand Champion in Singles, and Kit, paired with the blond Belgian mule Bird, took the Grand Champion trophy in Pairs. In awarding the trophies, Judge Jack Logan of Eatonton said that Kit and Bird were "the finest pair of mules in the state."

"We had an outstanding selection of mules to compete," said James Callaway. "I'm very pleased at the turnout."

Adding to the historic feel of the day were the Confederate encampment complete with regular cannon fire, and some 40 costumed docents from the United Daughters of the Confederacy. "David and Debra Denard really added a great historic touch to the day bringing to life the period of the War Between the States," Cartledge said.

Displays of antique tractors and old traction engines were popular, too, along with several antique and classic autos. Old-time craft demonstrators showed visitors how their

ancestors made soap, made chairs, and a dozen other primitive crafts. "Thank you to Ricky Callaway for his leadership on bringing back the antique machinery and tractors," Barnett said, "and thank you to Tammy Bryngelson for lining up First United Methodist Church for the children's games. The kids had a great time with all the games."

It took a community effort of dozens of local citizens to pull it off, Barnett said. "Mule Day is one of the great events that Washington-Wilkes has, and we are so thankful to all those who made it possible."



Lady Tigers win region championship, advance to round two in playoffs

After beating the GMC Bulldogs 3-0 last Thursday for their first-ever fast-pitch region championship, the Washington-Wilkes Lady Tiger softball team cruised past Echols County 5-0 and 9-1 in back-to-back games of a round one doubleheader at Ashley Park on Tuesday. In round two, W-W will host the Bryan County Redskins who are ranked No. 9 in the state

with an overall record of 26-8. The playoff will begin with a doubleheader on Friday, October 16, followed by a third game on Saturday, if necessary. The winner of the series will advance to the Elite Eight Tournament for the state championship to be held in Columbus October 22-24. More details on the region championship are reported on page 8A.

'Exceptional' artists to fill bill at Fall ArtFest set on Nov. 7-8

Preparations for the Washington-Wilkes Arts Foundation's Fall ArtFest 2009 are approaching completion, said organizer Debbie Wells, with both favorite artists returning and new artists to be displaying their work for the first time.

"Artists this year are exceptional," she said, "with many past favorites as well as artists who have heard about Washington and are showing for the first time. ArtFest is sure to be an exciting weekend for all of us as we meet the artists and enjoy their talent."

As in years past, the ArtFest will feature free children's activities Saturday at the Court Street Livery from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. "Polly Fievet and her host of volunteers are preparing to make this a memorable time for our children with seven stations where kids can create art. We need people in the community to save paper towel rolls and Pringles cans for the next three weeks and drop them by Fievet Pharmacy," Wells said. "We are going to use them for one of the art projects."

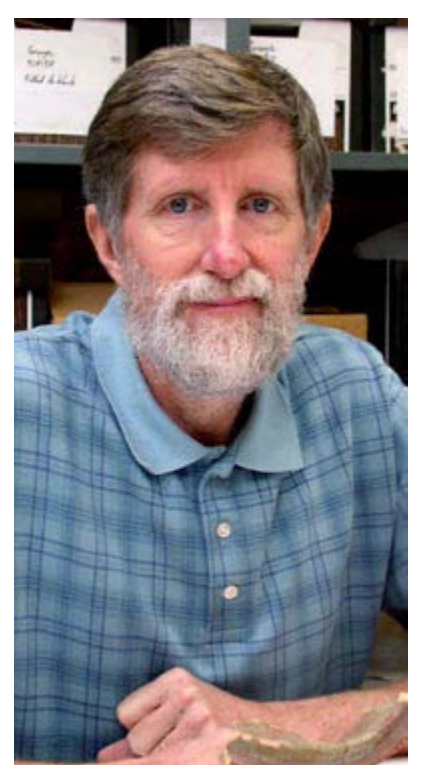
In addition to returning artists like Lincolnton's folk artist Leonard Jones, photographer Sally Ross, returning favorites expected from previous ArtFests include painter Anne Ray, photographer John Weber, and jewelry artist Ellen Cowne.

In addition to returning artists, the show will feature art from inmates at the Wilkes Pre-release Center, Wells said. "We will have a large exhibit of 'prison art' this year from the early release center. You will not believe what these men have done and the materials they have used to create their art! It is simply amazing."

Washington Wilkes Arts Founda-

tion members are invited to a Saturday get-together at Holly Court Inn to meet the artists and sample the culinary creations of Chef Aaron Rothman, Wells said. "This will be a special evening."

Anyone wishing to join the Washington Wilkes Arts Foundation can do so, she said, by sending a check to P.O. Box 428 Washington. "Beginning levels are \$35 single membership and \$60 for a family, but we encourage contributing at the most generous level possible. This membership entitles our members to participate in the satisfying work of promoting the arts in our area, particularly as it relates to children."



GRESHAM

Archaeologist set to present program on first Georgia people

Native American archeology expert Tom Gresham will present a program on "Native American Archeology in Georgia" Sunday afternoon, November 1, at the Washington Wilkes Historical Foundation meeting at the Robert Toombs House from 2:30 until 4:30 p.m.

Thomas H. Gresham, president of Southeastern Archeological Services, Inc., was born and reared in Aiken, South Carolina, where he collected arrowheads with his parents from a very early age. He pursued his hobby and received bachelor's and master's degrees in anthropology (emphasis in archeology) from the University of Georgia. He conducted his graduate work on cave sites in northern Somalia.

In 1983 he co-founded Southeastern Archeological Services, a consulting firm based in Athens, and now serves as company president. He is also president of his county's historical society and serves as an officer for the Society for Georgia Archaeology.

In 1993 Gresham was appointed to Georgia's Council on American Indian Concerns, where he still serves as the archeologist for that Council. He has been active in archaeological site and Indian burial protection issues. He lives with his wife and three dogs in rural Oglethorpe County.