

The News-Reporter

Serving Wilkes County since 1896

Vol. LXXXVIII, No. 48 Washington, Georgia • Publication No. 387-580 • 2 Sections, 16 Pages • November 26, 2009

www.
news-
reporter
.com



"We give thanks..."

Even in tough times, families are gathering around Thanksgiving tables that are still filled with the bounty of our efforts and of God's grace, and once again we're aware of how richly blessed we are - with friends, family, home, and hearth. Happy Thanksgiving!

City's new Urban Redevelopment Authority gets up to speed on two assigned projects

By KIP BURKE
news editor

The City of Washington's Urban Redevelopment Authority met last Wednesday to hear presentations on both of the major projects that the newly-minted authority will tackle for the city.

Chairman Charles Jackson, vice chairman Henry Harris, and secretary-treasurer Toombs McLendon IV met with City Attorney Barry Fleming and authority Executive Director David Jenkins and heard from representatives of Stevenson & Palmer Engineering, Gourmet Services Inc., and Carolina Hotel Development.

At the start of the meeting, Jenkins reported to authority members that the new authority is now registered with the Georgia Secretary of State and with the Department of Com-

munity Affairs, and that members are registered for redevelopment authority training in January. "This makes us all official," he said.

Rick Clegg with Stephenson and Palmer Engineering gave the members an update on the status of Anderson's Service Station, a dilapidated business on Whitehall Street, one of the city's gateways. The petroleum assessment has been going on for some two years, Clegg said, and Phase 1 and Phase 2 EPA testing has shown no contamination in groundwater, although there was some lead-based paint and asbestos found in the structure. The assessment found three underground fuel storage tanks, plus two oil/water separators.

Clegg said that his company's recommendation is to remove the lead paint and asbestos from the structure, and all the underground tanks. The

presentation ended with a consensus of actions that the authority needed to take on the project over the next year.

Authority members heard Ray McClendon, CEO of Gourmet Services, Inc., and Al Wall of Carolina Hotel Developers make a presentation on the Pope Center hotel project. Authority members had been given a feasibility study and a project pro forma before the meeting. Both McClendon and Wall said that the feasibility study and the numbers in the pro forma show that Washington could support a limited-service 75-room hotel of the Country Inn and Suites brand. If the feasibility study is correct, a projected 65 percent room occupancy rate would run the hotel at a profit, enough to offset the \$6 million debt the city would have to incur to build the hotel.

To move the project further along, City Attorney Fleming said, the new authority had to get comfortable with the facts of the hotel project, bring in bond and tax counsel to develop the funding, and then to decide whether or not to do the project with the city council's authorization.

The Urban Redevelopment Authority will meet again Thursday, December 17, at 10:30 a.m. in the city council chambers at City Hall.

Reserve seats now for Legislative Breakfast set for Thursday, Dec. 3 at The Pope Center

The Washington-Wilkes Chamber of Commerce is taking reservations now for next Thursday's annual Wilkes County Legislative Breakfast, an opportunity for citizens to speak their minds directly to their state and U.S. representatives.

The breakfast is next Thursday morning, December 3, at 8 a.m. at The Pope Center on Lexington Avenue in Washington.

In the annual breakfast sponsored by the Georgia Family Connection, local residents get a briefing on local, state, and national legislative activities from their elected representatives, and ask questions of the representatives.

At last year's breakfast, Rep. Mickey Channell and State Sen. Bill Jackson told the breakfast crowd that deep budget cuts would be the order of the day, and this year's message is not expected to be better. Last year, field representatives Nancy Bobbitt from Sen. Johnny Isakson's office, Jennifer Hayes from the office of Sen. Saxby Chambliss, and Regan Smith from the office of U.S. Rep. Paul Broun Jr., represented their respective offices, and are expected to return this year.

In addition to reports from legislators, a report is expected from the Georgia Family Connection, which sponsors the breakfast.

The breakfast at the Third Shiloh Mission Center will be catered by Alfred's on the Square and is sponsored by the Washington-Wilkes Chamber of Commerce, the Wilkes County Community Partnership, and the Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia.

The cost will be \$10 per person and reservations can be made by leaving a message at the Washington-Wilkes Chamber of Commerce at 706-678-2013 or by e-mail at chamber@washingtonwilkes.org with your name, the number attending, and a telephone number.

Snowy weekend shopping in Washington next month is the 'buzz all over Georgia'

It's going to snow, snow, snow in Washington's shopping district every Friday and Saturday night in December, and everybody's talking about it - even Christmas shoppers who'll travel from out of town for the experience.

"The snow is the buzz all over Georgia!" said Tourism Director Ashley Barnett. "Some of our stores will be staying open until 8 p.m. on the weekends, so in between the snow falling, you can get your Christmas shopping done. I am so excited!"

Word is getting out via television ads and rack cards, she said. "The snow commercials on WJBF News Channel 6 will start airing this week," she said. "These commercials go all over the CSRA, more than 25 counties plus the Aiken and North Augusta areas."

Thanks to technology developed by the Disney Corporation for their Celebration, Florida town square, and brought to Washington by Bradley Barber, a fresh snowfall will descend on The Square every hour at 6, 7, and 8 p.m. on weekend nights in December. "I saw this same process in Florida while visiting my parents a few years ago," Barber said. "Katherine and I thought it was very special and festive so we had the thought of trying it here."

The material used, "dry snow," is the result of a chemical process very similar to a fog machine, Barnett said. "The result is beautiful flurries flying through the night air, staying aloft like real snow and falling slowly to the ground, where it will evaporate after five to seven minutes. There's no clean-up, it's non-toxic, and it's not slippery at all."

With help from several citizens, Barber has mounted the snow machines on each of 10 light poles that



Bradley Barber prepares one of the snow machines for a test before the Candlelight Shopping event on Tuesday. The 10 machines should fill the air with snowfall and Christmas music during Washington's Christmas shopping season.

surround the inner perimeter of the Square's green space. "Kurt Wolfe designed the boxes that the snow machines are housed in, and Ronnie Cofer of Fareway Building Supply donated them. Lamont Lannaie donated his bucket lift for the whole month of December to keep the snow machines up," Barnett said. "We couldn't have done it without them."

The Tourism Office will control the machines and the Christmas music that will play at low volume from each pole, she said. "The volume will be appropriate and not interfere with business, only enhance it," she said.

Snow for Christmas shopping is

not a one-time thing, Barber said. "We already have bigger plans for next year. We hope that this concept continues to grow every year and that it has a great positive effect on the business community on and around The Square."

Two sponsors, McDonald's of Washington and the Washington Little Theater Company, are making the snow possible, Barnett said. "And a big thank you to Bradley Barber and Old South Media for all of his hard work on the machines and organizing this great event. This will be an annual event that we hope locals and visitors will enjoy every December for their holiday season."

More testing set for local census jobs at Mary Willis Library

More testing is set for short-term census jobs that will be available this spring in Wilkes County as the U.S. Census Bureau gets ready for the 2010 count of every person in the United States.

Sessions for applications and testing are set at the Mary Willis Library. The dates are Thursday, December 3, at 5 p.m.; Wednesday, December 9, at 10 a.m.; and Tuesday, December 15, at 2 p.m. "All the test takers need to have with them is a drivers license and Social Security card or birth certificate," said Carl Kotz of the U.S. Census Bureau.

Kotz says that a good census count is essential to getting the most funding from state and federal sources. "To make that count, we need good people, and we're testing in Wilkes County this week. We'll be hiring 1,000 to 1,500 over these seven counties," Cox said, "and we're paying from \$9 an hour up, plus mileage."

The part-time and full-time temporary employees are needed immediately for short-term assignments in spring 2010. The government's web site, www.2010censusjobs.gov, says these short-term jobs "offer good pay, flexible hours, paid training, and reimbursement for authorized work-related expenses, such as mileage incurred while conducting census work. Best of all, census takers work right in their own communities."

The site says that census taker jobs are excellent for people who want to work part-time, those who are between jobs, or just about anyone who wants to earn extra money while performing an important service for their community.



Dr. Rosemary Caddell admires the first copies of a new historical coloring book with collaborators Ginny King, David Jenkins, Mayor Willie Burns, and Bruce Fitzgerald.

Students to get new coloring book focusing on historical downtown

Students in the third grade at Washington-Wilkes Primary School will soon be presented with a new historical coloring book that focuses on the history of downtown Washington.

Wilkes County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Rosemary Caddell was presented with the first copy of "The Washington-Wilkes Historical Coloring Book" by members of the Washington-Wilkes Historical Foundation committee that developed it.

"We hope that this coloring book will promote interest in the history of downtown Washington in our schools," said chairman Ginny King.

Each third grader in the Wilkes County school system will receive a copy. The coloring book includes 22 historic sites along with a walking map, a location map, a listing of

some prominent homes and buildings that are on the National Register of Historic Places, a crossword puzzle, a word search, and pictures of Native American artifacts on display at the Washington-Wilkes Historical Museum.

The coloring book was the collaborative effort of David Jenkins and Bruce Fitzgerald of the City of Washington Main Street program and a committee from the Washington-Wilkes Historical Foundation which included Ginny King, Sharon Vreeland, Tina M. Lewis, Deb Talley, Jane L. Bundy, and Robert M. Willingham Jr. The book was printed by Wilkes Publishing Co.

Other coloring books are planned to teach more local history. "Now that a prototype has rolled off the presses," King said, "future editions on other historic themes will be easier to create."

Tickets available for Ty Herndon benefit concert for Calli Nickels

Tickets are still available for a special concert by country star Ty Herndon to benefit Calli Nickels, a local teen who is being treated for a rare form of cancer.

Nashville's Herndon will be "Ty-

ing up Cancer for Calli" Thursday evening, December 3, at the Tignall gym. There will be a meet-and-greet with the country star at the home of Nobie Keener in Tignall at 6 p.m., and the concert starts at 7.

All the proceeds go to help the Nickels family deal with medical expenses.

Callaway Plantation celebrates holidays December 11, 12, 13

The annual Christmas at Callaway Plantation will be held Friday and Saturday, and Sunday, December 11, 12, and 13, at the plantation located five miles west of Washington on Highway 78.

The candlelight tour will be held on Friday, December 11, beginning at 4 p.m. and continuing until 8 p.m. Admission is \$4.00 for each person. Saturday hours are from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., at the same admission rate.

The houses in the complex will all be decorated for the occasion.

Visitors will be welcomed on Sunday, December 13, 1-5 p.m. free of charge with Christmas Tour of Homes tickets. Piano students of Ruth E. Harris will be providing music.

Tickets for the two-hour benefit concert are available at the Washington-Wilkes Chamber of Commerce, from Lavonda Tanner at Washington-Wilkes Elementary School, and at The Sandwich Shop. Tickets are \$10 for just the concert, and \$20 to also attend the meet-and-greet prior to the concert.

In the 1990s, Herndon had 17 singles on the *Billboard* Hot Country Songs charts, including three Number 1 songs - "What Mattered Most," "Living in a Moment" and "It Must Be Love" - and four additional Top Ten hits: "I Want My Goodbye Back," "Loved Too Much," "A Man Holding On (To a Woman Letting Go)" and "Hands of a Working Man."



Stephen's House feeds 80 families at Thanksgiving

Led by Bill Miladin (left), the Stephen's House food bank at the Washington Church of God passed out Thanksgiving dinner fixings to some 80 families Saturday. "It's a record day today," Miladin said. "This is the most we've ever had." The ministry usually supplements the food supply of some 50 to 60 families each month, he said. Volunteers, including Michael Folker (center) and Margie Burke, helped recipients carry boxes of food to their vehicles.