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Wednesday, March 29, 2006

Samson Council Meets

Jackie Hudson
Geneva Newspapers

Samson City Council met in regular session Tuesday night, March 21, amended and discussed the new personnel policy written by Greg Smith, a personnel attorney from Birmingham. One issue receiving extensive discussion was the installation of time clocks for city workers.

Mayor Clay King told the group, "I would like to make our changes and adopt it at the next meeting." The new policy will replace the old city personnel policy. One suggestion made by the mayor and approved by the council will be to have a time clock installed. "I recommend that we get a time clock... so they can punch in and out. I know there is going to be times when there are emergencies... such as with the police department," said the mayor. He added that in emergencies the police can write in the time and have the police chief initial the time the next day.

City Councilman Roger Baine also suggested that the city workers work comparable hours with city hall. He explained that if someone came in to city hall to pay to have their water turn on, they have to sometimes wait until the next day to start receiving the service.

The council agreed that the city workers' hours will be from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Monday through Thursday and from 7 a.m. to noon on Friday. King said that this should cut down on overtime. He explained that if someone pays to have their water turned on after 2 p.m. now someone has to come out and turn it on and they are paid overtime for the service.

The council also discussed letting the workers accumulate a week of overtime to carry over from year to year. Presently all sick leave and personal leave expires at the end of the year. The policy will lay on the table and the mayor encouraged the council to continue to look at the policy and will it be discussed again at the next board meeting on Tuesday, April 4.

The mayor told the council that Auburn Environmental Consulting and Testing offered to cut their sewer water test to \$98 and offered to sell the city two automatic samplers for \$1200. This would be almost half the price of what the city was looking at with their new company.

The council voted to rescind their vote from the last meeting and go with Auburn. The council voted to purchase a Blister Chuck Wagon for \$4532 from Craig Harrison to work on the softball fields and to use reading meters. This would save fuel. The vehicle will be paid half from the recreation department and half from the water department. The new policy concerning setting prices for copies of public records was approved at the meeting. They also approved expenditures of \$80,469.96 for the month of February.

The council hired Attorney Samson, see page 3A



Clearman Found Not Guilty

Special to Geneva Newspapers

A Geneva County jury deliberated less than an hour Wednesday before finding a Wicksburg motorist not guilty for a 2004 traffic fatality.

Hunter, 67, died from injuries sustained when he was struck June 14, 2004, by a 1999 Lincoln Navigator driven by Fred W. Clearman Jr., 37, of Hilltop Road in Wicksburg.

Clearman was charged with manslaughter three days after the accident and was released on a bond of

\$5,000.

During two days of testimony, prosecution witnesses from the Hartford Police Department and Alabama State Troopers detailed the limited sight distance and dim driving conditions at 8 p.m. the night Hunter was struck.

"I feel badly for the family of the victim," said Chief Assistant District Attorney Bill Filmore. "I tried to present the facts to the jury to show Clearman acted recklessly. The jury did not agree."

Filmore said during opening statements that Clear-

man acted recklessly when he was speeding on 3rd Avenue enroute to a construction job in Destin, Fla.

Hunter, a deacon and Sunday School teacher at Prosperity Missionary Baptist Church, was apparently walking from the church to a friend's home at the time of the accident.

Adiagram of the accident and photographs of paint chips indicated Clearman's sport utility vehicle hit Hunter in the center of 3rd Avenue. A hump where railroad tracks have been filled will cause a vehicle to shift to the left unless the steer-

The Debate Continues

Probate Judge Harry O. Adkison, Geneva Newspapers Inc. Editor Stephen Crews and WGEA News Director Doc Parker debated the issue of a new jail for Geneva County on Tuesday morning during a segment of "The Breakfast Club" on WGEA 1150AM. (Submitted Photograph)

Board Approves Change to Graduation Policy

Jackie Hudson
Geneva Newspapers

Several seniors attending Geneva County Schools will be happy with the actions of the Geneva County School Board during their regular meeting Thursday night, March 23, when the board voted three to one to allow all seniors to walk at graduation.

This controversy has been waging at many schools throughout the state mainly focusing on the state required graduation exam. The new policy adopted by the board Thursday night will allow all seniors to walk and participate in the graduation ceremony and other activities as long as they have completed all the local requirements. This will include passing all of their course requirements and meeting attendance requirements.

The seniors who have not passed the state's graduation exam will walk but will not receive a diploma. The board's action began with a petition from Slocomb High School signed by all of the seniors asking that their classmates be allowed to walk with them at graduation. Superintendent David Snell said the board received similar petitions from the other county schools.

Snell stressed that the seniors will only be allowed to participate if they have "done everything that we have required at the local level". Surveys show that the state's schools are pretty well split on allowing the students to participate who have not passed the exit exam. At previous meeting Snell said he called most of the local schools and they do allow the students to walk.

Voting for the change of policy were Mike Gillis, Warren Byrd and Sam Revels. Marcia Hatcher and Greg Trawick voted against the action.

The board approved the calendar for the year 2006-2007. Snell said the proposed calendar was put together by a panel made up of representatives from all of the schools. The new calendar included five more days with school beginning on August 10 and ending May 25. To make up for the additional days several of the intersessions have been cut. The fall break in October will be only two days, Christmas break will be twelve days, and the spring break in March will be five days.

The board approved the retroactive expenditure of purchasing a bus engine for nearly \$12,000. Board member Sam Revels pointed out that expenditures for something this expensive needed to be approved before purchasing the item. Snell said that he has already talked to the transportation department and new procedures will be installed.

Snell told the group that the county's career tech program will be evaluated by the state on March 28. He said, "We have some things we have to correct... to be in state compliance." He added that each school will probably have to add two classes in the special education department to be in compliance with state standards. The next board meeting is set for Thursday, April 13, at 6 p.m. at the Geneva County Courthouse.

Stephen Crews
Geneva Newspapers

Buddy Calhoun was sentenced to 21 years in the state penitentiary last week after being convicted in February on drug charges.

Calhoun's tough sentence was likely a result of his denial that the drugs in question were his. The second reason was numerous prior arrests and convictions for drug charges.

The circuit court trial led to the conviction of Buddy Calhoun for possession of a controlled substance. The case didn't stop there as his wife, Tonia Calhoun, testified that the controlled substance in question didn't be-



Buddy Calhoun

long to Buddy but instead belonged to her. This led to her arrest following the trial.

The case initially began on June 27, 2004 when Tonia Calhoun made a domestic

complaint to the Hartford Police Department about Buddy. Tonia Calhoun reported that her husband was at the Scooter Store. Hartford PD officer Eugene Campbell proceeds to go talk with Tonia and sees Buddy at the Scooter Store.

Campbell then proceeds to pat Buddy down and asks to search the vehicle that was still occupied by Casie Jackson, a friend of Buddy Calhoun. During the pat down, officer Calhoun recovered a straw from Calhoun's pocket.

Upon searching the vehicle, Campbell finds a vial and a pill bottle containing methamphetamine. Officer Campbell called in Geneva

County Drug Task Force Agent Tony Helms to work the case. When Officer Helms arrived, Calhoun called Officer Helms over to where he was being held and confessed to being the owner of the methamphetamine. He was then arrested on a possession of a controlled substance charge while Jackson is arrested for an outstanding warrant.

Case Goes to Court

The case against Buddy Calhoun officially went to court on Wednesday, January 25 before Judge Ben McLaughlin. Calhoun was represented by Thomas Scarbrough while Assistant

BUDDY, see page 3A



The Ms. Senior Geneva County Pageant will be held March 30th at the Geneva High School Auditorium at 6:00 p.m. Admission is \$3.00. Contestants for the Ms. Senior Geneva County Pageant are: (Geneva): Louise Yarbrough; Ruth Flowers; Bernice Motley; Mavis Lindsey; Estelle Head; Florence Stacey; Myrtle Driggers; Mary Ganous; Sarah King; Gladys German; Frances Majors; and Virginia Commander. (Not pictured: Lu Infinger; Addie Paul; Annistean Hunter; Lyndal English; Wanda Hensley; and Mary Hallford). Slocomb: Altomease Peoples; Nina Williford; Ouida Phillips; Pat Schofield; and Frankie Whitehurst. (Not pictured: Louise Campbell; Sarah Cox and Mattie Baxley). Coffee Springs: Karen Cato. Samson: Gisela Brunson. (Not pictured: Beatrice Day and Nell Chambers). Senior Center Managers: Jena Kennington, Samson; Robbie Owen, Geneva; Janet Tew, Slocomb; and Mabel Henderson, Coffee Springs. Co-sponsors for the pageant are Carol Edgar and Miriam McKinney of Compassionate Hands Hospice.

Samson

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ney Rick Hollingworth to handle domestic violence cases and approved magistrate school for Tracy Wise.

Mayor discussed contracting with Good Shepherd Animal Shelter to pickup and handle stray animals. The council had several questions that could not be answered, such as, if the animals would have to be delivered to the pound or if they would come to pick up the animals. The mayor said he would find out and let the council know.

The mayor excused himself as the council discussed picking up refuse from a butcher shop partially owned by the mayor. The shop is located outside of city limits but is on the way to the landfill. The council voted to charge \$52 a month for the daily pickup at the shop.

Financial Aid Workshop

A FREE Financial Aid Workshop will be held at Enterprise-Ozark Community College on April 6, at 6:30 p.m., at the Lurleen B. Wallace Student Center, Multipurpose Room, at 6:30 p.m.

Participants need to bring their 2005 Federal Income Tax returns and W-2 forms to the workshop. Dr. Chip Quisenberry, Director of EOCC's Student Financial Aid, will lead the workshop and provide valuable information for completing applications to obtain college financial aid for the 2006-2007 academic year.

For more information, call (334) 347-2623, ext. 2214.

Flat Creek Reunion

Please come join us for our 22nd annual Reese, Flat Creek Community Reunion on Friday, April 14th at 6:00 p.m. for a fish fry.

Lunch Saturday, April 15th at the Flat Creek Community Center located on Hwy. 153 South of Samson.

Premier Book and Gift Sale

A Premier Book and Gift Sale will be held Saturday, April 8th from 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. at the new Senior Citizens Center (formerly Two Rivers Restaurant) beside Wal Mart.

Start your Spring shopping early with gifts for Easter, graduation, birthdays, weddings, etc. Help support the many services provided by the Geneva Senior Citizens Center.

- Premier provides a great selection of good quality books, toys, household items and gifts with something for everyone.

- Extensive selection of gift items from 40 percent - 70 percent less than you would normally expect to pay.

- Name brands such as Disney, Time, Gourmet Traditions, singer, Black & Decker and many more.

All products are 100 percent guaranteed.

The Geneva Senior Citizens Center will also have handmade gifts by the seniors. Chili dogs, drinks and chips will also be on sale.



Governor Bob Riley's office released several photographs showing the Governor talking with Alabama National Guard soldiers in Iraq during his recent visit there. The photographs, attached, show the Governor with members of the 690th Chemical Company out of Mobile. Governor Riley left Alabama for Iraq last Thursday and he is scheduled to return later this afternoon.

Buddy Calhoun Convicted

Continued from Page 1A

District Attorney Stephen Smith tried the case.

After the case began, the District Attorney's office learns that Tonia Calhoun had signed a verified affidavit on February 16, 2005 stating that the drugs in question are hers and do not belong to Buddy Calhoun. This affidavit was provided to his defense council around the same time Tonia and Buddy Calhoun reconciled.

Calhoun says in the affidavit that she placed the drugs under the seat of the car a few days prior to June 27. Calhoun says that she met her step-son Brad Calhoun at the Hobo Pantry in Geneva. Brad was on Buddy's truck and they decided to go to Walmart in Geneva. Tonia stated that she left her vehicle at the Hobo Pantry and rode with Brad.

Upon arriving at the Geneva Walmart, Calhoun stated that she placed the meth under the driver's seat of the truck and that Brad did not know what was under the seat but that she asked him to remind her to take it out when they got back to the car.

Miss Calhoun stated that she forgot to get the methamphetamine out from under the seat when they got back to the Hobo Pantry. She goes on to say that she was not trying to set Buddy up to be arrested and that he shouldn't be punished for something he had no knowledge of.

Tonia Calhoun Testifies

Before testifying before the jury, Tonia Calhoun was questioned by Judge Ben McLaughlin. It was this time that he asked her if she understood that by admitting to ownership of the drug she would be committing a felony. She said that she understood this. McLaughlin proceeded to ask several other questions about the ramifications of testifying that

the drugs belonged to her and Miss Calhoun stated that she understood (see transcript on page 3A).

After testifying before the jury, Judge McLaughlin ordered that a deputy arrest Miss Calhoun but one was not in the courtroom at the time. Miss Calhoun was not arrested at the time.

Additional witnesses also testified in the case including;

- Kacie Jackson who testified to confirm the actions of Eugene Campbell on June 27, 2004;

- Brad Calhoun who testified that Tonia Calhoun did ask him to remind her to get something from underneath the seat when they got back to the Hobo Pantry in Geneva.

- Buddy Calhoun who testified that it really wasn't his. Calhoun said that the officer said that someone had to claim it or they were both going to jail so he just confessed.

Mr. Calhoun also testified that him and Tonia are back together and have been together since February of 2005, around the time that the affidavit was completed.

- Eugene Campbell who described everything that had taken place with the case;

- Tony Helms who testified on his role in the case. He also testified that Buddy Calhoun confessed to him as well after his initial confession.

The Straw

Assistant District Attorney Stephen Smith said that due to budget constraints, forensic science asks that all items not be sent in on each case. Smith said that since they had a confession in the case they just sent in the meth and the vial found in the car and not the straw found in the pocket of Buddy Calhoun.

The decision was made after Tonia Calhoun's testi-

mony to contact forensic science and see if they had time to test the straw. They did have time to do so but this wasn't going to necessarily be helpful.

Another problem had to be dealt with. Due to the trial already underway, the District Attorney's office could not enter the straw into evidence because the results had not been provided to the defense. Their opportunity came during the rebuttal when Calhoun said that the straw belonged to him and that the only thing on it had to have come from him.

Forensic Science found that the straw contained methamphetamine residue and cocaine residue.

The Verdict

It took the jury less than an hour to find Buddy Calhoun guilty on the charge of possession of a controlled substance on Thursday morning, January 26. It also should be noted that Calhoun was on probation when he was arrested in June of 2004. Calhoun has at least three prior felony convictions ac-

cording to the District Attorney's office.

The Arrest

Tonia Calhoun was arrested at her place of her employment on Thursday afternoon, January 26 by the Geneva Police Department for possession of a controlled substance. The charge stems from her confession in an open court.

"If you are going to come into the courtroom and perjure yourself or admit to a crime, then you are going to be prosecuted," said District Attorney Kirke Adams. "The judges in this county are fully supportive in the prosecuting of these cases. We are tired of soap opera antics in the courtroom."

Adams has indicated that they will now work to prosecute Tonia Calhoun to the fullest extent he possibly can for the admission of a crime in open court.