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4-H Program Endangered By State Budget Cuts

By J-H Staff

That the state of Georgia is in the throes of deep economic distress is no secret. But to think that things have gotten so bad that the austere and time-proven 4-H Club program could be endangered is a surefire attention-grabber.

Furthermore, the elimination of county extension agents' jobs is potentially at stake, an official said today.

The likelihood of deeper than previously anticipated state budget cuts is also sending distress signals throughout the colleges in the University System of Georgia (USG), including Waycross Col-

lege, which is facing a 12.5 percent reduction in its Fiscal Year 2011 budget.

The budget-cutting anguish may reach farther into the lives of non-student state residents because of the various programs the state schools would potentially downsize or eliminate.

Among the most eye-popping cuts from across the state would include closing the University of Georgia's statewide 4-H program and half of its county extension offices.

James Jacobs, extension county agent for Pierce and Ware counties, said everyone involved in the 4-H program is

concerned.

"Basically, the proposed cuts to UGA is about \$60 million and extension offices will be taking about \$11.6 million in cuts," said Jacobs. "What we have been told is that about half of all offices are at potential for closing. This is going to jeopardize the 4-H program in a large way. It's basically going to eliminate this program and at the same time, a lot of folks are going to lose their jobs."

Jacobs said statewide, there are 156,000 members of the 4-H program in 158 of Georgia's 159 counties.

"This is going to include all of us," Ja-

cobs said. "The way it is set up is that 4-H will take the brunt of the cuts and it's a potential elimination of 4-H across the state. There is a lot of concern for this locally and statewide. Everybody understands the state economy, and we know there have to be changes made. We just want to be in there with everybody else. Youth participation is a big part of our organization."

He said an online meeting of extension agents all over Georgia was to be held today and that he hopes to have more information after that meeting.

The governor's office has recommended that the USG slash its budget by

\$265 million for Fiscal Year 2011.

Dr. David Palmer, president of Waycross College, said that means a 12.5 percent (\$510,961) reduction in the local school's budget.

"While it was difficult for Waycross College to realize an initial 12.5 percent reduction in the FY 2011 institutional budget, we were able to accommodate this request while keeping the college's core mission intact, which is to prepare students academically for transfer to four-year and graduate institutions," Palmer said.

(see BUDGET, page 3)

Big Rig Lost Control And Knocked Out Power Poles Three People Injured In Separate Accident Tuesday Afternoon

BLACKSHEAR — Half of U.S. 84 in Blackshear, just east of Carter Avenue, was closed for nearly nine hours after a tractor trailer went out of control and crashed into four utility poles around midnight Tuesday, said Detective Chris Wright of the Blackshear Police Department.

Glenn Smith, 34, of Atlanta, escaped the crash without injury, said Wright.

Meanwhile, a traffic collision in Waycross late Tuesday afternoon sent three people to the emergency room.

Two vehicles collided at the intersection of State and Waring streets, authorities said. A woman and two girls, all in the same vehicle, were hurt, and their injuries were not thought to be life-threatening.

The Blackshear accident that shut down U.S. 84 also knocked out electrical power, said Wright. Power was out for about two hours in the immediate area, but Wright said he was not sure how extensive the power outage was.

"Georgia Power came out immediately and they started replacing the poles. They worked about three hours," said Wright. "BellSouth (employees) was still on the scene when I left there about 8:30 this morning."

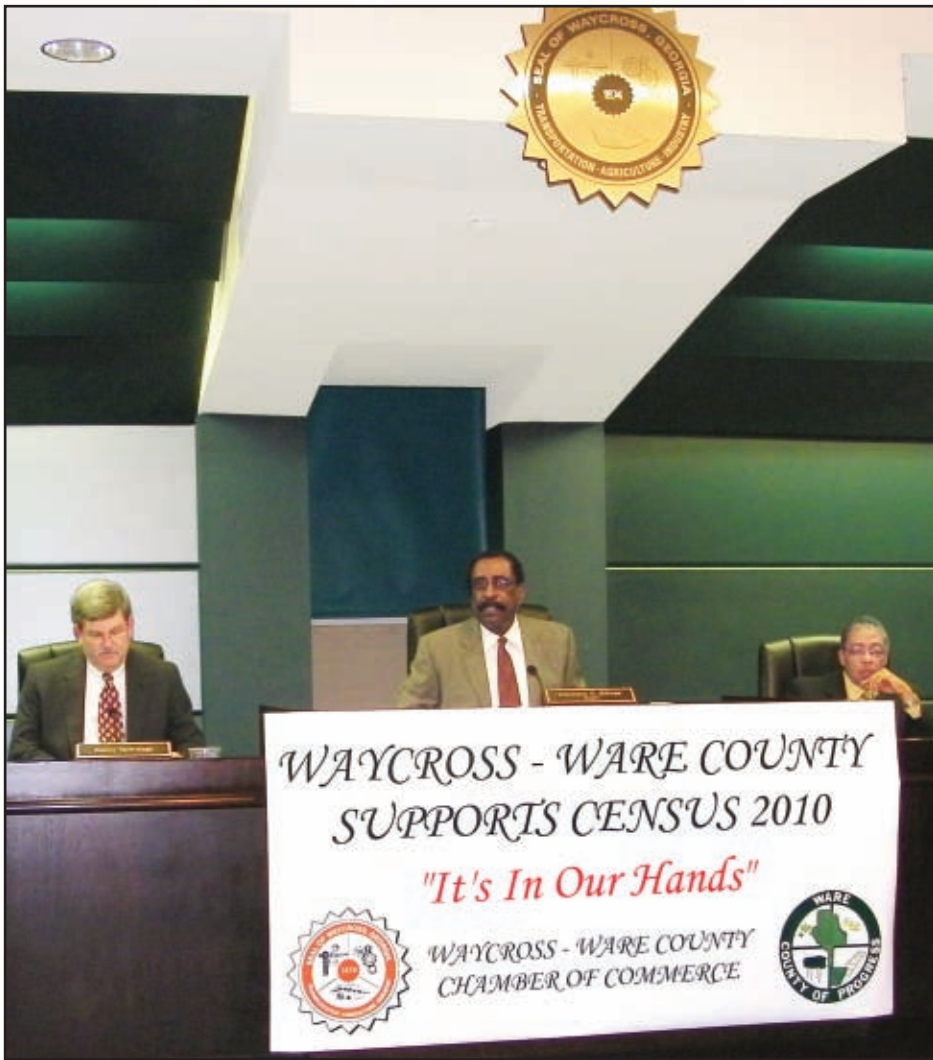
Driving a 2007 International truck with a box trailer, hauling 47,000 pounds of laminate hardwood flooring, Smith was westbound on U.S. 84 when he swerved to avoid striking an animal in the roadway, said Wright. The flooring and the rig were property of LandAir of Greeneville, Tenn.

"The rig then went out of control and hit four utility poles," said Wright, "power and telephone."

Wright said oil from one of the electric transformers leaked onto the roadway and had to be cleaned up by a hazmat crew.

"We were able to keep two lanes of the road open while they worked to clear it up," said Wright. "They finally opened all of the road about 8:30 this morning."

(see WRECK, page 3)



Mayor Clarence Billups (center) and city commissioners Danny Yarbrough (left) and William Simmons sit behind a banner supporting the 2010 census during a meeting Tuesday.

City Starts Work On Intersection Near Stadium

Sitting behind a banner showing their support for Census 2010, Waycross city commissioners Tuesday approved a contract with Corbett Electrical Construction, Inc., to build a pedestrian crosswalk at the railroad crossing at Harrison Street and Knight Avenue in front of Memorial Stadium.

The city has long sought a traffic signal at the busy intersection saying it is a "dangerous crossing." The Georgia Department of Transportation has recently agreed to signalization.

The state mandated that a gated pedestrian crossing synchronized with the railroad crossing signals be installed by the City of Waycross. City commissioners are forging ahead with their part of the bargain — the contractor should begin work late in March and be done no later than the end of September.

The cost of the contract is \$169,102.

Repair work is already being

done to a water line under Memorial Drive in front of The Mall at Waycross. The city contracted with Elmer Thrift Construction Co. to fix a leak to the water main and install new valves that will allow work to be done there without shutting off water to all the businesses in that area.

City commissioners approved the emergency contract for \$77,450 worth of construction to be paid under the infrastructure fund in the budget.

Commissioners were assured the work had to be done. They had been informed during a work session Monday how the new valves would allow the city to limit the number of water customers that would be cut off any time repairs are done instead of affecting all the main retail corridor of the city.

City officials have been expressing their support for Census 2010 for months. They displayed a banner of support for the census

(see CITY, page 3)

Triple Suicide Bombs In Iraq Kill 30 People

BAGHDAD (AP) — A string of three deadly suicide bombings killed 30 people in the former insurgent stronghold of Baqouba on Wednesday, including a blast from a suicide bomber who rode in an ambulance with the wounded before blowing himself up at a hospital, police said.

The bombings — Iraq's deadliest in weeks — come as Iraq is preparing for March 7 parliamentary elections. The crucial balloting will decide who will oversee the country as U.S. forces go home and help determine whether Iraq can overcome the deep sectarian tensions that have divided the nation since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion.

U.S. and Iraqi officials have warned repeatedly that insurgents were expected to launch such attacks in an attempt to disrupt the crucial vote. A

man purporting to be Abu Omar al-Baghdadi — the leader of an al-Qaida front group in Iraq — has vowed to violently disrupt the vote.

The bombings could also affect the candidacy of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, who came to power in 2006 and oversaw a return to relative stability in 2008 and 2009. Al-Maliki has continued to bill himself as the best candidate to assure security in Iraq.

A police spokesman in the volatile Diyala province, Capt. Ghalib al-Karkhi, said the blasts struck in quick succession in Baqouba, 35 miles (60 kilometers) northeast of Baghdad, and also wounded 48 people.

First, a suicide car bomb targeted a local government housing office next to an Iraqi Army facility.

Within minutes, another suicide bomber blew up a vehicle about 200 yards (meters) down the street from the first blast at an intersection near the provincial government headquarters where many police and army personnel were located, al-Karkhi said.

A third suicide bomber, wearing an explosives vest, rode in an ambulance with the wounded to the city's emergency hospital and blew himself up as rescuers and victims from the first two blasts were being rushed in for treatment, he added.

Most of the victims came from the blast at the hospital, al-Karkhi said. Police later safely detonated a fourth car bomb about 220 yards (200 meters) from the hospital.

(see IRAQ, page 3)



People attend a candlelight vigil for Chelsea King Tuesday held at St. Michael's Catholic Church in Poway, Calif.

Mourning Begins For Teen Whose Body Is Found

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Thousands of mourners walked the sidewalks of a wide avenue in silence, holding candles and tearfully embracing.

Many were at a loss for words over the discovery of a body believed to be that of 17-year-old Chelsea King, five days after the popular, straight-A student from San Diego County disappeared and two days after a registered sex offender was booked on suspicion of rape and murder.

Severe shock and denial among King's classmates is giving way to anger and hurt, Traci Barkerball, King's teacher for three

years at Poway High School, said Tuesday night.

"What bothers me most is the kids don't feel safe anymore," Barkerball said between hugs for grieving students. "Their sense of security has been taken away from them."

Brent King, Chelsea's father, thanked supporters on the lawn of St. Michael's Church in Poway, northeast of San Diego. Some in the audience fought to control their sobs as he spoke.

"One of the nicknames that I've always called my daughter is my Angel. She's my angel forever," he said.

"I want to thank you. Chelsea wants to thank you," he said.

When someone shouted, "We love you," Brent King responded, "We love all of you."

The body was found buried in a shallow grave on the south shore of Lake Hodges, said San Diego County Sheriff William Gore. The body has not been positively identified but Gore said there was a "strong likelihood" it was Chelsea's.

John Albert Gardner III, 30, was scheduled to be arraigned Wednesday in San Diego.

The Lake Elsinore man pleaded guilty in May 2000 to molesting a

13-year-old female neighbor and served five years of a six-year prison term. Prosecutors said he lured the victim to his home with an offer to watch "Patch Adams," a 1998 movie starring Robin Williams.

The girl was beaten before escaping and running to a neighbor.

Gardner "never expressed one scintilla of remorse for his attack upon the victim" despite overwhelming evidence, prosecutors wrote in a sentencing memo.

He had faced a maximum of nearly 11 years in prison under terms of a plea agreement but

(see TEEN, page 10)

Mostly Sunny

Cooler, Strong, Gusty Winds

Hi 54/32 Lo

—page 2—

Only 30 Days Until...

Our 6th Annual Swampfest

April 2nd & 3rd 2010

New Traffic Light

During a meeting Tuesday at City Hall (today's top of page 1 photo), city commissioners approved a contract that will get construction started toward having a traffic light (red-yellow-green) at the Harrison Street-Knight Avenue intersection in front of Memorial Stadium.

What's Inside

Vol. 92 No. 52

Billy Graham	4
Classified Ads	15
Comics	14
Dear Abby	4
Editorials	5
Extended Forecast	2
Family News	12-13
Obituaries	2
Sports	6-7