

Flag football: Lecanto edges county rival CR / B1

WEDNESDAY

TODAY & next morning
 HIGH 80
 LOW 66
 Mostly cloudy with showers possible.



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IN BRIEF

Faherty pre-files for School Board District 5

On March 7, Joseph Faherty pre-filed for Citrus County School Board District 5.

Faherty will run against Mary Seader and current Citrus County School Board member Linda Powers.

Veterans' Advisory Board to hold meeting

The Citrus County Veterans' Advisory Board will conduct its regular meeting at 3:30 p.m. on March 10 at the Citrus County Resource Center, 2804 W. Marc Knighton Court, Lecanto.

There will be a presentation on Veterans Affairs (VA) Home Loans.

Call 352-527-5915 or email Philip.Watson@citrusbocc.com.

Attend a workshop about new Suncoast Parkway

Citrus County has a unique opportunity to shape its future given the extension of the Suncoast Parkway and the associated development potential that extension brings. Citrus County Growth Management has launched online platforms to discuss plans for the Interchange Management Areas (IMA) at Cardinal Street and State Road 44.

A workshop focused on the SR 44 IMA will be held from 5:30-7 p.m. on March 9 at the Realtors Association of Citrus County, 714 S. Scarborough Ave., Lecanto.

There are many ways to get involved and provide input about these IMAs. To learn more about the projects, visit cardinalstreetima.com and stateroad44ima.com.

Contact Michael Sherman, Growth Management director, at 352-527-5221 or michael.sherman@citrusbocc.com.

Florida Dunkin' worker sentenced for fatal punch of customer

TAMPA (AP) — A Florida Dunkin' employee accused of fatally punching a customer who used a racial slur against him pleaded guilty to felony battery and was sentenced to two years of house arrest.

A Tampa judge on Monday also ordered Corey Pujols, 27, to complete 200 hours of community service and attend an anger management course.

Vonelle Cook was irate when he entered the Dunkin' store last May and began yelling about customer service, police and prosecutors said. When Pujols, who is Black, asked him to leave, Cook called him a racial slur, and Pujols punched him.

Cook, 77, fell to the floor and knocked his head. He died three days later. Pujols was initially charged with manslaughter.

In agreeing to a plea deal, prosecutors considered the "totality of the circumstances," including Pujols' youth, his lack of criminal history and the fact that he did not intend to cause Cook's death, Grayson Kamm, a spokesman for Hillsborough State Attorney Andrew Warren, told the Tampa Bay Times.

Skyrocketing rents have workers struggling

Lack of workforce housing, worsening economy add to the problem

By MICHAEL D. BATES
 Chronicle Reporter

Skyrocketing rents and a lack of attainable workforce housing are making it difficult for lower- and moderate-income residents in Citrus County to find decent living conditions, county

commissioners said at a Tuesday workshop.

Throw in an ever-worsening economy and record inflation and residents are struggling to make ends meet, they said.

"The working person is just getting killed," said Commissioner Scott Carnahan. Commissioners didn't

solve the problem Tuesday but they did toss around possible solutions, including incentivizing developers — possibly through density bonuses — to build more affordable apartments and houses without spending taxpayer dollars.

County staff will contact Inverness officials to see how they planned affordable apartment complexes to meet the need.

Board members also liked an idea pitched by Gaston Hall, director of the Citrus

County Building Alliance, who suggested forming a stakeholders group to explore what other communities are doing to encourage workforce housing and more rental opportunities.

It makes no sense, Hall said, to attract more industry here if there are no homes for their employees.

"The workforce needs a place to live," he said. Bill Hunter, resident of Pine Ridge, urged commissioners to focus on the crux of the issue: lack of work-

force housing rentals. "That's the core of the problem," he said.

Michelle Alford, director of the Citrus County Department of Community Services

Housing Services Division, said it is time to blow up the falsehood that affordable or

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CARNAHAN



ALFORD



Matthew Beck / Chronicle photo editor

Commission Holly Davis listens to Commission Chairman Ron Kitchen Jr. address the rest of the commission Tuesday, March 8. Kitchen leveled accusations that Davis acted inappropriately two weeks ago following a commission meeting while speaking with County Administrator Randy Oliver.

County rejects Oliver agreement

Kitchen accuses Davis of going behind board's back

By MICHAEL D. BATES
 Chronicle Reporter

County commissioners Tuesday voted 4-1 to decline drafting a separation agreement — estimated to be \$100,000 — that would have allowed Randy Oliver to resign immediately as administrator.

A majority of commissioners said losing Oliver before a qualified replacement is found and while the county is on the cusp of some huge revenue-producing projects would be a huge loss to Citrus County.

The vote was preceded by Commission Chairman Ron Kitchen Jr.'s personal attacks against Commissioner Holly Davis. And it is unclear whether Oliver will abide by the vote and decide to pack up and leave anyway. He spent most of the discussion with his head down and offered one comment at the outset: "I feel the relationship has been damaged to the point where I can't be effective."



Citrus County Administrator Randy Oliver was at the center of debate Tuesday at the Citrus County Commission meeting. Many members of the public attending the commission meeting Tuesday, March 8, as well as several commissioners voiced their support for the longtime administrator.

During an emotional exchange, Kitchen accused Davis of going behind the board's back to try and oust Oliver and solicit friends to take his

job. That, he said, despite a unanimous vote at the commission's last meeting to hire a search firm to find a replacement. Kitchen accused Davis of malfeasance.

"I'm convinced there have been behind-the-scenes meetings about potential replacements for Oliver," Kitchen said. Davis denied the allegations and told Kitchen it is a "flat-out lie" that she met privately with Oliver and told him to leave so she could recommend a friend.

"If I had (done that) I would agree with you," she told Kitchen. "But I did not."

Davis voted against the motion to reject Oliver's separation agreement. Commissioner Jeff Kinnard, who made the original motion, said this episode makes the board look bad to potential administrator applicants viewing this embarrassing spectacle.

"I don't think that Randy Oliver

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Parents get 18 years for infant's death

By BUSTER THOMPSON
 Chronicle Reporter

Kevin Christopher Courtney and Stephanie Pearl Carroll couldn't keep their infant daughter safe from harm — themselves.

"You couldn't do it because methamphetamine

stole your very soul," Citrus County Circuit Court Judge Richard Howard told the

couple at their shared sentencing hearing Tuesday, March 8. "You're all at fault for this."

Howard ordered for Courtney and Carroll, both 27, to spend 15 years in

state prison for the March 13, 2020, aggravated manslaughter of 2-month-old Aliyah Courtney, who died from meth toxicity inside an Inverness home her parents were living at.

"So thick, so inherently poisonous that it killed a baby," the judge said. "I don't think I've ever had a case where a child was gassed to death in their own house."

Howard also sentenced the pair to three consecutive years behind bars for neglecting Carroll's two other children by also exposing them to an "ongoing cycle of continued and repeated drug usage in the home."

"This is just a sickening case," the judge said.

After they're released from their 18-year prison term, Courtney and Carroll must serve two years of house arrest with drug-offender conditions, Howard ordered.

Courtney, of Inverness, and Carroll, of Brooksville, were arrested in September 2020 alongside 46-year-old Tammy Marie Allison and 54-year-old Steven Troy Gibson.

Along with being charged with manslaughter and three counts of child neglect, Gibson and Allison were also charged with running a drug house off of Live Oak Lane, where Carroll

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COURTNEY



CARROLL

Biden: U.S. will ban all Russian oil imports

By ZEKE MILLER, MIKE BALSAMO and JOSH BOAK
 Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Striking harder at Russia's economy, President Joe Biden on Tuesday ordered a ban on Russian oil imports in retaliation for Vladimir Putin's onslaught in Ukraine. The major trade action, responding to the pleas of Ukraine's embattled leader, thrust the U.S. out front as Western nations seek to halt Putin's invasion.

Americans will feel pain, too — at the gas pump — Biden acknowledged, declaring, "Defending freedom is going to cost."

The imports have been a glaring omission in the mas-



Matthew Beck / Chronicle photo editor

Gas prices have risen at a record pace in the last two weeks. Higher prices are forecast in the United States with the halt of imported oil from Russia.

sive sanctions put in place on Russia over the invasion. Energy exports have kept a steady stream of cash flowing to Russia despite other-

wise severe restrictions on its financial sector.

"We will not be part of subsidizing Putin's war," Biden said, calling the new

action a "powerful blow" against Russia's ability to fund the ongoing offensive.

Biden said the U.S. was acting in close consultation with European allies, who are more dependent on Russian energy supplies and who he acknowledged may not be able to join in immediately. The announcement marked the latest Biden attempt at cutting off Russia from much of the global economy and ensuring that the Ukraine invasion is a strategic loss for Putin, even if he manages to seize territory.

"Ukraine will never be a victory for Putin," Biden said.

Ukrainian President

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