

FERRIDAY

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town's need for a new accounting firm after The Vercher Group of Jena said it could no longer work with the town.

"There's one right across the river," Lloyd said, referring to Silas & Simmons of Natchez. "I don't like the fact that The Vercher Group was throwing us under the bus."

Turner said it was more a matter of the Vercher Group "knowing they would not be able to get done what they needed to get done on time," and it had "nothing to do with this board."

The board went into executive session before agreeing to a resolution for the Municipal Wastewater Treatment Plant Audit.

The town filed a report on its Wastewater Treatment Plant from DEQ Louisiana Municipal Water Pollution Prevention.

The report included general maintenance performed throughout the year, an engine start installation at the Kindergarten Road Lift Station, main sewer line replacement on Tennessee and Virginia Avenues and a collection line replacement at E.E. Wallace Blvd. and Texas Ave.

The report also stated ultraviolet light electrical system needs repairing, three aerators need to be repaired and a new compressor is needed at the treatment plant. Facility assessment is still in progress before determining any upgrades.

The audit report is done annually to keep the town in compliance.

Occupational licenses were approved for Deja Vu Outdoor Events Space and Kim's Fashion Shop and More.

SPORTS

Monterey baseball grabs win

Monterey High's baseball team defeated Rapides 8-5 Monday in Monterey.

Bryce Barfoot, Treyten Charrier and Colby Barfoot had two hits each.

Landon Duncan pitched five innings for the Wolves.

Monterey plays at Rapides Thursday.

Storm baseball falls to Buckeye

Delta Charter School's baseball team fell to Buckeye 12-0 Tuesday in Ferriday.

The Storm were held without a hit in the contest.

"That's the first time I've ever had that happen," said Delta Charter head coach Nicholas Kennedy. "We hit a lot of balls right at them. Buckeye has a good baseball team. Gunner Smith did a real good job battling on the mound for us."

Delta Charter plays in the Grace Christian Tournament

this weekend.

DCS softball wins

Delta Charter's softball team improved to 7-4 with 26-8 win over Delhi Charter Tuesday in Delhi.

Ally Atwood and sister Kayvan Atwood both homered for the Lady Storm.

Rami Burks and Ally Atwood pitched for Delta Charter.

Delta Charter hosts Block on Monday.

Lady Waves on roll

Monterey's Lady Wolves won their seventh straight game, defeating Grace Christian 16-4 Tuesday in Monterey.

Monterey, 10-4, is ranked No. 12 in Division V non-select.

Erin Tiffie hit a grand slam and doubled, driving in seven runs.

Macee Green and Hannah Hitt also had two hits.

Hitt got the win, allowing six hits.

Monterey plays at Avoyelles Charter Thursday.

HANDBOOK

asked Demby.

Gardner accused Mayor Buz Craft, who was absent from the meeting, of putting the clause in the handbook.

The revisions to the handbook were passed, including prohibiting elected officials from posting negative com-

ments on social media. Alderman Tommy Probst made the motion and Smith seconded it. Gardner was the only alderman voting against the motion.

Additionally, aldermen gave permission for Vidalia to research a Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality re-

volving account program that provides low interest loans to improve sewer systems.

If Vidalia decides to move forward and they are approved for the loan, funds would be used to upgrade the Azalea Street Lift Station and the town's sewer lagoons aerators.

The loans are less than one percent with a 20-year payout, according to Jay Lasyone, town manager.

"This resolution just says we are willing to look at the program," Lasyone said. "You are not obligating the town."

Meanwhile, aldermen dis-

cussed transferring a 46-acre tract of land to Syrah Plus for Phase III of the company's expansion.

The company has applied for a federal grant. If approved, funding for the grant would bankroll the expansion of the facility's complex to three

times larger than it is now. The expansion could lead to hiring 120 additional people.

Meanwhile, aldermen approved occupational license applications to Leslie-Anne's Vintage Emporium, Finders Relics & Resale and Vintage Souls Market & Boutique.

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JURORS

\$11,000 matching funds for administrative fees.

CDBG program provides annual grants on a formula basis to states, cities, and counties to develop viable urban communities by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment, and by expanding economic opportunities, principally for low- and moderate-income persons, according to hud.gov.

Additionally, a request for engineer qualifications pertaining to the Brushy Bayou Project were posted on the Police Jury's website, announced Cathy Darden, Police Jury employee.

Packets are due April 6 where they will be scored.

"The project start date is getting closer and closer," Darden said.

The Brushy Bayou Project,

priced originally at \$4.5 million, has increased to \$7.4 million due to rising prices and design changes required by FEMA.

The project has been in the works for close to a decade.

Funded by a FEMA grant, the project was one of the last approved in the wake of Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

It was designed to provide better parish wide drainage.

According to past Police Jury minutes, a gated box culvert in the Tensas River Levee where Brushy Bayou used to discharge was installed. The improvement would divert the Brushy Bayou discharge basin and a portion of the Buckner Bayou discharge basin into the Tensas rather than down Cocodrie Bayou.

According to engineers, this represents approximately 40

percent of the northern drainage area of the parish.

A weir will be installed just upstream of the box culvert to maintain water levels in Brushy at 43 feet. A bridge will be installed at Luke Martin Road to replace undersized culverts to allow increased Brushy flow to pass.

Engineers have estimated that water in the Vidalia Canal should be lowered by two feet

when the project is completed.

Meanwhile, Police Jury members unanimously elected Police Jury member Gary Neal as parish liaison for the Louisiana Recreation Program.

The group also gave permission to the secretary/treasurer and bookkeeper to attend the Center for Local Government Excellence training on March 15 in Baton Rouge.

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CHAMBER

Northeast Louisiana.

"We're trying to raise that level up in Northeast Louisiana," Womack said.

According to Womack, the area was losing teachers to other jobs because of the amount of pay they received, the amount of discipline they had to give out and the number of students they were having to teach in one class.

"What we are running into as far as society is the home is not whole anymore," Womack said. "That is something we are going to have to work on, so these teachers don't have to always discipline."

Womack also touched on

workforce training in the public school system.

"We need to catch our students in the eighth or ninth grades," Womack said. "I would like to see more legislation going toward our school system to where they are matching those children earlier (with careers). Not everybody is going to college, but everybody has a talent. The field is wide open."

In the past, Womack has authored legislation giving monies to community colleges, but now there is a different problem.

"The problem we are running into now is getting those instructors," Womack said. "Peo-

ple who could be an instructor make more money at his or her trade."

Additionally, communities are being inundated with fentanyl. Both Jackson and Womack have authored legislation where higher penalties could be given to those producing or selling fentanyl.

"It's sweeping through our communities," Jackson said. "This is a major issue. The only thing we can do now is increase the penalties."

"There needs to be some tightening on the judicial system on fentanyl crime," Womack said. "I'm doing a bill on the mold the cartel uses to shape pills that look like they come from a drug store."

A member of the finance committee, Johnson said he was looking at carefully spending Louisiana's surplus in "one-time expenses."

"Some of the surplus that we see is because of things put in place 8, 10, 12 years ago and now that we had some money coming down, we were able to use that money wisely," Johnson said. "We didn't want to put that money to programs that would come back when we didn't have the money (in the future). We were very direct saying 'one-time expenses.'"

In his talk about the session, Johnson said he remained an

advocate of economic growth.

"These first four years of my term I dedicated them to economic development," Johnson said. "It is the most important thing to me."

According to Johnson, a key component for economic growth was broadband.

"Broadband is important," Johnson said. "We can't move forward in the future without broadband."

Concordia Parish has received a total of \$7.2 million in grants in broadband-related grants. Of that amount, \$3 million was from Granting Unserved Municipalities Broadband Opportunities (GUMBO).

GUMBO launched Nov. 1, 2021. The aim is to "eliminate the digital divide by 2029," according to Veneeth Iyengar, ConnectLa executive director.

ConnectLa, Gov. John Bel Edwards' Office of Broadband Development and Connectivity, is the administering division of GUMBO.

To "eliminate the digital divide," GUMBO is using more than \$180 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to provide broadband and internet access to 400,000 Louisiana households.

With the coming broadband, Johnson said he was an advocate for furthering Telehealth

services in the Miss-Lou.

Also included in his talk, Johnson highlighted the Delta Agriculture Research and Sustainability District. The group was established through Johnson's legislation and is tasked with researching ways agriculture could be used to improve economic development in Northeast Louisiana, specifically the Delta region.

Johnson said if small Delta towns and communities combine their efforts "as a regional approach we can go for those big grants."

One crop Johnson would like to see in the Miss-Lou is industrial grade hemp.

"Industrial hemp means manufacturing," Johnson said. "Cotton was king here. Where cotton grows, industrial hemp also does."

In 2022, Johnson authored a law creating the pro-hemp commission in 2022 with goals being to study industry dealing with the versatile plant.

He called the Delta area "Hemp Pathway" and compared it to an agricultural Silicon Valley.

In a previous interview, Johnson gave his vision for the Hemp Pathway: "turning northeast Louisiana into the industrial hemp mecca within the United States. It gets its name because it is a region

along with Mississippi River which has ample ports that ship many agricultural commodities throughout the nation right from the river. It also has a major interstate, train to transport and three private airports within the region."

In another area of Johnson's economic growth, he touched on the Delta Bike Trail.

According to Johnson, the Delta Bike Trail would highlight areas of Concordia Parish through East Carroll Parish. He envisioned the trail attracting visitors throughout the United States and beyond. These visitors would come, spend money and stay at area hotels and RV parks, thus stimulating economic growth.

Eleven miles of the bike trail is already being built in Concordia Parish along La. Hwy 84.

"This is going to showcase the beauty of the district," Johnson said.

The following are legislators' contact information:

Sen. Katrina Jackson:
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Sen. Glen Womack:
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Rep. C. Travis Johnson:
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Public Notices

NOTICE OF SPECIAL ELECTION

Pursuant to the provisions of a resolution adopted by the Police Jury of the Parish of Concordia, State of Louisiana (the "Governing Authority"), acting as the governing authority of the Parish of Concordia, State of Louisiana (the "Parish"), on February 13, 2023, NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT a special election will be held within the Parish on **SATURDAY, APRIL 29, 2023**, and that at the said election there will be submitted to all registered voters in the Parish qualified and entitled to vote at the said election under the Constitution and Laws of the State of Louisiana and the Constitution of the United States, the following propositions, to-wit:

PROPOSITION NO. 1 OF 2 (MILLAGE REDEDICATION)

Shall the Parish of Concordia, State of Louisiana (the "Parish"), which is currently levying a 1.81 mills tax for public health purposes (the "Tax") through the year 2030 (an estimated \$287,000 reasonably expected at this time to be collected from the levy of the Tax for an entire year) pursuant to an election held on November 16, 2019, and prior elections for public health purposes, rededicate \$1,600,000 of the proceeds of the Tax heretofore collected for the purposes of acquiring, constructing, maintaining and supporting public roads and drainage, including equipment, animal welfare, and public buildings; and, to the extent any proceeds of the Tax hereafter collected remain after use for public health purposes in any year, shall said proceeds be used for the rededicated purposes set forth above?

PROPOSITION NO. 2 OF 2 (MILLAGE)

Shall the Parish of Concordia, State of Louisiana (the "Parish"), levy a 3 mills tax on all the property subject to taxation in said Parish (an estimated \$478,000 reasonably expected at this time to be collected from the levy of the Tax for an entire year), for a period of 10 years, beginning with the year 2023 and ending with the year 2032, for the purpose of providing funding and support for the Concordia Parish Coroner's Office, including operating and maintaining facilities and equipment therefor?

Said special election will be held at each and every polling place in the Parish of Concordia, which polls will open at seven o'clock (7:00) a.m. and close at eight o'clock (8:00) p.m., in accordance with the provisions of La. R.S. 18:541.

The polling places at the precincts in the Parish are hereby designated as the polling places at which to hold the said election, and the Commissioners-in-Charge and Commissioners, respectively, shall be those persons designated according to law.

The estimated cost of this election as determined by the Secretary of State based upon the provisions of Chapter 8-A of Title 18 and actual costs of similar elections is \$45,000.

Notice is further given that a portion of the monies collected from the taxes described in the Propositions shall be remitted to certain state and statewide retirement systems in the manner required by law.

The said special election will be held in accordance with the applicable provisions of Chapter 5 and Chapter 6-A of Title 18 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, as amended, and other constitutional and statutory authority, and the officers appointed to hold the said election, as provided in this Notice of Special Election, or such substitutes therefor as may be selected and designated in accordance with La. R.S. 18:1287, will make due returns thereof to said Governing Authority, and NOTICE IS HEREBY FURTHER GIVEN THAT the Governing Authority will meet at its regular meeting place, the Police Jury Room of the Courthouse, 4001 Carter Street, Room 2 (2nd Floor), Vidalia, Louisiana, on **MONDAY, MAY 8, 2023, at SIX O'CLOCK (6:00) P.M.**, and shall then and there in open and public session proceed to examine and canvass the returns and declare the result of the said special election. All registered voters of the Parish are entitled to vote at said special election and voting machines will be used.

THUS DONE AND SIGNED at Vidalia, Louisiana, on this, the 13th day of February, 2023.

ATTEST:
Aniella Cortez
Secretary-Treasurer

[Signature]
President

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