

COVID-19

Jackson Co. high schools transition to virtual learning

East Jackson Comprehensive High School and Jackson County High School transitioned to virtual learning this week due to the impact of COVID. The two county high schools will have virtual learning for two weeks (virtual learning began Monday, Aug. 30). Additionally, students across the Jackson County School System will be re-

quired to wear face coverings beginning Sept. 1, district leaders said in an email Tuesday evening (Aug. 31). The new mask-protocol will be in effect for one month. Several schools — Maysville Elementary School, North Jackson Elementary School, East Jackson Middle School and West Jackson Middle School — had already implemented the

mask requirement earlier this month (Monday, Aug. 23.) Across the Jackson County School System, there were 234 new cases reported last week among students and staff. Since the beginning of the school year, the district has had 628 cases.

As of Friday, Aug. 27, the Jefferson City School System reported 42 active cases among students and staff. That's 0.9% of the student/staff population, up slightly from the week prior (0.8%).

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In the Commerce City School System, there were 44 active COVID

cases on Friday, Aug. 27. That's up from the week prior when there were 19 active cases among students and staff. The district announced some adjustments to the daily schedule at Commerce High School to help minimize opportunities for large gatherings. Beginning Monday, Aug. 30, students began reporting

directly to their first block class instead of meeting in the lunchroom. CHS also eliminated ROAR time from the schedule, resulting in a later start time (8:20 a.m.). The school still opens at 7:20 a.m. and bus routes remain the same. A dance at Commerce

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This old photo from the 1980s shows Julius Mack (R) with pressman Steve Hollis after printing an edition of The Commerce News.



Julius Mack (L) with Mainstreet Newspapers pressman Garnett Smith.

**County planning commission
Planners give split
recommendations
on Pendergrass tracts**

By Morgan Ervin
The Jackson County Planning Commission gave split recommendations for two proposed industrial rezonings at Pettijohn Rd. and Wayne Poultry Rd. in Pendergrass.

Map changes to 116 acres of property owned by Joan Williamson were approved by the Jackson County Board of Commissioners in March, which changed the character area map from rural to urban and the future land use map from residential to industrial. The JCPC approved the rezoning with one condition: There be one ingress and egress entrance off of Wayne Poultry Rd.

A proposal to rezone 116.6 acres fronting Pettijohn Road and Wayne Poultry Road in Pendergrass from agricultural to light industrial received conditional approval by the Jackson County Planning Commission Aug. 26, marking the first time the land has been approved for rezoning since the inception of zoning in 1974.

In a separate proposal involving an adjacent tract on Pettijohn Road, a request to change the future

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**Georgia Milestones testing
Milestones results
show varied results**

The disruptions from Covid during the last school year had an impact on student learning state leaders said recently with the release of the annual Milestone test results. Overall, scores dropped for students across the state compared to previous years, in large part due to the impact of Covid on classroom instruction.

Federal funds were made available to local school systems to help remediate the loss of learning during the last school year. The results of Milestones in Jackson County schools varied widely from school to school.

“Georgia Milestones was designed to measure instruction during a typical school year, and 2020-2021 was anything but,” State School Superintendent Richard Woods said. “Given the impacts of the pandemic on all students, we expected some decreases this year.”

One snapshot of those results is the percentage of students who were not reading on grade level. That varied from a low of just 10.6% for 5th Graders at Jefferson Academy to a high of 51.6% for Jackson County Comprehensive High School students taking American Literature. State education officials said that the year's results

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**Remembering
Rev. Julius Mack**

By Mainstreet Newspapers staff
Mainstreet Newspapers lost its brightest light last week with the death of Rev. Julius Mack.

Rev. Mack served as printing shop foreman where he oversaw printing operations of the newspapers and commercial printing operations for The Jackson Herald, later Mainstreet Newspapers. He recently celebrated his 50th anniversary of working at the firm.

Rev. Mack was a well-known member of the community who interacted with the public through both his job and his ministry at Bush River Baptist Church in Banks County.

Rev. Mack, 63, of Jefferson, died of complications of COVID-19 on the morning of Aug. 25 after being hospitalized for 10 days.

Services were held Monday, Aug. 30, in Jefferson. See Rev. Mack's full obituary on the obituary pages this week.

Employees and friends of Mainstreet Newspapers remembered Rev.

Mack this week:
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Helen Buffington:
I have many fond memories of Julius but my favorite is of a chubby little guy whose round face was laced with smiles. His father, Mr. Jesse, worked at the newspaper and one day we found we needed someone to sweep and do similar chores. So I asked Mr. Jesse if he had any boys at his house who might be interested in working after school. He promised to get back to me. A few days later, Mr. Jesse walked in with this beaming little fellow. “This is my boy Julius,” he said. The cute lad was all of 13. Julius went to work at the newspaper as a floor sweeper. But over the years, he earned his way up the ladder to become our diligent and beloved shop foreman. RIP, Julius.

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Sharon Hogan:
How do you come up with just one memory of someone you've worked with over 36½ years. For the first 35+

years I probably spent as much time with my work family as I did with my real family. Julius and I were close to the same age, he has a son about my daughter's age, he has grandchildren around the same age as my grandchildren. We had a lot in common to talk about over the years. We have watched our kids and grandkids grow up over the years we have worked together. I have been through some rough times during my time working at MainStreet Newspapers and no matter the situation or how down I might be when I came in to work I could always count on Julius to greet me with a smile on his face and some encouraging words. Julius was a man devoted to his family, his church family and MainStreet Newspapers. He truly was a shining light at work. He was a friend you could count on and he was always willing to help.

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MAILING LABEL

Pendergrass

*Underwood,
Justice qualify
for two new
Pendergrass
council seats*

Qualifying closed last week for two new seats on the Pendergrass City Council. Tara Underwood and Tawnia Justice qualified for the additional seats. All four Pendergrass city council seats are unopposed. In addition to Underwood and Justice, Nick Geiman and incumbent Nathan Pruitt qualified unopposed for the two other council seats up for election.

Jefferson

**Jefferson council continues
budget, millage rate talks**

By Kyle Funderburk
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The Jefferson City Council moved a step closer to deciding its new millage rate at its recent voting session. Despite the council's desire for a full rollback to 5.036 mills, it voted to advertise a 5.3 millage rate that is proposed in the FY 2022 budget. The council's most vocal opponent of the proposed rate was Mark Mobley who said he wanted to make more cuts to the budget to reduce the millage rate further. Mobley proposed cutting the city's fire department, but that was met with strong opposition. Fire chief Mark Duke requested a budget increase to hire three full-time fire captains, saying the fire department needed to grow with the city. Mobley suggested only hiring two captains. Duke said not having a captain for every shift would hurt the continuity of the fire department. Mayor Jon Howell defended the fire department's budget request saying fire and the police

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**Commerce planners
Commerce
planners reject
townhomes project**

By Alex Buffington
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Commerce planners rejected a proposal last week for a townhomes project off Waterworks Rd. The Commerce Planning and Zoning Commission voted 3-1 to recommend denial of a rezoning request from Presidential Oaks Properties for 8.6 acres at 155 Waterworks Rd. The property is zoned R-5 and was previously used as a mobile home park. The site, located across Waterworks Rd. from Willoughby Homes and the city shop, has been abandoned for years. Developers initially requested to put 64 townhomes on the site, but that number was reduced to 28 total units before the planning commission meeting Aug. 23. Each is proposed to total at least 1,750

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