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The Loris Scene

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City of Loris postpones second reading of 2020-21 budget

BY SCOTT HARPER
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Today is July 1. The day governments that operate on a fiscal year are supposed to have a new budget in place.

But, because of delays and complications brought on by COVID-19, many cities and counties have been unable to meet that deadline.

The City of Loris is one of the places that does not yet have a 2020-21 budget in place.

Loris City Council held a meeting Monday evening to give the proposed \$3.2 million bud-

get second reading. However, the budget still needs some tweaking before it can be passed so council voted to keep the current 2019-20 budget in place until the new spending plan can be approved.

Another meeting will take place next week -- tentatively scheduled for Monday -- to get feedback from the public on the budget and to give it second reading.

Councilman Mike Suggs said he feels the public needs another chance to see the budget once it is balanced and to offer comments before it is ratified. A pub-

lic hearing has already been held but that was before changes to the budget were made.

Administrator position

During a meeting held on June 22, council said in order to make the ends of the budget meet, the \$75,000 allocated for a city administrator had to be removed.

That prompted administrator Dennis Drozdak to announce he was leaving that position effective June 30.

Drozdak was hired as an interim administrator in August 2019, one month after the resignation

of Damon Kempksi from that position. He has been working as a contract employee, not an employee of the city. He has also been the acting City Clerk Treasurer.

Mayor Todd Harrelson said after Monday's meeting, money is being used from the city's water and sewer funds to pay for the administrator's position.

Earlier this year, billing code errors were found in the city's water and sewer department.

An audit of that department's finances took place and it was discovered the coding errors caused a lowered rate for a mix-

ture of residents and businesses in Loris.

Once that problem was fixed and the proper billing was taking place, it added \$1.2 million to the water and sewer budget.

Even though the position is now in the proposed budget, Drozdak did not change his mind about resigning, Tuesday was his final day on the job.

Harrelson said information to advertise the position has been sent to the Municipal Association of South Carolina but, as of Tuesday, the job was not posted on the organization's website.

Pay raises

Harrelson said he expects there will be enough money in the new budget to give workers of the city a pay increase.

However, when the amount of the increase and when it will go into effect is still unknown.

The mayor said he expects the economy will improve in the next few months and council will be able to vote on the pay raises.

Last week it was said that would take place in January, but Harrelson said he would like to see it happen sooner.

Three new football coaches navigate introductions among COVID-19 restrictions

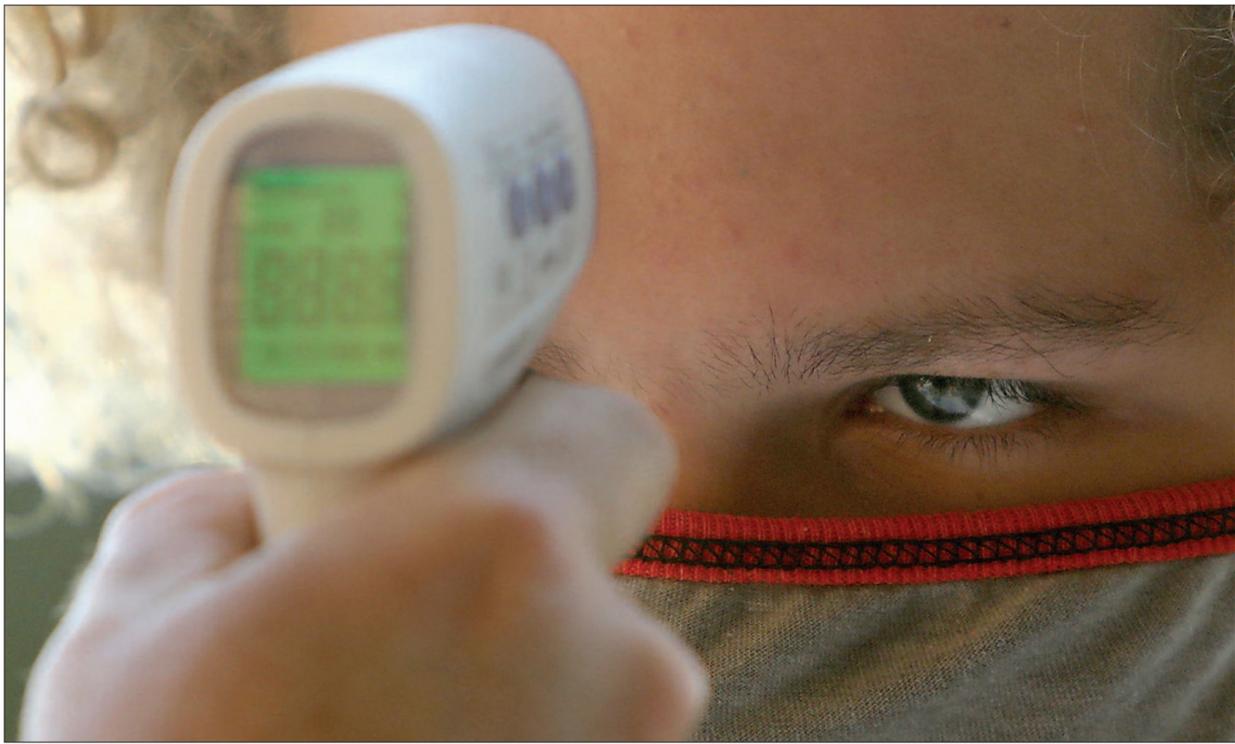
BY IAN GUERIN
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Ben Hampton never imagined his first practice with his new football team would look like this.

It was a hair after 7 a.m. on Monday of this past week, and 17 Socastee players he had never met in person were spread around the stadium entrance, waiting to have their temperatures checked. Staff members punched names into tablets for physical and waiver forms, eventually sending home all but eight players from the first two groups.

And Hampton, donning a black wrap-around face mask with a skull design, did his best to make his initial session in the age of COVID-19 feel anything like football.

"It's a very watered down [version] of what football is and what I would normally be trying to do with the program. It's a touch-and-go thing. It's a change in reality for them," said Hampton, the Braves' first-year coach. "A lot of things have been taken for granted. This puts that in perspective. They're still children. We're dealing



JANET MORGAN / THE LORIS SCENE

FOOTBALL, A3 Before players hustle to conditioning stations, questions about exposure and health are asked as they have their temperature checked.

Spearman: What happens with schools depends on South Carolinians response to COVID-19 precautions

BY KATIE POWELL
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The AccelerateED Task Force formed by S.C. Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman gave its final recommendations this past week for guidelines for districts to follow in forming their school reopening plans for the fall.

"I'm extremely concerned about the spread of COVID-19 in South Carolina. I don't know how anyone could not be. We've got to change our ways, neighbors," Spearman said in a Monday press conference. "If we want our children and grandchildren back in

school, everybody's got to do their part."

Spearman said everyone should be wearing masks, washing their hands and practicing social distancing.

"The focus must remain directed toward protecting the health, safety and well-being of the students and staff," said AccelerateED Task Force Chair Kathy Coleman.

Task force members said they received more than 2,000 public comments from parents, teachers and other concerned citizens, and have met 25 times since their April inception.

Their main focus was to provide the districts with a menu of options, because

what will work in one community may not work in another, Spearman said.

The group came up with three scheduling modules - a "traditional" one with lower virus spread conditions, a "hybrid" one with medium spreading, or a full distance learning model if virus cases skyrocket.

These three plans have a few things in common - planning for self-isolation time and altered attendance policies for those who may contract COVID-19, capping class size, reducing class transitions and taking considerations for the youngest students including ones with Individualized Education

Plans (IEPs), and high schoolers in CTE programs that require hands-on instruction.

Spearman said the task force plans to work to provide a waiver from state and federally-mandated standardized tests for this school year, develop additional distance learning capabilities and address the amount of funding schools will need to offset extra costs incurred for heavier cleaning protocols.

"I will pursue a waiver for state and federal mandated tests. I cannot guarantee this will become a reality without action from the U.S. Department of Education and other state

leaders. I will do all within my power," Spearman said. "I have been overwhelmed with outcries from teachers and parents pleading to consider this, and I've listened to them. I think that the time we could save by not doing all of the testing in the spring, and the anxiety that our teachers and students have, we need to relieve that as much as we can."

Spearman said schools should be flexible in terms of which scheduling module they choose.

"A scheduling module that works in August may not work the whole year," she said.

Teachers will also not be

expected to prepare lessons for children physically in their classroom on the same day and virtually as well.

Preparing districts in the state that have less technological capabilities is also on their list, and S.C. Gov. Henry McMaster recently said the state will spend \$20 million toward purchasing more hot spots for internet connectivity in the event of distance learning.

Dr. Brannon Traxler, physician consultant with the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control, said DHEC is not recommending routine

SCHOOLS, A2

OUTSIDE



Weather

High 89, partly sunny
WEDNESDAY NIGHT

Low 74, mostly cloudy
THURSDAY

High 88, partly sunny
FRIDAY

High 88, mostly sunny
SATURDAY

High 87, partly sunny

HAPPENINGS

Loris First United Methodist Church, 3507 Broad St., has a Blessing Box available each Friday, 4:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. This box contains nonperishable food items and individuals in need are encouraged to come to the box. It is located inside the church. Dogwood Hill Baptist Church Food Pantry, 1040 Mt. Zion Rd., Loris, has a food pantry the third Saturday of each month from 8 a.m. until 10 a.m. This institution is an equal

opportunity provider. The Loris Civitan Club meets at 7 p.m. on the second and fourth Tuesday evenings of each month (except December) at Backyard BBQ, 5107 Main St., Loris. For more information call Charles Webster at 843-756-4300. The Loris Area Lions Club meets the first and third Tuesday evenings of each month from 7-8 p.m. at Dale's Seafood. For more information call Lion Jim

Murph at 756-7900. Although Conway's Riverfest was canceled due to COVID-19, the Conway Chamber of Commerce board of directors and its Special Events Committee will present Fireworks on the 4th. As always, the event will be presented by the Conway National Bank. The chamber will host a fireworks display on July 4 at 9:30 p.m. There will be no events during the day. Spectators can safely

enjoy the display as the fireworks will be visible from many areas throughout downtown. Each Friday night, Thompson Farm at Brickyard Plantation will have a Drive-In movie, beginning at dusk at approximately 8:45 p.m. Tickets are \$9/adults, \$5/children ages 3-11, and children 2 and under are free. Get tickets online at www.thompsonfarmand-nursery.com or get a ticket

at the gate while space is available. Movie showings are as follows: June 26 - Frozen; July 3 - Top Gun; July 17 - Dirty Dancing; July 24 - Cars; July 31 - The Notebook. Concessions will be available.

