

THE POLK COUNTY STANDARD JOURNAL

A Combined edition of the Cedartown Standard and the Rockmart Journal

PROGRESSIVELY MEETING THE NEEDS OF POLK COUNTY SINCE 1869

Wednesday, October 31, 2018

CEDARTOWN ♦ ROCKMART ♦ ARAGON

Volume 149 ♦ Number XX ♦ 75¢

Candidates speak out at Chamber forum

By Kevin Myrick
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Local and state candidates on the 2018 ballot got the chance to voice their opinions, tell voters about themselves and field questions on a variety of topics, ranging from the future of fire protection in Polk County to how best educators should assess the progress of students statewide.

As the final days of the 2018 midterms come closer to an end, it came down to differing visions over the direction Polk County wants to take in the future for a trio of local candidates, and a statewide vision for a pair of educators who have opposing ideas of what direction schools should take in educating children.

District 2 Polk County Commissioner Jennifer Husley — who is running for a second term as incumbent — was joined by a trio of District 3 candidates and incumbent Republican State School Superintendent Richard Woods and his challenger Democrat Sonia Francis-Rolle. Though Commission of Agriculture candidate Fred Swann had agreed to come, he was absent from the night's forum.

Since Husley's challenger Ricky Clark wasn't present either, she was given five minutes to make a short address to the audience about what she felt were her accomplishments since she was elected in 2014, and what she hoped to continue onward in achieving in the years to come if she wins another term in office.

Among those areas where she's already involved in the future for Polk County is the expansion of broadband. She cited recent sessions with other leaders within the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission about ways they can seek to increase connectivity and reliable service across rural communities, and that in the forthcoming months she expects that input from local residents will be critical in determining the next steps forward, specifically through surveys and individual comment.

"It's time that we have better internet access," Husley said.

Husley pointed to positives in her remarks that have come about since her time began in office, like the completion of the County's Public Works facility, 911 operations center, and ongoing work toward renovations being completed on Polk County's courthouses.

She also covered other initiatives she's sought to organize with the help of the community, like the Polk Drug Prevention Alliance with the goal of curbing drug abuse and distribution locally, and Take Back Polk, a middle school mentoring program she organized in 2017 and is now in its second year.

"The drug problem we have here is a dark cloud that we need to address," Husley said of the efforts on the Polk Drug Prevention Alliance. "I feel strongly about this, and our drug dealers need to know — we're putting them on notice — we want you off our streets."

SEE FORUM, A16



A scary afternoon of fun at the Cedartown Welcome Center and Depot was had by youth and adults alike for the Polk County Chamber of Commerce's "Slime Time," part of their season-long Halloween Hoopla sponsored locally by H&R Block. Halloween events continue today. / Contributed

GET SPOOKY

Halloween fun planned for today

Staff reports

The scariest day of the year is nearing, and Polk County is becoming the place to go for frights and sweets. Between trunk-or-treats, corn mazes, fall festivals, costume contests, and other Halloween inspired events, locals are sure to get their fill of the spookiest holiday around.

Before getting into the bulk of the forthcoming spooky events this coming weekend and through next Wednesday, a few helpful reminders and tips for people who planning to Trick-or-Treat this year.

First, remember that during the evening hours that all who are out (including little ghouls and goblins wandering from house to house) should always wear reflective clothing, and an adult should be with their children at all times, if possible.

Additionally, local officials ask that everyone slow down and drive safely on Halloween night to avoid both

traffic violations and the potential to hurt people wandering about before the witching hour strikes.

For youth, only ever take candy that is pre-packaged as a precaution against any potential threats that may have been inserted within.

Other additional information of note, local businesses that have their scarecrows still up for the fall season need to get them down later this week as the season moves onward toward the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. They must be removed in Cedartown by Monday, Nov. 5.

Here's a list of some of what's happening around Polk County tonight for the Halloween holiday:

Festival of Treats: One recurring Halloween tradition is Rockmart's annual Festival of Treats which beckons citizens downtown for candy, kids costume contests, pet costume contests, face painting, and much more. Citizens can head downtown on October 31 from 4:30 through 6:30 p.m. for everything Halloween.

The festival is completely free and everyone from vampires to princesses are encouraged to attend.

Cedartown Trick or Treating: Cedartown is once again inviting the county's ghosts and ghouls to the city's downtown area on Halloween day from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. where businesses and locals will be handing out candy. Don't let your child leave with his or her treats too early because there will be a costume contest and a pet costume contest shortly after.

Carlton Corn Maze: October is also when Carlton Farm unveils their annual corn maze. While not haunted this year, navigating the maze through chilly fall weather fits the holiday just as well. Those itching to test their navigation skills can show up at the farm at 1276 Cartersville Hwy, Rockmart. Tickets to the maze usually run from \$5 to \$7 depending on date and time.

SEE SPOOKY, A10

Murphy steps down from bench today

By Kevin Myrick
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The long tenure of a local judge comes to an official end today as Michael Murphy hangs up his robes and goes on to a job he'd much prefer as the winter of his life approaches. He wants to be a full-time grandpa.

After a life in service of the law, first as an attorney arguing on one side of the bench, then the past two decades of his life as a judge making decisions on the merits of the arguments of past colleagues and opponents alike, one could argue it is a long overdue reward for his service.

Murphy, who announced his retirement earlier in the month, said he's hoping to take the "goblins and ghouls with me" once he clears out of his office in Haralson County, surrounded by the trappings of the past and present on the walls and desk.

He said over his long career, it all circled back to how he became a judge. When he was considered to take over the seat left open

by a retirement in the late 1990s, Murphy never once considered that he'd ever be a judge.

"The first thing I did was to call two lawyers who had more seniority than I did," Murphy said. "I had been practicing for 25 years, and you don't see that much in the young judges who are becoming judges today... the first thing I did was I picked up the phone and called Freddy Wicker and Richard Sutton, because they'd been practicing law five years longer than me."

He asked if either wanted to put in to be judge since they had more time and experience, and wouldn't consider himself.

"That's the way I felt then, and that's the way I feel right now," he said. "Neither one of them wanted to do it."

Murphy recalled how he interviewed for the job in front of the Judicial Nominating Committee, packed with people from all around the state and being peppered

with question. He recalled that when he was asked why he wanted to be a judge, he said "I anticipated that question."

"If I had my druthers, I'd rather be king," Murphy recalled as his reply. "Their mouths all started to hang open, and I let that sink in for a second and when I had everybody. I said then 'Now that I have all y'all's attention, let me tell you something, I was riding over here and I was listening to public radio — that ought to tell you something about me — and I heard a statistic that half of the world lives in abject poverty. And all I can tell you ladies and gentleman is if I was king I'd have the wherewithal to do something about that. I want everyone of you to know that I would... but I know that I'm not here seeking the position of king. I'm here to seek the job of Superior Court Judge. And I know within the circuit, with the superior court judge lives, he has the ability to impact lives more than any other



Michael Murphy

person in that circuit."

It's a message he imparted and said he took to heart over hundreds of cases heard in his past two decades on the bench. He said he always tried his best to make the law a even playing field as well.

He ended up as former Governor Zell Miller's final appointment to the bench before his term was up.

After serving 20 years on the bench and 25 years before that as an attorney, Murphy said he has no real desire to continue on in the courtroom anytime soon. Instead he wants to spend more time with his grandchildren and potentially getting back into another love that he undertook as well in his life: coaching.

It comes from a lifelong love of sports that began in his hometown of Bremen. Murphy comes from a lineage of state leaders, most notably his father the longtime State House Speaker Tom Murphy, who was replaced by now State Sen. Bill Heath.

SEE MURPHY, A3

Hospital's financial future looks good after clean audit

Matt Gorman went over the numbers with the Cedartown-Polk County Hospital Authority board during their October meeting.



Kevin Myrick

By Kevin Myrick
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The books look good at Polk Medical Center, and are likely to continue on track for another profitable year as the budget numbers continue in line through the 2019 fiscal year.

Officials presented the Cedartown-Polk County Hospital Authority with the FY 2018 fiscal year's audit, and after reconciling the numbers came up with a total of more than \$8.4 million in profits compared to the \$5.6 million that they made in the 2017 fiscal year.

The auditors who completed the report for Polk Medical Center's financial performance gave the company an unmodified opinion of their books, meaning that not only are they clean but also healthy.

Officials from Draffin and Tucker added that compared to other rural hospitals around the state, Polk Medical Center remains in a good position as well, with long term debt down to around \$30.3 million according to Clarice Cable's latest estimates.

SEE AUDIT, A8



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Local gas prices

Cedartown

\$2.56

Rockmart

\$2.75

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AREA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

The Polk County Police Department is hosting their annual Trunk-or-Treat on Wednesday, Oct. 31 at 5:30 p.m. at the PCPD headquarters, located at 73 Cline Ingram Jackson Drive, Cedartown. The event is for youth 13 and under.

Halloween fun is coming to Cedartown and Rockmart on Wednesday, Oct. 31. The Downtown Cedartown Trick or Treat goes from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m., with a costume contest to follow featuring children 12 and under in Holloway Park, and the dog costume contest to follow. Rockmart's annual Festival of Treat's in downtown Rockmart kicks off at 4:30 p.m. to wrap up at 6:30 p.m., with a costume contest at 5:30 p.m. and the pet costume contest at 6 p.m.

Join the First Baptist Church of Cedartown for Halloween fun with their Trunk-R-Treat event being held on Wednesday, Oct. 31 at 5:30 p.m. in the church's parking lot. Call 770-748-3120 for more information, or visit fbccedartown.org.

Celebrate Recovery is gathering for their 4th anniversary coming up this Monday, Nov. 5 with their weekly dinner at First Baptist Church of Rockmart, followed by the large group meeting at 7 p.m., and a small share group at 8 p.m.

SEE CALENDAR, A12