

Walker County Messenger

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FOUNDED IN 1877 — WALKER COUNTY'S OLDEST CONTINUOUS BUSINESS

Three sections ♦ 75 cents

Water authority meeting sees full house

By Jan Morris
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Tuesday night, July 9, the house was packed at the Walker County Water and Sewerage Authority in Flintstone, Ga. The Authority board directors were all in attendance — Annette North, Scott Abston, William “Bill” Cooke, Michael Haney (vice chairman), and Shannon Whitfield (chairman).

has recently made headline news for a lawsuit against the government entity pertaining to a dispute about billing and payment for outside services from a neighboring state, no one who sought to address the board July 9 raised the issue.

Instead, the Authority board directors fielded questions and concerns about other issues, such as incorrect billing, low water pressure, high water pressure, deposit for

services, and more.

The board chairman led the meeting, but many of the different experts on the payroll of the Authority addressed customers when it pertained to their area of expertise. And, all board directors agreed unanimously when it came to resolutions for the situations presented.

For example, one water customer with knowledge of laying water pipes was experiencing too high a water

pressure, so a technical expert sitting at the table who was affiliated with the Authority took time to physically draw on paper a solution and to explain it to the man who took his time to come to the Authority for help.

That customer, like all the others, were given all the time they needed to voice and vent. Yet, they were all treated respectfully by the board — and the customers were all respectful to the

NEXT MEETING

The Walker County Water and Sewerage Authority will meet Tuesday, Aug. 13, at the Authority's office, 4665 Happy Valley Road, Flintstone. The meeting is open to the public.

board directors.

SEE MEETING, A3



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Walker and Catoosa residents reminisce on the moon landing 50 years later

News/A8

Sheriff: Expedite toxicology report

By Jan Morris
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The Walker County Sheriff's Office continues to push forward in its death investigation into the unexplained passing of Britney Parker Cole, 31, Sheriff Steve Wilson said on July 15.

However, there is still no update on the toxicology screening that the sheriff's office expedited with the Georgia Bureau of Investigations late last week.

The sheriff had requested on Friday, July 12 that the G.B.I. expedite the toxicology lab tests because there was still no word from the lab on the toxicology results, and it had been three weeks since Cole was found dead.

Mrs. Cole's body was found on June 18 approximately 115 feet off a rural road in the 2900 block of Old Mineral Springs Road, which is two miles southeast of the local Super Walmart on U.S. Hwy. 27 just outside LaFayette city limits.

The sheriff's office has been awaiting toxicology results from the GBI crime lab for

SEE REPORT, A3

First school budget hearing held

Minimal opposition turnout at school board hearing

By Jan Morris
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The Walker County school board held its first public hearing in the legal process required to approve its proposed 2019-20 budget.

The Tuesday, July 9, meeting at the county's Advancing Education Center at 925 Osburn Road in Chickamauga was the site of the first of the two required hearings.

A notice informing the public that they could attend and speak out about any concerns they had regarding the proposed budget resulted in an attendance of only three in the audience at the July 9 meeting.

During the meeting, School Superintendent Damon Raines was joined by members of the Board of Education, which include Bobby McNabb, Dale Wilson, Phyllis Hunter, Karen Stoker, and Mike Carruth, who was in attendance via phone.

"This is a budget work session," Karen Stoker informed the audience of three.

SEE BUDGET, A2



Damon Raines

Walker County Schools Superintendent Damon Raines makes time each week to visit as many schools as possible in the school system. He said he tries to go to at least two school a day, except for Monday, when he needs to be in the office for administrative purposes.

Q&A With County Schools Superintendent Raines

with Damon Raines

School chief discusses self, budget, and proposed property tax rate hike

By Jan Morris
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On Thursday, July 11, Walker County Schools Superintendent Damon Raines agreed to discuss the process for approving the school board's proposed new fiscal year budget and the planned hike in millage (property tax) rate needed to fund the budget.

Superintendent, I am new to the community myself, but I don't know if a personal profile has ever been done on you in the media for the Walker County public, so tell me a little bit about yourself.

Yeah, maybe when I first started they did some things, way back when. But, I have not followed the typical path to becoming a school superintendent. My path was I went to work right out of college. I got married. I went to work for a sign company. I worked there for a number of years. I left there and went to PNS School and Office Supply, so that was kind of my introduction to teachers, because they dealt with, primarily, schools and teachers.

I worked for three-and-a-half years there and went from working as the night manager to the operations manager of the entire operation. And, then, I was actually fired from that position when my wife was nine months pregnant. So, I tell my teachers that I know what that feels like. A lot of time teachers don't understand that because when they come in and get tenure, that's a different process. I came from a different world.



Constance Morris

Superintendent Damon Raines (shown here with one of his students) started as a teacher in the school system before moving into a management role. He says he still likes to visit schools, talk to students and teachers, and interact with parents.

And, so, I went from there into toy retail, and I spent 11 years in toy retail. I worked my way from a store manager to a marketing manager for a region and loved it. I did a lot with customer service and with loss prevention. But, I never came home with any of those stories my wife was coming home with as a teacher.

She would come home and tell me these amazing things about her kids. I kept hearing that and thought, you know money will only get so much. I wanted to have that personal connection and to know that I was having some level of impact into the life of a child. I had my own children, so I took that very seriously as well.

I went back at night and got my master's degree at UTC (University of Tennessee) in special education. Got a job in Catoosa County as a special education teacher and from that point I spent a few years in the classroom. They moved me into administration quickly because of my background. I was an assistant principal and a principal. The superintendent then moved me to the central office in an operational role. I spent six years doing that, and then the seventh year was the year of the tornado.

So, I spent a year rebuilding. I spent \$65 million dollars in insurance money

SEE Q&A, A2

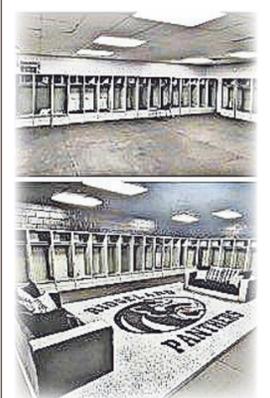
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Haven ministry moving to LaFayette, helping those in need

News/A11



Ridgeland has new home away from home with renovated football locker rooms

Sports/B1