

Walker County Messenger

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Planned hotel resort must maintain 180 workers, won't cost taxpayers

By Josh O'Bryant
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A \$106 million hotel-resort planned atop Lookout Mountain must employ at least 180 full-time workers if it wants a tax break.

Slated to be built and open by the end of 2019, Canyon Ridge Resort could receive a 30-year tax abatement — pay no property taxes for the first five years and 10 percent of the current tax rate for the remaining years — Walker County Commissioner Shannon Whitfield said during press conference Monday, May 15.

The hotel-resort would be built on a shelf of the eastern brow of Lookout Mountain overlooking historic McClemore Cove and will include a 178-room upscale hotel, conference center, spa and infinity pool. An existing golf course will be renovated to compliment the overall development, according to developers.

Whitfield, when announcing the project on May 14, said, "It is ...



important to note that (this project) do(es) not include any financial contributions or risk backing from Walker County or the Development Authority. Even though it was never requested, we made it abundantly clear from the beginning that Walker County is not in a position to take on any financial investment or risk at this time."

Canyon Ridge homeowners have agreed to a special tax district that will bring tax hikes — as much as double the

current rate — for properties within the district. Those funds would be used to provide government facilities and services for public roads, streetscapping, lighting, fire and EMS facilities and equipment, public recreations and parks, walking trails, as well as water, sewer and other county-owned utilities.

This is a private investment, Whitfield said, one without any county financial involvement.

The project has been

considered in the past, but this time the county is not offering public investment, he said.

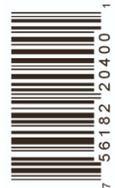
"The county would have been on the hook, under the original proposal, for up to \$50 million of co-signing loans for the project in the past," he said. "And also, they (the prior administration) were going to leverage one mill of property tax in support of this project."

"They were also looking for funding from Chattooga County and also Dade County to make the project work."

"As the project is now, there's no funding from any county. It's 100 percent of private-invested money and they will only receive tax abatements once they have completed their \$100 million investment and they will have to maintain at least 180 full-time jobs to be eligible for the tax abatement."

Whitfield said the developers must earn their lower tax rates each year,

Canyon Ridge, page A8



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LaFayette alum wins a pair of Pac 12 track titles with Oregon.

Sports/B1

Walker County Messenger

CVMS students travel from Flintstone to Orlando for national competition

By Mike O'Neal
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The Technology Student Association is a national organization devoted to simultaneously challenging and meeting the needs of students interested in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Better known as TSA, the association serves the best and brightest high and middle school students — nearly 200,000 of them in about 2,000 schools, in 48 states.

And in Georgia, perhaps no other school and its STEM-interested students gained accolades than



Chattanooga Valley Middle School's Technology Student Association members show some of the many awards their school has won in recent years. (Messenger photo/Mike O'Neal)

those from Chattanooga Valley Middle School.

Under the guidance of science teacher Steve Wells, the CVMS teams have consistently

done themselves and their school proud — and Wells has a room full of trophies and awards to prove.

The most recent

trophy room addition came after the CVMS team earned a fifth-place finish in this year's statewide competition.

Georgia TSA was founded in 1962 as the Georgia Association of Industrial Arts Clubs with 10 clubs, statewide. More than five decades later, the organization continues in guiding its members to become successful leaders and responsible citizens in a technological society with programs that foster communication, leadership and competitive skill development in the classroom/laboratory environment.

"It teaches problem solving," Wells said.

While some might dismiss TSA members as "nerds"

TSA, page A11

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Denson pleads guilty to wife's murder Sentenced to life, eligible for parole in November 2045

Lookout Mountain Judicial Circuit news release

Steven Marcus Denson, 43, pleaded guilty on May 18, to felony murder in the Walker County Superior Court before Judge Don Thompson.

Denson killed his wife Christina Michelle Denson at their home on Kemp Road in November 2015. The victim was discovered on Nov. 22, 2015, after Denson told a friend that he had shot his wife.

Denson admitted shooting his wife and told detectives it was accidental, but his

explanation was inconsistent with the physical evidence.

Denson was a convicted felon and should not have been in possession of a firearm under Georgia law.

Denson did not call for medical help for his wife and made efforts to conceal the crime. He hid the victim's vehicle in the woods so it appeared she was gone from the residence. Denson cleaned the floor and dressed the



Steven Denson

victim in clean clothes. He hid the handgun in a shop building on the property.

The shooting occurred several days prior to the discovery of the victim.

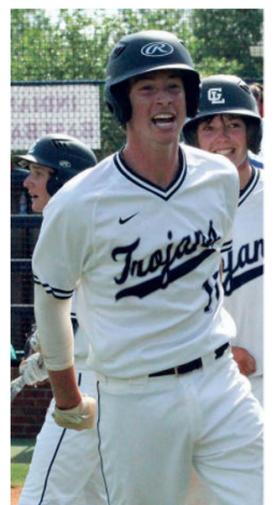
Christina Denson had told friends prior to her death that her husband would pull a gun on her during arguments. She also confided that he had hit her in the leg with a shotgun.

When her body was

discovered there were multiple bruises on her arm and legs.

Denson was sentenced by Judge Thompson to serve the remainder of his natural life in prison. He will not be eligible for parole until November 2045.

Christopher A. Townley represented the defendant. Detective Allen Ellenburg of the Walker County Sheriff's Office was the primary investigator on the case. Assistant District Attorney Beth Evans handled the case for the State of Georgia.



Gordon Lee set to play for the Class A Public School state title.

Sports/B1

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