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12-cent hike proposed for real estate taxes

By Daniel Sherrier
CP Reporter

MILFORD—Caroline County's real estate tax rate could increase from 72 cents to 84 cents per \$100 in assessed value to help pay for school renovations and the county's new radio system.

County Administrator Charles Culley introduced a Fiscal Year 2014-2015 budget proposal at the March 11 meeting of the Caroline County Board of Supervisors.

The budget proposal would also raise water rates by 5 percent for residential and commercial customers.

The board is scheduled to set the tax rate by April 8.

The Board of Supervisors will hold a work session March 19 at 6 p.m. to take a closer look at the budget, and a public hearing has been scheduled for March 25 at 7:30 p.m.

All funds would total

\$85,326,341, which would be a 4.2 percent increase over the current year's budget. The new budget year will start July 1.

The General Fund, which is the primary fund for most county operations, would total \$45,130,841, which would be a 7.8 percent increase over the current year. Other funds include schools, Social Services, Comprehensive Services Act, debt retirement, tourism, utilities, Dawn Wastewater System,

and capital improvements.

In a bond referendum last November, voters approved borrowing \$25,133,000 to finance the renovation and expansion of Caroline High School and Madison Elementary School. This adds \$1,722,453 in debt service payments in FY 2014-15 alone.

Caroline's new public safety radio system has resulted in another \$6,574,068 in borrowing, which adds \$692,138 in debt service pay-

ments in FY 2014-15.

Additionally, the radio system adds \$100,060 in lease payments for cell towers and other operating expenses.

"That's an ongoing cost of not owning or building your own towers," Culley explained. "Given that it's more than a million dollars per tower site, that's another \$6 million to build all six towers. So while it's \$100,000 in leasing

see Real estate tax page 10

SPRINGTIME ALMOST HERE!



Photo by Dawn Haun

Sweet sunshine

Temperatures are slowly rising to 60° this week and bringing folks out of the house and into the sunshine. Above Becky Wagner (left) and Linda Soby enjoy a chili dog on the patio at Lake Caroline Clubhouse last Saturday.

Caroline handles first crystal meth case in over six years

By Eric Miller
Editor

BOWLING GREEN—Caroline County's first crystal methamphetamine case in over six years came up for trial on Thursday, and the judge gave the defendant a second chance.

Christine Marie Newton, 28, of Springfield, Va., was charged with a class 5 felony (possession of a controlled substance). She was driving through Caroline County on July 13, 2013 when a deputy with the Caroline County Sheriff's Office pulled her over near the intersection of Route 17 and Route 301, said Tony Spencer, the Commonwealth's attorney for Caroline County.

The officer noticed an odor of marijuana coming from the vehi-



Example photo of crystal meth.

cle, Spencer told Caroline Circuit Judge Patricia Kelly. Eventually, it was discovered that a white purse in the vehicle contained a small bag of rock crystal meth, which was sent to a state laboratory for an analysis.

On Thursday, Newton did not plead guilty to the felony charge in the traditional way, but instead used the Alford guilty plea. In this

type of case, a defendant does not admit to having committed the criminal act. The defendant asserts innocence. But the defendant does admit that the prosecution has the evidence that would likely persuade a judge or jury to find the defendant guilty.

Kelly handed down a deferred disposition in which Newton will serve no time, but will have to provide 100 hours of community service and undergo a drug screen each week for a year. Newton also had to give up her driver's license for six months and undergo fingerprinting. She must not violate any laws over the next year and must continue with the Fairfax treatment program. Newton will have to return to Caroline Circuit Court

see Crystal Meth page 2

Board hopes to keep spring break intact

By Daniel Sherrier
CP Reporter

If Caroline County Public Schools needs to make up any more time, School Board members would prefer not to take days from spring break, they said March 10.

The board updated the 2013-14 calendar at its March 10 meeting to change April 18 from an early dismissal to a full school day to recoup some of the instructional time lost to snow days.

The board voted 5-0 to make April 18 a full day and tabled the question of how the county's 4,000 public school students would make up any additional time. Board member Shawn Kelley of the Madison District was absent.

Dr. Rebecca Broaddus, assistant superintendent, said the schools have missed 13 days and have had five two-hour delays due to inclement weather this year.

Five of the missed days were already scheduled to be made up Feb. 17 and June 16-19. Feb. 11, March 11, and March 27 were previously extended from early dismissal to full school days. Caroline's 2013-14 calendar was originally built with 184 days—four above the required 180.

Broaddus also proposed a plan for making up additional days, if the need arises. If two more days are missed, she suggested making them up on April 24 and 25, the Thursday and Friday of spring break. If just one more day is missed—or three—then Memorial Day would be another candidate for a makeup day.

"I have a problem with that, April 24 and 25th," chairman George Spaulding of Bowling Green said. "That's going to be four days there of someone on a vacation."

Spaulding asked if extending the school day was an option. Broaddus said it was, and so was having school on Saturdays.

"I'm not in favor of it either," board member Mack Wright of Reedy Church said. "I don't think you'll have very good attendance on the Thursday and Friday of spring break. Personally, I'm not in favor of (having school on) Memorial Day or Saturday."

Wright asked about the possibility of getting a waiver from the state to excuse any additional missed school days.

"The waiver from the state requires that you've exhausted all

see Spring Break page 2

Caroline man to spend 4 years for burglary, larceny, assault

By Eric Miller
Editor

BOWLING GREEN—Andrew Jay Harris, 25, of Hustle got a 47-year sentence in Caroline Circuit Court on Thursday after he pleaded guilty to burglary, grand larceny, property damage and assault with a vehicle.

Caroline Circuit Court Judge Patricia Kelly suspended the sentence for 43 years, meaning he will have four active years in jail. He still faces trial for similar charges in other counties.

He was caught in September 2013 after a police chase from King George County to Caroline County. While fleeing police officers, he drove the wrong way on the divided highway portion of U.S. 17 near Port Royal and caused a head-on collision that sent three to the hospital, including himself.

He drove a Cavalier northbound in the southbound lanes when his vehicle collided head-on with a Subaru station wagon. The impact sent the Subaru to the bottom of a steep embankment where it broke through a fence and came to rest upside down. Harris' car wound up upright on the roadway, but with major damage to the front.

Wesley Robert Krum, 57, of Danville, Pa., was driving the Subaru, and he and a passenger were taken to Mary Washington Hospital.

During Harris' trial, Diane Abato, Caroline's deputy Commonwealth's attorney, told Kelly that Krum sustained broken ribs and a punctured lung as a result of the accident. Krum still has pain in his arm and is still undergoing physical therapy.

Harris pleaded guilty to two counts of burglary, two counts of

see Sentencing page 2



Photo by Dawn Haun

Savoring a taste of wine

Caroline Rotary Club hosted its annual wine and beer festival Saturday of last week at Caroline County Agricultural Fairgrounds. Pictured sampling wine are Todd Swain (left), Brittany Raymond, John Brauer and winemaker Svetlozar Kanev of Rebec Vineyards from Amherst County.



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Principals plan to reduce stress of tests for students

By Daniel Sherrier
CP Reporter

MILFORD—Two elementary school principals told the Caroline School Board on March 10 that they plan to reduce the number of benchmark assessments that students take and reduce the stress associated

with those tests.

Two parents of elementary school students complained publicly to the School Board last month that their children were taking too many assessment tests.

In addition, members of the Caroline School Board

were told that the Caroline County Public Schools administration has plans to involve teachers in the development of benchmark assessments.

Dr. Rebecca Broaddus, assistant superintendent, delivered an update on the school system's evaluation of its student testing policies during the board's regular monthly meeting on March 10 at Caroline Middle School in Milford.

Caroline schools administer several benchmark tests throughout the school year. In addition to the state-mandated Standards of Learning, the local school system requires elementary students to take "STAR" reading and math assessments, Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening, and more.

Broaddus said she met with a group of teachers from each elementary school and the middle school to hear their concerns regarding testing.

She said teachers were unclear about the purpose of some data collection, and they felt some tests were redundant and came at the expense of instructional time.

"They're not sure why some of the tests were required. Teachers have other assessments they want to use," Broaddus said.

"We're going to reconvene the teacher groups that we met with earlier over the

last few weeks to review and assess the findings of the previous meetings and make recommendations for changes. We want to use the teachers to help us determine what needs to happen," she added.

Broaddus listed several changes that are already planned. Reading benchmarks in grade two will be reduced to two per year. Benchmark assessments will be designed so that students can take them within a class period—with the exception of grades two and three reading assessments, which can be administered over two days or in morning and afternoon parts.

Also, paper and pencil versions of some tests may be administered instead of requiring students to take them online.

"That will help us streamline the testing window. And we know that the students get a lot of experience on computers, so we don't feel like at this point it's necessary for all of the benchmark assessments to be given online," Broaddus said.

Two of Caroline's three elementary school principals addressed the board.

Scott Belako, Madison principal, said, "Multiple assessments are used to monitor student progress in core academic areas, and teachers then utilize this information and data to plan

daily lessons and interventions for students to meet the needs of each diverse learner."

He added, "We're definitely working toward minimizing testing and looking at the testing window and decreasing stress, anxiety and test anxiety to minimize the impact on children.

"However, some of the data is definitely needed so that we can obviously monitor and guide instruction, and like I said, we're definitely going to be working towards looking at the windows and minimizing how long things are and maximizing instruction."

Jason Mack, Bowling Green principal, said, "We looked at our data, and we use it to guide our instruction to meet the needs of all learners. Where their students are struggling, we try to do what we can to recognize where their deficits are so we can build upon those. As far as kids who are excelling, we try to build on their skills as well."

The data is also presented in parent/teacher conferences "so parents know specifically where their students are as far as the reading level, how they're doing in math, social studies and science," Mack continued.

"We're going to try to do some things to lessen that stress and anxiety" on students, Mack said. "(We) let them know that, yes, this is

important, but they should be fine—just work hard, do your best, but we use that information to drive instruction so in the end, it's going to help them perform better."

Board chairman George Spaulding of Bowling Green commented, "We mentioned data a hundred times tonight. How much data do we need? Every time we give a test, that's less time on instruction. You're not instructing when you give a test of any kind."

He continued, "I'm an old-school dinosaur, but I remember when I gave my unit tests in biology, I could tell after I graded the test how that student was doing, and I knew what I had to do on the next unit. We didn't have to take a band of tests. If it's mandated, yes—state, federal, we don't have anything to do with that, but we don't want to just keep adding tests on top of tests."

"That's part of what we're going to look at in a meeting with teachers—looking at what data do we really need," Broaddus said. "We have come to the realization that we are collecting probably more data than we need to. We're going to eliminate pieces that we don't need."

Spaulding added, "I want the teachers involved in making these tests."



Caroline County Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis Public Meeting

Join us for a presentation, review of informational materials, and a question and answer session for the County's study of future transit and passenger rail options for Carmel Church. Alternatives studied and a preferred alternative to enhancing transit and passenger rail mobility for the County will be shared.

March 19, 2014
5:30 to 7:00 p.m.

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For more information, please visit
www.carolinecountyttransitstudy.com

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ROBERT W. O'NEAL
Attorney at Law

Real Estate Tax increase from page A1

tower space, it's much cheaper than borrowing \$6 million, which debt service could be another \$600,000 or so."

Culley is proposing raising the real estate tax to 84 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation. The current rate

is 72 cents. The school renovations and radio system equal 11 cents of that 12-cent increase.

The personal property tax would remain at the current rate of \$3.80 per \$100 of assessed valuation.

The departmental budgets are mostly flat. The budget proposal includes no new positions or employee pay raises.

Culley said \$176,203 would be cut from departmental budgets collectively.

"What that means is if you take everybody else's budget that they are currently operating on for FY14—our current budget that we are on right now—it's

\$176,203 that's been cut out of that moving into '15. So while we do have increases in places, there are places that we've already chopped and reduced in trying to find savings where it might exist," Culley said.

The proposal anticipates increasing the county's appropriation to the school operating fund by \$364,196. This would bring the county's contribution to school operations to \$12,117,383 in FY 2014-15.

The only new capital project planned in FY 2014-15 is a courthouse security upgrade, which would cost \$187,371.

"We're not proposing

in this budget to buy any school buses, any sheriff's cars, any trash truck, or any vehicles at all," Culley said.

Property tax revenue is expected to increase from the current fiscal year's \$30.2 million to \$32.9 million for FY 2014-15 budget. Factoring in all other revenues, such as other local taxes, fees and licenses, etc., the county's total revenue is expected to increase from the current budgeted \$42.4 million to \$45.1 million. For a detailed listing of the proposed FY 2014-15 budget, see page 9 of The Caroline Progress.

13-year-old boy charged with marijuana possession

A deputy arrested a 13-year-old boy on Feb. 27 and charged him with possession of marijuana, the Caroline County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) reported.

In another incident, Amanda Thresher, 25, of Beaverdam was arrested March 1 and charged with possession of stolen property.

Investigations conducted by law enforcement officials in Caroline, Hanover, Louisa, and Spotsylvania counties resulted in the arrests in February of Thresher and Daniel W. McFadden, 25, of Partlow Road in Spotsylvania County, Caroline Sher-

iff Tony Lipa reported. Thresher was arrested and charged in Hanover County but wasn't initially charged in Caroline.

The arrests were in connection with a series of residential break-ins that had occurred in the four counties between July 2013 and February 2014. At least a dozen cases have been linked to McFadden in Caroline County alone, as well as many others in Hanover, Louisa, and Spotsylvania counties.

Other arrests for the week ending March 1 include:

Hattie Baylor, 76, of

Ashland, charged with assault and battery.

George E. Crenshaw, 45, of Fredericksburg, possession of stolen goods and possession of a firearm by a convicted felon.

Yahshaddai Weekes, 35, of Newport News, malicious wounding.

Thomas M. Rock, 18, of Ruther Glen, reckless driving, eluding and driving while license is suspended.

Theresa M. Boyd, 36, of Spotsylvania, driving under the influence of drugs.

Dana Anderson, 42, of Ruther Glen, unauthorized use of vehicle.



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