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Winborn death investigation stalled by jury shutdown

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

A case that began with the discovery of a young woman's body behind Road Russellville will be presented to a Franklin County grand jury, as soon as there is a grand jury to hear it.

The body of Casie Winborn, 29, was found by two Russellville Electric Board employees behind Road Gear in the area formerly used as the old Russellville Landfill on July 2, 2018.

Russellville Police Department Investigator Jake Tompkins has worked the case since that date, and at the request of Winborn's family, Tompkins has submitted the results of his investigation to Franklin County District Attorney Joey Rushing for review by a grand jury.

But COVID-19 health concerns have brought the State of Alabama's court system to a halt. There is a tentative September date for jury trials to resume, but Rushing said with the state's COVID-19 numbers continuing to rise, that date may get pushed back again.

Grand juries are selected at random from the jury venire that is summoned to come for a trial week. 18 citizens are selected for a grand jury, and at least 12 must vote to issue an indictment in order to bring felony charges against a defendant. With no jury trials, there is no grand jury.

"We're just not sure when that's going to happen," Rushing said of having a grand jury term. "The police plan to turn in everything they've done so far in this case, and we will present it to the next grand jury."

See 'INVESTIGATION,' page 5

College Road improvements set to begin with grant funding

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

When it comes to pursuing grant funds for road and bridge projects, Franklin County Engineer David Palmer abides by an old adage: *If at first you don't succeed, try, try again...*

And that persistence finally paid off with a \$268,000 construction grant for safety improvements on College Road in Phil Campbell. The work, which includes some striping, raised pavement markers, pavement scoring, traffic control markings/signs, traffic control devices and guardrails, will be done on the stretch of College

Road from U.S. 43 south to Dan Street.

Rogers Group will serve as the contractor on the project, which requires a 10 percent match from Franklin County (\$26,800). The grant was received through the State of Alabama High Risk Rural Roads (HRRR) fund, and was approved after repeated efforts at grant funds for College Road had failed.

"The county was very diligent in reapplying for various funding opportunities on College Road," Palmer said. "We've been turned down time and time again. Finally, our persistence paid off and we were able to fit

See 'IMPROVEMENTS,' page 7

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Martha Faye Murray, 75, of Russellville, passed away on Thursday, July 9th. Interment at Bethsaida Cemetery.

Mary Lois Robinson, 81, of Spruce Pine, passed away on Friday, July 10th. Interment at Franklin Memory Gardens Mausoleum.

William Delton Saint, 71, of Phil Campbell, passed away Wednesday, July 8th. Interment at Tharptown Cemetery.

Margaret Ann Steele Wood, 74, of Phil Campbell, passed away on Sunday, July 12th. Pinkard Funeral Home is assisting the family.

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Nale seeks re-election to Russellville District Two seat

Submitted to the FFP

William R. Nale, Jr., has announced his intent to seek re-election to the District 2 Russellville City Council position. Nale has served as councilman since 2008.

During his years as a councilman for District 2 and the citizens of Russellville, he has helped bring about many positive changes: obtaining grants that help with road repair, downtown revitalization and seeing new jobs come into our area. Nale said all of this has been done at no cost to the taxpayers.

Nale acts as liaison for the Russellville Fire Department. He is extremely proud of the Insurance Service Offices (ISO) rating of the fire department. They have achieved a rating of 2 and are one of only two fire departments in North Alabama to obtain this rating.

"This rating lowers the cost of homeowners insurance for our citizens and is a factor when trying to attract new businesses," Nale said.

He is working on getting another fire department placed at the intersection of Duncan Creek Road and Clay Avenue.

Nale is also working on getting grants for more paving, especially Clay Avenue. He was instrumental in getting two of the nine new storm shelters placed in District 2—one near City Lake Drive and one at Westside Apartments.

Nale is a strong supporter of our schools and believes every child should have the opportunity for a quality education. In the last eight years, the city has given Russellville City Schools approximately \$8 million dollars.

Nale began working for the City of Russellville in 1972. Since that time he has worked in several of the city's departments.

"My experience in working these jobs gives me a wealth of knowledge as to the daily operations. I am a strong supporter of our city employees," Nale said.

He retired from the city in 2001 as Lieutenant Investigator for the Russellville Police Department.

Nale is very active in the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP). He has served in many positions in his local lodge that services three counties. He is currently the State Trustee for Lodge 5. Nale served six years on the Ways and Means Committee that oversees a \$3 million dollar budget per year. He just finished serving two terms as Chairman of Alabama FOP State Trustees, an honor bestowed on him through an election process of his peers.

Nale and his wife Debbie are active members of Calvary Baptist Church in Russellville. They have three adult children and 10 grandchildren. Debbie is a retired teacher from Russellville City Schools.

Nale said there remains work to be done in Russellville, and he asks the voters of District 2 to allow him to continue the job.

"I will continue to work hard to do the best job possible. I am still the man for the job," Nale said. "I stand on my honesty, integrity and hard work."

For questions or concerns, Nale can be reached at 256-810-6990.



William Nale

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Imported danger to our Hemlocks

Andrew J. Baril
Submitted to the FFP

Welcome to *Naturally Alabama!*
For a while now I have desired to write a series of articles based on what I have encountered in almost 40 years of working in the forest. What you will receive by reading this article, is some research-based information balanced with some homespun common sense. I trust you will enjoy these articles as much as I have enjoyed personally encountering the subjects.

I love working in the woods! I love the peace and symmetry found in the forest. My wife and I live in a little crosstie cabin tucked into the big woods of the Talladega Mountains. When life, office work, or U.S. 280 traffic get too overwhelming I go to the woods. Everything functions so smoothly, and slows down in the woods. In the woods I can see equilibrium, pattern, and symmetry is found at every turn. Look at the Fibonacci spiral of a pine cone, sunflower, or hurricane; they are beautiful. Pull back the leaf litter/pine duff, grab a magnifying glass, and lay on your belly; it is absolutely amazing what goes on under the litter with those tiny creatures. My favorite amazement is pollen. Green plants are rooted to the ground. They cannot move as animals do. Most plants pollinate to reproduce. While most of our cultivated plants use pollinators to accomplish reproduction, most of our trees use the wind. Imagine this: in the spring while your car has turned yellow, the trees in our neighborhoods are cascading the environment in that shower of pollen. Male flowers, the stamen, on oaks, pines, sweetgums and other trees are all releasing their pollen together to impregnate the female flowers, the pistil, on adjacent trees to produce a seed. This seed becomes the next generation of tree or food for another creature. Each year each large tree can produce roughly 20,000 seeds. What amazes me about pollination is that with all the pollen flying around, why don't we find oak-pine trees or pine-sweetgum trees? Interesting. Sometimes the serenity gets disrupted. Non-native invasives, whether plants, animals, insects, or pathogens are causing great harm to our forests.

Last month, the beginning of June, another invasive, an imported danger was found in Alabama. This invasive is called Hemlock woolly adelgid



COURTESY PHOTO

The invasive species, Hemlock woolly adelgid, is not native to Alabama but was recently discovered in Mentone on top of Lookout Mountain.

(HWA) (*Adelges tsugae*). HWA was found in the small community of Mentone, AL on top of Lookout Mountain. It had been in adjacent counties in Georgia and Tennessee for a decade before entering Alabama. Found around Richmond, VA in 1951, this invasive from Japan has slowly moved throughout the Eastern US, decimating forests of eastern hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) and Carolina hemlock (*Tsuga caroliniana*). Many of you have

See 'HEMLOCKS,' Page 9

My take on this... oh how things have changed!

As far back as first grade, I can remember being taught there were four seasons: Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter. We were taught how each season brought about changes in nature. There was a temperature change during the seasons. You could distinguish a difference in each of them.



Gail Motes

Over the past several years, it's been difficult to tell what is going on. It seems we are only having two seasons. We have Summer and Winter or a short combination of fall/winter. It ties in so closely, it has been difficult to determine a significant difference.

Do you think the season change began when the "day-light- saving time" began? Who is the person/persons who was responsible for this anyway?

It sounds like someone who was bored and thought it would be a great idea to mess with people's minds. "Oh yeah, let's change the time twice yearly and watch how aggravating it will be for most people!" Thus, began that change and the beginning of the world being turned upside down. Whoopee!

Names were changed, even in reference to our well-known condiment in the color of red.

It was first spelled, "Catsup," when I was a child growing up. It even came in a glass bottle. Sometime, many years later, that name was changed to the spelling, "Ketchup," and came in a plastic bottle.

I wore an item of clothing, in my younger years, that went by the name of "pedal-pusher." I did ride my bike a lot but I never once used the pedal when I needed to push my nike or when I got a flat tire or had one of my many bicycle

wrecks.

Even that was changed. We now wear the same type of clothing but it's no longer "pedal-pushers," It is now called, "capris." I'm glad that took place. It sounds so much nicer, don't you think?

Now, I'm just being sarcastic, but if you prefer to call them "pedal-pushers," just go for it. Whatever, makes you happier!

It doesn't seem too many years back that I wore a bathing suit when I went swimming. Now, we have a new and improved name. It's now referred to as a "swimsuit." Swimsuit does fit it more appropriately. They are used for swimming and not for bathing.

There is one more "name-change" that comes to mind. The ole footstool. I really don't know why it was called a foot stool when you normally placed both feet on it. Maybe it should have been called a "feetstool."

Do you know the name used for this piece of furniture that serves the same purpose? Well, it's called an ottoman. That sounds like it should be used by a "man-only" After all, it doesn't have "woman" in the spelling.

Why did any of these things need change anyway? I knew the difference in all these things. It seems it would have been simpler to have kept the names we grew up using and let the younger people learn our spelling.

There is a secret job out there with an unknown title just for the sole purpose of taking the simpler things in life and making them more complex.

There is a positive side to this unknown occupation. They are real good at what they do!

These are just a few things that occupy my "intellectual-brain." Yes, I know! It's only a joke!

Until later, thanks for reading...

FRANKLIN FREE PRESS

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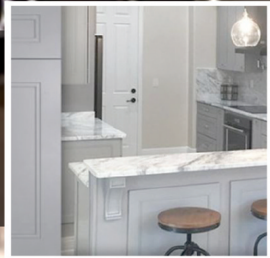
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'INVESTIGATION,' from page 1

Once a grand jury considers a case, it may either indict a defendant with a 'true bill,' decide not to bring charges (a 'no bill') or continue a case to another term.

If a grand jury declines to bring charges, the case will not be presented again unless there is new evidence discovered, Rushing said.

When Winborn's body was found more than two years ago, it was sent to the Alabama Department of Forensic Sciences for an autopsy. The medical examiner's cause of death was listed as "non-determined," which could present difficulty in proving any criminal charges related to her death. The report indicates there were no obvious signs of injury on her body, and numerous toxicology tests have been conducted, police said.

Tompkins said Winborn's family asked him to present his investigation to the DA for grand jury consideration. That investigation includes physical evidence, video and written statements and polygraph examination results and statements, Tompkins said.

"It's been a very lengthy 2 and a half year investigation that is still going on," Tompkins said. "We still are encouraging people to come forward with any and all information. One of the last statements we took revealed some information we didn't know from someone who came forward."

Police were first alerted about Winborn when her sister contacted RPD asking for a welfare check the night of July 1, 2018. Her partially-clothed body was found the next day in an area used by the Russellville Electric Board to pile debris.

RPD Chief Chris Hargett said at the time that Winborn's body appeared to have been in that location for at least a couple days before it was discovered. The location is locked at night, but accessible during the day as electric board employees go back and forth from there.

As far as naming suspects or indicating whether an arrest is imminent, Tompkins declined to offer specifics, other than to say the case remains a "high priority for our department."

One individual, Ronnie Shane Vandiver, has previously been identified by police as a "person of interest" in the investigation. Vandiver was interviewed by police. He is now serving a state prison sentence for multiple felonies, including possession of a short barrel rifle/shotgun and possession of a stolen MasterCard. The indictment in that case was amended to redact (not make public) the name of the victim.

The Alabama Department of Corrections Inmate Locator shows Vandiver to be housed at Kilby Correctional Facility with a release date of October 29, 2020. Vandiver has not been named as a suspect in Winborn's death by police.

Although there is no statute of limitations in Alabama on murder, Winborn's family has expressed concerns on social media about perceived inactivity on her case. As a result, family members asked Tompkins to present the case to a grand jury.

"We've got to do our due diligence to handle this case properly and make sure the right person or persons are involved," Tompkins said. "I'm not closing this case by any means.

"We want justice and closure for the family. I still encourage people with any information to please come forward. It may be very beneficial no matter how small they think it is," he added.

Anyone with information regarding the Casie Winborn death investigation is encouraged to call the RPD at 256-332-2230.

PUBLIC NOTICE

In accordance with the Alabama Abandoned Motor Vehicle Act, Alabama Code Sections 32-13-1 through 32-13-8, the following motor vehicle will be sold for cash at 10:30 a.m., on September 5th, 2020, at M&N Wrecker & Service Center, 11833 Hwy. 43 South, Russellville, Al, 35653. Seller reserves the right to reject any bid and the right to bid.

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To all District Five Residents:

Door-to-door campaigning has traditionally been a part of running for office in local elections.

As your City Councilman for District Five, I always enjoy meeting new people in our district and visiting old friends as I campaign door-to-door.

This year, though, with a national health pandemic, I have made the decision not to use traditional door-to-door campaigning. This decision was made out of respect to your health and the health of your family, which must be our primary concern these days. We will be leaving door hangers at homes, but will do so without disturbing your family.

I am still available to meet, either by telephone or in-person (if so requested), with anyone in District Five. Please feel free to call me at 256-810-7388. Our city election is Tuesday, August 25, 2020.

I respectfully ask for your vote and the opportunity to represent you the next four years, as we continue to move our city forward.

Sincerely,

Jamie Harris
Russellville City Councilman, District Five

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 You are invited to join summer revival services at Alva Chapel Missionary Baptist Church. Located at 4395 Highway 77, Russellville, AL 35654 in the Mountain Star community. Services begin Sunday, July 12 at 2 p.m. with services each night Monday July 13 thru Friday July 17. Morning services during the week begin at 10:30 a.m. with evening services beginning at 7 p.m. Moderator is Brother Ronald Oliver with evangelist Brother Keith Prince. Everyone is welcome to attend!

 Everyone is welcome to worship services at Duncan Creek Baptist Church, 3925 Duncan Creek Road, Russellville. Service times are Sunday School at 10 a.m., Worship Service at 11 a.m. and Bible Study at 5 p.m. Pastor is Bro. Joe Thorn.

 You are cordially invited to new service time at Pleasant Ridge Missionary Baptist Church on Highway 48 in Russellville, at 11 a.m., Sunday mornings. Social distancing practiced, mask optional. Pastor Roger Bond.

 New Life Ministries invites you to join them for Sunday School at 10 a.m. on Sunday mornings and for worship services on Sundays at 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. and Wednesday nights at 7 p.m. On the first Sunday of each month, there will be a fellowship lunch after morning services. You and your family are invited to come worship and fellowship with the Lord of Hosts and his children. New Life Ministries is located on Hwy. 24 west toward Red Bay, behind Tompkins Feed.

 American Legion Post #64 would like to announce that the July meetings have been cancelled due to COVID-19. August updates will follow. Meeting occur every second Thursday of the month.

 Fifth Thursday Food Giveaway - 2 p.m. July 30, 2020 - Russellville First United Methodist Church - downtown corner of Madison and Washington Ave. Groceries will given out while supplies last. All social distancing measures will be followed. Bring your ID and follow instructions given by staff.

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'IMPROVEMENTS,' from page 1

this project into the criteria required for the HRRR grant at the present time."

College Road, which provides the only access to the entrance/exit of the Phil Campbell campus of Northwest-Shoals Community College, is a 16,285-foot roadway that runs between U.S. 43 and Hwy. 237. The road was built with many sharp ravines along both sides and with no guard rails.

Multiple deaths and injuries have taken place as the result of accidents along College Road, with its sharp drop-offs. Palmer said more than half of College Road contains these drop-offs.

Former NW-SCC faculty member Tony Shackelford has been a zealous advocate of safety improvements on College Road since his mother died in a one-car accident there four years ago. Shackelford said he was pleased to hear the project would soon begin.

"When you lose a family member, it's personal. And other people want these improvements done, too," Shackelford said at a meeting with Palmer and county officials in 2016.

While guardrails will be installed along 3,250 feet (at various locations) of College Road, the cost of guardrails makes it prohibitive to install them along the entirety of the road.

The Franklin County Highway Department has done some maintenance and safety improvements on College Road in recent years, including re-striping the center line, patching and leveling the road and repairing a major culvert issue with federal disaster funds. Palmer said the HRRR grant project will help with some of the most pressing safety issues, but county officials will continue to look for funds to make more improvements on the heavily-traveled road.

"We won't get to do all we want to do on that road with this one project, but we'll do the best we can with what we have on this grant and we'll move forward working to receive additional grants," Palmer said.

Palmer expects work to begin on College Road on July 20.

City Council receives clean audit report for previous fiscal year

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville City Council received a clean financial bill of health at its July 6 meeting, with a report on the city audit for fiscal year 2019-20.

Council members heard a report from Stack & Blair, LLC, of Florence, and Certified Public Accountant Van Stack regarding an audit of the City of Russellville for fiscal year 2019-20. Stack said the audit was clean, with no material weaknesses or significant deficiencies identified as a result of the audit.

"As stewards of the City of Russellville's funds, we strive to be professional and honest in our dealings with monies," said Mayor David Grissom. "A clean audit is something we expect, and it's important to the public to have confidence in how we manage city government."

In other agenda items, the council:

—approved a resolution to accept a bid of \$45,000 from Franklin Electric Cooperative for purchase of a skid steer loader.

—approved Grissom to execute a contract with Alabama Pyrotechnics Guild for \$17,500 for a fireworks show. Council members hope to have the fireworks display later this year, but in the event that is not possible due to COVID-19 concerns, the payment will be applied to the 2021 Jam on Sloss Lake event.

—approved the promotion of Nick McCormick to Sergeant in the Russellville Police Department.

—approved the hiring of Jason Tyson as a laborer in the Russellville Street

See 'COUNCIL,' Page 9

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New transportation guidelines for Russellville bus drivers to be put in place for fall semester

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

When Russellville City Schools (RCS) students return August 20 for the start of the 2020-21 school year, they will experience an environment different than the one they left in March.

The threat of COVID-19 has permeated most areas of our lives since March, and that's certainly the case with public schools. And the changes will begin on the bus rides to and from school.

RCS Transportation Director Alan Wilson released new transportation guidelines to the system's bus drivers last week. The *Franklin Free Press* obtained a copy of those new mandatory guidelines, which follow state protocol including social distancing, sanitation and wearing of masks.

Bus routes will be halved with two drop-offs each morning and two pick-ups each afternoon. Morning drop-off times will be 7:15 a.m., and 8:15 a.m., while afternoon pick-up times will be 2:40 p.m., and 3:10 p.m.

Wilson said parents are encouraged to transport their children to school in personal vehicles instead of buses, wherever possible, but bus service will remain available to all students.

Of the system's 2,450 students, Wilson said approximately 1,250 ride buses to and from school.

"We certainly are encouraging our students and parents to transport them in personal vehicles and if the numbers of students on the buses are low enough, we may be able to do this in only one route per bus," Wilson said.

RCS bus drivers, per state mandates, are paid for two hours each morning and two hours each afternoon. Wilson said even with two routes, he believes all drivers should be able to complete them in less than two hours. "Of course, if any drivers have to work beyond the two hours, they will be paid for that time," Wilson said.

The system's transportation rules will be as follows:

- It is strongly encouraged that students be transported to school in personal vehicles instead of buses, if at all possible.
- All active buses will be sanitized at the completion of the final morning and afternoon routes.
- The first row on each bus will not be occupied to increase social distancing.

—Members of the same household must sit on the same school bus seat or together.

—Temperature checks will be administered to students riding on the Special Needs bus.

—Bus drivers and students are required to wear masks at all times while on the bus. Students are to provide their own masks.

—Bus sanitation includes handrails, seats and windows.

—When appropriate, buses will travel with windows open.

—Buses will have hand sanitation stations and children will use these as they enter and exit the bus.

—Bus routes will be halved with two drop-offs each morning and two pick-ups each afternoon. AM drop-off times will be 7:15 a.m. & 8:15 a.m. PM pick-up times will be 2:40 p.m. & 3:10 p.m.

—The Special Needs buses will run at the first drop-off and first pick-up schedule.

—Signage will be included on each bus to communicate the symptoms students should not have while traveling on a school bus.



DESIGN BY JASON HILL

When the 2020-21 school year begins, there will be new rules in place regarding school buses, including sanitation, and other measures.

Washington Avenue drainage project nearing completion

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

With a major drainage project at the intersection of Washington Avenue North and Lauderdale Street nearly complete, Russellville officials say they will continue to address flooding issues across the city.

With multiple, intense rainfalls this year, insufficiencies in the city's storm drain system have been brought to light.

The Washington Avenue project included installation of new, larger capacity storm sewer pipes and the addition of a second 18-inch drain pipe along the north side of Lauderdale.

Before the project began, all water routed from both sides of Lauderdale Street from the west (uphill), flowed into one 18-inch pipe under the south side sidewalk on Lauderdale.

That pipe, according to Russellville City Councilman David Palmer, was insufficient to carry the flow from both the north and south drainage areas on Lauderdale. Overflow then resulted, causing flooding into First Baptist Church.

"This project installed another storm drain on the north side of Lauderdale to split that flow," Palmer said. "Now that 18-inch diameter pipe is sufficient to carry the drainage just on the south side of an imaginary line running through the middle of Lauderdale Street."

The drainage mitigation project is being done by Eady Contracting, Inc., which submitted the low bid of \$110,699.95. The project also includes drainage improvements on Green Avenue between High Street NW and West Hoover Street.

Russellville Mayor David Grissom said he and the city council will continue to address drainage issues in the city after the current project is completed.

"We are aggressively working to find these issues and ways to correct them. These current projects are just the beginning of those efforts," Grissom said.

Palmer said rain events this year "exposed" a number of drainage issues across the city and that prompted the council to find these issues and ways to mitigate them.

"Obviously, some are simple fixes but the majority are not so simple," Palmer said. "These improvements will take place over time because there's not enough money to do everything that needs to be done in a short period of time."

"We are identifying those areas of concern and putting together a plan to mitigate them. Some are more expensive than others. For those, we have to do the engineering and design and then work diligently to find grants and funding outside our own city tax base to complete them," he added.

With no weather-related problems, the Washington Avenue project should be completed this month, Palmer said.

Letter to the editor

Our family would like to say Thank You to our family and friends for the flowers, visits, cards, gifts, texts, calls, food but mostly the prayers during the sickness and passing of our mom Ella Rae Vinson Hill. Thank you to the ones that came to the funeral. Special thanks to Pinkards Funeral Home and a very special thanks to our good friend Carol Hall. Thank you to Bro. Stanley Hargett, Russellville

Hospital Staff, Kindred Home Health Staff and Mitchell-Hollingsworth Staff and the Franklin County Deputies for their assistance. Thank You to the Pallbears Donovan and Peyton Bailey, Rick and Matt Hall, Earl Payne and Donnie Vinson. Daughters: Janice Hill Pennington & Family Tammy Hill Bailey and Family. Janice Pennington — Russellville

'HEMLOCKS,' from page 4

seen the dead hemlocks in the Great Smokies over the last fifteen years. My first encounter with HWA was while living in Buffalo, NY in the 1990s. In 1993, it was in the NYC and Catskills areas. A couple of years ago it reached Buffalo.

While eastern hemlock is not an important commercial species in AL, it is a very important species environmentally. Eastern hemlock is our only shade tolerant conifer. It grows in pure stands as well as underneath the canopy of hardwoods. Also, many homeowners grow them as an ornamental in their yard. (Please don't plant hemlocks in your yard. We may unknowingly bring the adelgid here on nursery stock). Most importantly, as a forester, I am concerned about the potential loss of the tree because of the shade it gives to our creeks and streams. Many amphibians, fish, and macro invertebrates depend on cool water to survive. Without hemlock to shade these waters, especially in the Bankhead NF, many of these critters will die.

One benefit for us in NW Alabama is distance. There is an 80 mile gap in the native eastern hemlock range map between 'us' and the trees in Mentone. We have native hemlock in Cullman, Colbert, Fayette, Franklin, Jefferson, Lawrence, Marion, Walker, and Winston Counties. If we can discourage our neighbor from planting hemlock in their yard, and educate those who already have them how to detect and control the adelgid; we may spare our native hemlocks. If you have questions about your 'yard' hemlocks, give me a call or send me a picture via email. HWA can be seen through magnification and it can be controlled through insecticides. Blessings. – Andy

"Naturally Alabama" is written by Certified Forester Andrew J. Baril of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A&M University and Auburn University) is an equal opportunity educator and employer. Everyone is welcome. Email questions to Andy at ajb0012@auburn.edu, or call (205) 221-3392. Learn more about what is happening with Extension by visiting the ACES website & social media: www.aces.edu, <https://twitter.com/acesedu>, www.facebook.com/alabamacooperativeextensionsystem.

Bonner announces candidacy for Phil Campbell mayoral seat

Submitted to the FFP

Jim Bonner recently announced his candidacy for Phil Campbell Mayor in the August 25, 2020, municipal election.

Bonner said his first order of business would be to revitalize the downtown area and return the "home town charm" that Phil Campbell once had.

"This is not just aesthetics, but will also help attract new residents," Bonner said. "And it will make our home town a Southern Living centerfold."

Bonner said Phil Campbell leaders need to actively seek real estate housing developments that are attractive to retired Social Security recipients, such as inexpensive patio homes.

"One retirement check is worth two full-time jobs to the local economy," Bonner said.

Broadband internet is also essential for high-paying work from home jobs, Bonner said.

Bonner said Phil Campbell has two magnificent, underutilized campuses that once fed the city economy in both jobs and buying power.

"One might mention to the administration the symbiotic nature of teachers who live near the campus," Bonner said.

As mayor, Bonner said he would revisit zoning laws established "as a 1970s solution to a 1950s problem" that the 2011 tornado made moot.

"We need a food court and businesses that can attract outside dollars and stop trading a white mule back and forth between the same people," Bonner said.

"We also need to build a \$300,000 matching funds account for the many federal grants that are available," he added.

He will work to revisit what he described as the regressive cost of doing business in the city limits that has caused many people to relocate to the north.

"I live here, and I will be here. I go to church here and unless I'm in Montgomery lobbying for you, I will be a cost-free full-time resource for the town. I will match every salary dollar into an economic development fund to bring dollars into our town," Bonner said.

With his connections in the Republican Party, Bonner said he believes he can get the four-lane highway paved, a project that has stalled for several years.

"I will make available city disbursements to the media quarterly, as opposed to budgets which mean very little," Bonner said.

Bonner asks for your vote on August 25, 2020.

Vendor applications solicited for October 17th Spruce Pine Day

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The organizers of Spruce Pine Day are moving forward with plans to hold the event in downtown Spruce Pine on Saturday, October 17, 2020.

Hosted by the Spruce Pine Historical Society, the annual event offers visitors a glimpse into the area's history, combined with a day of music, activities and food.

Vendor applications are now being accepted. Spruce Pine Day is an outside event so vendors will need to bring their own tables, chairs and tent.

10' x 10' spaces are available for only \$10 each. Spaces with electricity, \$25 each, are limited to food vendors. Other vendors may be a small generator if they need power at their site.

Vendors are asked to set up their spaces by 8 a.m., on the day of the event.

The deadline for all vendor applications is September 25, 2020. To sign up, contact Shannon Pike at 256-460-5276 or email her at shannonbowen-pike@gmail.com.

For more information on Spruce Pine Day, visit the Spruce Pine, Alabama Community Center page on Facebook.



COURTESY PHOTO

Spruce Pine Day, which is held on Saturday, October 17, will feature food, music, activities and more. The event is now accepting vendor applications.

'COUNCIL,' from page 7

Department. —approved a motion to appoint Councilman David Palmer to put together a set of plans/specifications for repair and replacing of the collapsed stretch of sidewalk in front of the Russellville Police Station.

The city will take competitive bids for the project with an emphasis on time being of the essence in completing the work, Palmer said.

Once that project is completed, city officials will investigate the remaining storm drains and sidewalks downtown to see if any additional work is needed.

The next regular meeting of the Russellville City Council will be July 20, with work session at 6 p.m., and meeting to follow.



Letters to the Editor

We love to hear from you! Send your guest columns, recipes, cartoons, letters to the editor and other creative submissions to franklinfreepress@yahoo.com.

For updates on news and sports throughout the week, don't forget to check us out online at franklinfreepress.net!

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Have a Sports Story?

Brady Petree, Executive Editor
franklinfreepress@yahoo.com
256.332.0255

Key storylines to watch for in the SEC

Brady Petree
Franklin Free Press



Brady Petree
Sports Editor

This week would have been the week for SEC media days in Atlanta to occur. Unfortunately due to the COVID-19 pandemic, those media days will be happening via ZOOM video conferences, and phone calls.

Although we were robbed of any glorious sound bites that new Mississippi State Head Coach Mike Leach or new Ole Miss Head Coach Lane Kiffin might have given us, we're still able to speculate on a few topics and key storylines that will take hold of college football in the Southeastern Conference as we are just over a month away from kickoff.

These are just a few of the many storylines that college football fans will be paying attention to this fall...

What will the schedule look like?

This is the elephant in the room for not only the SEC, but for college football in general. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, schools and conferences are having to look at shortening or altering their schedules to accommodate health and safety guidelines to ensure player and coach safety. Some conferences like the Patriot League and the Ivy League have already canceled fall sports altogether this year.

While the larger conferences in college football

See 'SEC,' on page 12

A new challenge

Belgreen head boys basketball coach Marty Cooper has coached across three decades and has seen just about everything there is to see when it comes to coaching. Coaching in the midst of a pandemic brings a new set of challenges for Cooper and coaches everywhere.



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

When the basketball season gets underway, Cooper (second from left) will have no shortage of talent to work with including Franklin County's leading scorer Will Bonner.

Brady Petree
Franklin Free Press

BELGREEN - If you want a basketball coach with experience, Marty Cooper is your guy. Cooper has been around the coaching block a time or two and has seen it all. From coaching at the high school level, all the way up to the college ranks in Mississippi, there haven't been too many coaching issues that Cooper hasn't dealt with along the way.

However one thing that he, along with coaches all across the country, have never dealt with, is coaching in the middle of a worldwide pandemic. What would normally be a summer filled with exhibition games, workouts and practices, teams have essentially had to take their operations day-by-day to abide by the health and safety guidelines imposed by the Alabama State Department of Education.

Understandably, Cooper feels as though that while this may not be a normal summer for his squad, they are still attempting to get in work when and where they can.

"I don't feel like we've had a 'normal' practice. We would have done a lot of our stuff in March, April and May in terms of working out and things like that and working on some fundamentals," Cooper said. "Instead we had to work on that stuff

in June instead. Things like ball handling, fixing and correcting shots and things like that we basically spent the entire month of June just doing things like that."

Adhering to the social-distancing guidelines handed down from the state means that while teams can work on individual drills and focusing on getting better player-by-player, it can be difficult to work on things as a team.

Cooper says that while they have been focused on doing things on an individual basis, there have been opportunities for the Bulldogs to do some work involving the team as a whole.

"The only thing we have been able to do as a team is run through our offense together. Just running through it so that everyone knows it," Cooper said. "Of course there's no defense or anyone in front of them when we're trying to run the offense but we're working through it so that when the time comes, hopefully we will be where we want to be and everyone will know the offense."

One aspect that Cooper has understandably shied away from working on his players with, has been conditioning.

Due to the requirements that every player and coach must wear a mask, Cooper says that he wants to make sure that his players' health comes

See 'CHALLENGE,' page 13

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'SEC,' from page 11

aren't likely to make such drastic decisions, it is highly possible that the schedule for this college football season will look different than anything we've seen before.

Conferences like the Big Ten and ACC have already announced they will only play conference games this year and other conferences are considering a similar move.

One scenario that has been floated around, if the SEC elects not to do conference-only games this year, is pairing each SEC division with another conference. For instance, the SEC East will pair with the ACC for their games, and the SEC West will pair with the Big 12 for theirs.

This seems like a next-to-last scenario if all else fails. The most likely outcome in terms of the scheduling for this year in the SEC will be for conference-only games but don't rule out some twists and turns as SEC officials attempt to stay the course as best as they can.

A new era of quarterbacks coming through

Joe Burrow, Tua Tagovailoa and Jake Fromm are all gone from their respective schools hoping that they can have the same level of success at the NFL level as they did in college.

Guys like Bo Nix and Kellen Mond have their positions locked down. But not every school has their quarterback situation figured out just yet.

At Alabama Mac Jones figures to be the top guy from day one. After stepping in for an injured Tagovailoa late last season, Jones threw ten touchdown passes across three and a half games and even led the Tide to a Citrus Bowl victory over Michigan. However, despite the successes that Jones had during the three and a half games last fall, he will have a short leash. If the offense falters or isn't putting up decent numbers, expect to see young guys like Bryce Young get much more playing time early on.

Joe Burrow was phenomenal last season, and that's probably underselling him a little bit. The Heisman trophy winner and number one overall pick in the NFL draft led LSU to its first national title since 2007. With Burrow and a slew of offensive talent gone, it's time to turn the keys to the offense over to someone else. That someone figures to be Myles Brennan. Brennan, the only QB on LSU's roster with any college experience, has completed 42 of 70 passes for 600 yards and two touchdowns across 17 career games. Brennan will have to watch his back though as incoming freshmen like Max

Johnson and T.J. Finley and redshirt freshman Peter Parrish will be chomping at the bit for playing time if Brennan can't keep the offense afloat.

The quarterback conversation at Georgia seemed to be all but finalized as of this past weekend with Jamie Newman seemingly being the guy for Kirby Smart. The Wake Forest transfer threw for 2,868 passing yards and 26 touchdowns while running for another 574 rushing yards and six rushing touchdowns. While those numbers are eye-popping, it must be taken into consideration that those were in the ACC. With Newman getting his first taste of SEC football, it's reasonable to question if those numbers will hold up.

As we mentioned above, Newman figured to be the number one guy without a doubt going into last weekend. That's changed drastically as USC transfer J.T. Daniels got the thumbs-up from the NCAA to start practicing with

See 'SEC,' Page 14

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'CHALLENGE,' from page 11

first and that there will be more than enough time to get into basketball shape in the fall.

"We haven't done any conditioning or anything like that simply because I just didn't want to take a chance on one of our guys getting sick or something like that," Cooper said. "Right now it's not that big of a deal anyways because we know that our first game won't likely come until November sometime. So we've got time to get our kids physically in shape before the season starts."

When and if the season begins on time, Cooper will have an extremely talented roster to file through as he enters his second year at the helm of the Belgreen program. The Bulldogs return three of the top eight scorers in Franklin County in Will Bonner (19.3 PPG in 2019), Scout Bragwell (12.0 PPG in 2019), and Collin Bonner (11.5 PPG in 2019). Add in senior defensive stalwart Isac Willingham to the mix and Cooper might just be looking to improve on that 27-win season the Bulldogs had last season.

There are noticeable differences between this season and last season, particularly regarding the checklists that teams must go through before allowing players or coaches into the gyms for practices at workouts. While these things are abnormal, Cooper says that once on the court, basketball takes over.

"The kids have to work in a certain door before we practice where we check their temperature. Then they have to wash their hands before they begin practicing. Every kid has their own water bottle, towels, and things like that. There's just a lot of things that are different but it's what we have to do to make sure our kids are safe and healthy," Cooper said. "Once you're on the floor and practice starts, no one seems to think much about it. Our guys wear masks and it's not that big of a deal right now since we're just doing individual drills but once we get to doing team things, that'll be another thing we'll have to look at if and when that time comes."

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'SEC,' from page 12

the Bulldogs and figures to challenge Newman for the starting spot. Daniels threw for nearly 3,000 yards with 15 touchdowns and 11 interceptions during his time at USC before an injury derailed his season last year.

Will the SEC coaching press conferences be "must-watch tv"?

This is as close to a surefire "yes" as you can get. In a conference jam-packed with intriguing coaching personalities, there will without a doubt be some viral sound bites that come out of the SEC this year.

Whether it be one of Saban's rants, Orgeron's inspiring cajun-accented speeches, Lane Kiffin not afraid to say whatever is on his mind or Mike Leach who will talk about anything under the sun, the SEC press conferences this year will be must-watch TV.

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AHSAA, coaching committees meet to discuss fall sports issues

Submitted to the FFP

MONTGOMERY – The AHSAA met with its Fall Sports and Football Coaches' Committees last Tuesday through an online virtual meeting and heard updates from the AHSAA Medical Advisory Board Committee and the Alabama State Department of Education.

ALSDE State Superintendent Dr. Eric Mackey gave a brief update concerning the Roadmap to Reopening Schools plan. AHSAA Medical Advisory Board chairman Dr. James Robinson and board member Dr. Jeffery Dugas updated the committees on most recent data and best practices relating to high school sports activities.

AHSAA Executive Director Steve Savarese, Associate Executive Director Alvin Briggs and the AHSAA executive staff discussed the upcoming fall sports season and current COVID 19 challenges that still loom ahead.

Committee members and the AHSAA staff discussed being proactive and the importance of continuing to be at the forefront of following best health and safety practices.

Mr. Savarese enlisted input from the committee members concerning options for fall sports play moving forward. The AHSAA plans to present any recommendations to the Central Board of Control for review and approval at the Board's next meeting, which has been set for July 22.

"We are grateful to Dr. Mackey and Mr. (Terry) Roller of the ALSDE, and Dr. Robinson and Dr. Dugas of our Medical Advisory Committee for taking the time to join our committee meeting," said Savarese. "And we appreciate the discussion and input we received from our own committee members.

"Our world would be in better shape concerning the recent increase in COVID cases if everyone followed the health and safety examples our coaches and administrators provide and practice daily."

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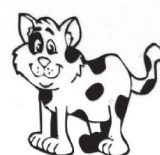
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