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# Times - Courier

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## Search for county's next chief appraiser continues

by Michael Andrews  
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The Gilmer County Board of Tax Assessors' search for a chief appraiser continues as the board reviews candidates for the position left vacant for the third time in a year after retired former chief appraiser Richard Lamb ended his interim tenure with the office in October.

Board chairman Jeff Holloway said the board is currently in contact with three candidates it has in mind for the supervisory position. One candidate, who

Holloway said was from "out of town," was interviewed during an extended executive session conducted at the beginning of the board's most recent monthly meeting Thursday, Dec. 15.

Holloway said the board's goal is to have someone selected for the position and ready to start work by the first of the year. "If things all go well, hopefully we'll have this thing nailed down by the end of the year," Holloway confirmed.

With bank and foreclosure sales now being accepted as fair market

value transactions per state law, the inclusion of those "arms-length" transactions continues to negatively impact property values in Gilmer County. The most recent property digest saw a 13 percent drop in values from the previous year.

With the county's real property values still on the decline and the total value of next year's digest expected to drop even further, whoever is chosen to be Gilmer County's next chief appraiser will already have at least one challenge in front of them.

## Budget hearing reveals property tax surprise

by Ryan R Rees  
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At a public hearing to discuss the proposed 2012 fiscal budget Friday, Dec. 16, the board of commissioners were surprised by the revelation that not all property tax bills have been mailed to property owners, even though final payments were due Dec. 20.

Joene DePlanke told Commission Chairman JC Sanford and Post 2 Commissioner Danny Hall that she had not received her tax bill on 23 acres she owns that are in conservation.

"I've called (tax commission office) several times and was told they are doing them

as fast as they can. After another call, they said they were overwhelmed.

"I volunteered to help them but they said you (the BOC) would have to hire me," she said.

Sanford said he would meet with the tax commissioner later that afternoon to find out why and how many bills hadn't been mailed.

The tax commission office sent out erroneous bills to some residents last fall that included a 1-mill tax increase. However, the state Department of Revenue said that was in error and new bills were mailed, due Dec. 20. All other property taxes were due Nov. 12.

Sanford presented a rosier financial outlook for the coming year than last year. The commissioners will vote on final approval of the \$17,999,134 budget Dec. 29.

The budget includes a contingency fund of \$690,000, that he warned shouldn't be used except for an emergency. "That's not money we can just spend. Any county that doesn't have a contingency fund is foolish," he noted.

The general fund budget is \$16,410,134 with additional revenue coming from E-911, hotel/motel taxes and bond debt services.

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## Charter school board submits application to BOE

### OACS founding board

The Oakland Academy public Charter School in Gilmer County recently announced that its plan for this free public school, called a "charter petition," was formally submitted to the Gilmer County Board of Education and Georgia DOE Charter Schools Division Thursday, Dec. 15.

Pursuant to Georgia's Charter School Act of 1998, "A local board

shall approve a petition that complies with the rules, regulations, policies, and procedures promulgated in accordance with Code Section 20-2-2063 and the provisions of this title and is in the public interest."

The school's founding board members stated, "We expect that the Gilmer County Board of Education (GCBOE) will see Oakland Academy Charter School's (OACS) petition as qualifying under the Charter

School Act of 1998 Code Section 20-2-2063, and serving the public interest as a valuable addition to the system of schools in Gilmer County. The result of these conclusions would be the GCBOE's enthusiastic approval of our charter petition at their January 2012 board meeting."

They went on to explain that based on the submission date of the OACS charter petition, the Gilmer County Board of Education will act upon the charter

petition no later than Monday, Feb. 13, 2012, pursuant to Georgia Code 20-2-2064 (b): "The local board must by a majority vote approve or deny a petition no later than 60 days after its submission."

The most significant of the many changes that were made to the OACS charter petition after a draft and public meeting held Nov. 23, was to adjust the OACS attendance zone. The petition now states that, "The

OACS attendance zone will correspond to the entire geographical area of Gilmer County, Georgia, as served by the Gilmer County School System." This change was made in response to community members' requests that OACS serve the whole county.

Visit the website oaklandcharterschool.com to read the full petition.

For more information, contact oaklandcharter@gmail.com.

## Grand Jury indicts 41 people on 82 criminal counts

The December term of the Gilmer County Grand Jury handed down indictments on 41 people that covered 82 counts of criminal activity, a majority of them felonies.

The charges ranged from murder to child molestation to aggravated assault to battery.

The murder indictment was against Loretta Ivey and involved five counts: malice murder, aggravated assault, concealing a death, abandonment of a

dead body and tampering with evidence. Ivey is accused of murdering John Patrick Hade in 2007.

A number of the charges involved illegal drugs and prescription drugs.

An official list of indictments is supplied to the *Times-Courier* by the Gilmer County Clerk of Court's Office. For a complete list of the indictments, see page 9C of this edition of the *Times-Courier*.

## 2011 – The year in review

### From Times-Courier archives

#### January 2011

- Ellijay Police Capt. Jack Panchot retires after over 40 years of service to the public. The veteran officer was particularly known for his work with the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program in Gilmer schools.

- Snowfall ranging from 4 to 10 inches reported throughout the community, causing snow days to add up for local schools.

- A house fire claims the life of one Gilmer County man in the early morning hours of Friday, Jan. 14.

- A new fuel tank designed to handle jet A fuel is installed at the Gilmer County Airport, thus allowing the facility to expand its services and attract new types of business, such as helicopter refueling.

- The local library reduces its hours of operation in response to a 12 percent drop in funding.

- The Gilmer County Board of Education discusses how to approach a \$6 million budget gap and poten-

tial cuts.

- Mitchell Morgan, United Community Bank of Ellijay chairman, is named Citizen of the Year at the annual Gilmer Chamber of Commerce banquet.

#### February 2011

- The Board of Commissioners decides to hold plans for a ball field project near Clear Creek Middle School because of lack of funds. The board also discusses charging for household garbage collection.

- Oakland Elementary School hosts a community meeting to discuss the school's future in light of pending school system budget cuts.

- The Ellijay-Gilmer County Water and Sewerage Authority votes to move forward in creating a plan to connect existing infrastructure to the aging water system in place at gated Walnut Mountain.

- Gilmer County Sheriff's deputies and SWAT team members from both Gilmer and Cherokee counties bring peaceful end to an almost 10-hour standoff

with an armed man.

- BOC chairman JC Sanford tours a Dalton recycling facility to get ideas to better deal with Gilmer's solid waste management.

- A fire destroys the old Plymart center in Ellijay the afternoon of Tuesday, Feb. 15.

- A man accused of raping the 13-year-old daughter of his girlfriend at her Ellijay residence turns himself in to the Gwinnett County Sheriff's Office.

- Two people are arrested in connection with a cocaine

investigation and authorities seize 18 grams of the drug, which has a street value of \$1,800.

#### March 2011

- Spring arrives, but the BOC members remain at an impasse on the county's household garbage collection and whether or not to privatize the service.

- Gilmer loses several acres of taxable property when the county line that separates Gilmer and Fannin is clarified to avoid

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## Times-Courier New Years schedule

With New Years Day falling on Sunday this year, the *Times-Courier* will close at noon Friday, Dec. 30, but will be open Monday, Jan. 2, at 8:30 a.m.

**The deadline for real estate advertisements will be Friday, Dec. 30, at noon. The deadline for legal advertisements will also be Friday, Dec. 30, at noon. The deadline for editorial and other submissions will be at noon Tuesday, Jan. 3, and this deadline will be adamantly observed.**

Please try to submit advertisement and news copy to us by Friday, Dec. 30. This will ensure that your material gets published in the Thursday, Jan. 5, edition.

Have a happy and safe New Year from the publishers and staff of the *Times-Courier*.