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McCONNELLSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

OCTOBER 30, 2008

SF Head Says Lack Of Teacher Help Linked To Compensation

Shares views on dual enrollment program in response to letter to the editor

By Chanin Rotz-Mountz
STAFF WRITER

The issues of dual enrollment courses and the proposed "double dipping" of payment for services were again brought to the forefront of last Tuesday's Southern Fulton School Board meeting when the district superintendent publicly went on the record in response to a recent letter to the editor.

Superintendent Ralph Scott quickly and pointedly answered a question posed by the Karen Solomon, president of the Southern Fulton Education Association (SFEA), in a letter to the editor published by The Fulton County News on October 9. In the letter, Solomon asked "what was the problem" between the administration and the bargaining unit in determining whether college courses would be taught during school hours by existing staff or by an outside professional associated with Allegany College of Maryland (ACM).

Scott informed the board and those in attendance on October 21 the problem boiled down to "money."

In a document detailing 13 various points, Scott confirmed that the early college program got under way at Southern Fulton in 2005. Since that time, 24 students took college English, while 22 were enrolled in psychology before and/or after school hours.

Due to the low enrollment numbers, Scott stated the district wished to branch out in a new direction and offer classes during the school day to give a larger number of students the opportunity to enroll through ACM. In turn, the district, through ACM, would be reimbursed \$2,100 for each class with the funding earmarked for class supplies or for the textbooks of participating students.

"The high school principal (Dr. Brett Gilliland) was approached in the spring of 2008 and informed that SFEA thought the teachers should be paid for teaching the course. However, this superintendent considered the concept as 'double dipping.' In checking with nearby dis-

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An employee of CM Fuels Inc. of Spring Run, Pa., "fills 'er up" with fuel oil in preparation for the upcoming heating season. The prediction is that this winter will be slightly colder than last year, and that all fuel prices will be higher by 10 to 25 percent.

High Heating Costs, Economic Woes Make For Uneasy Winter

Fuel prices higher this winter, help is available

By Jean Snyder
STAFF WRITER

If the U.S. Department of Energy's predictions turn out to be correct, average household expenditures for all space-heating fuels are projected to be at least 15 percent higher over last year's expenditures.

According to the Energy Information Administration (EIA), household costs this winter will average \$1,137 (from October 1-March 31) as compared to the estimated \$986 spent last winter. The EIA also predicts that the largest increases will primarily be in households using heating oil and natural gas. Homes heating with propane can expect an 11.3 percent increase in cost this year, while those heating with electricity can expect a 10.4 percent increase. But homes heating with fuel oil can expect the highest increase projected at about 23 percent higher than last winter.

Locally, temperatures have dropped in the past two weeks and light snow is predicted in the moun-

tains west of here. As homeowners turn on their "heat" to take the edge off freezing morning temperatures, many are concerned that, along with other economic woes, keeping warm this winter may prove to be costly—at a time when extra money is often not available.

With the county's unemployment rate higher than that of the state or nation (Fulton currently has the 65th highest unemployment rate out of 67 counties), households are struggling to balance their budgets.

And if that news isn't bad enough, the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is also projecting this winter to be 2.4 percent colder than last winter but 1.7 percent warmer than the 30-year average. EIA also projects oil markets to "remain tight over the next six months" because of sluggish production growth and recovery from hurricanes Gustav and Ike in the Gulf of Mexico. Although the prediction is that crude oil prices could go back to \$120 per barrel by April 2009, this week oil prices were down to just over \$69/barrel, reflected in lower gasoline prices for now.

Current home heating oil prices

Locally, home heating oil prices fluctuated on Monday from a low of \$2.61/gallon from CM Fuels Inc. of Spring Run to \$3.49/gallon at Shipley. Prices from E.C. Barnes, St. Thomas (\$2.759/gallon); Twin Oil, Neelyton (\$2.82/gallon); and Bedford Valley Petroleum (\$2.759/gallon) all fell in the middle of the high and low prices.

If the prices seem high, it's likely because the home-heating season is just beginning. However, fuel oil prices have been higher in the recent past. At E.C. Barnes, heating oil was \$3.67/gallon as recently as August of this year. As recently as one week ago, it was \$2.899/gallon. A spokesperson for Barnes said their highest prices were in July of this year when a gallon rose to \$4.15.

The spokesperson also said that while heating oil prices have fluctuated, kerosene prices have remained relatively the same—\$3.99/gallon. At Blue Flame in Hancock, Md., propane gas was averaging \$3.41/gallon for 250 gallons.

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Voters To Pick New Leader November 4

Registered voters urged to have their say in historic election

By Chanin Rotz-Mountz
STAFF WRITER

The clock is ticking down and history will be made in less than a week when registered voters head to the polls across the nation on November 4 to elect what will be either the country's first black president or female vice president. With so little time remaining and the future of the nation riding on this one decision, local party chairmen have only one suggestion for area residents – get out and vote!

"Local voters can and should remind their family and friends to vote on Tuesday, November 4, for the John McCain/Sarah Palin ticket," Fulton County GOP Chairman Mikeal Fix told the "News." "Even with all the media coverage, political ads, mailings and phone calls, there will be some people who will still forget to vote."

Meanwhile, longtime Democrat party Chairman Rheon Gelvin also urged voters to head out to the polls instead of sitting back, talking about it and not liking the end result. Looking ahead to the possible outcome in Fulton County, Gelvin forecasted a 50/50 split between voters during the presidential election.

In addition, race and gender, according to Gelvin, could be "somewhat" of a deciding factor for voters in Fulton County as well as in neighboring Franklin and Bedford counties.

"Statewide, I think we'll carry the state. I think the Democrats will fare better than what we have in prior elections, given the situations that have arisen during the last eight years," concluded Gelvin.

Fix countered that the Republicans still have a good chance with their candidates to pull off a win in Pennsylvania. "We need an overwhelming turnout in rural Pennsylvania, the 'T' Gov. Rendell smust also think PA is still in play or he wouldn't have sent two memos to the Obama campaign to get him back in PA in these final days before the election," he said.

Locally, Fix said the election

comes back to conservatism versus liberalism and predicts that Sen. McCain will be well received here in following Republican tradition. "Fulton County is a conservative county where people work for what they have. People here don't expect the government to hand to them what they aren't willing to work for on their own and aren't interested in having their income 'redistributed' like Obama wants to do. Thomas Jefferson is credited as saying, 'The democracy will cease to exist when you take away from those who are willing to work and give to those who would not.'" Fix stated.

In regard to racism in the county, Fix maintains it is not as widespread of an issue as many on the left side would want others to believe. Backing his statement, Fix related that in 2006, in the race for Pennsylvania's governor, 62 percent of the votes cast in Fulton County were for Lynn Swann, a black conservative.

Voter registration reports in Fulton County show 3,494 Democrats and 5,514 Republicans among the 9,824 registered to vote. The breakdown also shows 316 individuals registered as "others" and an additional 315 having "no affiliation." Furthermore, as of Friday, 369 absentee ballots have been issued to date, making the 2008 presidential election similar to the 358 absentee ballots issued four years ago.

As alternatives to Obama and McCain in Pennsylvania, voters can cast their vote in favor of Independents Ralph Nader and Matt Gonzalez or Libertarians Bob Barr and Wayne A. Root.

On the ticket for attorney general, Republican incumbent Tom Corbett will square off against Democratic contender John M. Morganeli and Marakay J. Rogers of the Lib-

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County's Jobless Stats Drop Slightly

Improves in Sept. but actual August UE rates higher than reported

By Jean Snyder
STAFF WRITER

Fulton County's unemployment rate dropped by 1.5 percentage points in September, going from 9.2 percent in August to 7.7 percent in September, according to preliminary figures released by the Department of Labor and Industry last week. The seasonally adjusted data for Fulton County showed unemployment at 600, with a total labor force of 8,000 for the county in September. By comparison, the September 2007, unemployment rate for Fulton was only 5.7 percent.

Last month, it was reported that Fulton's unemployment rate for August was 8.5 percent. Because the Dept. of Labor and Industry (L&I) reports preliminary figures, actual unemployment rates are subject to change. According to this month's report, August's rate was actually much higher at 9.2 percent. That rate also put Fulton County in the number 67 position in the state for August, meaning that the county experienced the highest unemployment rate in Pennsylvania.

According to an L&I spokesperson, "there was an upward revision for the final rate in Fulton County in August. As more data is collected, rates are subject to change. Border counties can be particularly affected since there may be a delay in getting claims data from surrounding states."

Walt Nichols, L&I analyst, said, See UNEMPLOYMENT, Page A2

Vo-Tech Assessing Priority Jobs, Curriculum

By Chanin Rotz-Mountz
STAFF WRITER

Due to the ever-changing economy and job market, the Fulton County Area Vocational-Technical School is continuing its efforts to prepare area students for job opportunities not only in the area but the commonwealth through the preparation of a detailed listing of high-priority occupations.

In her executive director's report recently released to members of the vo-tech's Joint Operating Committee (JOC), Elizabeth Cheattle noted the majority of course offerings at the AVTS can directly lead to high-priority occupations at a regional or state level. As an example, students completing course work in welding technology would be more capable of obtaining a job as a welder, cutter or solderer in the state as well as the Southern Alleghenies region than a student studying horticulture and seeking future employment as a landscaper or groundskeeper.

In addition to jobs in welding, other high-priority jobs in the region include ag sales representatives, construction supervisors, mechanical drafters, architectural and civil drafters, bill and account collectors, customer-service representatives, receptionists, shipping and receiving clerks, secretaries, administrative assistants and insurance claims and policy processing clerks. In comparison, Cheattle further re-

lated hot jobs across the state, but not necessary in this region, include preschool teachers, childcare workers, healthcare support workers, bookkeepers and accounting and auditing clerks.

Even though the AVTS continues to monitor the job front for graduates planning on entering the workforce or moving into postsecondary schooling, Cheattle stated the vo-tech is not currently interested in eliminating any existing programs such as ag production or mechanization. They are, however, Cheattle indicated, always searching for new programs that will aid the student body.

Under new scheduling adjustments, a student must complete three periods of AVTS course work daily during their sophomore, junior and senior years. Anyone taking less than the three classes daily are considered to be taking electives and cannot be counted as an AVTS student.

Currently, a total of 176 students are enrolled at the McConnellsburg-based AVTS. The numbers are consistent with 2007-08 enrollment numbers that were recorded at 177. Those figures, Cheattle said, represent 29 percent of the overall eligible student population in the county and are consistent with the statewide average of 27 to 34 percent.

Courses seeing the largest number of student participation are co-op (39), allied health (23), welding

(22), drafting and design (21), childcare (17) and ag production (16). The business occupation course has a total of five students enrolled, while no students are participating through the AVTS in ag mechanics or horticulture.

To increase the viability of their program and future success of their students, Cheattle noted the AVTS is taking steps to meet business certifications and industry standards in both the areas of building trades and welding. In fact, five design and drafting students are scheduled to take American Design and Drafting Association certification tests on December 19. Students passing the test will be reimbursed 50 percent of the \$100 required to undergo testing.

In other business reviewed by the JOC, approval was granted to pay guidance counselor Christian Wahl to work an additional five days at the conclusion of the 2008-09 school year to prepare Perkins assurances. Wahl will receive a per diem rate of \$215.39 for a total of \$1,076.95. The additional time can be applied to Wahl's current overpayment due to a miscalculation in her 2007-08 salary.

In connection with their nurse aide instructor duties for the clinical portion of the CNA program at Fulton County Medical Center, Vonnice Miller and Amy Swank were approved to receive \$22.55 and \$20.80 per hour as previously budgeted.

Furthermore, the annual clinical agreement was approved with Fulton County Medical Center as presented to the JOC.

Todd Wolford was granted authorization to mentor Elisa Ramsey, welding instructor retroactive to September 2008 through August 2009. Wolford is slated to receive a stipend of \$500 for his duties.

In addition, Wolford was added to the list of adult education instructors in the area of drafting at the hourly rate of \$20.

Linda Banks, Jessica Dovey, Jolinda Harkless, John Henry Sr., John Hodge, Cheryl and Frank Stearn, Brittany Frost, Debbie Duran and Deborah Remeikas were added to the substitute list pending the receipt of clearances.

Two students from the Tuscarora Blended Learning Charter School were added to the roster as tuition-paying students retroactive to August 27. One student will be enrolled in childcare, and the remaining student will be taking allied health.

Approval was given to use up to \$5,000 from the 2008-09 budgetary reserves as a match for the Ag & Rural Youth Grant. The funding has been earmarked for the Safe Program, and computers will be purchased so ag students have the capability to produce farm emergency response maps for local emergency responders.

An additional grant in the amount of \$31,815 from the 2008-09

HALLOWEEN IN THE BOROUGH
Thursday, October 30
Halloween parade lineup from 6-6:30 p.m. at the library. Parade begins at 6:30 p.m. Borough residents wishing to participate in trick-or-treating are asked to leave their porch lights on between 6-8:00 p.m.

DEATHS

Chesnut, Julia, 89, McConnellsbg.
Funk, Robert, 79, State Line
Keebaugh, Betty, McConnellsbg.
Rouser, William, 78, Saxton
Umbrell, Walter, 88, Chambersbg.
Wills, Opal, 74, Berk. Spgs., W. Va.

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