

THURSDAY  
WEEKLY

# The Fulton County News

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MCCONNELLSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

JANUARY 1, 2009

## Trial Date Scheduled In Murder-For-Hire Case

Rouzer trial in Franklin County tentatively set for April

By Chanin Rotz-Mountz  
STAFF WRITER

Gregory Aaron Rouzer will finally have his day in court this spring after several continuances were granted by the Court of Common Pleas in 2008 for the 40-year-old Harrisonville man who remains lodged in the Franklin County Prison, convicted of attempting to shoot and kill a man outside a Sipes Mill Road home.

Already convicted in Fulton County of attempted homicide as well as various assault charges in the February 7, 2008, shooting of Randy Walters and sentenced to a minimum of 14 years and seven months in a state correctional institution, Rouzer is slated to again appear before a judge of the Court of Common Pleas in April 2009 on additional charges of criminal solicitation-criminal homicide and criminal conspiracy engaging-criminal homicide. Both counts are graded as felony one.

Charged in Franklin County by local investigator Trooper M.B. Gordon of the McCConnellsburg state police substation, the two counts stem from alleged talks with a fellow prison inmate about wanting to keep Walters and Walters' girlfriend, Marian Wertz, from testifying in court. The talks ended with Rouzer obtaining the services of a hit man, who was in actuality an undercover officer.

In addition to charges being filed against Rouzer, charges were also filed against Rouzer's ex-girlfriend, Mildred "Midge" Tressler of Mercersburg. Tressler reportedly met with the undercover officer, and if approved by the court, she will be tried simultaneously with Rouzer during his tentative trial date set for April 8 and 9. Jury selection is slated for March 9.

The ruling to grant an additional continuance and delay the trial until the next trial term was

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## Ceremony Held To Honor Late Dr. McLucas

A small private ceremony was held last week honoring the memory of a beloved local physician, Dr. Russell C. McLucas. The ceremony was held on the 10th anniversary of his passing.

A portrait of the late physician, commissioned by the Fulton County Medical Center (FCMC) and painted by local artist Anne Gobin, will hang in the center's Wall of History corridor. FCMC staff members, physicians and family members remembered the physician who practiced at the center from January 1953 through December 1998, serving Fulton County for nearly 46 years.

## Disbanded Police Force Marks End Of An Era



Just as the clock strikes midnight on Wednesday evening signaling the beginning of a new year, that time will also mark the end of borough police services in McCConnellsburg. The McCConnellsburg Police Association's current contract ends at 11:59 p.m. on December 31, and this summer the borough council voted to disband the police department citing economic reasons. The new year will bring to a close nearly 80 years of local police protection for borough citizens. Both current officers, Chief Gary Long and Sergeant Doug Thomas, have served on the two-man force for 25 years. Earlier this month, council and the police union came to an agreement on end-of-contract issues as a result of binding arbitration. That agreement, according to the borough's solicitor, will be made public after it is signed by all parties, likely in the very near future. The local police officers formed a labor union in 2002 and negotiated two three-year labor contracts prior to council's decision to abolish the department.

## Zechman To Head Mercersburg Police

Fort Littleton man appointed to fill chief's position

By Chanin Rotz-Mountz  
STAFF WRITER

A "delighted" borough council and mayor selected a local, retired Pennsylvania State Police sergeant last Monday to take the helm of the Mercersburg Borough Police Department.

John Zechman, who retired

from the state police in April 2007 after logging approximately 39 years with the law enforcement agency, was unanimously hired to replace former police Chief Larry Thomas. Thomas retired in October, and officer George Weber has since stepped up to serve as acting chief until Zechman is sworn in.

Even though there were a total of nine applicants for the position, only three were interviewed by the Mercersburg Bor-

ough Council's Personnel Committee. Zechman's resume was a "stand out" among the applicants, the borough council added in its public announcement.

During his stint with the state police, Zechman worked at the McCConnellsburg, Bedford and Harrisburg barracks. Under his new duties in Mercersburg, the Fort Littleton resident will be in charge of manning a department comprising two full-time officers

## Icy Conditions Lead To Many Car Accidents

State police respond to accidents across the county Dec. 24

By Chanin Rotz-Mountz  
STAFF WRITER

Making a last-minute trip to the grocery store in preparation for Christmas lunch or heading to the mall for gift-giving purchases on December 24 proved to be too much for multiple motorists who found themselves slipping and sliding off Fulton County's ice-covered roadways.

Pennsylvania State Police at the McCConnellsburg barracks responded to numerous accidents throughout the morning and early afternoon hours last Wednesday in connection with the freezing rain that plagued much of the county. Trooper

Brett J. Massafra was one of several troopers on duty to investigate the accidents that ranged from Timber Ridge Road to Interstate 70.

Trooper Massafra reported to the "News" at 9:38 a.m. Wells Tannery resident Charles Eugene Cook lost control of his northbound vehicle, which struck a utility pole near the intersection of Great Cove Road and Meadow Lane. Cook, 70, was transported to Fulton County Medical Center for treatment of injuries following the crash in Todd Township.

Monroeville, Pa., resident Ashley Nicole Hassell, according to Trooper Massafra, also had trouble with the icy roadway conditions while traveling along Interstate 70 at 11:05 a.m. Hassell's eastbound vehicle slid into a guiderail and crossed both eastbound lanes, where it was then struck by a commercial-grade tractor-trailer. The tractor-trailer continued heading eastbound without stopping, Trooper Massafra added.

Both Hassell, 23, and passenger Craig Stephen Smith II, 25, of University Heights, Ohio, were wearing seat belts when the crash occurred near mile marker 162.5.

Trooper Massafra related 26-year-old McCConnellsburg resident Brenda Israel Strait lost control of her northbound vehicle along the 6200 block of Timber Ridge Road at 11:38 a.m. The vehicle went onto the western berm, where it collided with a tree and overturned.

Strait and her passengers, a 14-year-old Needmore girl and a 1-year-old boy and a 4-year-old boy, both from McCConnellsburg, were transported to Fulton County Medical Center for treatment immediately following the Thompson Township crash.

Trooper Massafra indicated in his report both the 1- and 4-year-olds were secured in child safety seats, but Strait and the teen were not using seat belts.

Meanwhile, Trooper Clifford Greenfield responded to a 12:08 p.m. accident near the Fulton/Bedford County border in East Providence Township. An eastbound 2004 Chevrolet Silverado driven by 53-year-old Carl D. Souders ran off Route 30 and struck an embankment. The truck overturned and came to a final rest on its roof, partially blocking the westbound lane.

Souders, of Wells Tannery, was wearing a seat belt and suffered minor injuries. He was transported via Breezewood Volunteer Fire Co. to UPMC Bedford Memorial Hospital.

State police were assisted during the series of accidents by the Tinman Body Shop, Breezewood and McCConnellsburg volunteer fire companies.

## Wilmot To Announce Judicial Candidacy

Seeks seat in Court of Common Pleas

By Chanin Rotz-Mountz  
STAFF WRITER

A Chambersburg-based attorney will be making a formal announcement next week to throw his hat into the ring in hopes of securing one of two vacant judicial seats within the Court of Common Pleas.

Attorney-at-law Timothy D. Wilmot of 998 Scotland Avenue will be publicly meeting with local officials and residents at the Fulton County Courthouse

on Monday, January 5, at 4 p.m. in conjunction with kicking off his bid for office.

According to Wilmot's extensive resume, he has served as an assistant district attorney in neighboring Franklin County during the last nine years and has represented the common-



Wilmot

wealth in more than 2,000 sentencing proceedings. In connection with his duties at the district attorney's office, Wilmot has also served in the capacity of domestic violence/sexual assault prosecutor and county task force member.

In regard to his family law experience, Wilmot was first appointed by the court system in 1996 as the divorce hearing master for both Fulton and Franklin counties and has presided over at least 500 divorce cases. He has also represented children in numerous parental rights cases.

Wilmot has spent a total of two years as the "contract attorney" dealing with inmate civil claims at the Franklin County Prison and has represented clientele in contract matters and in commercial real estate sales in excess of \$6 million.

In addition to community involvement ranging from volunteer umpiring with Chambersburg Little League and Suburban League to nonprofit affiliations with the Salvation Army and N.E.T. Work Ministries, Wilmot remained on active duty

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## Commissioners Conduct Routine Business

Judge Herman to be sworn in as president judge

By Chanin Rotz-Mountz  
STAFF WRITER

The Fulton County commissioners signed a series of requests for payments and change orders in connection with the ongoing renovations at the Fulton County Library last Tuesday amid a series of routine meetings held with county employees and department heads.

Chairperson Bonnie Mellott Keefer was granted authoriza-

tion to sign a change order from SSM Industries totalling \$1,381 for the relocation of a water heater. In addition, five requests for payment in the amount of \$253,947.81 were signed for Eagle Construction Co., SSM Industries and R&S Electric.

In an unrelated matter addressed December 23, the commissioners granted use of the courthouse hallway on Tuesday, January 6, for a reception to honor Judge Douglas Herman, who will be sworn in as president judge of the Fulton/Franklin County Court of Common Pleas. Permission was

granted to McCConnellsburg-based attorney James Schall for the event.

Technology director Eldon Martin updated the board on an array of issues, including the development of a video outlining the ins and outs of the newly approved countywide Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance (LERTA) program. County solicitor Stanley Kerlin is slated to appear on the video, which will be shared with local school districts and municipalities.

Martin also reviewed computer needs for the business

office and GIS information available to the public with the commissioners.

Commissioner Daniel Swain Jr. was appointed to a one-year term of office as the commissioners' representative on the Conservation District Board of Directors.

The commissioners also conducted two executive sessions to privately discuss personnel matters. Human Services Administrator Jean Snyder, business manager Tim Stanton and solicitor Kerlin were on hand for one of the meetings. No action was taken.

## Hess Named Commerce Committee Chairman

Rep. Dick Hess (R-Bedford/Fulton/Huntingdon) announced last week that he was tapped by Republican leader Rep. Sam Smith (R-Jefferson/Indian/Armstrong) to serve as Republican chairman of the House Commerce Committee for the 2009-10 legislative session.

"I am honored to have been picked once again to serve the Republican Caucus in this capacity," Hess said. "We have numerous issues facing the commonwealth in the coming year, and I am committed to ensuring that my colleagues and I have a voice in shaping legislative poli-

cies to bring about positive change for all Pennsylvanians." Hess, who has served as Commerce Committee chairman since 2007, was chosen by Smith due to his vast experience and seniority in the Republican Caucus.

As one of the most important committees in the House, the Commerce Committee is responsible for oversight of economic development and banking issues throughout the commonwealth, such as the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA). PHFA helps enhance the quality and supply of

affordable homes and apartments for older adults, persons of modest means, and persons with disabilities. The agency operates homeownership programs, rental housing development initiatives, and a foreclosure prevention effort.

Most notable, during the 2007-2008 session, the committee advanced several pieces of legislation to reform the commonwealth's mortgage industry. One of the new laws requires individual mortgage originators to be licensed in order to work with borrowers in obtaining home financing.

Due to the economic downturn that has affected the national and state economies, the committee will be active in considering legislation that will have long-term beneficial effects on Pennsylvania's fiscal health.

Prior to serving as Commerce Committee chairman, Hess served as chairman of the House Aging and Older Adult Services Committee during the 2003-04 and the 2005-06 legislative sessions.

"When the new session convenes in January, I intend to hit

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### DEATHS

**Bain**, Harry, 94, Big Cove Tannery  
**Brant**, Margaret, 92, Orange, Va.  
**Cover**, Lillian, 90, McCbg.  
**Whitmore**, Helen, 73, Chmbrsbg.

**Woodal**, Frank, 82, Needmore

OBITUARIES, Page B3



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