

# The Clayton Tribune

THURSDAY, June 9, 2011

www.theclaytontribune.com

Vol. 114, No. 23 ■ 75 CENTS

## School facilities to get facelift

By Jessi Stone  
Staff Writer

The Rabun County Board of Education plans to spend \$11 million in Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax funds before 2015 for school facility renovations and equipment. Superintendent Matt Arthur

said the board had many of the same plans for the current SPLOST but ran out of money after the Fine Arts Building was built at Rabun County High School.

Phase one of the state facility plan will be completed this summer and will cost about \$1.4 million. It will include fix-

ing the football field at Frank Snyder Memorial Stadium.

"It hasn't been redone in 30 years," Arthur said.

Although many schools are switching to FieldTurf, he said he decided against it because it

### INSIDE

■ Related editorial on page A4.

would cost \$700,000 to install and would have to be replaced every 10 years.

Arthur said the track also was overdue for a replacement because the rubber was starting to fall apart. He said two more lanes

needed to be added to the track to accommodate the increasing number of participants.

The concession stand will be torn down to make way for a new visitors facility at the football stadium. Arthur said the current bathrooms were

Please see **SCHOOL**, A7

## Paying at the pump



Jeremy Styron/The Clayton Tribune

RaceTrac bulges with customers at the pump Tuesday afternoon as gas prices in Rabun County approached the \$3.70 mark early this week. While the average price for a gallon of unleaded gasoline in Georgia is about \$3.60, prices in numerous locations in the Atlanta area are hovering around \$3.50, according to GasBuddy.com.

## Expect gasoline prices to remain high, experts say

By Jeremy Styron  
News Editor

With prices for a gallon of unleaded gasoline approaching \$3.70 in Rabun County — conspicuously inflated compared to other locations in Georgia — residents may be wondering whether relief will come any time soon.

The answer, at least in the short term, appears to be no.

"The gas prices will fluctuate, but they're going to remain high" throughout the summer, said Rajeev Dhawan, director of the Economic Forecasting Center at Georgia State University.

As of Tuesday, Circle K and I Market in Clayton were offering the cheapest gas in the county at \$3.65 per gallon for unleaded, according to GasBuddy.com. The state average was \$3.59 as of early this week, and gas prices at numerous locations in the Atlanta area hovered around \$3.50. Likewise, most gas price listings in Cornelia,

### By the numbers

Following is list of gasoline prices in select cities across Georgia (as of Tuesday):

Town	Location	Price
Clayton	Circle K	\$3.65
Cornelia	RaceTrac	\$3.58
Clarksesville	Ingles	\$3.64
Toccoa	Murphy USA	\$3.52
Acworth	Home Depot	\$3.44
Athens	Sam's Club	\$3.52
Savannah	Sam's Club	\$3.41
Georgia (avg.)		\$3.60
South Carolina (avg.)		\$3.44
North Carolina (avg.)		\$3.64
United States (avg.)		\$3.76

Source: GasBuddy.com

This sign at On the Run in Rabun Gap shows the price of a gallon of unleaded gasoline at \$3.69 on Tuesday afternoon.



Toccoa and Clarksesville were lower than in Rabun.

"I see that all over the state wherever I go," said Jeff Humphreys, director of the Simon S. Selig Jr. Center for Economic Growth at the University of Georgia, about price differences in various parts of the state. "Per-

centage-wise, that's a very small differential."

Representatives from Hasty Mart in Dillard and RaceTrac in Clayton could not be reached for comment. Steve Hall, with Flowery Branch-based Clipper Petroleum, Inc., which owns the BP station in Clayton and On the Run in Rabun

Gap, did not return calls left at his office.

Dhawan said crude oil prices, which are currently a little less than \$100 per barrel, will likely not go below \$80 in the foreseeable future. He said most of Georgia's supply of gasoline,

Please see **GAS**, A9

## New routes for I-3

### Highway 441 not likely choice

By Jessi Stone  
Staff Writer

While Rabun County may now be spared from the proposed Interstate 3, new routes may put Dahlonega in danger.

WaysSouth, the new name for the Stop I-3 Coalition, met May 25 in Dahlonega to discuss the four new alternative plans set forth by Federal Highway Administration consultants who conducted a study for a highway to connect Savannah to Knoxville, Tenn.

WaysSouth and Georgia ForestWatch are encouraging supporters to submit letters and

emails of opposition to the FHA.

Georgia ForestWatch member Joe Gatins, of the Satolah community, said it appeared the alternative route Corridor A was the most popular option because it avoided national forests.

Corridor A would skirt Athens to Commerce and below Dahlonega before following Highway 52 and Highway 76 to Ellijay and Chatsworth before linking to I-75 to Knoxville.

WaysSouth board member Lucy Bartlett of Tiger said more than 50 people attended the

Please see **ROAD**, A16

## Authority wants original water deal

By Jessi Stone  
Staff Writer

The Clayton-Rabun County Water and Sewer Authority is giving Clayton six months notice before it reverts back to the original water-purchase agreement.

Authority member Randy Speed made a motion for the authority to go back to its original agreement by charging Clayton per thousand gallons of water. He said the authority signed a five-year "cost plus" agreement in 2002 to

allow the city time to get its water loss under control.

After operating under that contract for eight years, Speed said he felt like the county had decreased the water loss enough to revert back to the wholesale water agreement.

City Manager Cissy Henry reported that the water loss was at 33 percent, which is a 4 percent increase from last month.

While Speed recommended giving Clayton

Please see **WATER**, A16

## Young Wildcats storm hardcourt



Jeremy Styron/The Clayton Tribune

Ricky Mason, right, 11, breaks hard to the hole during the annual Wildcat basketball camp at Rabun County High School. About 25 children ages 5-14 participated in the camp, which focused on fundamental skills.

By Jeremy Styron  
News Editor

While members of the Dallas Mavericks and Miami Heat have reached the pinnacle of basketball success, vying for the championship in the NBA Finals this week, a group of local youngsters are at the genesis of their careers.

About 25 children ages 5-14 participated in the Wildcat basketball camp this week at Rabun County High School, which was led by 'Cats head coach Jeff Page, assistant coach Jonathan Welch and six volunteers from the Wildcats basketball team.

During the camp, which took place Monday-Wednesday, children

Please see **CAMP**, A7

### INDEX

Calendar .....B7  
Church .....B4  
Classified.....C1  
Honor Roll.....A5  
Letters.....A4  
Medical Directory.....B5  
NASCAR.....A13  
Obituaries .....A6  
Police Blotter.....A2  
Service Directory .....C1  
Sports.....A10  
TV Guide .....B6  
Weather .....A8

### WEATHER

**High 86-90**  
**Low 63-64**

Rain chance all weekend  
See page **A8**



Become a **Subscriber** today and

**The Clayton Tribune**

will be delivered weekly with all the news, sports and advertising information for Rabun County.

**1-year, in-county subscription: \$25**

**2-year, in-county subscription: \$42**

120 North Main St., Clayton, Georgia 30525

**706-782-3312**

# ROAD

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

Dahlonega meeting, including two Lumpkin County commissioners. "Dahlonega is very disturbed about this," she said. "They already have (Georgia Highway) 400 and everything it's brought with it. The last thing they want is another highway."

Even though the route wouldn't go directly through national forest, Bartlett said the route would go alongside it. She said increased traffic through the area would still have negative impacts on natural resources and wildlife habitats.

The second option, Corridor B, would affect Rabun County because the proposed route is from Toccoa to Franklin, N.C., along Highway 441 before linking to Highway 129, which would affect the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Bartlett said the Corridor B route was found to have "fatal flaws" because

■  
**"It's ridiculous to spend \$6 billion on something we don't need."**  
 — **Lucy Bartlett**  
 ■

building a highway directly through the mountains was difficult, expensive and detrimental to the environment.

Corridor C would run from Lavonia to Rosman, N.C., along the Blue Ridge Parkway through the Great Smoky Mountains National Park to Knoxville. Corridor D would follow I-26 and Highway 25 to Asheville and Knoxville.

The federal highway consultants conducting the Third Infantry Division Highway Corridor study met on April 28 to discuss the steps and costs of the four new plans. Based on terrain and road type, the estimated cost for structures, interchanges, intersections and mitigations in Tennessee is \$10.9 million per mile and \$9.5 million per mile

in Georgia, according to the highway study.

According to the study, the estimated cost for acquiring rights of way in Tennessee is \$93,000 per project mile and \$150,000 per acre in Georgia. The four design options include a two-lane road, a super two-lane road, a four-lane divided highway or an interstate.

The study recognized that residents in eastern Tennessee, western North Carolina and Northeast Georgia "are very attuned to environmental issues." The study stated that unofficial polls in North Georgia in 2006-07 indicated that 90 percent of respondents were opposed to the idea of a new highway.

"Otherwise, strong opposition can be expected, which could represent an obstacle to any of the corridors developed," the study read.

A press release from ForestWatch advised supporters to oppose all plans and demand the corridor study to end immediately. "The United States cannot currently afford the billions of dollars that would be required to build this road," the release stated.

Bartlett said there was still time for

people to give feedback on the study by visiting [www.wayssouth.org](http://www.wayssouth.org) and following the prompts.

"It's ridiculous to spend \$6 billion on something we don't need," she said. "Let them know that not any purpose or need has ever been established for the highway."

If the project was approved, Bartlett said Georgia would be responsible for funding at least \$5 billion.

"Georgia's match would take all the money budgeted for road widening and repairs for many years," Bartlett said.

Comments can be sent to project director Stefan Natzke at [stefan.natzke@dot.edu](mailto:stefan.natzke@dot.edu). She suggested for one to copy the comment to one's congressmen.

Bartlett said people should write their congressman to ask that the \$1 million in the highway administration offer set aside for the study should be put back into the U.S. treasury.

After the feedback period is complete, the study consultants will submit a detailed report to the FHA before the study is delivered to Congress for a decision.

# WATER

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

60-90 days notice, city-appointed authority member Henry Burrell said he wanted to give the city until Jan. 1, 2012, to comply with the original agreement.

City Councilman John Bradshaw said Clayton was currently paying the authority \$10,000 a month plus maintenance expenses. If the city reverts back to paying about \$2.47 per thousand gallons, he said the authority would receive about \$60,000 a month but would have to pay more expenses.

"How are you going to gain anything?" he asked.

Speed said the authority might not gain anything from it, but the authority would once and for all know the true cost of producing the water.

"Then we may have to increase rates," he said.

The authority voted 6-0 to give Clayton six months notice to comply with the original water-purchase agreement.

Mayor David Phillips asked if the authority should take the idea before county commissioners or council before making a decision. "You all are

representatives of the city and the county," he said.

County-appointed authority member Butch Darnell said it was an existing contract, not a brand new one.

"I just feel like the city isn't being represented very well," Phillips said, adding that the city wasn't getting enough information before the authority made a decision.

Speed said the authority had been discussing reverting back to the original agreement for several months.

"I don't understand why we need to change (the contract) if it's working well," Phillips said.

Darnell said it wasn't working well enough because the authority wasn't able to put enough money aside to replace the Lake Rabun water plant.

City-appointed authority member Sam Beck said the 40-year water plant was wearing out twice as fast because of the 50 percent water loss. "That means when it's worn out in 20 years, we'll still owe another 20 years on the loan," he said.

Bradshaw said he didn't understand where all the authority's money went.

"It's in the city clerk's office," said Jerry Krivsky, authority chairman. He said the clerk had a check registry of all the authority's expenses that coun-

cil could access at any time.

Darnell said the county gave the authority \$146,000 last year to make repairs at the plant, repair fire hydrants throughout the county and make interest payments on the authority's sewer expansion project loan.

"If the county wouldn't have given us this (money), the city would've had to pay for all this," Krivsky said.

Bradshaw suggested having a couple of the authority members attend a council meeting to answer any questions about the authority's budget.

"Now that we're back in the wholesale water business, I want to make another motion to sell Dillard water," Speed said, adding that Dillard's wholesale water rate would include the cost for Clayton to distribute the water through its infrastructure.

Dillard asked Clayton to provide it with water, but Speed said the two cities couldn't reach an agreement. The authority approved the intent to sell Dillard wholesale water 5-1 but did not discuss a price.

Darnell opposed the motion during the meeting. In a follow-up interview, he said he meant to abstain from voting because he owned property in Dillard.

The authority tabled a dis-

cussion about Georgia Rural Water Association's proposal to conduct a feasibility study until members could have more time to think about what items they wanted to include in the study.

Phillips said he didn't understand why the authority wasn't further along with the feasibility study. He said the authority had pressured him to sign an agreement immediately. "Why is it that the study was such a priority a year and a half ago and still nothing has been done with it?" he asked.

Darnell said the document the authority asked Phillips to sign was only an intergovernmental agreement for the county and all municipalities involved to share information.

The authority had to get the mayor pro tem to sign the intergovernmental agreement because Phillips refused to sign it.

Phillips said the feasibility study needed to be completed before the authority started on any expansion projects.

"I appreciate your comments," Krivsky said before trying to move on.

"You still haven't answered why the consolidation study hasn't moved forward," Phillips said.

Darnell said the authority had heard several presenta-

tions from companies wanting to conduct the study.

Krivsky said expansion and selling water to Dillard didn't have anything to do with consolidation. He said the authority needed to move on with the meeting.

Phillips stormed out of the city courtroom and slammed the door behind him.

In other business, the authority:

- Approved donating the authority's van to the county as a thank you for funding water and sewer projects. Speed said the authority was spending \$1,500 a year for insurance for a van it didn't use.

- Approved an operating budget of \$185,000 for the Lake Rabun water plant and south Tiger pumping station.

- Paid two invoices to Engineering Management Inc., the authority's engineering firm. The first bill for \$1,870 was for computer system repair services and the second bill for \$2,240 covered ongoing engineering services for the sewer expansion project along Highway 441 from Mountain City to Dillard.

- Agreed to continue negotiations with Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School for an easement needed to move forward with the sewer expansion project.

# Happy Father's Day June 19th



Come Celebrate with us!  
**Father's Day Special**  
**1/2 OFF Dad's Dinner**

**\$4.99 Lunch Special Monday - Friday**  
 Includes soft drink (excluding beer, wine & liquor)

Join us for the best Mexican food in town!  
 Sun. - Thurs. 11-10 • Fri. - Sat. 11-10:30  
All major credit cards accepted.  
**706-782-7247**  
 12 Hwy 441 North • Clayton

the best **FATHER'S DAY GIFTS** for the world's **BEST DAD** at **Keeves** Hardware & Sporting Goods

Just what Dad wants for all of his smoking and grilling needs!

**Plus, a full line of Eggcessories!**

- 15% OFF** Sunglasses • Shoes • Grill Accessories
- 20% OFF** Knives • Binoculars • Camping Supplies • Fly Vests • Fishing Reels
- 25% OFF** • Men's Clothing

**SELECT GRILLS ON SALE**

706-782-4253 • 16 South Main Street • Clayton

Happy Father's Day from **CJ & Sam**

**"Stay Cool This Summer!"**

Call Northeast Georgia Heat & Air for all of your heating and cooling needs.

**706-782-7825**  
 1104 Old 441 South • Clayton, GA  
GA CL 3000176 • NC 17279 • SCR BH 1043

**We Have Dad Covered Inside & Outside!**

Let Dad prop up his feet, lean back and relax this Father's Day in the lap of luxury and comfort.

**Hurry In & SAVE!**

- 20% OFF!** MotionCraft & Barcalounger Leather Recliners
- 15% OFF** Woodard Wrought Iron Outdoor Furniture

Offer ends June 30, 2011

**706-782-4253**  
 16 South Main Street • Clayton  
[www.reeveshomefurnishings.com](http://www.reeveshomefurnishings.com)