

The Trussville Tribune

April 15 — 21, 2015

Your news source for Trussville, Clay and Pinson

50¢

Matt Pitt trial set to begin in Jefferson County

by Gary Lloyd

Editor

The 2013 case of The Basement founder and youth evangelist Matt Pitt allegedly impersonating a peace officer in Grayson Valley is set to go to trial. The case is set for

Monday, April 20 at 9 a.m. in Jefferson County Circuit Court Judge Tommy Nail's courtroom.

The trial date was set in November 2014.

"There is no plan at this time to make any kind of a plea," Pitt's lead attorney, Carmella Penn, said in November 2014.



file photo by Gary Lloyd

The Basement founder and youth evangelist Matt Pitt leaves Shelby County Jail on Palm Sunday 2014.

Pitt pleaded guilty in Shelby County in 2012 when he was charged with impersonating an officer after Calera police pulled him over for allegedly flashing blue lights on Interstate 65.

Pitt served about eight months in Shelby County Jail for violating probation

after he was arrested for impersonating a peace officer for a second time, in June 2013 when he allegedly showed a badge to two men in the woods in Grayson Valley and claimed to be with the Jefferson County Sheriff's

see PITT page 3

Trussville denies rezoning of Eastminster property

by Gary Lloyd

Editor

The Trussville City Council on Tuesday denied to rezone 1751 Gadsden Highway from institutional to commercial, the former Eastminster Presbyterian Church property.

The move came in a 3-2 vote. Council President Alan Taylor and councilmen Anthony Montalto and Brian Plant voted no. Councilmen Buddy Choat and Perry Cook voted for the rezoning.



file photo by Gary Lloyd

A "For Sale" sign has been on the Eastminster Presbyterian Church property for quite some time.

At the March 24 Trussville City Council meeting, a public hearing was held in regard to the possible rezoning of the former Eastminster Presbyterian Church property from institutional to commercial (C-2 zoning).

The Eastminster congregation merged two years ago with Grace Presbyterian Church to form Cahaba Springs Presbyterian Church, which is located

see EASTMINSTER page 2

'I never stopped'

Hewitt-Trussville freshman singer signs label deal

by Gary Lloyd

Editor

Jackson Capps realized his dream when he was just 9 years old.

He wanted to be signed to a label, to go far in the music business.

"I was pretty sure I wasn't going to stop (music)," Capps said.

He definitely won't be stopping now.

Capps, at the end of February, signed a label and management deal with Mike Jones Entertainment. There are plans to release a debut album and a United States tour in the near future.

Capps, a 15-year-old freshman at Hewitt-Trussville High School, got his first guitar when he was 8. He taught himself how to play, listening to early influences such as Hank Williams and Johnny Cash. At age 10, Capps made his live performance debut at Nashville's World Famous Tootsie's Orchid Lounge. At 12, he made his debut at the Grand Ole Opry.

Capps said he's worked "pretty hard" since he realized music is what he wanted to pursue.

"It is hard work, but it's not really a job, because it's



photo courtesy of Mike Jones Entertainment

Hewitt-Trussville High School freshman Jackson Capps has signed a label and management deal.

fun for me," he said.

Capps said a Mike Jones Entertainment staff member saw him play at WorkPlay last year, when he won the WorkPlay Songwriters' Series, a 10-week competition. Mike Jones

Executive Producer David Koonce said the label's CEO, Mike Jones, discovered Capps and thought he'd be a "perfect fit" with MJE.

see CAPPS page 5

Pinson man arrested after programming home address in GPS in stolen car

by Gary Lloyd

Editor

Just after 9 p.m. Saturday deputies were called to a home in the 4700 block of Innsbrooke Parkway in Pinson to investigate a report of a vehicle break-in.



photo courtesy of the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office

Donnie Jaydon Terry

The victim reported that he caught a white male breaking into his truck. When he confronted him, the man ran away. The suspect left a car in front of the residence. Deputies contacted the

see ARREST page 4

TRIBUNE AREA WEATHER

Here is The Trussville weather conditions in page by scanning the QR Trussville, Clay, and code below with your forecast for the next Pinson, see The Trussville smartphone. seven days. For current Tribune weather web



Groundbreaking ceremonies set for new Trussville schools

by Gary Lloyd

Editor

The time to turn some dirt has come. Trussville City Schools last week announced the groundbreaking ceremonies for two new community elementary schools that will be constructed in the city.

The groundbreaking ceremony for the school to be built in the Cahaba Project is Thursday, April 23 at noon. The groundbreaking ceremony for the school

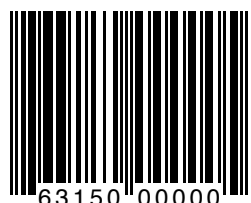
to be built near Magnolia Place is Friday, April 24 at noon.

The bid for the elementary school to be built in the Cahaba Project was approved by the Trussville City Board of Education on Feb. 23. Trussville-based Blalock Building Company was approved to build the school, and renovate the existing structure, for \$10,961,000. The company had been revealed as the low bidder Feb. 10 with a bid of \$11,088,000. Minor

see SCHOOLS page 4

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NEWS

Trussville RadioShack closing

by Gary Lloyd

Editor

The RadioShack on Chalkville Mountain Road in Trussville will soon be closing.

A yellow banner hanging on the storefront says "Store Closing."

There is no set date for the closing.

RadioShack announced in early 2014 that it was planning to close up to 1,100 underperforming stores in the United States.

"Over the past few months, we have undertaken a comprehensive review of our portfolio from many angles — location, area demographics, lease life and financial performance — in order to consolidate our store



photo by Gary Lloyd

RadioShack in Trussville

base into fewer locations while maintaining a strong presence in each market," RadioShack CEO Joseph C. Magnacca said in 2014. "The result of that review is our plan to close up to 1,100 underperforming stores."

The RadioShack in

Trussville was robbed at gunpoint Feb. 13, 2014 and Nov. 15, 2014. Suspects were arrested in both cases.

Contact Gary Lloyd at news@trussvilletribune.com and follow him on Twitter @GaryALloyd.

EASTMINSTER continued from page 1

on Deerfoot Parkway in Trussville. The 5.5-acre Eastminster property was under contract to Serra Automotive in February for \$1,951,000. The plan could be for a Serra Kia car dealership.

Eric Helmers, a member of Cahaba Springs Presbyterian Church, is seeking to facilitate the sale of the Eastminster property on behalf of the church. He said the contract is contingent on the property being zoned commercial.

Montalto said at the March 24 meeting that people move to Trussville for schools, parks, nice subdivisions and great churches.

"They didn't move here because they wanted Trussville to become like Highway 75 from Roebuck to Center Point, just full of car lots side by side for

about a four-mile length there," Montalto said.

Helmers said all areas surrounding the church property are zoned commercial except for Jefferson Memorial Funeral Home and Gardens. He said he wants the property to "conform" with the surrounding areas.

Plant said the city council's vote was "purely a matter of land use." He said that land being zoned commercial is "very intensive" for that area.

Members of Cahaba Springs Presbyterian Church attended the March 24 meeting, and most spoke in favor of the rezoning. If the rezoning is approved and the sale is finalized, the church will stand to gain much-needed revenue.

Laura Reichert, a member of the church,

said the church or property owner should be able to sell to who it wants to. She said nine years of debt is almost paid off.

"We're almost there," she said before the vote. "We're almost to the top of that mountain."

Arnold Reichert, a member of the church, said Cahaba Springs is made up of "two struggling congregations that have come together." He said the church needs financial help "so we can exist." He said he wishes Eastminster could remain so its gym and meeting space could be used, but the church doesn't have the money to keep it up.

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Trussville tax preparer sentenced to 1 year in custody for tax fraud

by Gary Lloyd

Editor

A federal judge last Thursday sentenced a Trussville woman to six months in prison and six months home confinement for preparing fraudulent tax returns for herself and others in a Tarrant business she ran with her sister, announced U.S. Attorney Joyce White Vance and IRS Criminal Investigation Special Agent in Charge Veronica Hyman-Pillot. U.S. District Judge

Abdul K. Kallon sentenced Lugenia L. "Gigi" Conner, 32, on five counts of preparing fraudulent tax returns and one count of making a false return. Conner pleaded guilty to the charges in January. The judge ordered Conner to pay \$56,908 in restitution to the IRS. She must report to prison June 12.

"Tax return preparers who concoct schemes to collect inflated refunds are stealing from the U.S. Treasury and cheating the millions of hard-working Americans who pay their

due share of taxes each year," Vance said. "The U.S. Attorney's Office will continue to work with the IRS to prosecute tax fraud and protect the sanctity and integrity of the tax system."

Hyman-Pillot said refund fraud is an "egregious offense that affects honest taxpayers."

"As we embark upon the close of filing season, I hope this sentence sends a message that the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Division has a zero-tolerance policy for refund fraud," Hyman-

Pillot said. "Anyone who chooses to play a role in this crime will be investigated and ultimately prosecuted."

A federal grand jury last year indicted Conner and her sister, Kaneshia L. "Kiki" Conner-Goodgame, 35, of Birmingham, on charges that they worked together in their Taxes 'N More business to prepare fraudulent tax returns for the 2008 tax year, often falsely claiming a credit for first-time homebuyers.

Conner-Goodgame pleaded guilty in January to two counts of preparing fraudulent tax returns and one count of making a false return. She is scheduled for sentencing May 27.

Both sisters

acknowledged in plea agreements with the government that they owned and operated Taxes 'N More and worked there as tax preparers, inflating refunds for their clients in 2009 by falsifying information submitted on clients' 2008 returns. The sisters claimed the First Time Home Buyer's Credit of up to \$7,900 on returns they prepared for other taxpayers, knowing those taxpayers were not entitled to the credit. The women also prepared third-party tax returns claiming itemized deductions or business expenses that clients neither had provided information for, nor were entitled to receive. Both

women also assisted taxpayers with the illegal practice of buying and selling dependents.

Conner and Conner-Goodgame also created and submitted 2008 personal tax returns on which they claimed the homebuyers' credit, knowing they were not entitled to that deduction.

IRS Criminal Investigation investigated the case, which Assistant U.S. Attorneys Amanda Wick and Robin Beardsley Mark are prosecuting.

Contact Gary Lloyd at news@trussvilletribune.com and follow him on Twitter @GaryALloyd.

Trussville Earth Day this Saturday

From staff reports

Trussville Earth Day is scheduled for Saturday, April 18.

The cleanup will begin at The Mall at 7:45 a.m.

Prize money will be given to the winners of the cleanup.

After the cleanup, participants will return to The Mall to receive a T-shirt and eat hot dogs.

For more information, visit www.trussville.com, or contact Courtney Dollar at cdollar@trussville.com or 205-228-1048.

PITT continued from page 1

Office.

Pitt was arrested on the charge Aug. 20, 2013, then spent about eight months in Shelby County Jail on the probation revocation from the Shelby County case. He was released on Palm Sunday in 2014. Pitt sat down with The Trussville Tribune for an interview about a month after his release.

"I believe that it will be one of the greatest experiences of my life," Pitt said in May 2014. "God uses every kind of thing in my life. He uses trouble, He uses trials. Any time I've been knocked down, He uses the pit as my greatest story. He's always used the craziness of my life to reach so many more people."

Penn said in November 2014 that Pitt had gone back to work with his ministry and just wanted the legal ordeal done.

"Let's try to get it over with," Penn said.

Contact Gary Lloyd at news@trussvilletribune.com and follow him on Twitter @GaryALloyd.

UAB: Baby with rare hypoplastic left heart syndrome born

by Gary Lloyd

Editor

A Trussville husband and wife who shared its pregnancy journey with UAB are now parents.

Crystal and James Burford shared their story about Jeremiah James (J.J.) Burford, their son who was born Wednesday, April 8. He weighed 8 pounds, 12 ounces and was 21.5 inches long.

J.J. has hypoplastic left heart syndrome, which means the left side of the baby's heart can't pump oxygen-rich blood to the body properly.

The oxygen-rich blood bypasses the poorly functioning left side of the heart during the first few days of life. The right side of the heart then pumps blood to both the lungs and the rest of the body.

However, among babies with hypoplastic left heart

syndrome, one of these openings closes in the first couple days of life and prevents blood flow from reaching the body. This results in critical illness and even death in some instances.

Read more about this at www.uab.edu/news.

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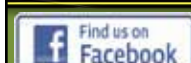
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2. If you give cash to your church or other qualified charitable organization, you must have a receipt with the name of the charity, the date and the amount of the contribution in order to claim it on your taxes.

-Eva Hall, Office Manager, H&R Block-Centerpoint

Cahaba River Boil in Trussville Saturday

From staff reports

A record crowd at last year's Cahaba River Crawfish & Shrimp Boil encouraged event organizers to expand the springtime outdoor music and food festival.

Scheduled for Saturday, April 18 from 2 p.m. to 10 p.m., the event will take place at Trussville Springs, just northeast of downtown Trussville on U.S. Highway 11. Admission to the festival is free.

"Our community came out in great support of this event last year, so we decided we had to make it bigger and better," said festival chairman Wendell Gibson. "Trussville Springs provides us with a beautiful setting on the banks of the Cahaba River. Add to that an outstanding lineup of live musical entertainment, free activities for the kids, delicious food and

a huge fireworks display to cap off the evening, and you've got all the elements for a fun and relaxing time with family and friends."

Crawfish and shrimp plates, cold beverages, hamburgers, hot dogs, barbecue sandwiches and barbecue nachos will be available for purchase.

Kids' activities will include backyard games such as cornhole and face painting. Musical entertainment will feature live bands throughout the afternoon and evening, headlined by Il Da Maxx.

The Cahaba River Crawfish & Shrimp Boil is a fundraising event equally benefiting the Trussville City Schools Foundation and Hewitt-Trussville Athletic Foundation. Last year's event raised \$28,000.

For more information, visit www.cahabariverboil.com.

Accomplice shot during Trussville Chevron robbery now charged

by Gary Lloyd

Editor

The accomplice of two suspects charged in the March 19 robbery of the Chevron gas station on Chalkville Mountain Road in Trussville has now been charged.

Trussville Police Department Capt. Jeff Bridges said a warrant for first-degree robbery has been signed on 20-year-old Katerra Shain Howard, of Center Point. Bridges said her bond will be set at \$30,000 and the Jefferson

County Sheriff's Office will pick her up "when she recovers enough."

At about 4 a.m. March 19, the Chevron was robbed at gunpoint. Arrested were 19-year-old Roderick Williams, of Center Point, along with 22-year-old Paulet Williams, also from Center Point. The two are not related. Both were charged with first-degree robbery.

During the robbery, Roderick Williams possessed a .380-caliber pistol, which was discharged, striking Howard in her chest,

Bridges said. The suspects dropped Howard off at St. Vincent's East, Bridges said.

No one else was injured. Trussville police officers apprehended the Williams suspects attempting to flee the hospital a short time after the robbery.

Bridges said three guns and the stolen money -- approximately \$125 -- were recovered.

Contact Gary Lloyd at news@trussvilletribune.com and follow him on Twitter @GaryALloyd.

ARREST continued from page 1

registered owner of the car and learned that it had been stolen.

A tracking dog was brought in to assist in locating the suspect. The dog tracked to the area of nearby Crossbrook Lane. A GPS device located in the car showed an address in the 6700 of Crossbrook Lane as "home."

Deputies went to the address and found the suspect hiding under the porch in the back yard. The suspect told deputies that he wanted to turn himself in for "making a bad choice and stealing a car."

Donnie Jaydon Terry, 18, of Pinson was arrested and charged with first-degree theft of property, unlaw-

ful breaking and entering a vehicle and criminal mischief.

He remained in the Jefferson County Jail on Monday with bonds totaling \$20,300.

Contact Gary Lloyd at news@trussvilletribune.com and follow him on Twitter @GaryALloyd.

April 11 declared Pinson Day in Alabama

by Gary Lloyd

Editor

As the city of Pinson celebrated its bicentennial Saturday, the city was recognized statewide.

State Sen. Shay Shelnett presented Pinson Mayor Hoyt Sanders with a proclamation from Gov. Robert Bentley proclaiming April 11,



2015 as Pinson Day in the state of Alabama.

Shelnett also presented an Alabama State Senate resolution signed by Lt. Gov. Kay Ivey recognizing Pinson's bicentennial.

Contact Gary Lloyd at news@trussvilletribune.com and follow him on Twitter @GaryALloyd.

SCHOOLS continued from page 1

adjustments decreased the cost. Blalock Building Company was the company that won the bid for constructing Hewitt-Trussville Stadium, which was completed in October 2014.

The projected completion date for the school is June 30, 2016.

The bid for the elementary school to be built near Magnolia Place was approved Feb. 12. Birmingham-based Argo Building Company will construct the school for \$13,754,935. The expected

completion date is July 15, 2016.

Each school will accommodate up to 500 students. The total cost -- including construction, renovation, site work, contingency and other costs -- for both schools was projected to be around \$23 million.

The plan is to open both schools for the 2016-2017 school year.

Trussville residents on Feb. 25, 2014 voted to approve a seven-millage property tax increase to fund the two new

community elementary schools. The final results of the vote were 2,813 people in favor of the increase, while 1,935 voted against it. Seven additional mills in property taxes will cost Trussville residents \$70 per year on homes appraised at \$100,000, \$140 per year on homes appraised at \$200,000 and \$210 per year on homes appraised at \$300,000.

Contact Gary Lloyd at news@trussvilletribune.com and follow him on Twitter @GaryALloyd.



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CAPPS continued from page 1

“When I was brought on board I was introduced to Jackson’s sound and immediately began putting a plan in motion for his development,” Koonce said. “We spoke with him and his parents about our goals, and we all agreed it was a great idea to bring Jackson on with MJE.”

Koonce said MJE decided to sign Capps because he has “that ‘it’ factor.”

“I knew right away he was something special,” Koonce said. “It has been a real privilege working and getting to know Jackson. He is an amazing talent all the way from his singing, playing, songwriting and genuine attitude.”

MJE can do everything for Capps in-house. The label has a new recording studio, capabilities to record an album, equipment to professionally duplicate an album, graphic designers to design logos for merchandise and backdrops, a warehouse to print and screen print items, and a website for Capps. Capps’ team,

including manager, publicist, booking agent and attorney “are right down the hall,” Koonce said.

“When he has shows coming up we can take him over to our rehearsal space and iron out any kinks we have to the live performance,” Koonce said. “We like our artists to know that everything they need is right here in one place.”

A typical day for Capps -- outside of school -- consists of practicing in his room, whether that means fiddling with a new melody, writing a song or just playing one of his nine or 10 guitars. He practices anywhere from 30 minutes to two hours, depending on what needs to be done. He said it’s cool to come home with a new idea or melody, tinker around with it and come up with something that sounds good.

“It’s a neat feeling,” Capps said.

Capps said he got into music because he grew up listening



photo courtesy of Mike Jones Entertainment

Capps

to traditional country, such as Williams, Cash and Elvis Presley. He took lessons and was never forced to pursue music.

“I just decided to stick with it once I realized I loved it,” Capps

said. “So then I never stopped.”

Should a first album and tour be successful, Capps may have to look to homeschooling for the bulk of his high school years. He’d be OK with that.

“Music means that much to me,” he said.

He’s hoping something big happens for his career in the future.

“Yes, I think something will happen,” he said.

Koonce believes so, too.

“Jackson Capps will be a big star,” he said. “I look forward to watching his career move very quickly.”

Contact Gary Lloyd at news@trussvilletribune.com and follow him on Twitter @GaryALloyd.

Scan this QR code with your smartphone to watch a short video featuring Jackson Capps.



Trussville BOE to choose school names Monday

by Gary Lloyd

Editor

The Trussville City Board of Education on Monday will choose the official names of two community elementary schools to be constructed in Trussville.

The meeting is Monday, April 20 at 6 p.m. with a work session at 4:30 p.m.

The board last month placed two names on the table for consideration for the two new schools. The name the board placed on the table for the school



photo courtesy of Trussville City Schools

A rendering of the elementary school that will be built in the Magnolia Place area

in the Cahaba Project is Cahaba Elementary School. The name the board placed on the table for the school in the Magnolia Place area

is Magnolia Elementary School.

The board had placed seven names on the table earlier this year. The names placed on the table for the



photo courtesy of Trussville City Schools

A rendering of what the elementary school in the Cahaba Project will look like, as seen from where Jack Wood Stadium used to stand

Magnolia Place school were South Trussville Elementary School and Magnolia Elementary School. The names placed on the table for

the Cahaba Project school were Central Trussville Elementary School, Cahaba Elementary School, Cahaba Central Elementary

School, Cahaba Village Elementary School and Trussville Cahaba Elementary School.

The board had been accepting input from the community on naming the two new schools at newschool@trussvillecityschools.com.

The schools are expected to open for the 2016-2017 school year.

Contact Gary Lloyd at news@trussvilletribune.com and follow him on Twitter @GaryALloyd.

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LIFESTYLE

Home ownership can pay off at tax time

Although home prices nationwide are still recovering from the housing crisis, the number of homeowners with underwater mortgages has declined. Federal mortgage regulators have also taken steps to ease the tight credit standards that have stymied some potential borrowers in recent years. A healthier housing market and an improving employment situation suggest that many Americans may be in a better position to buy or sell homes in 2015.

The ability to write off mortgage interest and other home-related expenses can be a significant financial incentive. To take advantage of the tax savings, homeowners must itemize their deductions

on Schedule A of their federal tax returns instead of claiming the standard deduction.

Deductions add up

Interest. The mortgage interest deduction generally applies to a primary residence and a second home such as a vacation condo, mobile home, boat, house trailer, or any structure with sleeping, cooking, and toilet facilities. However, special rules may apply to a second home if it's rented for part of the year.

The deduction for mortgage interest applies on up to \$1 million for first mortgages (secured by the home) plus up to \$100,000 for home-equity loans. The interest deduction is especially



David R. Guttery, RFC, RFS, CAM

valuable for homeowners with a jumbo mortgage or two home loans. For a married couple filing jointly who are subject to a 30 percent tax rate, deducting \$24,000 in mortgage interest could result in a tax savings of up to \$7,200.

Property taxes. The legal property owner can also deduct real estate taxes in the year that

they're actually paid to the taxing authority, whether paid directly by the owner or by the lender through an escrow account.

Points. Paying points (or loan origination fees) up front may help borrowers lower the interest rate for the life of the loan. When a mortgage loan is used to purchase or build a primary residence, the IRS allows the borrower to deduct mortgage points in the year they are paid, even if the seller pays them for the buyer. With a refinanced loan, deductions for points must typically be prorated over the life of the loan.

When it's time to sell

A capital gain (or loss) on the sale of property is equal to the sale price

minus the adjusted basis. The adjusted basis is the initial cost, plus money spent on capital improvements, less any depreciation and casualty losses claimed for tax purposes.

When a principal residence is sold, losses are not tax deductible. On the other hand, a profit of up to \$250,000 (\$500,000 for married joint filers) may be excluded from the federal capital gain tax.

To qualify for the exclusion, the home must have been owned and used as a principal residence for two out of the five years before the sale. Owners who can't pass this test may be eligible for a reduced exclusion, but only if the home sale was due to a change in place

of employment, health reasons, or certain other unforeseen circumstances.

Keep in mind that if you're subject to the alternative minimum tax or the Pease provision, your ability to deduct mortgage interest and other home-related expenses may be limited. Before you take any specific action, be sure to consult with your tax professional.

David R. Guttery, RFC, RFS, CAM, is Ameritas Investment Corp. and President of Keystone Financial Group, in Trussville. David has been in practice for 23 years, with a distinctive focus on the management of retirement assets for the production of durable income.

New Trussville school board member re-appointed through 2020

by Gary Lloyd

Editor

Kathy Brown has passed her first test.

The Trussville City Council on Tuesday re-appointed Brown, a member of the Trussville City Board of Education, through May 25, 2020.

Brown has served on the board since November 2014.

Brown was appointed to fill the vacant role Danny Garrett left after his election to the Alabama State House of Representatives.

With the move, school board member Stan Garrett took Danny Garrett's spot, meaning his term ends in May 2016. Brown took Stan Garrett's spot, which has a term ending in May 2015. The city council can extend board members'

terms on the school board. Brown previously served on the Trussville City Schools Foundation and Athletic Foundation.

When Danny Garrett's position on the board came open, 18 people applied for it. Four were interviewed, including Brown, Wendell Gibson, Bill Hamilton and Greg Carroll.

The city council also approved of amending

an ordinance to require building and construction permits and to establish fees. The fees have been slightly adjusted "to stay comparable with neighboring cities," Councilman Anthony Montalto said. Montalto said the permit fees have been unchanged since 2007.

The city council also approved of going out to bid for two new motorcycles

for the Trussville Police Department. One current motorcycle, a 2008 Harley Davidson, will be surplus. The two new motorcycles will replace the current ones. No extra police offers are slated for this detail. The department employs two motorcycle police officers.

In other news, Trussville will be the site of the 2016 and 2017 Alabama Masters Games, a competition for

those 50 years and older that promotes healthy lifestyles for active adults. The games were developed in Oxford in 1989. Each year there are between 600 and 800 participants from across the state. Trussville has been the site of the Masters Games before.

Contact Gary Lloyd at news@trussvilletribune.com and follow him on Twitter @GaryALloyd.

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Rock School Center in Pinson could be future library

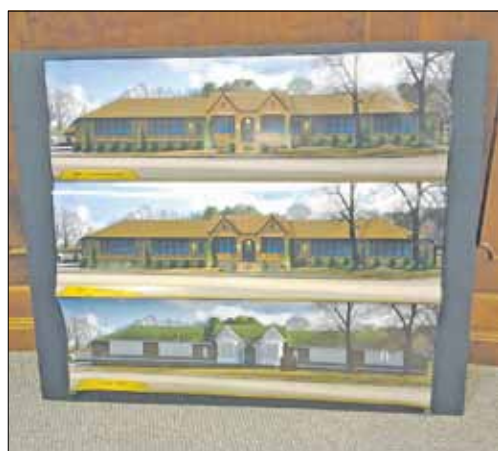
by Gary Lloyd

Editor

Once the new city park is complete in Pinson, focus will likely shift to the Rock School Center.

The Pinson City Council voted 4-2 to purchase the historic building in 2013 for \$975,000. Councilman Robbie Roberts and Councilwoman Joy McCain voted against the purchase.

The building, built by local residents in 1921, served as a school and was closed in the 1980s. The Jefferson County Board of Education decided to tear it down, but the community rose up and saved it from demolition. The building served as Solid



file photo by Lee Weyhrich

The current look of the Rock School Center (bottom) and the options presented by Daniel Churchwell (top two renderings) in 2014

Rock Church from 2004 to 2013.

Councilman Joe Cochran said in 2013 that the field behind what's now called the Rock School Center could be used for football and softball practice. The Pinson Valley High School football team has used it while the field at Willie Adams Stadium has been improved. Cochran also said in 2013 that the front portion of the building could be repurposed to become an expanded Pinson Public Library.

Two years later, that appears to still be the plan.

Mayor Hoyt Sanders recently said the Rock School Center could be due for a revamping once the city park is finished, likely in May. The building could get new windows, a new roof and more. With ev-

erything that needs to be done to bring the building back to life, the cost will likely be between \$600,000 and \$800,000, Sanders said. He's always on the prowl for grants to help with the cost, he said.

Sanders said no plans are definitive for the future use of the building, as each Pinson City Council member has their own ideas. He said it's safe to say the library is out of room, so part of the Rock School Center may need to serve the library at some point.

"I think it's got a great future," Sanders said of the Rock School Center.

Contact Gary Lloyd at news@trussvilletribune.com and follow him on Twitter @GaryALloyd.

Many factors contributing to housing shortage

The housing inventory is low. What is low? Lower than demand, low enough that buyers are becoming frustrated. So low that there are competing offers on the same home and the calls for highest and best offers are commonplace in today's market.

A common question from many clients has been: Why?

There's no single factor that's causing this shortage. It's instead a mix of many factors, none of which look likely to change in the near term.

Economic recovery: Yes, there's an economic recovery that's been going on for several years. That recovery is real, although not universal. Things are improving, employment numbers are up, overall confidence in the economy is up. The general feeling that real estate is a sound investment is again the norm.

Continued low interest rates: The FED, as they are lovingly referred, has kept

money rates to banks at near zero, resulting in near record low interest rates. At this writing the national average interest rate being quoted for a 30-year fixed mortgage is below 4 percent. These low interest rates and knowledge that these won't last a lot longer are fueling buyer activity. If interest rates rise 1 percent, that's equivalent to a 20 percent increase in a home's price for a financed sale. The vast majority of sales are financed sales.

Increase in existing home sales: Fueled by a renewed confidence in the economy and continued low interest rates, there's an increasing interest in homeownership. Demand for homes has improved dramatically. This is especially true for homes priced below \$250,000. Remember this number is for the local market but is the rule for Birmingham and surrounding areas. This number may be different if you're thinking about another market area.

The largest increase in home buyers is by far first time home buyers and first time move up buyers.

Low number of new housing starts: New housing starts are on the increase and have been for almost 18 months at this writing; however, they remain at a below normal rate. The number of active homebuilders is at the lowest rate in decades. Lot inventories (number of already developed buildable lots) is at the lowest point for more than 20 years.

Reduction of foreclosure inventory: Foreclosure rates are down to almost normal rates for most of the nation. Yes, foreclosures are still occurring, but they're having much less impact on the general real estate market than they have for almost eight years.

Many homeowners remain underwater: Despite all the positive news in the general economy and in the real estate market, it will take some



Dave Parrish

The Real Story ... News and commentary about the real estate market and related topics.

additional time for many of the homeowners that purchased or refinanced between 2004 and 2010 to make up for the losses in home value caused by the Great Recession. A 20 percent loss in value takes a while to overcome when appreciation rates are running at 4 percent.

Selling before those losses in value are recovered or equity can be built means selling at a loss and perhaps even bringing money to the table at closing. So, unless there are some pretty strong motivating factors, many homeowners who would love to sell are still on the sidelines waiting to be in a better position.

Fear of rising prices and interest rates: Fear is a significant motivator. For much of the past six years buyers have held back on purchasing, waiting on even lower prices and lower interest rates. With the reality that the bottom is now significantly past, buyers are now acting out of fear that prices will start to increase. They have begun their climb just as building costs have increased. Only the most truly uninformed buyer believes that the record low interest rates will remain

with us much longer.

Millennials entering the market: Talk about pent-up demand. The under-40 crowd is ready to get it on. Having lived most of their adult life in one or another form of disaster, they're finally seeing some light at the end of the tunnel, some hope for the future. Ready to move out of the parents' basement or that cramped apartment, they're entering the home market with a vengeance while not quite the overwhelming force that my generation (Baby Boomers) was, they're a force to be reckoned with.

So, is the glass half empty or half full? Yes, home inventories are low and prices are rising. Good news or bad news? I'll let you be the judge. For me, I'm happy to see the return of the American Dream.

May the market be with you.

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