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Republic MONITOR

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Forum topic is tax levy

Altenburg Public School District 48 will hold an informal meeting to talk about the new school funding.

By Amanda Layton
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Residents who live in the Altenburg Public School District 48 will be given the opportunity to learn more about a tax levy they will vote on next month in an informal meeting at 7 p.m., July 18, at the school’s cafeteria.



Bleau Deckerd Last month, school leaders announced their intent to place a \$1.9 million initiative on a special election ballot Aug. 6, with the proceeds going toward the construction of a new school.

This capital facilities lease purchase would increase District 48’s tax levy by 77 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation. Currently, the district’s tax levy sits at \$3.6038 per \$100 of assessed property. Passing the initiative would raise the levy to \$4.3738. The initiative requires a simple majority to pass.

In 2010, voters stuck down a \$2.5 million bond measure initiated by District 48 to be used to build a new school by a narrow margin.

“That measure was unsuccessful,” Deckerd said. “The school board has spent a great deal of time over the last three years focusing on some of the questions and issues that were brought about during the 2010 campaign.”

Deckerd said in 2010, the school hosted three separate informal meetings like the one scheduled later this month.

“This time, we will only have one meeting where we will present to the public the information we’ve collected, then allow them to ask questions so they have a clear understanding,” he said.

Deckerd said the two questions asked most often in 2010 were why a new elementary school should be built versus making repairs and modifications to the existing school. The next was if \$2.5 million was more than what would be required to take care of the district’s needs.

In short, Deckerd said it would cost

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NEW BOURBON PORT IS OPEN ... AT LAST



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Pictured is a bird’s eye view of the New Bourbon port near Ste. Genevieve, which is nearly open for operation after 30 years in the making. All the port authority needs to complete the decades-long project is a port operator. The port was a collaborative effort between Perry and Ste. Genevieve counties to promote economic development.

After decades of let-downs, Mississippi River port is open

After trying to open for 31 years, recent flood led New Bourbon to serve its first customer.

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Despite three decades of let-downs, last-minute funding losses and uncontrollable river patterns, hard work and dedication have paid off for the New Bourbon Regional Port Authority, who, at long last, can comfortably announce that the Mississippi River shipping port is just one operator away from an official opening.

“It’s built. It’s ready to go,” said Chauncy Buchheit, executive director of the SEMO Regional Planning Commission. “The dock is ready to rock ‘n’ roll. Now we just need a port operator to oversee it.”

The port, 31 years in the making, was an idea born in Perry County, but raised by collaborative hands when Ste. Genevieve joined the picture in 1982.

That year, leaders of both counties collectively signed an article of agreement to create a regional port authority, responsible for planning and carrying out port development in both areas.

With the assistance of SEMO Regional Planning, the New Bourbon Regional Port Authority was born. The motive was simple — to spur economic development through what Regional Economic Development Planner Ron Steele calls the most efficient, cost-effective method of cargo transportation.

Once the seven-member board was created, the next step was finding a location for the port.

“There was no real area in mind as to where the port would go,” Buchheit

said. “The first few years of activity focused on hiring consultants and engineering firms to conduct a search.”

The search yielded three sites, one of which is the port’s present location, roughly three miles south of Ste. Genevieve on Highway 61.

Even though a site was selected, the board had a massive check list of to-do’s, like achieving a building permit, purchasing the property and, of course, finding the money to do it.

None of this, they soon found, would come easily.

“... a long, slow process ...”

“So we found a site,” Buchheit said. “Then we had to get permits for design standards. To do that, we needed an engineer to design the harbor. We take

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Unemployment rate remains steady in Perry County

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Perry County’s unemployment rate remains steady, fluctuating only slightly in the last five months.

This year, in January, March and May, Perry County’s rate stood at 5 percent. In February and April, it dipped slightly to 4.9 percent and 4.8, respectively.

Perry County Economic Development Administra-

tion Executive Scott Sattler said he’s not entirely sure why the fluctuations occurred, but said the possibility of recent Sabreliner Corporation layoffs at the Perryville facility could be reflected in the numbers.

However, Sattler said that, compared to other neighboring counties, Perry County is one of the most consistent concerning unemployment. Unemployment rates are configured based on people who are

UNEMPLOYMENT January to May 2013

	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	April	May
Perry	5%	4.9%	5%	4.8%	5%
Ste. Gen.	7.6%	7.4%	7.1%	6.6%	6.8%
Cape	6.3%	6.2%	5.9%	5.5%	6.1%

currently seeking employment on a month-by-month basis.

“We’re doing well overall because of strong industry, due largely because

of places like Gilster-Mary Lee and TG Missouri,” Sattler said. “We’re getting back down to almost pre-recession numbers. Before 2008, which is what we

consider ‘pre-recession,’ we were anywhere from 4 percent to 4.6 percent.”

According to the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center, Perry County has a consistently lower unemployment rate than both Cape Girardeau and Ste. Genevieve counties.

In January 2013, Cape Girardeau’s rate stood at 6.3 percent, then dropped steadily, and by May, was at 6.1 percent, more than

1 point higher than Perry County’s May figure.

“We’re actually still doing better than Cape’s unemployment rate,” Sattler said.

Ste. Genevieve’s January figure stood at 7.6 percent, dropping to 6.8 percent by May, but still higher than Perry County’s May rate of 5 percent.

From January to May 2013, Missouri’s overall

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Port

FROM PAGE 11A
that to the Corps of Engineers and get a permit.”

It seemed like an easy process, but proved a tedious, and at times, frustrating one. It was 1992.

To achieve a construction permit from the Corps, an engineering firm was imperative for the process. One was selected after extensive interviews, but at the last minute, the company ceased operation.

Again, the board solicited requests for a qualified firm, and Burns and McDonnell was selected in 1993. By 1995, a 10-year permit was issued by the Corps, allowing the authority to proceed with construction.

“There are always challenges when you do something like this,” Steele said. “It was a long, slow process, to say the least.”

Thirteen years later, following another engineering search, Koehler Engineering & Surveying was selected, and continues to provide services today.

In 1995, the board advertised nationally for a company to provide land for the project, and to serve as port operator. Ste. Genevieve Sand and Material, Inc., then-owner of the current harbor site, was selected. Seventy-two acres bordering the Mississippi were in the authority’s hands, but finding funds for the project would prove more difficult than the struggles they just fought.

“... nothing is ever certain.”

“We thought we felt real comfortable during the [Mel] Carnahan administration,” Buchheit said about the former Missouri governor, who served from 1993 until his death in 2000. “The General Assembly passed a bill appropriating millions of dollars to Missouri ports. New Bourbon was to receive well over a million. There was our money, right there, to go forward ... it didn’t work out that way.”

The “millions” were sequestered, he said, but the money still sat in the budget. The port authority waited patiently for the funding to come their way, but it never did.

“The governor’s money froze and went away,” Buchheit said.

Simultaneously, the board looked to partner with the Corps.

“The Corps would provide money for construction, but in working with them, there were challenges,” Buchheit said. “The partnership simply went away. The Corps lost funding ... they



PHOTO BY AMANDA KEEFE

The New Bourbon port in Ste. Genevieve is nearly open for operation after 30 years in the making. Recently, the Mississippi Lime Company accessed the port, acting as New Bourbon’s first customer after river levels were too high for the company to access their own harbor.

could no longer do what they said they were going to do.”

Steele sighed and shook his head at the memory of such a loss.

“You think you have this funding ready to go, but nothing is every certain,” he said.

Things begin to look up

The struggles to acquire necessary funding finally ceased in 1997, when capital improvement funds came through the Missouri Department of Transportation, combined with matching local funds. This annual grant, for the first few installments, was to be used to create a wetland, according to Corp of Engineer requirements. If a wetland is taken for construction, another has to be created, or expanded. This would mitigate the loss of wetland in the pool for development of the harbor.

“Basically, the Corps said, ‘If you do something here, you have to replace what you removed,’” Buchheit said.

The wetland failed once — forestry just simply wasn’t surviving — and in 2001, trees and emergent plants were planted once again,

also funded through MoDOT’s annual capital improvement grant and local match.

In 2006 and 2007, still using MoDOT’s grants and local matches, the authority constructed a road atop the levee for vehicle traffic, forming the first of two dredge disposal basins. The second basin was constructed in 2009.

Dredge disposal basins were pivotal in establishing a harbor.

“To allow for a feasible harbor, we had to remove all the material that was there; sand and things of that nature,” Buchheit said. “But we needed some place to put it. We built two holes for all the material to go into; one is seven acres and the other is 12.”

Both dredge disposal basins sit on either side of the harbor. Eventually, the basins will fill up, settle and harden, and can be used for building purposes, Buchheit said.

Money comes rolling in

“We had some serious flooding [of the Mississippi] in 2009,” Buchheit said. “Because of this, there was money made available through various entities.”

The list of organizations, ad-

ministrations and departments that contributed to the project is lengthy, to say the least, and the port authority was finally making headway.

By the late 2000s, hundreds of thousands of dollars were secured through federal funding with the help of U.S. Rep. Russ Carnahan, D-St. Louis, primarily with major grants from the Delta Regional Authority, MoDOT, the Economic Development Administration, the Missouri Department of Economic Development and several other entities.

By August 2009, the port authority felt ready to break some official ground. And they did, though dredging the harbor was still in progress, and a dock still had to be erected. The project was expected to be complete by 2012. Alas, time, and the river, had other plans.

“... it should’ve been open two years ago.”

“The money was in place, and we were ready to go,” Buchheit said. “[The port] should’ve been opened two years ago.”

But, time and unforeseeable river levels caused the project to

move slower than anticipated. Several contractors were given two years to complete both the basin dredging and the dock, but “it was a big contract. We lost some time due to fluctuations in the river,” Buchheit said.

“Flooding stayed for a good while, and we just couldn’t get it done. We also had several contractors; at least three different ones out there working at different times. We had to get one off the site before another (contractor) could come in.”

He said removing the rock and similar elements from the harbor took serious time and effort, and river levels weren’t cooperating.

“We went from one extreme to the next,” he said. “We had high water for so long we couldn’t clear the harbor. Then, as soon as the river went down, it wouldn’t stop going down [during last year’s drought]. It really all depends on what the water is doing.”

The ole’ Miss brings a pleasant surprise

During one of the highest flooding seasons on record in southeast Missouri, a welcome surprise came the port’s way. Because river levels were so high last month, the Mississippi Lime Company’s regular barge-loading facility was inaccessible. The company, of Ste. Genevieve, would become the New Bourbon port’s first customer.

“With the rain and high river levels we have experienced, our barge-loading facility is not currently usable,” said Mississippi Lime General Manager Mike Sheffield in a June 20 press release. “Being able to use the new Port of New Bourbon allows us to continue shipping product to our customers, keeps our plant running and maintains jobs.”

The first-time port usage proved successful, and also proved to all those behind the port’s existence that their 30-year project was finally ready.

“It’s been an amazingly long process, but we know that we were either going to do it now, or not at all,” Steele said. “The port authority amazes me most of all; to maintain such a level of enthusiasm the whole time, even when, at times, they weren’t sure how they were going to get this done, is unbelievable to me.”

Currently, the authority is seeking a port operator to oversee the day-to-day production of New Bourbon, and plan to hold an official ribbon-cutting in the near future.

Cuts

FROM PAGE 10A

“We welcome items from the community that we can sell,” Foster said. “Or storage space to keep donated items.”

Additionally, they are currently organizing a change drive where containers will be placed at area businesses to collect

pocket change from business patrons, which will be donated to the homebound meal program the senior center operates.

“So many people don’t know they are eligible to receive those hot meals at home. We need to get the word out about what a great and affordable product we are offering,” Foster said. “People who maybe just had surgery and can’t get

out.”

Right now, the group is just doing their best to hold on and improve the programs the center is currently offering, and they are hoping the community will step up to fill in the fiscal gaps not covered by state and local funding.

“We will take any kind of help we can get,” Foster said. “We are a non-profit and the donations would go

a long way toward making this place a little better.”

For information about center, contact Susan Foster at (573) 547-2188.

Cale

FROM PAGE 9A

growing up with Alopecia and what it is like today as a 20-year-old. He really inspired me to think there is no reason that Cale can’t have a wonderful life and fulfill his own dreams.”

And although the Schremps have accepted this as their son’s reality for now, they have in no way given up on the hope for a cure that may someday make Cale well.

Part of that hope comes by raising money for research, and this year, Wayne and Nikki took Cale, along with their other son six-year-old Wyatt, to participate in a special walk held under the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, meant to raise money and awareness about the disease that affects so many.

“We participated in the 2013 Tortoise and Hair Walk-a-Thon,” Nikki Schremp said. “This was part of the national conference that is held every year in different cities all across the country.

“Money raised provides children with Alopecia the opportunity to attend the

conference and camps for kids with Alopecia. It also offers financial assistance to those children. The conference also offers a camp for children and siblings of those with Alopecia and support groups for the parents and families. It was a great experience and we learned so much about the ongoing research and the search for a cure.”

Nikki said researchers have discovered the illness shares a lot of the same genes as Rheumatoid Arthritis, Diabetes and Celiacs disease.

“However with it being a rare condition there just isn’t the funding and monetary support behind it like other organizations to further the research,” she said.

But the Schremps hope to change that and dedicated time to raise money to donate to the organization that may someday cure young Cale.

“I got a call from the National Alopecia Areata Foundation (NAAF) and they said that Cale was the second-highest earner in pledges in the country for the Walk-a-Thon, and a new iPod is headed his way for his hard work on raising money,” she said. “They are

also sending me Alopecia awareness bracelets that I will be selling for \$5 each. This money will go toward a fund through NAAF that provides financial aid to children so they can purchase a wig.”

Nikki said many family members and friends as well as several area businesses sponsored her son for the conference, and one in particular has made a pledge to continue that support.

“When I returned from the conference I was contacted by Kathy Cissell, who owns Sparkle Party, which is a company that sells jewelry,” Nikki said. “She wanted to donate 10 percent of the profits of Sparkle Party to the NAAF. So we just received our first check for \$100 last week.”

Nikki said her family will be doing additional fundraisers throughout the year, and she is hoping for continued community support. “If someone wants to donate to NAAF to help with the clinical trials, or towards the wig fund I know it is greatly needed,” she said.

For additional information on donating to Alopecia research, contact Nikki Schremp at (573) 768-1112.

Back to School Supply List

Missouri state law requires all students be immunized against vaccine-preventable diseases.

- Call your child’s medical provider to verify the child’s immunizations are up-to-date according to current Missouri school requirements.
- Schedule an appointment for needed immunizations.
- Get two copies of your child’s immunization records. (Give one copy to the school nurse and keep one copy for your records.)

☒ Book bag
☒ Pencils
☒ Sports physical
☒ Immunizations!



www.health.mo.gov/immunizations
or contact your local public health agency

Children may be eligible to receive free vaccines through the Vaccines for Children program before their 19th birthday.

Contact the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services at 800.219.3224 or your local public health agency to find out if your child is eligible.

www.health.mo.gov/immunizations