Looking back to July 20, 2018

Written by Christy Hoots

The following information was entered into the July 20, 2018, edition of The Ledger Independent:

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Augusta to move ahead with pool

AUGUSTA — Plans to move ahead with construction on the Augusta public pool were approved Wednesday by Augusta City Council.

Discussion on funding sources for the pool have been a topic of discussion for several months. The pool was shut down in July 2017 after the city found several issues that needed to be corrected. Earlier this year, city council bid out the renovations for the pool and received a bid from PSS Contractors for $340,000.

The city waited to accept the bid until funding could be found.

Augusta Mayor Wendell High told council he now has the funding for the renovations ready to go. That funding includes a $200,000 loan from US Bank that must be repaid over seven years with a payment of $2,900 per month and a balloon payment at the end of the loan's life.

In order to secure the loan, the city also had to use the Clooney Community Center as collateral.

"I'll go ahead and tell the bank to move forward with the loan," High said. "They have some paperwork that will need to be completed and they'll have to look at (Clooney Community Center) since it will have to be used as collateral."

In March, the Bracken County Fiscal Court also approved an advance of $150,000 to the city in order to make repairs to the pool. The money was already given to the city each year in the amount of $7,500. Now, the city will receive 20 years of funding in a lump sum.

During Wednesday's meeting, High said he wanted to have the project bid approved by next month, but Council Member Joe Goecke said he saw no reason to wait.

"I don't want to leave the pool sitting out there," he said. "I don't see any problem with moving forward on this."

High said he agreed and offered three options for repaying the loan. The first was a nickel tax added to the property tax. However, assessments had not yet been returned from the state and the council would be required to publish the tax twice and hold a public hearing before approving it. If the the tax were to be challenged by the public, it would have to be placed on the November ballot.

"There's no guarantee on that nickel tax," High said.

Goecke said he would like to see the nickel tax dropped and find the funding in another source.

"I'd just like to forget that five cent tax and look at other options," he said. "Maybe raise the payroll and insurance taxes."

High said he had looked into raising both. If the insurance tax was raised from 5 percent to 7 percent, it would generate an extra $31,000 per year and if the payroll tax was raised from 1.25 percent to 1.35 percent, it would generate an extra $27,000 per year.

Goecke asked about raising the payroll tax by 1 percent instead of 2.

"I would like to see us maybe raise the payroll tax by just 1 percent and then raise the insurance tax," he said.

No decision was made on how to repay the loan, but High said it would be a topic at the August meeting.

"At the next meeting, you all will have to find a way to fund this thing," he said.

Council also approved a billing agreement with the Augusta Regional Water Authority.

At a previous meeting, John Yingling, with ARSA, asked the council if it would be willing to approve city employees maintaining the billing for the organization at no charge for a period of one year when the new wastewater plant goes online.

"I'm asking you to do this because if you charge us for the billing, we have no other recourse but to pass that on to the customer," Yingling said at the June 22 council meeting. "The city of Brooksville has already given us a verbal agreement that they will not charge ARSA for the billing. However, the county has to charge something, though I'm unsure of the amount that will be right now."

Goecke said he saw no issue with approving it for one year.

The council approved the measure.

Crash

From page 1A

crash occurred around 3:55 p.m., on Saturday, July 18, in Jackson Township on US Route 50 near Smokey Road.

"The preliminary investigation revealed a 2017 Toyota Corolla, operated by Connor S. Hodge, 18, Mount Orab, was traveling northeast on US Route 50 when it traveled left of center and struck a 2018 Nissan Frontier, operated by Kimberly A. Boyer, 56, Hillsboro, that was traveling southwest on US Route 50," Utter said. "After impact, the Corolla traveled off the left side of the roadway and the Frontier came to final rest in the roadway."

He further expressed that Hodge and Boyer were transported to a local hospital. Boyer was pronounced deceased later at the hospital. According to Utter, two juveniles were present in the Nissan Frontier and were transported to a local hospital after sustaining injuries.

"The Ohio State Highway Patrol was assisted with this incident by the Clermont County Sheriff's Office, Jackson Township Fire and Rescue, Stonelick Township Fire and EMS, Wayne Township Fire and EMS, Williamsburg Township Fire and EMS, Ohio Department of Transportation, and Tarvin's Auto Service and Recovery," said Utter.

The two-vehicle fatal crash remains under investigation.

Quinn Simple Scenes: My favorite sport

By Rix Quinn

It's a crisp March morning. I can't wait to get to baseball camp. We nine-year-olds meet today to split into teams at the park's recreation league.

There must be 50 guys out here at the park. A man holding a clipboard checks off each name as we sign in.

One of the older coaches separates us into three groups: batting, fielding, and pitching. Each of us will get a chance to demonstrate all three.

I first go to the pitcher group. We stand on the putcher's mound, and look toward home plate. My first throw goes over the backstop. I adjust for distance, and my second throw bounces twice before it gets to the catcher. Pitching is not my gift.

Next, I go to the batting area, where a father stands patiently on the mound and lobs balls to the young hitters. One kid is great. Another keep gripping the bat on the wrong end.

I get ten pitches. I swing and miss the first five. Then I make contact, and dribble a grounder that nearly reaches the pitcher. Then I tell the pitcher I've had enough.

The fielding group is my favorite. We boys stand out in the field, all wearing gloves about twice too big. We each field a combination of grounders and flies. Most of us did OK, and one kid just throws his glove at each grounder.

The coaches then divided us into five teams, and we spent a couple months in competition. During that time, I learned important terms like bunt, hook slide, and homer.

There was only one minor injury, when a runner tripped over third base and fell on top of a melted ice cream cone.

At the end of the season, the coaches gave us a big banquet, and every kid got a little trophy that said "Baseball Star."

In high school, I showed that trophy to a girl I wanted to date. She just laughed.

ARC says it has settled with federal government over billing issues

Deborah Yetter

Addiction Recovery Care, once Kentucky's largest provider of addiction services, has reached a settlement with the federal government over "billing issues," the Louisa, KY-based company said in a July 16 news release.

It also announced it has reached a separate settlement with a finance company that had accused ARC of fraud.

"The resolution of these matters is an important step forward for ARC and our organization," ARC CEO Cassandra Webb said in the news release.

The company did not explain the billing issues or whether ARC has agreed to repay the federal government through the civil settlement, only that it represents "a comprehensive resolution of the billing matters."

But court records in a separate civil lawsuit allege ARC previously had agreed to pay the U.S. Justice Department almost $28 million to resolve allegations of billing problems.

The FBI announced more than a year ago it was investigating ARC for possible health care fraud. The settlement announcement comes six weeks after ARC founder and former CEO Tim Robinson was indicted on federal fraud charges related to finances at his company.

He has pleaded not guilty to the charges. A trial is scheduled Aug. 10 in Ashland.

ARC – which at its peak had about 1,800 residential treatment beds and 1,350 employees – has foundered over the past year amid reports of the FBI investigation into possible health care fraud, closing programs and laying off hundreds of employees. ARC, a for-profit company, owned by Tim Robinson and his wife, Lelia, receives nearly all of its revenue from Medicaid, the government health plan for low-income individuals.

Mark LaPalme, a Danville-based treatment provider who once worked with Robinson and has been critical of ARC, said Thursday he hopes the civil settlement doesn't represent the end of the case.

"Treatment is a business," said LaPalme, senior consultant for All Together Recovery. "It's a business about helping people and protecting the systems that provide that help, not abusing people."

The U.S. Justice Department press office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In a separate, civil lawsuit filed in January in federal court in New York, two finance companies accused ARC of fraud by selling them both the same $8 million in federal tax credits, then failing to repay either company.

One of the companies, Angelica Capital Trust, claimed ARC was on the "brink of insolvency" and said ARC engaged in "massive fraud" by submitting millions of dollars in false claims to Medicaid and Medicare, both government health plans.

It said ARC, to attempt to resolve an ongoing federal investigation, had negotiated a proposed settlement with the U.S. Department of Justice to pay the government $27.7 million, $16 million of which is restitution.

According to a copy of the proposed settlement, which Angelica filed in court, the federal investigation began after some individuals filed a "qui tam," or whistleblower lawsuit alleging fraudulent practices by ARC. Such cases typically are sealed while the government investigates.

Allegations under investigation include that ARC and its affiliates falsified medical records, billed for services already paid for by other programs, provided and billed for "medically unnecessary services" and unlawfully distributed certain medications used to treat addiction.

"This settlement agreement is neither an admission of liability by the ARC entities nor a concession by the United States that its claims are not well-founded," the proposed agreement said.

A second company, Clear Cove Capital, also accused ARC of defrauding it by selling it $8 million in tax credits it failed to repay when ARC received the funds from the IRS.

ARC's news release Thursday said it has reached a confidential "mutual resolution" of the dispute with Clear Cove.

The federal charges against Robinson do not appear related to billing or Medicaid payments. Rather they appear to relate to fraud claims made by the two finance companies in the federal lawsuit.

The federal indictment alleges that Robinson in 2022 and 2023 committed fraud by selling federal tax credits to "Buyer 1" and "Buyer 2" but failed to repay either firm when ARC received the money, instead spending it on "operational costs and debt obligations."

The tax credits were federal funds employers could claim during the pandemic for retaining employees. The federal lawsuit alleges Robinson sold the same tax credits to two financial firms with a pledge to repay them with interest when ARC received the money from the government.

The federal charges also seek forfeiture of any assets used in commission of federal offenses.

They carry a penalty of up to 30 years in prison and $500,000 in fines.

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