



Nearly 10 companies expressed interest in Foley mill

State officials have referred interested companies to GP

Approximately 10 companies have expressed some interest in potentially purchasing Georgia Pacific's (GP) Foley Cellulose mill in Perry according to officials with the Florida Department of Commerce.

"We've referred nearly 10 companies to Georgia Pacific to discuss the land, resources and infrastructure, in the hopes

that at least one of those companies is the right fit," stated Rose Hebert, director of communications for Florida Commerce.

Hebert confirmed that at least two of the leads referred to GP were a result of Enterprise Florida President/CEO Laura DiBella and retired plant technology manager Bob Cate making a trip to the "Investing in Cellulose"

Pulp Week Symposium 2023 in London, England, on Nov. 5-7.

Cate, a member of the local Citizens Action Task Force that is seeking potential buyers for the plant, returned from the cellulose conference stating he was "encouraged" and regarded the trip as "a success."

During the conference, the pair reportedly met with

seven dissolving wood pulp manufacturers and a private equity company with recent experience turning around a cellulose-based business.

"These companies' operations are worldwide, with locations in Europe, Asia, North and South America," Cate reported.

"We were encouraged. Several companies asked

→ Please see page 3



UP IN FLAMES



Numerous pieces of evidence -- including illegal narcotics -- no longer needed for criminal court cases were destroyed during two evidence "burns" over the past month. Evidence can be destroyed by a judge's court order only after cases are completely closed by law enforcement, reviewed by the state attorney's office and signed off on by five witnesses, including the state attorney's office and a member of the press.

School district earns 'B' under new grading scale

Report card day is always stressful -- especially for students and their parents.

However, on Monday, it was teachers and administrators who were bracing themselves as the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) released "report cards" for every school in the state.

This year's grades were based on a new grading scale to accompany the new Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST) program.

"While this is considered a baseline year, and schools were held harmless if they received a grade of 'D' or 'F,' the Taylor County

School District is proud to have been awarded a district grade of a 'B' by earning 59% of the total points possible," Superintendent of Schools Alicia Beshears said, noting that students' English Language Arts (ELA) and math scores "both stayed steady."

School

continues to lead the district, earning an "A" for the fourth year in a row by receiving 73% of total possible points.

Taylor County Elementary School (TCES), which was a "D" school last year, saw gains that moved them to a high "C," and just 1% away

→ Please see page 3

Commission, school board will meet again Tuesday

No consensus on new district map

Despite spending two and a half hours debating and discussing the best way to legally re-draw voting district lines during a joint meeting on Tuesday, members of the Taylor County Commission and Taylor County School Board appeared to be no closer to a consensus than when they began.

However, the two boards plan to resume discussions during the county's regularly-scheduled meeting on Tuesday, Dec. 19, in the hope of settling on a map that could be approved early next year in order to meet a Feb. 9 statutory deadline to have the new map in place in time for the 2024 election.

The joint workshop featured all five county commissioners and four school board members (Danny Lundy was not present), as well as Superintendent of Schools

Alicia Beshears, School Board Attorney Angela Ball, County Administrator LaWanda Pemberton,

County Engineer Kenneth Dudley and County Attorney Conrad Bishop.

Much of the discussion

Tuesday night was less about the specific maps under consideration and instead involved the local

representatives debating -- and trying to understand -- the various legal requirements any new map

needs to meet to ensure it is in compliance with both the U.S. and Florida constitutions, as well as the Voting Right Act of 1963.

Attempting to guide the board members through the process were representatives from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), who started the current process after they sent letters earlier this year declaring that the county's current district map, which has been in place unchanged since 1983, was out of compliance with both the constitution and the Voting Rights Act due to population changes and shifts over the past 40 years.

Current District Map Issues

ACLU Staff Attorney Nicholas Warren outlined the problems with the county's current district

→ Please see page 8



Members of the Taylor County Commission and Taylor County School Board held a joint workshop Tuesday evening to discuss the future of the county's district voting maps. The two boards were guided by attorneys from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), who have said the current map is no longer in compliance with either the U.S. Constitution or the national Voting Rights Act due to population changes since it was adopted in 1983. Although the boards were not able to reach a consensus, they agreed to meet again next Tuesday, Dec. 19, to resume the debate. Above, the board members are shown just prior to the start of the workshop.



City resident Gregory Flowers appeared before the city council Tuesday to repeat a request that the council approve funding for a disc golf course and adult exercise equipment at Loughridge Park.

Council considers adding disc golf, exercise equipment at Loughridge

Despite "uncertain financial times," the City of Perry is considering using budget reserves to fund up to \$70,000 in new equipment at Loughridge Park, after repeated requests from one local resident gained support from two city council members.

Greg Flowers appeared before the council at its Dec. 12 meeting to ask the council to approve the purchase and installation of disc golf and adult exercise equipment at Loughridge Park on Hwy. 98.

After making the same request earlier this year at

a May 24 meeting, Flowers pressed the council to add equipment to Loughridge Park before making any repairs or improvements at other city-owned parks.

After members of the council questioned the cost of the improvements and where the money would

come from, Councilwoman Shirlye Hampton complained those concerns are raised "only when it comes to stuff on that side of town."

At the city's previous Nov. 12 meeting, Hampton

→ Please see page 2

City employees get \$100 gift cards

City of Perry employees will be receiving a \$100 gift card for Christmas following a unanimous vote of the city council at its Dec. 12 meeting.

City Manager John Hart placed the item on the agenda, suggesting the council award each employee a \$50 gift card, similar to what the county commission did for its

employees.

"Can we afford to do \$100?" Councilwoman Venita Woodfaulk asked.

"Second," Councilman Bill Brynes quickly agreed.

The council voted 5-0 in favor of the motion.

Staffney stated there are approximately 88 employees, meaning the bonuses would cost the city \$8,800.



Council asks staff to secure cost estimates

LOUGHRIDGE

Continued from page 1

asked for both items to be included on the city's Dec. 12 agenda, leading to discussion on a pair of budget amendments, including an estimated \$50,000 to purchase and install a disc golf course and another \$20,000 to fund adult exercise equipment at Loughridge Park.

Over the previous several meetings, Hampton and fellow Councilwoman Venita Woodfaulk had requested the city make improvements and upgrades to both Loughridge and Jerkins Park, where the city recently constructed a pole barn to provide shade for new playground equipment and is in the process of making repairs and upgrades to bathroom facilities.

Flowers began by stating he had come before the council multiple times, adding that the city had unsuccessfully applied for several state grants to pay for the new equipment.

"I ask the city council to approve funding for disc golf and exercise equipment at Loughridge Park to match equipment at other local parks and go toward showing the city council's commitment to the health and wellness of residents," Flowers said.

"While working out at other parks around the county, I've spoke to multiple people who said they would like a change of scenery to go work out and play disc golf at Loughridge Park. It would go a long way toward showing the commitment of the council to support the community, bring the community together and it is something that is needed," Flowers stated.

"If the money is available and it brings the community together, I don't see why it would not be approved at this time," Flowers stated.

"Before you start, could you tell me what other parks have this equipment?" Councilman Bill Brynes asked.

Flowers replied that the sports complex – owned by the county – and city-owned Heritage Park near the city's water plant both have some of the equipment,



The city council is considering adding a disc golf course and basic adult exercise equipment at Loughridge Park. Disc golf "baskets" are shown above at the city's Heritage Park (left) near the city's water plant and Taylor County Sports Complex (right) owned by the county on U.S. 19 North.

although several people pointed out the equipment at Heritage Park was not in good condition.

"The exercise equipment at the sports complex – push-up and pull-up bars – are fairly new and in good shape. But there is nothing whatsoever at Loughridge Park as far as any equipment other than just to walk around the park. The traffic at that park has almost tripled since I have been coming out there," Flowers said.

Flowers stated he spoke to disc golfers from Live Oak and Mayo – as well as 10-15 locals who play at the sports complex – who said if there was a disc golf course at Loughridge they would play there as well.

"I think John (City Manager John Hart) also received a lot of letters of support for it," Hampton said. "We don't have to spend \$50,000."

City Finance Director Penny Staffney questioned what the county spent on the disc golf course at the Taylor County Sports Complex and asked if there would be enough room for one at Loughridge Park.

Flowers suggested Loughridge Park could accommodate a smaller nine-hole disc golf course, adding that he was requesting just a simple push-up bar and pull-up bar

at each of the four corners of the park along the walking trail.

"We have a lot of people coming off Hwy. 98 who stop at Loughridge Park to walk the track there and we need more stuff there," Hampton said.

Hampton, who has pushed for the city to fund shade coverings, new water fountains and other upgrades to Jerkins Park and Loughridge Park several times over the past year, requested the budget amendments be placed on the Dec. 12 agenda.

"For me it is as simple as the city could do something to bring the community together, get people outside interacting and the more people you have doing something positive, the less you have doing riff-raff," Flowers said.

"If the money is in the budget, it needs to be used for this. I should be able to do the same exercises at Loughridge as I can go do at any other park," Flowers stated.

"Can we get some kind of definitive number of what this is going to cost?" Mayor Ward Ketring asked.

"We definitely can, but I wanted to get a general consensus from the council before we put more time and effort into it," Hart replied.

"I make that motion," Hampton said, before

Woodfaulk quickly offered a second.

"Where is the money going to come from?" Ketring asked.

"Super-Pufft money. Gas revenues," Hart replied.

"My question is how long before we have to replace or repair it?" Councilwoman Diane Landry asked.

"Just like any other park," Flowers said. "Just like Heritage Park by the water plant. If it is tore up, you have to replace it. Normal wear or tear or bad juvenile kids who are going to tear it up, but it is just like any other park."

"We are having the same problem every other week at Rosehead Park," Woodfaulk added.

"I thought we were putting the Super-Pufft money in a CD," Ketring asked. "Did we decide not to do that?"

"No one has called me back. We are working on it. That was the last directive -- to put it in a treasury management or CD," Staffney answered.

Hampton suggested the city pull from its reserves or use any remaining federal ARPA grant funds.

Staffney pointed out the city funded all of its capital outlay purchases using ARPA funds this budget year, adding, "but I believe there is still some left, although we have

some expensive trash trucks coming. If not, we do still have reserves."

"If you don't do it, for me there should not be any other upgrades to any other park in the city without doing something to this park that someone has been up here asking about five or six times," Flowers said. "In the future if some money comes up and it goes to any other park other than Loughridge, it would be unfair."

"So, Loughridge Park has to have first dibs on any improvements?" Ketring asked.

"I am asking for something at Loughridge that some of the other parks already have. If there is no money now, then if there is any money in the future and nothing is done at Loughridge, I would say that is not fair to Loughridge Park," Flowers replied.

"Ms. Shirley says there is money in the budget in reserves, and I hear there is Super-Pufft money, so the money is there, and all it takes is a couple of people to get together and approve it," Flowers said.

"It does not matter if it is \$70,000 or \$20,000. It might not take \$70,000 -- just as long as it is safe. It should not be that big of a deal to do something at the park to enhance the community," Flowers added.

"I have heard proponents for the exercise equipment, but I have not heard that much for the disc golf," Hart said. "Maybe we could do the exercise equipment now and wait six months and come back and look at it."

"Why not do both, John?" Hampton asked.

"We can," Hart replied.

"Where do we get the \$70,000?" Landry asked.

"My concern is that we are living in uncertain financial times," Ketring commented.

"Only when it comes to..." Hampton said.

"Why don't you review the books, and if there is no money in reserves and no Super-Pufft money, then we can't do it. But, if you have an extra \$10,000 or \$30,000, then let's do something for the park. If not now, then six months later do something for the park," Flowers said.

Ketring suggested taking the disc golf baskets from Heritage Park, repairing them and moving them to Loughridge Park, but Flowers, Hampton and Woodfaulk objected.

"No, no, no. You are not going to take something that is tore up and has to be repaired, been there for a while and put them in a new park," Flowers said.

Hampton suggested cutting the disc golf course cost estimate from \$50,000 down to \$20,000 and spending \$20,000 for exercise equipment, capping the total at \$50,000.

"Let's quit doing this you all! We are doing this all the time when it comes to stuff on that side of town," Hampton said.

"That has nothing to do with it," Staffney replied.

"That is not true," Landry stated. "We just put new refrigerators and stoves (at Loughridge Park)."

"We have a motion on the table. What exactly is the motion? Where is the money coming from? It is kind of up in the air," Ketring said.

Hart stated city staff had not actually prepared a budget amendment, but just wanted a "general consensus" from the council on "how much and where it would come from."

"We do need to get the exercise equipment professionally installed. We don't want to go cheap on that," he added.

Staffney suggested the council allow her to get more accurate pricing on the cost of disc golf baskets and concrete tee pads.

"We will get a price and come up with a budget amendment resolution to vote on at the next meeting," Staffney said.

"I am worried about discs flying across 98," Hart said. "But we can handle that in design phase."

Woodfaulk and Hampton asked that the item be added to the council's next agenda in January, and Flowers asked if the request would be approved once the council had a cost estimate.

"We can't make any guarantees," Brynes answered.

"We have to wait until we see what it comes back at. We can't approve it if it comes back at \$100,000," Landry added.

"Please work within the budget and get us some equipment and stuff out at Loughridge Park," Flowers concluded.

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TCMS, TCHS earn 'C' grades

SCHOOL DISTRICT
Continued from page 1

from being a "B" school. Both Taylor County Middle School (TCMS) and Taylor County High School (TCHS) maintained their respective "C" grades. (The primary school is not included in the grading system.)

Steinhatchee Principal Jimmy Bray said he was pleased to maintain an "A" school grade during the transition to the new BEST (Benchmarks for Excellent Student Thinking) standards and FAST assessments.

"We're eager to build upon that success by increasing the percentage of students scoring three or higher in third grade reading, as well as the number of students making a learning gain in fourth and fifth grade," Bray

said. TCES Principal Chuck Finley said, "Areas of focus for the 2023-24 school year are ELA and math learning gains, ELA and math lowest quartile learning gains, proficiency for our targeted ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) subgroups (major racial and ethnic groups; economically disadvantaged students; children with disabilities and English learners)."

In addition, TCES saw gains in all tested areas, as ELA proficiency improved from 37 to 42, math proficiency improved from 46 to 56 and science proficiency improved from 33 to 50.

TCMS received 54% of total possible points to earn the school's "C" grade. "In March 2023, after data analysis of the second

progress monitoring assessment, TCMS was predicted to be a 'D' school. Upon receipt of this prediction, we created a shift in instructional focus to support the weak areas in our data," TCMS Principal Kasey Robert said.

"These instructional shifts created a momentum for change that is evidenced by TCMS receiving a grade of 'C.' While we are relieved to see our efforts pay off, we will continue to make instructional shifts based on progress monitoring data to increase points earned in all categorical areas," she said.

TCHS received 53% of total possible points to maintain its "C" grade. "Our biology and U.S. History End-of-Course (EOC) assessments each saw an increase from the previous school year, with both departments working hard to beat the state average in their subjects this year. However, our graduation rate (Class of 2022) dipped slightly from the previous school year and with it the acceleration points for those students," Principal Heather McCoy said, adding that these were also the students who struggled to stay on track following the COVID shutdown.

"Our plan is to keep working together with the goal of seeing big improvements for our students and our community," McCoy said.

In reviewing the district scores school by school, Beshears said she does not believe the overall scores are a true indication of what students are capable of in these areas.

"New instructional coaches were hired this school year to concentrate on math, as well as reading, so we anticipate those scores

to increase with the added resource. Science jumped from 40% to 53% while social studies achievement fell 10 percentage points," she said.

The decrease in social study points, Beshears said, "may be attributed to the new Civics Literacy test that was added as a requirement for students enrolled in a U.S. government class, a course usually taken by juniors and seniors."

"The district invested in professional learning over the summer and expects to see the passage rates of this exam increase, causing an overall rise in total social studies points earned," she said.

Middle School Acceleration also saw an increase, moving from 60% to 90%, mostly due to more students passing the Algebra 1 end-of-course exam in 8th grade, Beshears said.

In addition, while college and career acceleration dropped from 59% to 42%, the graduation rate stayed steady at 87%, she noted.

"With the closure of the Georgia-Pacific cellulose mill here, Big Bend Technical College (BBTC) is working to expand their course offerings, which will include opportunities for more dual enrollment courses. That, along with the district's dual enrollment partnership with North Florida College (NFC), both of which prepare students for colleges and careers, should help those numbers increase," Beshears added.

She said the district expects to see more students graduating with their AA degrees than ever before.



SATURDAY, DEC. 16

First Assembly of God

Perry First Assembly of God will hold a food distribution this Saturday, Dec. 16, starting at 9 a.m. The church is located at 828 West Julia Street.

TUESDAY, DEC. 19

Second Harvest at West Fraser Mill

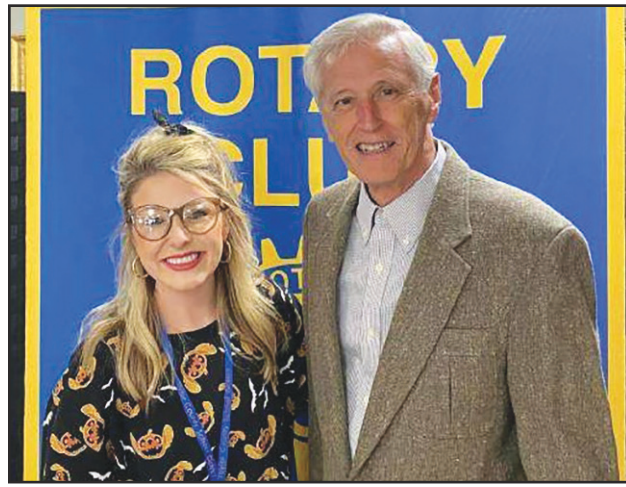
Second Harvest of the Big Bend will hold a holiday food distribution Tuesday, Dec. 19, starting at 10 a.m. at the West Fraser Perry Mill. The mill site is located at 1509 South Byron Butler Parkway.

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 20

Temple of God Church of God in Christ

The Temple of God International Church of God in Christ will host the seventh annual Pre-Christmas Food Distribution on Wednesday, Dec. 20, starting at 1 p.m. Food will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis while supplies last.

The church is located at 604 West Julia Street. Additional sponsors include The Less Fortunate Still Matters and Farm Share.



Career opportunities

Members of the Rotary and Kiwanis clubs learned at a November meeting about the wide variety of postsecondary career and technical education programs available to students attending Big Bend Technical College. Assistant Director Shelbi McCall told the civic leaders that programs available in 2024 will include commercial vehicle driving, diesel systems and maintenance, electrical and instrumentation, massage therapy, medical coder, millwright, patient care, practical nursing and welding. McCall said the college's staff is "working hard to ensure every student who comes through our doors can be successful and accomplish their career goals."

Herbert: 'GP gives very little actionable information' to the interested companies

GP
Continued from page 1

the Florida Department of Commerce for more information on state incentives, and Florida is leading this effort," Cate added.

Florida Commerce is working as an intermediary between prospective buyers and GP, who announced plans to close the Foley Cellulose pulp manufacturing plant on Sept. 18. The mill officially completed its shut down on Nov. 16.

In October, Florida Commerce Secretary Alex Kelly and members of his staff met with the Taylor County Development Authority (TCDA), Perry-Taylor County Chamber of Commerce and Task Force

members to discuss what financial incentives the state was willing to provide, including "reimbursement of capital to repair and replace equipment in the existing plant, new infrastructure, such as water and gas lines, new roads, sewer, rail spurs, broadband internet, etc."

GP recently confirmed it has received calls and was preparing a package to provide to companies interested in potentially purchasing the Foley Cellulose mill.

"Georgia-Pacific has accepted calls from companies who have expressed interest in discussing the purchase of the Foley facility," GP Public Affairs Manager Scott Mixon confirmed last week. "Georgia-Pacific will

develop a plan to respond further to those companies. Details on the content of the response and timeline have not been officially shared with any party or company outside of Georgia-Pacific," Mixon said.

"Any interest expressed by another company about the sale of the Foley facility and timeline for the sales process will be kept confidential by Georgia-Pacific (GP) for business reasons," Mixon added.

"We have consistently heard back from these referrals that GP always meets with them, and we have also consistently heard that GP gives very little actionable feedback in those conversations," Herbert said, adding that GP is "keeping their cards close" to their chest.

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Lady Bulldogs shut out district foe Marianna 3-0

The Taylor County High School (TCHS) Lady Bulldogs traveled to Marianna Tuesday night and shut out their district rivals 3-0, bouncing back from a tough 1-0 loss to Maclay last week.

"We dominated the game and probably should have scored a few more goals," admitted TCHS Girls Head Coach Stuart Ely after the win.

The Lady Bulldogs (7-3) peppered the Marianna goal with 15 shots while holding Marianna to just 3 shots.

Marianna (2-6-3) focused on defense and packed players into the goal box

in an attempt to limit the Lady Bulldogs' scoring opportunities.

Scoring for the Lady Bulldogs were: Hannah Harvey (2) and Emma Kirkland (1) with assists from Jha'miyah McIntyre (2) and Hannah Claire Curry.

It was a relatively quiet night in goal, as Hannah Shiver recorded just 4 saves.

"I was especially proud of our composure and controlling the pace of the game," Ely said. "Our defense of Mallory Folsom, Ella Goodman, Becky Buhler, Kiersten Carter,

Brylee Gant, Autumn Young and Mia Withers excelled in preventing scoring threats, as Marianna really only had one quality shot on goal.

"Our midfield dominated possession and helped sustain and build our offensive attacks. The strength of Marianna's team was in their defensive backline, which played admirably and made it very difficult to score in their defensive third of the field," Ely said.

"It is always great to win a competitive game against a quality opponent -- especially a district

opponent. I'm looking forward to the challenge ahead of us Friday against Lafayette.

The TCHS girls will next face off against a very good Lafayette County team that is 7-1 on the season, with their only loss coming against the Lady Bulldogs back on Nov. 14 by a 6-1 margin.

The Lady Bulldogs and Lady Hornets will square off in Mayo at 5 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 15.

TCHS will then host Godby next Tuesday, Dec. 19 in Perry and travel to take on Leon next Thursday, Dec. 21 in Tallahassee.



TCHS goalie Hannah Shiver (above right) and the Lady Bulldogs' defense recorded a shutout win over Marianna Tuesday night. (Photo by Amy Sadler)



Sisters earn green belts

Sisters Allyson, Maggie and Natalie Paulus recently tested and earned their 7th Kyu Green Belt at the Perry Dojo. "This is a level few of our students reach," said Chief Instructor Jimmy Bowden, who is shown above with the trio. "The girls had trained 90 classes since October 2022." Their parents are Jake and Sarah Paulus.

Free softball clinic

The Taylor County Fast Pitch Association (TCFPA) will host a free softball clinic Saturday, Dec. 16.

The clinic will be held on from 9:30-11 a.m. at the Taylor County Sports Complex for players ages 4-14. Each player is asked to bring a glove and facemask.

After the clinic concludes at 11 a.m., players can stay and participate in speciality

training classes (pitching and catching) from local high school players for a small fee.

TCFPA will be on hand offering early registration at a discounted rate (\$50) to local youth softball players for the spring 2024 season.

After December, the registration fee for the upcoming season will increase to \$55.

Hughes, Windham finish third at Okeechobee fishing tourney

Matthew Hughes of Perry and Hudson Windham of Tallahassee brought home "big bass" honors and a third-place finish for the Capital City Junior Bass Hunters during a high school fishing tournament on Lake Okeechobee Dec. 10-11.

Each month, August through April, the pair have fished in middle school and high school bass tournaments hosted by BassMasters, attempting to qualify for state and eventually a spot in the national competition.

On Dec. 10-11, the Hughes and Windham were one of 120 high school teams competing in a tournament on Lake Okeechobee.

On Saturday, Hughes and Windham weighed in a five-fish limit totaling 10.72 lbs. to rank 45th out of 120 teams.

On Sunday, the pair caught the biggest bass of the day (9.05 lbs.) to anchor an impressive five-fish bag weighing 19.66 lbs. to vault themselves up the leaderboard and into a third-place finish.

Hughes, the son of Shane and Brandi Hughes, is a lifelong resident of Taylor County, while Windham is the son of Chris and Tonya Windham in Tallahassee.

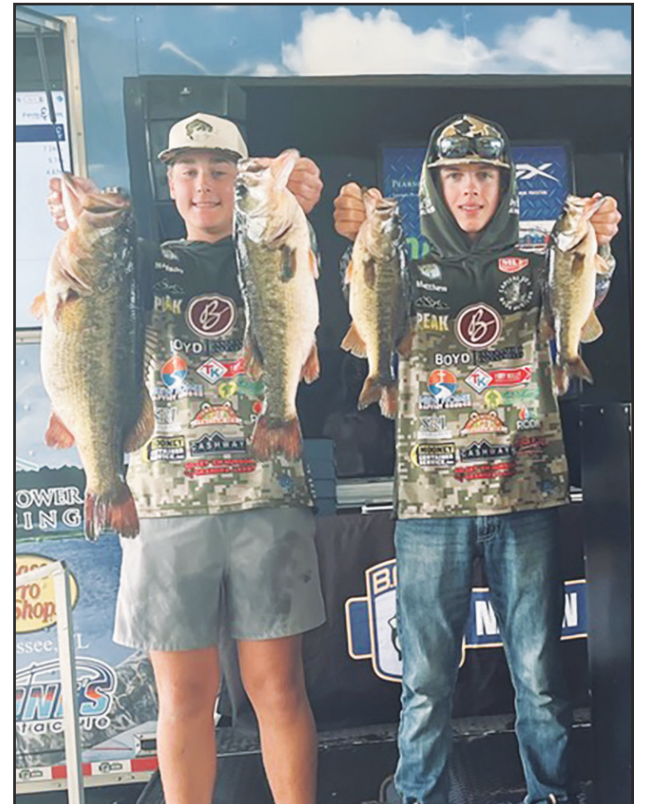
The teens are fishing for scholarships offered to graduating seniors who wish to pursue furthering their education, as well as fishing, at the college level.

"Without the love and support of their communities, this would not be possible," said Brandi Hughes. "We would like to give a big 'Thank you' to each of our sponsors, including: Cashway Building Products, SRI Management, New Home Baptist Church, Wilson's Bait & Tackle, Big Bend Marine, Rocky's, M.A. Rignoni, Inc., Optimist Club of Perry, Trophy Creek Outfitters & Pawn, Little Pine Pediatrics, Amanda Clark Photography, Schwab Brothers Hydraulics and Sea Hag Marina, as well as each person who individually contributed, loved and prayed over these boys.

"It is such a blessing to watch them do what they love in this beautiful creation God has provided," she added.

The anglers are scheduled to compete in their next tournament Jan. 6-7 on Lake Seminole.

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Matthew Hughes of Perry and Hudson Windham of Tallahassee brought home "big bass" honors and a third-place finish for the Capital City Junior Bass Hunters during a high school fishing tournament on Lake Okeechobee Dec. 10-11.

TCMS 'Dogs pick up forfeit win after opponent fails to take their own field

The Taylor County Middle School (TCMS) Bulldogs' soccer team picked up a forfeit win over Quincy this past week, before losing to Bell, 4-0.

The win and loss came on the heels of losses to Florida High and Suwannee last week.

The Bulldogs are now

3-7-2 on the season.

The TCMS boys dropped a 4-0 decision to Florida High in Tallahassee on Dec. 4 and lost to Suwannee Middle School 9-1 on Thursday, Dec. 7.

On Dec. 8, TCMS picked up a 1-0 forfeit win over Quincy, who failed to show up for a home game on their own field, leaving

TCMS and officials with no explanation.

The Bulldogs finished the week with a 4-0 loss to Bell on Dec. 11.

"We have played well as a team, but it seems that every team we have played this year looks like a high school team - they are all huge," TCMS Coach Jonathan Roberts

commented.

TCMS is scheduled to wrap up the regular season against Crossroads Academy on Thursday, Dec. 14 prior to the conference tournament next week.

The Bulldogs will take on Quincy on Monday, Dec. 18 in the first round of the conference playoffs.

TIDE TABLES

F 15	High 1:54 AM	3.6	19	High 6:02 AM	2.5
	Low 9:55 AM	-0.8	19	Low 1:12 PM	0.3
	High 4:03 PM	2.9	19	High 7:07 PM	2.7
	Low 9:27 PM	1.2	W 20	Low 2:06 AM	0.6
Sa 16	High 2:41 AM	3.5	20	High 7:52 AM	2.4
	Low 10:40 AM	-0.7	20	Low 2:11 PM	0.8
	High 4:46 PM	2.8	20	High 7:59 PM	2.8
	Low 10:18 PM	1.1	Th 21	Low 3:31 AM	0.3
Su 17	High 3:34 AM	3.3	21	High 9:37 AM	2.4
	Low 11:28 AM	-0.4	21	Low 3:14 PM	1.0
	High 5:31 PM	2.7	21	High 8:51 PM	2.9
	Low 11:21 PM	1.0	F 22	Low 4:42 AM	-0.2
M 18	High 4:38 AM	2.9	22	High 10:56 AM	2.5
	Low 12:18 PM	0.0	22	Low 4:15 PM	1.3
	High 6:18 PM	2.7	22	High 9:42 PM	3.0
Tu 19	Low 12:38 AM	0.8			

FEED TIMES

	Minor	Major	Minor	Major
15	9:24 AM	1:32 AM	7:44 PM	2:02 PM
16	10:11 AM	2:31 AM	8:55 PM	3:00 PM
17	10:51 AM	3:27 AM	10:03 PM	3:53 PM
18	11:26 AM	4:19 AM	11:09 PM	4:43 PM
19	11:57 AM	5:07 AM	----	5:31 PM
20	12:13 AM	5:55 AM	12:29 PM	6:18 PM
21	1:16 AM	6:42 AM	1:00 PM	7:05 PM
22	2:20 AM	7:30 AM	1:33 PM	7:54 PM

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The Perry Garden Club (PGC) will host its annual Christmas Luncheon and Floral Design Auction Wednesday, Dec. 20, starting at 11 a.m.

The Perry Women's Club (PWC) has donated the use of its facility for the event, which will be open to the public. Admission is free. (The club house is located at 502 North Jefferson Street, next door to the Chamber of Commerce.)

Floral designers Rain Devos and Bob Bell will create stunning holiday arrangements, which will then be auctioned off. Proceeds will benefit the Garden Club.

Everyone is invited to bring a covered dish to share.



MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Gift distribution Sunday at Courts of Praise for children and adults

Courts of Praise will hold a gift distribution this Sunday, Dec. 17, from 1-3 p.m. (while supplies last). Gifts will be available for children (babies to teens) and adults (male and female).

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Operation Catnip



152 coastal community cats treated

Thanks in part to a generous donation from BISSELL Pet Foundation, RedRover was on the ground in Taylor County over the past few weeks, helping Operation Catnip, A Hound to Hold, Inc. and other groups in a humane "Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return" (TNVR) operation that served 152 community cats in the coastal areas of the county.

The operation worked hard to assist community cats (and their caretakers) in ethically keeping cat overpopulation down in areas where they will be most impacted by hurricanes and flooding.

Teams humanely trapped, spay/neutered, vaccinated and treated cats for parasites (fleas and worms), as well as other injuries/illnesses as needed in Steinhatchee, Keaton Beach, Dark Island and Jena, while the sheltering took place in Perry.

RedRover Responders volunteers, who assisted in humanely trapping and transporting cats to and from the temporary shelter, where they also cared for the cats and ensured they had food, fresh water and a clean space.

"RedRover is honored to be in Taylor County alongside Operation Catnip, A Hound to Hold, Inc., and others helping people with free roaming cats," Gammie stated.

"We know how devastated the community has been since Hurricane Idalia hit, followed by the paper mill closing, and understand what a struggle there is to take care of one's own needs," Gammie added.

"We are proud to work with the local caregivers to ensure that the free-roaming cats get the spay, neuter, vaccination and flea prevention medications that they need," Gammie said.

communities become overburdened by a crisis involving a large number of animals. The volunteers provide a skilled and compassionate workforce which enables a jurisdiction to address local cases of animal cruelty and neglect.

"BISSELL Pet Foundation is proud to make this critical Trap-Neuter-Return operation possible to address the root cause of community cat overpopulation," said Cathy Bissell, founder of BISSELL Pet Foundation. "RedRover is doing incredible work to impact animals and the people caring for them nationwide."

To donate to RedRover's Emergency Response Fund, visit: redrover.org/donateresponders. To learn how to become a RedRover Responders volunteer, visit: redrover.org/volunteer.

About RedRover
Since 1987, RedRover has focused on bringing animals out of crisis and strengthening the human-animal bond through emergency sheltering, disaster relief services, financial assistance and humane education. RedRover is a founding member of the National Animal Rescue and Sheltering Coalition (NARSC), established after Hurricane Katrina's devastating impact to more people and animals than any other storm in the history of the United States. RedRover has earned a coveted 4-star rating from Charity Navigator, America's largest independent charity evaluator. To learn how RedRover is creating a more compassionate world, visit RedRover.org.



Cats were humanely trapped, treated and then released back to areas they were found.



Teams humanely trapped, spay/neutered, vaccinated and treated 152 cats for parasites (fleas and worms), as well as other injuries/illnesses as needed in Steinhatchee, Keaton Beach, Dark Island and Jena.

The cats were returned to the specific locations where they were trapped at the conclusion of the operation.

RedRover Director of Field Services Beth Gammie said, "Because of BISSELL Pet Foundation's generous support, we are able to safely reduce the community cat population in this disaster-prone region. We are so grateful for BISSELL Pet Foundation and our partners with Operation Catnip, A Hound to Hold, Inc. and the community volunteers who made these efforts possible."

RedRover sent a Team Leader (Gammie) and nine

"It has been a labor of love helping 152 cats – and we'd like to say a huge thank you to Perry Animal Hospital and Dr. Sapp for opening up the clinic for the spay/neuter surgeries."

"A Hound to Hold remains dedicated to PAWS of Steinhatchee. Partnership efforts such as this provide expanded opportunities to better improve the quality of life for our community animals! We are forever grateful!" stated A Hound to Hold founder Courtney Baumgartner.

With more than 4,700 trained volunteers in the United States and Canada, RedRover can deploy its volunteers quickly when



Volunteers cared for the coastal community cats and ensured they had food, fresh water and a clean space at a temporary shelter in Perry.



The Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return" (TNVR) operation was made possible by a generous donation from the BISSELL Pet Foundation. Groups involved with the catch-and-release program included RedRover, Operation Catnip, A Hound to Hold, Inc. and other groups.

Scavenger Hunt Starts Monday, Dec. 18

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The Taylor County Public Library is hosting a Christmas Scavenger Hunt, kicking off Monday, Dec. 18, and continuing through Saturday, Dec. 30. "If you are looking for a fun and entertaining activity to keep your children engaged during the holiday season, look no further. Swing by the library to be a part of the excitement," Librarian Kim Pegg said. Forms are available at the library and all participants will be entered to win a grand prize.


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County staff presents alternative map proposal

DISTRICT MAP

Continued from page 1

map when he addressed the county commission at its workshop in September. The ACLU made a similar presentation to the school board.

"The Equal Protection Clause (of the U.S. Constitution) requires substantially equal representation from all citizens," Warren said. "That's because one person's vote should have roughly as much weight as anyone else's."

"If you have a district that's twice the size, it means that one constituent in that larger, more-populous district has the same commissioner as the person in the district that's half as big, but they are competing with a lot more people for the same services and getting the ear of their elected official. Then, when they go to the ballot box, their vote is diluted because there's more people casting a vote for the same amount of representation."

The principle of "one person, one vote" is also required on the state level, as it is in the Florida Constitution.

According to Warren, "minor deviations" in populations between districts is allowed, but the maximum deviation is 10%, as established by the U.S. Supreme Court in Gaffney v. Cummings (1973) and Brown v. Thomson in (1983).

For example, if one of the county's five districts had a population 5% above the "ideal" or average population, and another district was 5% below the average, that would equate to a deviation of 10%.

According to figures provided by Warren, the deviation range found in Taylor County's current map is 47.6%, with Districts 1, 2 and 5 being under-populated and Districts 3 and 4 currently over-populated.

However, Warren said the principle of "one person, one vote" is not the only one the commission and school board must consider when developing a new district map, specifically citing Section 2 of the federal Voting Rights Act of 1963.

"It prohibits voting practices that result in the denial or abridgement -- on account of race or color -- of the right of any citizen to vote," he said. "You can establish a violation if members of that racial group have less opportunity than others to participate in the political process and elect representatives of their choice."

"The courts have boiled this down to sort of a three-part (test), which looks at whether the minority group is sufficiently large and geographically compact to form a majority in a single-member district, which in this case is District 5; whether the minority group is politically cohesive; and then whether there's a majority group in the jurisdiction that votes in block. Those last two parts are called racially-polarized

voting." Warren stated that all three are present in Taylor County.

In 1983, a number of black voters in Taylor County sued in federal court, arguing that the then practice of electing commissioners at-large (countywide) "excludes black representation and participation and minimizes and cancels out black voting strength in violation of their rights secured by the Voting Rights Act of 1963."

Among the half dozen residents in the audience Tuesday evening was Shirley Scott, one of the original litigants in the lawsuit.

"That (suit) resulted in a settlement, and the county and the school board agreeing that this at-large system -- which was a requirement of the state constitution that the county couldn't actually change -- did violate the Voting Rights Act," Warren told the commission in September.

"Then, the court, with the agreement of the county and the school board, mandated the particular map that should serve as the remedy," he said. "That is the map that Taylor County still uses today."

County Staff Presents New Alternative Map

Although it was expected that the county commission and school board would begin Tuesday's workshop discussing a concept map provided by Warren and his ACLU colleagues back in September, Pemberton and Dudley instead began by presenting an alternative map, which they said they had been working on for the past several weeks in consultation with Warren and including specific suggestions provided by various county commissioners.

Warren had said in previous discussions that the concept map was just one possible solution to the issues facing the current map and that changes could be proposed by either the commission or school board.

However, starting with a completely different map brought objections from School Board Member Diedra Dunnell, who stated she thought the group would be discussing the ACLU concept map, adding she felt unprepared to talk about the county's proposal, which had been e-mailed to commissioners and school board members the day before.

Several other school board members also raised questions, including whether the staff-prepared map resulted in any school board members' residences changing districts, but Warren reminded both boards that a law recently passed by the Florida Legislature forbids the consideration of incumbents' residences when developing district maps.

Dudley explained that the county's proposed map was an attempt to reach compliance with both the "one person, one vote" and maintain District 5 as required by the Voting Rights Act -- but with less dramatic changes to the current district boundaries

than the ACLU concept map.

Additionally, Dudley stated he attempted to update the map, when possible, so that it used geographic boundaries such as roads, creeks and rivers that can be seen, rather than political ones, such as the Perry city limits, which can be difficult to identify without a map.

Dudley then went through a detailed district-by-district breakdown of the county's proposed map, comparing it with the current map to show where changes had been made to bring districts into balance or better aligned with geographic features.

According to Dudley, districts in the proposed county map had a maximum deviation of 9.27%, below the threshold of 10%. By comparison, the ACLU concept map had a maximum deviation of 7.3%.

As for District 5 and its compliance with the Voting Rights Act, Dudley said it was drawn to maintain a plurality of black residents (48%), compared to 46% white and 3% "other," according to U.S. Census figures.

When the current map was approved in 1983, the racial makeup of District 5 was 69% black, 30% white and 0.4% "other."

Scott objected to the county's proposal, arguing that the result of the original federal lawsuit "guaranteed" a black representative on both the county commission and the school board, adding that if the new map did not provide that, they would return to litigation.

Pemberton stated that county staff had been in communication with Warren throughout the process and were aware the ACLU had concerns about the proposed map, but with the workshop approaching, they decided to wait until everybody was in a room together to further discuss the proposal.

Dudley added that he had not expected each board to approve the proposal that night, pointing out the goal was to find a map that was "least impactful" to the existing boundaries while still meeting the requirements.

Alternative Map Would Not Comply with Voting Rights Act

Following Dudley's presentation, Warren stated the county's proposed map would not meet the requirements of the Voting Rights Act because the accumulated case law that has resulted from decades of litigation prohibits using any single metric, such as population (which is what Dudley used) or even registered voters, when determining if a district is in compliance.

Dudley and Pemberton both said they were not aware of this requirement when developing the county's proposal.

"At Mrs. Pemberton's urging, I've pulled together some cites (case law excerpts) to explain how the legal requirement is now, not what it was in 1983 when the Bellamy case was brought by Mrs. Scott and others," Warren said. "If no lawsuit

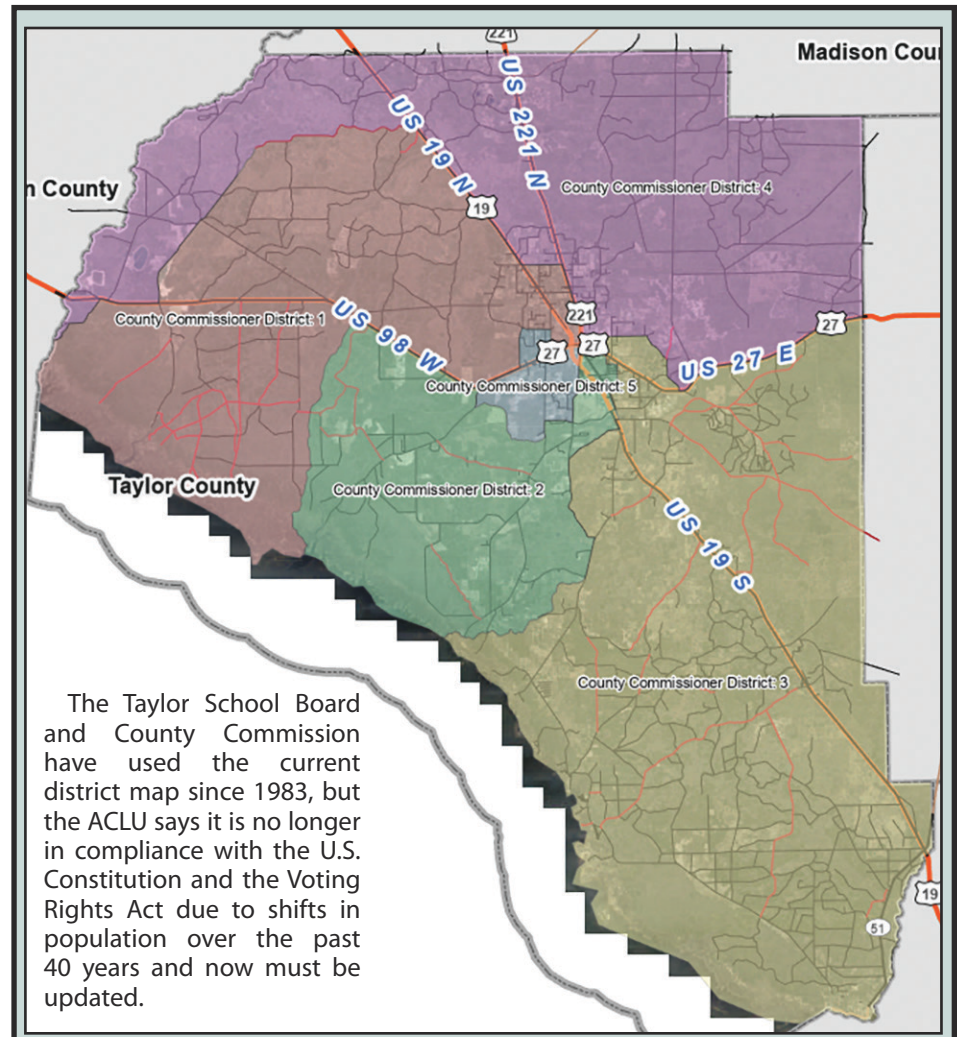
had ever been brought, there would still be a requirement to follow the Voting Rights Act in Taylor County, so

I will explain it from that perspective."

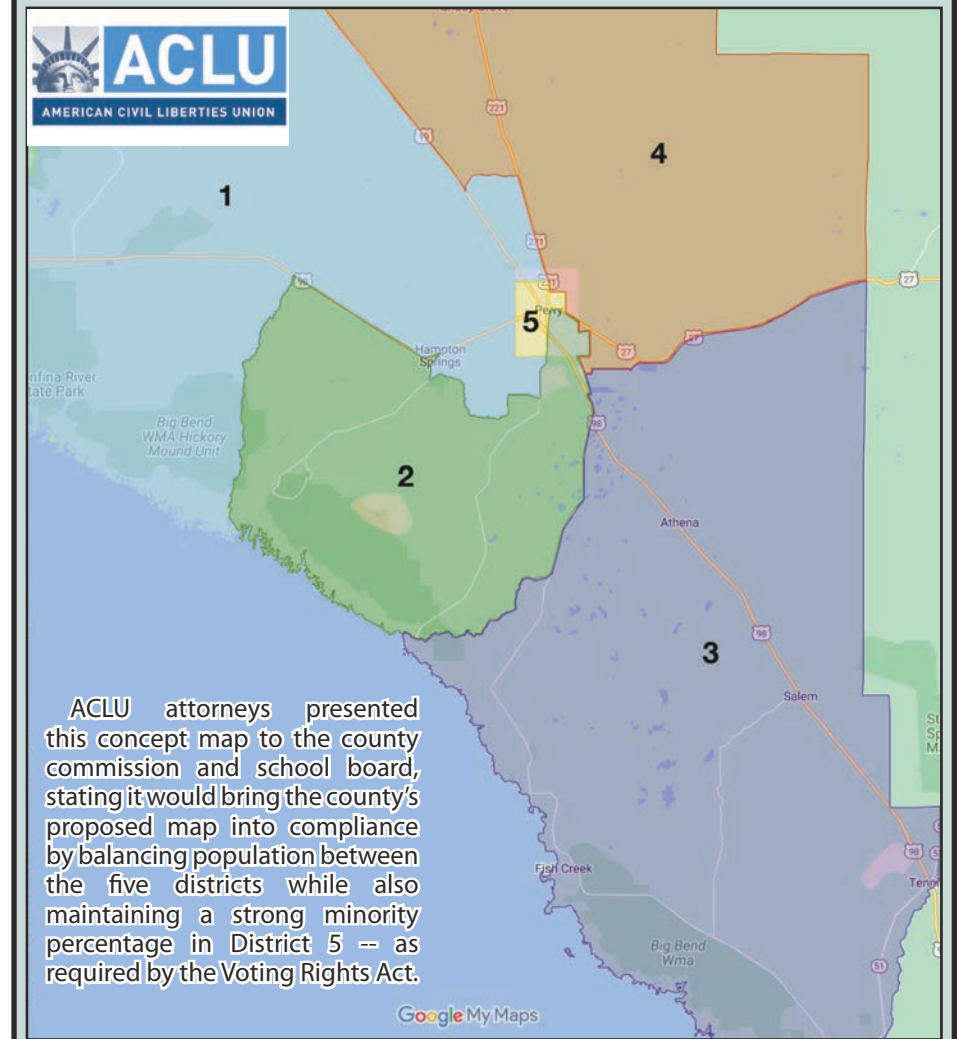
He reiterated that the three prongs of the Voters Right

Act exist in Taylor County, including that "you can draw

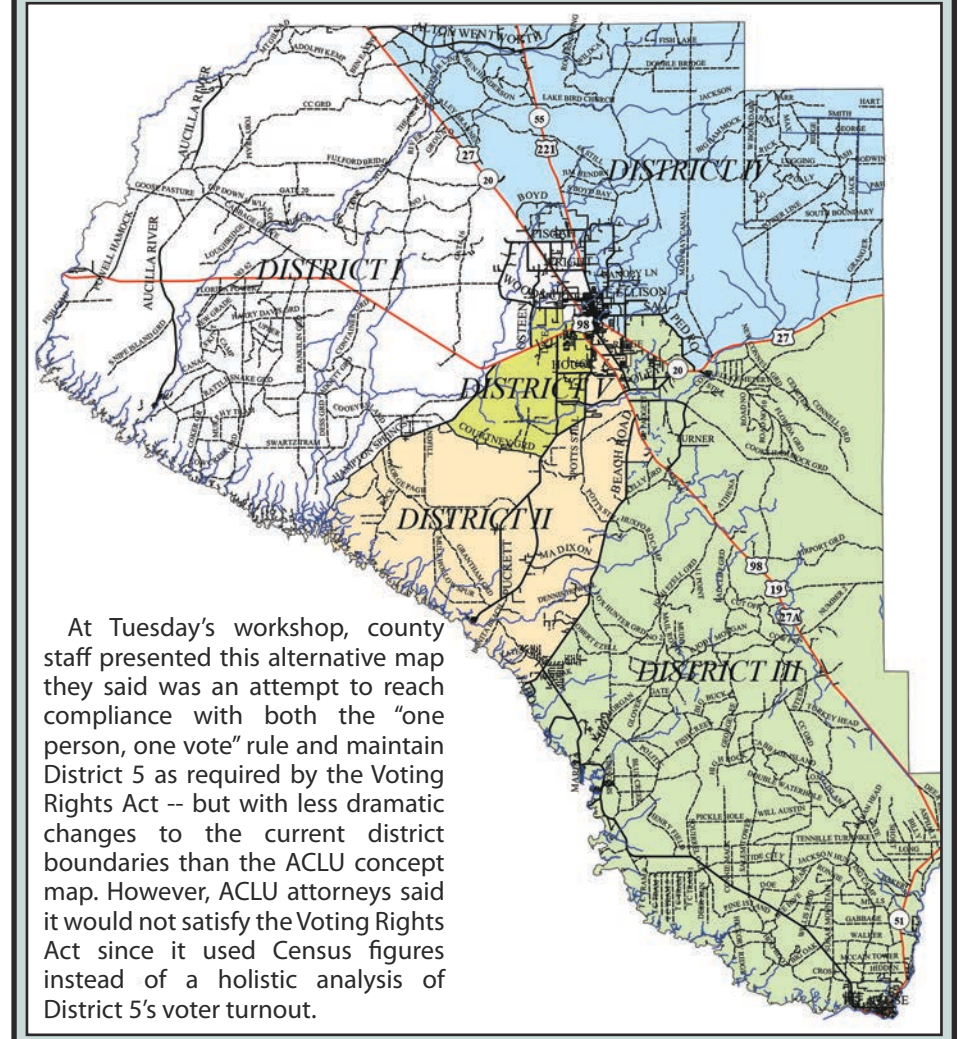
→ Please see page 9



The Taylor School Board and County Commission have used the current district map since 1983, but the ACLU says it is no longer in compliance with the U.S. Constitution and the Voting Rights Act due to shifts in population over the past 40 years and now must be updated.



ACLU attorneys presented this concept map to the county commission and school board, stating it would bring the county's proposed map into compliance by balancing population between the five districts while also maintaining a strong minority percentage in District 5 -- as required by the Voting Rights Act.



At Tuesday's workshop, county staff presented this alternative map they said was an attempt to reach compliance with both the "one person, one vote" rule and maintain District 5 as required by the Voting Rights Act -- but with less dramatic changes to the current district boundaries than the ACLU concept map. However, ACLU attorneys said it would not satisfy the Voting Rights Act since it used Census figures instead of a holistic analysis of District 5's voter turnout.



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HOLIDAY GARBAGE PICK-UP SCHEDULE

City of Perry

The City of Perry will be closed Friday, Dec. 22 and Monday, Dec. 25 for the Christmas Holiday.

Week before Christmas 2023:

- Regular Schedule Monday, Dec. 18
- Regular Schedule Tuesday, Dec. 19
- Thursday Customers pick up Wednesday, Dec. 20
- Friday Customers pick up Thursday, Dec. 21

Week after Christmas 2023

- Monday Customers pick up Tuesday, Dec. 26
- Tuesday Customers pick up Wednesday, Dec. 27
- Regular Schedule Thursday, Dec. 28 & Friday, Dec. 29



Federal judge will have to approve new map

MAP PROPOSAL Continued from page 8

a district that has a numerical majority of black votes... which is in the concept map we shared.

"If those preconditions are present, then you have to draw a remedy, and that remedy must protect -- this is a quote from a Supreme Court case from earlier this year -- 'the potential to elect a representative of the racial group's own choice' in some single-member district. It is important that what is protected is the ability to elect a preferred candidate of choice. It's not a hard numerical target or a demographic target."

"This is another helpful quote from a case from the Supreme Court in 1994: 'No single statistic provides courts with a shortcut to determine whether a set of districts unlawfully dilutes minority voting strength.' So, looking at just what the Census reports or just looking at registered voters or whatever it is, is not -- unfortunately, because it would be easier -- how you measure your compliance with the law."

"This is another more recent case from 2015: 'The Voting Rights Act does not require a jurisdiction to maintain a particular numerical minority percentage. It requires the jurisdiction to maintain a minority's ability to elect a preferred candidate of choice.'

"So, the question is how do you determine whether that ability would be present in a proposed district?" Warren said. "The Supreme Court laid it out somewhat helpfully recently in a series of cases. This one is from 2017: 'You must perform the functional analysis of electoral behavior within the particular election district that's required to determine what minimum minority population will satisfy the Voting Rights Act standard.'

"That is referred to a pre-enactment analysis with justifiable conclusions," Warren said. "All of that is to say that there is a kind of 'political-sciencey' analysis of recent elections of voting patterns -- how black voters and non-black voters vote in different elections -- and then average them out. That gives you an indication of how a particular configuration of a district will perform, whether it will provide the ability to elect (their preferred candidate)."

Referencing Scott's earlier comment about a "guarantee" concerning the election of a black representative on each board, Warren said, "One thing I want to mention that is really important, the Supreme Court is very, very clear that the Voting Rights Act is not a guarantee of electoral success. It doesn't mean that in every single election black voters are always guaranteed to elect their preferred candidates, because there may be a race where there's a candidate that makes great inroads with black voters, and a lot of black voters cross over to support that candidate. 'Usually' is what the law requires."

According to Warren, the ACLU performed the analysis on District 5 "that is required in the case law. We looked at recent elections. We looked at voter turnout, which as Mr. Demp raised, is different from the Census reports. The estimated range for actual voter turnout that would usually meet that 'usually is able to elect candidates of choice' would be about 47% to 48% turnout."

For example, using that analysis, the ACLU's concept district map resulted in a 50% white and 48% black population, meeting the desired threshold.

By comparison, the analysis of county's proposed map resulted

in 59% white and 39% black, which is the same as the current district map, meaning that both would fail to meet the Voting Rights Act requirements, Warren said.

Warren noted that the software both he and Dudley used to develop their maps does not have that analysis available, requiring him to use separate software to make that determination.

"That's why when we got this draft map yesterday, we ran it through (the software) we had, and why it was concerning to us," Warren said.

Based on the ACLU analysis, the overall minority percentage in District 5 has been declining over the years, resulting in the current map no longer being in compliance with the Voters Rights Act, Warren added.

Dunnell and Commissioner Thomas Demps, who represent District 5 on the school board and commission respectively, agreed with that assessment based on their own election histories.

However, that was about the only agreement to be found over the next hour or so, as various commissioners, school board members and members of the public debated how best to determine the validity of any new proposed District 5.

School Board Member Bonnie Sue Agner said the analysis was simply "guessing" how people would vote, while Scott said they should look at population numbers, as they did in 1983, instead of voter turnout, which can change from election to election.

Warren continued to reiterate throughout the discussion that the pre-enactment analysis is what is required by the Supreme Court.

Adding to the confusion is the fact that separate Supreme Court case law requires jurisdictions use Census figures to determine whether a map is in compliance with the "one person, one vote" requirement that mandates each district have essentially the same number of people.

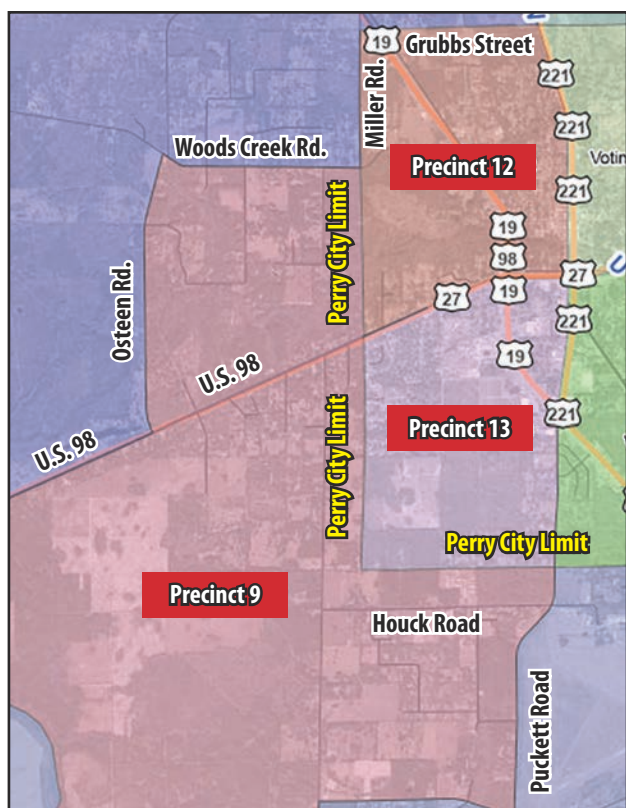
This is so even though those same figures cannot be used, by themselves, to determine compliance with the Voter Rights Act.

School Board Attorney Angela Ball asked Warren how many election cycles they used in their analysis and if that matched what the Supreme Court used.

Warren said they looked at 10 elections over the past three election cycles, which is the same used by the courts, adding that it has been determined looking any further back in time does not provide accurate information for the present day.

During the discussion, Scott asked, "Is it our intent, as far as we are able, to redistrict so that a black person will be afforded the opportunity (to be elected)? If you say one map is 39%, that's a long way from 50%. Is it our intent to make sure that we have minority representation on the board? That's what I want to know. If it is our intent, I feel confident that we will be able to make it happen. But, we've got to want to make it happen."

How to Draw District 5 to be in Compliance
Warren stated that the ACLU used the county's alternative map as a base to create a new concept map that would meet the requirements of the Voters Right Act.
Currently, District 5 (see map) begins its northeast corner at the intersection of U.S. 27 and Jefferson Street, moving south along Jefferson Street and then Puckett Road until Holt Road. It then follows Holt Road westward to Golf Course Road, then south to the Fenholloway River.



According to ACLU Attorney Nicholas Warren, the only way to draw District 5 so that it meets the requirements of the Voting Rights Act would be to remove Precinct 9 and add most of Precinct 12 south of Ash Street.

The boundary continues to follow the river westward all the way to where it meets Hampton Springs Road, then turns north to U.S. 98, before making its way back eastward until it reaches O'Steen Road. The boundary follows the east side of O'Steen Road northward to Woods Creek Road until it reaches the Perry city limits, turning southward until it once again reaches U.S. 98. It then moves eastward back to the intersection of U.S. 27 and Jefferson.

District 5 includes two voting precincts, No. 13, which includes everything within the city limits, and No. 9, which includes everything outside the city limits.

According to Warren, the only way to draw District 5 so that it meets the requirements of the Voting Rights Act would be to remove Precinct 9 and add most of Precinct 12, specially the area within Miller Road to the west, Ash Street to the north, Jefferson Street to the east and U.S. 27

to the south.
In the new concept map he presented to the two boards Tuesday evening, Warren also included the area between Jefferson and Center streets in order to increase the total population within the district to meet the "one person, one vote" requirement.
One noticeable result of this proposal, similar to the ACLU's original concept map, is that District 5 would greatly shrink in geographic size compared to its current configuration, as it would contain a much higher density of people without the rural area of Precinct 9.
The county's proposed map, by contrast, expanded District 5 north only to Spring Creek east of U.S. 19 (Byron Butler Parkway) and to Pimple Creek (just south of Doctors' Memorial Hospital) on the west side of highway. To gain the rest of the necessary people to bring the district even with the others, the district was also expanded to the southwest, shifting the border from Hampton Springs Road to

Courtney Grade.

Several representatives from both boards questioned the wisdom of adding areas in the City of Perry that would seem to have a large majority of white voters, but Warren stated that Precinct 12 (which would be added under his concept) is 34% black, compared to Precinct 9, which is just 10% black.

Dunnell noted that she felt she performed quite well in Precinct 9 and was concerned whether Precinct 12 would generate the same results.

However, the ACLU representative stated that Dunnell garnered only 25% of the vote in Precinct 9 back in 2020, while she received 80% of the vote in Precinct 13.

What Happens Next?
As it became clear that no consensus would be reached, the question was raised about when the two boards would meet again.

In addition to the constitutional and Voting Rights Act requirements, the boards are facing a state statutory requirement to have the new map in place 270 days before the next regular general election, which is Feb. 9, 2024.

According to Pemberton, in order for the commission to hold a public hearing on an ordinance implementing the new map prior to the deadline, the commission would need to approve a map by the first meeting in January at the latest so they could advertise the hearing.

Ultimately, the two boards agreed to meet again next week during the commission's regular meeting set for Tuesday, Dec. 19, beginning at 6 p.m. School board members agreed to attend the county meeting as soon as they wrapped up their 5 p.m. meeting that same evening.

Unlike at the workshop, where no formal votes are allowed, it is possible the commission could vote to move forward with a proposed map at next week's meeting. However, if that

happens, the new map would not be officially approved until after a public hearing held in either late January or early February.

Throughout the lengthy discussion Tuesday evening, no one offered specific suggestions to alter the ACLU's version of District 5 to better garner their support.

However, Warren said he would prepare several different alternative versions of District 5 to consider at the next meeting.

Although Warren did not get a chance during the workshop to show specifically how his proposed changes to District 5 would affect the other districts, the biggest impacts would be felt by Districts 1 and 2, which would grow in size.

Also, during the discussion, several representatives asked Warren to bring a similar pre-enactment analysis for all five districts so they could see projected voter turnout figures for each district instead of just total population figures.

While it is possible that the commission and school board could ultimately choose two separate district maps, all those present voiced their opposition to that idea.

Whatever map is chosen, the county is still under the 1983 court order requiring they use the current map.

When asked after the workshop what would need to happen next, Warren said the two boards would need to have the surviving litigants -- including Scott -- approve the new map. Then, collectively they could file a motion with the court asking that the county be allowed to substitute the new map since it is no longer in compliance with the Voting Rights Act.

Warren said the ACLU had assisted several counties with a similar process, and had no trouble getting the court to agree with the request as long as all of the parties were on board.

**STORM DAMAGE?
UNDERPAID CLAIM?
DENIED CLAIM?**



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CANDIDATE WORKSHOP

Are you interested in learning more about the candidate process?

Join us for a candidate workshop which will focus on the fundamentals of becoming a candidate. Participants will be introduced to the steps involved in pre-filing, the petition process, qualifying, and online campaign finance reporting. Campaign pitfalls will also be discussed as well as audits, recounts and contest of elections.

THERE IS NO COST TO ATTEND

When: Friday-January 5, 2024 @ 3:00 PM

Where: Taylor County Administrative Complex
201 E Green St, Perry, FL 32347

Space is limited!

Contact your elections office at (850) 838-3515 or email vote@taylorelections.com to reserve your spot.





Dana Southerland

Supervisor of Elections







Kellie (Levingston) White, ARPN

STEINHATCHEE RIVER PRIMARY CARE, LLC

Bringing health care home

Steinhatchee's newest health care provider – Steinhatchee River Primary Care, LLC – will hold an "Open House" this Saturday, Dec. 16, from 1-4 p.m.

Everyone in the community is invited to come meet the staff and visit the new location at the corner of First Avenue and 11th Street (101 11th

St. SE). Kellie (Levingston) White, APRN was born and raised in Steinhatchee and is returning to open her own practice.

With over 30 years of experience in surgery, dermatologic surgery, urgent care, home health and primary care, White says she is looking forward to "bringing it all home."

The Steinhatchee River Primary Care office will be open Monday through Friday beginning in January 2024.

White and her staff are excited to meet the health care needs of Steinhatchee and the surrounding communities.

White holds a Masters Degree in Nursing from Walden University (2020)

and is a board certified Family Nurse Practitioner.

She obtained a Bachelors Degree in Nursing in 2017 from Florida Gateway College, an Associates degree in Nursing from Central Florida Community College in 1995 and a Practical Nursing Certificate from Santa Fe Community College in 1992.



The Steinhatchee Christmas Boat Parade will light up the Steinhatchee River beginning at 6 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 16.

The parade will start at Sea Hag Marina, where boats will begin gathering around 5 p.m.

The parade will begin just after dark, heading downriver toward the mouth before making a loop at Gulf Breeze Condos and heading back up river and end close to Fiddler's Restaurant.

Prizes for the best decorated boats and "Ugly Sweater Contest" will be presented 30-45

minutes after the parade at Kathi's Krab Shack, where there will be live music.

There is a \$15 entry fee per boat. To register, contact Crissy (crissy.harper.krabshack@gmail.com) or Lynzi (lynzi.chambers.krabshack@gmail.com).

For those planning on turning out to watch, see the route above and pick your perfect spot. If rain forces the boat parade to be rescheduled, it will be moved to Saturday, Dec. 30.



The Christmas Boat Parade will start at Sea Hag Marina and will travel down river toward the Gulf. They will turn near the condos, travel back up the river and end close to Fiddler's Restaurant.

Let's Connect

OPEN HOUSE
December 16, 2023
1-4 P.M.

We would like to invite the community to come see your new addition and meet your staff!

Steinhatchee River Primary Care LLC

101 11th St. SE,
Steinhatchee, FL 32359



This Saturday!

Santa is coming to Steinhatchee!

Santa invites you to bring your family, friends and neighbors to the Steinhatchee Community Center from 4-7 p.m. on

Saturday, Dec. 16, for the annual Steinhatchee Chamber of Commerce's "Festival of Trees."

Steinhatchee Marina at Deadman's Bay is providing chili and drinks, and the American Legion will serve hot dogs.

Santa is inviting everyone to come eat, browse through the Festival of Trees (inside the Community Center) and take a photo with him.

The community center will be filled with beautifully-decorated Christmas trees as part of the annual event sponsored by the Chamber to benefit a local charity.

The public is invited to the public viewing and voting on Dec. 16. To vote, you can place your change, dollar bills or even checks into the voting box under the tree(s) of your choice.

The tree collecting the most votes (donations) will be declared the winner of the "best decorated" contest and receive a trophy.

The winner will be announced on Dec. 16 at 7:15 p.m.

If you have any questions, contact Rhonda Bardsley at (352) 317-3565.

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Save 10¢ Per Gallon



This Christmas tree is "all about da' crab"... vote for your favorite tree this Saturday at the community center.

Co-Ed Softball is back!

Free co-ed softball games are scheduled every Monday night in Steinhatchee at the big field on First Avenue. Gates open at 6:30 p.m. Teams are picked at 7 p.m. and play begins immediately after. Everyone is welcome to participate.



The power of grief and imagination on display in 'The Boy and the Heron'

By MARK VIOLA

Following the release of his last movie, 2013's 'The Wind Rises,' Japanese filmmaker Hayao Miyazaki announced his retirement, ending a career that had produced some of the greatest animated movies ever made, including the likes of 'My Neighbor Totoro,' 'Princess Mononoke' and 'Spirited Away.'

His films are some of the highest-grossing productions in the history of his native Japan, and both he and they have been awarded by festivals, critics and peers around the world, including the 2023 Academy Award for Best Animated Feature for 'Spirited Away.'

Fortunately, Miyazaki's retirement turned out to be temporary, and he and his fabled Studio Ghibli have been working for the past eight years on his newest feature, 'The Boy and the Heron.'

The result is yet another masterpiece from a writer and director who has been producing them for decades. Throughout his career, Miyazaki has been able to tap into the timeless realm of imagination to tell wonderful, fantastical tales that feel simultaneously otherworldly and entirely relatable while effortlessly crossing the boundaries of age and culture.

This time, Miyazaki turns his lens inward, telling a semi-autobiographical tale loosely based on his own childhood.

After losing his mother during World War II, young Mahito moves to his family's estate in the countryside. There, he discovers a secluded and ancient tower, home to a mischievous gray heron and hiding a gateway to a world shared by both the living and the dead -- and so much more.

There's a whimsical and almost frenetic aspect to the storytelling in 'The Boy and the Heron,' which feels at times like it is bordering on stream of consciousness. It's essentially impossible to predict where the story is heading at any given moment, especially once we enter the world inside the tower.

One moment Mahito might be aboard an ancient, grounded vessel sharing dinner with someone who may or may not be dead, while in the next, he could be fleeing giant, man-eating, militarized parakeets. And, perhaps, the strangest thing of all, most of it actually makes sense within the context of the story we are being told.

That's not to say I completely understood

everything, even after having several days to think about it. There are universal ideas, including grief, anger, imagination, love, family and regret, that come through despite the differing generations and languages. There are other, smaller, story-specific things that I'm still not sure about. But, ultimately, I don't really even care that much, because sometimes when you venture as deeply into the chaotic realm of imagination as Miyazaki does here, fretting about the details seems beside the point.

Here in the U.S., feature-length, hand-drawn animation is essentially dead, replaced by computer generated productions that are often quite beautiful, but can never truly recreate the look and feel of what came before. Disney tried to do just that recently with 'Wish,' and the result wasn't anywhere close to what we lost.

Thus, getting to sit in a movie theater for two hours beholding the absolutely gorgeous animation on display in this film was a wonderful treat. There is such beauty in nearly every frame, even when it is mixed with some imagery bordering on the macabre.

I must also mention the score from Joe Hisaishi, who has collaborated with Miyazaki to provide the music for nearly all of his films. He delivers one of his best yet for 'The Boy and the Heron,' matching the whimsy and ominous interplay in the story and the visuals.

Most of Miyazaki's films have targeted at children, although there have been exceptions, including 'The Wind Rises' and 'Princess Mononoke.' While the main character in 'The Boy and the Heron' is indeed a boy, there are occasional bloody images and several unsettling scenes that combine to earn the film its PG-13 rating, and parents should keep that in mind when considering whether or not to go.

One final note, 'The Boy and the Heron' is being shown in both Japanese with English subtitles as well as dubbed in English. I chose the former, but if you would prefer the English version, it sports an all-star cast that includes Christian Bale, Dave Bautista, Gemma Chan, Willem Dafoe, Robert Pattinson, Florence Pugh and Mark Hamill. Be sure to look at the details of your chosen showing to ensure you see the version you want.

The film is rated PG-13 for some violent content/bloody images and smoking.

'Trolls Band Together' is another hit

By MARK VIOLA

While I have never been a big fan of pop music, I quite enjoyed the 2016 animated film, 'Trolls.' It was a musical adventure featuring an all-star vocal cast led by Anna Kendrick and Justin Timberlake belting out pop covers of hit songs mixed in with original tunes.

The sequel, 'Trolls World Tour,' never made it to the big screen here in the U.S. due to COVID-19, which shut down movie theaters a little more than a month prior to its scheduled debut. Instead, it was released for premium digital rental.

While I also had fun with 'World Tour,' it suffered from a story that tried to do much in its lean 90-minute runtime, resulting in a messy and less-than-satisfactory conclusion to an otherwise enjoyable movie.

Now, three years later, we have 'Trolls Band Together,' which seems to have learned from its predecessor's mistakes. While it has the same runtime, 'Band Together' wisely devotes its time to its primary story rather than a multitude of side plots, and the end result is a fast-paced, fun musical adventure that should keep audiences of all ages entertained, with a bit of 'Shrek' humor for the adults to laugh at on occasion.

The opening prologue reveals that as a baby, Branch (Timberlake) was in the boy band 'BroZone' with his brothers Floyd (Troye Sivan, 'Boy Erased'), John Dory (Eric André, 'The Mitchells vs the Machine'), Spruce (Daveed Diggs, 'Hamilton') and Clay (Kid Cudi, 'Young Love').

However, the band broke up, leaving Branch behind with his grandmother, who would later fall prey to the Bergens at the

start of the first movie. In the present, John Dory returns to alert Branch that their brother Floyd has been kidnapped by two wannabe pop stars who are using his talent (literally) to propel their careers. The only way to save Floyd is to bring the entire band back together so they can finally hit the 'perfect family harmony.'

Thus, Branch, Poppy (Kendrick) and John Dory set out on a musical odyssey, and before it's over, Branch might not be the only one to discover some long-lost family members.

As with the first two films, the animation is once again beautiful. The amount of almost felt-like texture they are able to convey in the various characters and the super colorful locations is simply amazing, and this time, the animators are able to contrast that with the smooth, almost plastic-like quality of the people and buildings of Mount Rageon, the city where Floyd is being held captive.

One result of the more streamlined plot is that a lot of the secondary characters from the first two films don't make more than a cameo this time, but that is an acceptable sacrifice for a better story that delivers a much stronger conclusion this time around.

While I'm not, nor have ever been, into boy bands, there are plenty of Easter eggs and puns for fans, many of which even I understood. Of course, there's also a 'surprise' cameo from the members of N*SYNC, who deliver a brand-new song with the help of the movie's cast.

'Trolls Band Together' is a fun movie with solid music, engaging characters and plenty of humor for kids and adults.

The movie is rated PG for some mild rude and suggestive humor.

THIS WEEK IN THEATERS AND STREAMING AT HOME



By MARK VIOLA

Last weekend, 'The Boy and the Heron' became the first original Japanese anime film (not based on an existing series) to top the domestic box office, earning \$13 million.

The film has continued to lead the box office this week, and as of Tuesday, its total had increased to \$15.6 million, making it director Hayao Miyazaki's highest grossing film in the U.S., overtaking the \$15 million earned by his 2008 movie, 'Ponyo.'

In third place last weekend was 'Godzilla Minus One,' which earned \$8.5 million for a domestic total of \$25.5 million. It is now the highest-grossing live-action Japanese film ever at the domestic box office.

In between was 'The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds & Snakes,' which added \$9.2 million for a domestic total of \$135 million. Worldwide, the film has grossed \$258 million, which is actually pretty good considering the prequel has a relatively modest budget of \$100 million.

'Trolls Band Together' finished in fourth in its fourth weekend in theaters, earning \$6 million for a domestic total of \$82.9 million. Worldwide, the film has earned \$173 million, which isn't bad considering the last film in the franchise, 2020's 'Troll's World Tour' never saw the inside of U.S. theaters due to COVID-19. Still, with a reported budget of \$95 million, it has a way to go to hit profitability.

Rounding out the top five was 'Renaissance: A Film by Beyoncé,' which took a steep tumble in its second weekend, earning just \$5.4 million for a domestic total of \$28.5 million. For comparison, Taylor Swift's 'The Era Tour' concert film earned \$37.5 million in its first day.

In other movie news, the first major awards have been announced recently, with Martin Scorsese's 'Killers of the Flower Moon' getting a lot of love, including Best Picture from the National Board of Review. However, it's still early, and a lot will likely change between now and next year's Oscars.

In Theaters

'Wonka' is a prequel to the 1971 classic 'Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory' starring Gene Wilder. In this film, a young and poor Willy Wonka (Timothée Chalamet, 'Dune') arrives in a city renowned for its chocolate with dreams of opening a shop. However, he discovers that the industry is run by a cartel of greedy chocolatiers. The movie is directed and co-written by Paul King ('Paddington,' 'Paddington 2'), and the cast includes Olivia Colman ('The Favourite'), Keegan-Michael Key ('Keanu') and Hugh Grant ('The Gentlemen').

The film is rated PG for some violence, mild language and thematic elements.

In addition to this weekend's nationwide release, we also have two



smaller options to consider.

'Christmas with the Chosen: Holy Night' presents Jesus' birth through the eyes of a young mother and shepherd boy, blending 'The Messengers' and 'The Shepherd' into one special remastered and re-scored story. It also features a never-before-seen performance from Andrea Bocelli highlighting seven music performances and two new monologues. The special is not rated.

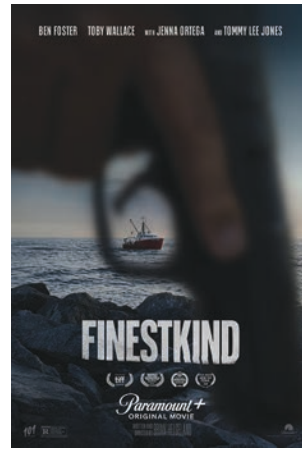
'Waitress the Musical' is a filmed stage production of the Broadway musical following the life of Jenna Hunterton (Sara Bareilles), a pie-maker and waitress stuck in an unfulfilling marriage in a small town. Jenna finds solace in baking and dreams of winning a baking contest in a nearby city to escape her mundane life. Along the way, she confronts her past, faces her fears and makes life-changing choices. The musical is not rated.

Netflix

'Chicken Run: Dawn of the Nugget' is the long-awaited sequel to the Aardman Animation's 2000 stop-motion animated film, 'Chicken Run.' Having pulled off a death-defying escape from Tweedy's farm, Ginger has finally found her dream -- a peaceful island sanctuary for the whole flock. When she and Rocky hatch a little girl called Molly, Ginger's happy ending seems complete. But, back on the mainland, all of chicken-kind faces a new and terrible threat. For Ginger and her team, they will have to risk their own hard-won freedom, because, this time, they're breaking in.

The movie is rated PG for peril, action and some thematic elements.

'Face to Face with ETA: Conversations with a Terrorist' is a documentary from Spain featuring an exclusive interview with one of the key figures of ETA: Josu Urrutikoetxea, better known as Josu Ternera. Led by Jordi Évole, the documentary offers a



hitherto unseen look at the inside of the terrorist outfit and addresses some of the decisive moments before it was disbanded in 2018. It is a tense conversation which has enabled one victim of the conflict to solve some of the mysteries of the attack of which he was a victim almost 50 years ago.

The documentary is rated TV-MA for language.

'Familia' is a drama from Mexico in which a family discusses the future of their treasured olive ranch over a meal, during which the complexity of their relationships emerges through laughs and confessions.

The film is rated TV-MA for language.

Max

'Trees and Other Entanglements' is a documentary about the entangled lives of people and trees. In this film, meet a young boy stolen and hidden amongst trees, an artist refining American bonsai, a photographer artfully observing trees, a mother fighting to protect the forests in her backyard, family trees and uprooted trees, and a man who steadfastly plants them.

The documentary is rated TV-14.

Paramount+

'Finestkind' is a crime thriller telling the story of two half-brothers (Ben Foster, 'Hell or High Water' and Toby Wallace, 'The Royal Hotel') raised in different worlds and then reunited as adults over a fateful summer. Set against the backdrop of commercial fishing, desperate circumstances force the brothers to strike a deal with a violent Boston crime gang. Along the way, a young woman (Jenna Ortega, 'Wednesday') finds herself caught perilously in the middle. Sacrifices must be made and bonds between brothers, friends, lovers and a father (Tommy Lee Jones, 'The Burial') and his son are put to the ultimate test.

The movie is rated R for pervasive language, some violence, drug material and sexual content.

Perry News-Herald

December 15-16, 2023

P.O. Box 888 Perry, Florida	123 S. Jefferson Street (850) 584-5513
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We look forward to hearing from you! Our address is Perry Newspapers, Inc., P.O. Box 888, Perry, Florida 32348. e-mail: newsdesk@perrynewspapers.com

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PROBATE DIVISION
File No. 2023-715-CP
Division Probate**

**IN RE: ESTATE OF
LUKE DEWAYNE WELDON
Deceased.**

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
The administration of the estate of
Luke Dewayne Weldon, deceased,
whose date of death was September
25, 2022, is pending in the Circuit
Court for Taylor County, Florida,
Probate Division, the address of
which is 108 N Jefferson Street,
Perry, Florida 32347. The names
and addresses of the personal
representative and the personal
representative's attorney are
set forth below. All creditors of
the decedent and other persons
having claims or demands against
decedent's estate on whom a copy
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served must file their claims with

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OR MORE AFTER THE DECEDENT'S
DATE OF DEATH IS BARRED.
The date of first publication of this
notice is December 8, 2023.

Attorney for Personal Representative:
John J. Kendron
Florida Bar Number: 306850
Robinson, Kennon & Kendron, PA
582 W Duval Street
PO Box 1178
Lake City, Florida 32056
Telephone: (386) 755-1334

Fax: (386) 755-1336
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