



Morgan officials part of state coalition to keep public informed about infrastructure funding

By Sheryl Marsh

Three years ago residents saw seven deteriorating

bridges replaced and surrounding roads widened and improved.

The \$14.4 million worth of projects would've taken about 27 years to complete

with federal monies the county receives for roads and bridges.

Morgan, along with other counties received millions from the Alabama Transportation Rehabilitation and Improvement Program that was introduced by Gov. Robert Bentley in 2012 to improve infrastructure statewide.

Morgan's share was \$11.9 million of a \$19.1 million allotment, according to County Engineer Greg Bodley. The remainder was divided between municipalities.

The projected total for all counties was \$1 billion, and the fund-

Circuit clerk moves passports, absentee voting to first floor

**By Sheryl Marsh
Communications Director**

Morgan County Circuit Clerk Chris Priest's separation of the various judicial processes has made it easier for people to come to his offices for court matters or other business.

Priest's most recent change was moving passports and absentee voting out of the fourth floor office to a new office on the first floor.

Before, people who came to apply for a passport or obtain an absentee voting packet had to wait in line behind others who were there for judicial purposes.

"They had to go to the fourth floor and wait in line," Priest said. "We are currently understaffed and the employees are working on active cases. Now, we've taken out anything that's

Please see **Passports,, page 8**



From left, District 4 Commissioner Greg Abercrombie, Chairman Ray Long and District 3 Commissioner Don Stisher outside the courthouse in Cotaco Park. They have no opposition for 2016 elections.

Chairman, commissioners have no opposition for re-election bids

**By Sheryl Marsh
Communications Director**

You won't see two Morgan County commissioners or the chairman on the campaign trail, or putting out political signs next year.

Instead, they'll just keep working for you.

Chairman Ray Long, District 3 Commissioner Don Stisher and District 4 Commissioner Greg Abercrombie are humbled by the fact that they are un-

opposed for the 2016 primary and general elections.

No one qualified with the Republican or Democratic parties to challenge them

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A colorful facelift for Archives

Renowned artist leads Decatur elementary students in painting local history on murals

Decatur City Schools should be proud of 800 students from three of its elementary schools and their art teacher Beth Young for the roles they played in creating murals that now grace the county's archives building.

The colorful murals are images of notable places such as the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge and Rhodes Ferry Landing as well as the state's bird and flower. The paintings also depict Decatur's history.

The county's maintenance employees erected the murals on the south side of the facility, and they were unveiled for public viewing on Nov. 3rd.

A crowd gathered for the unveiling, where renowned muralist/artist/teacher Markus Tracy spoke about working with Young and the students. Tracy designed the murals, and the students as well as adults from the community participated in the creation.

Participating students were from Walter Jackson, Frances Nungester and Austinville elementary schools. Other participants were students and staff from the Alabama Center for the Arts.

Young obtained an Alabama Art Education Initiative grant, to bring Tracy here for the murals project, according to Archivist John Allison.

Among those unveiling the murals were Decatur City Schools Superintendent Dr. Ed Nichols, County Commission Chairman Ray Long, District 2 Commissioner Randy Vest, Decatur Mayor Don Kyle, Allison, Young and Tracy.



From Left, Dr. Ed Nichols, Mayor Don Kyle, and Chairman Ray Long stand ready to help unveil murals. Archivist John Allison is on the far right, and Decatur elementary art teacher Beth Young is in the inset photo above, addressing the crowd.



Left, famous muralist, /artist/teacher Markus Tracy, of Las Vegas, tells the crowd about the murals that he designed for students and others in the community to help create. Tracy is a nationally recognized artist. Right, Long, Allison and District 2 Commissioner Randy Vest participated in unveiling the murals along with students and others.

Murals

Continued from page 2

Some of the elementary students participated also.

“This is a wonderful addition to the exterior of the county’s facility,” said Long. “We are proud of these children, their teacher, members of the community and the muralist for a job well done.”



Standing room filled quickly outside Morgan County Archives on Nov. 3rd for unveiling of the murals that depicted local history and notable places.

Remembering The Honorable Sue Baker Roan

July 1930 — November 2015



- ★ First woman elected to local public office in 1982 as member of the Morgan County Board of Education
- ★ Appointed Morgan County License Commissioner in 1994 by former Gov. Jim Folsom
- ★ Subsequently, won elections with landslide victories

Served as license commissioner until January 2015

Holiday closings

The Morgan County Courthouse will be closed in observance of the following holidays

Christmas Eve, Dec. 24th

Christmas Day, Dec. 25th

New Year's Day, Jan. 1

The courthouse will be open on New Year's Eve, Dec. 31st.

Voting precinct changes

More than 5,000 voters between two precincts will go to new polling places for elections in 2016. First Baptist Church of Hartselle will replace the John Thompson American Legion Post 52 as a polling place, which was the precinct of about 4,500 voters. Those voters will cast ballots at First Baptist's family center.

The Salvation Army of Decatur has been approved for a temporary voting site for the Decatur Utilities poll which has about 750 voters. DU will be undergoing remodeling, therefore, primary elections cannot be held there in the spring.

Voting is expected to resume at DU for the general election in November, according to Elections Director Kate Terry.

Primary elections are March 1st.

Absentee voting begins Jan. 7th.

Archives has impressive Girl Scout collection

By Sheryl Marsh
Communications Director

Whenever you make a promise...consider well its importance. And when made... engrave it upon your heart.

If you were ever a Brownie

or Girl Scout you know well the above song.

Morgan County Archives has an impressive collection of uniforms and other memorabilia on display that will take you down memory lane.

"Anthony Patterson donated the bulk of the items for the exhibit," said Archivist John

Allison. "We already had some items that had to do with Decatur Girls Scouts, and this was a very good collection to add to that. It's a comprehensive collection."

Allison explained that Patterson's late wife, Susan and her mother Clara Reed Thompson were collectors.

"They were both Girl Scouts and had collected many items over the years," said Allison. After they passed Mr. Patterson donated the items to Archives," Allison said.

It's a very impressive collection.

Uniforms date from 1919 to

the present.

The display will be taken down sometime this month, and moved to a permanent spot on the third floor of the building.

Allison urges anyone interested in the exhibit to come by for viewing.



Left, a row of brown and green uniforms. Right, Archivist John Allison stands in an aisle of the display.



Left, a cabinet display, and right, framed honorary badges.

Commissioner Don Stisher honored for promoting tourism in Morgan County

District 3 Commissioner Don Stisher received the Julian Walker "Mr. Tourism" Award during the Morgan County Convention and Visitors Bureau's annual awards breakfast last month. Chairman Ray Long announced Stisher as the recipient. Long told the crowd: "This year's award recipient is someone who takes great pride in making good things happen in Morgan County--A man who keeps the interest of the citizens at heart and has been a solid supporter of tourism throughout his career." "His enthusiastic support and willingness to help whenever and however needed typifies the commitment he makes to his county. Please join me in congratulating Mr. Don Stisher as our 2015 Julian Walker "Mr. Tourism" Award recipient."

Long told about Stisher's history of working to support tourism in the county. He has served on the Board of Directors of Celebration Arena, and he is the County Commission liaison to the Decatur-Morgan County Convention and Visitors Bureau.

When Decatur was chosen to host the Archery Outdoor Nationals, Stisher offered support and services, allowing items and trailers to be stored at his facilities prior to the event. Also, he provided equipment and personnel to help, which made the process easier for USA Archery, Decatur Parks and Recreation and CVB staff.

The award is presented to someone in Morgan County who has made significant contributions to developing and promoting tourism for the betterment of Decatur and Morgan County.



Stisher holds the "Mr. Tourism" Award he received last month.



Judge Langham on Mount Harvard

Morgan District Court Judge Charles Langham climbs Mount Harvard in Colorado

District Court Judge Charles Langham went hiking recently out West on the summit of Mount Harvard near Buena Vista, Colorado. Mount Harvard, which has an elevation of 14,421 feet, is the fourth highest peak in the contiguous United States and the highest summit of the collegiate peaks. The mountain was named in honor of Harvard University in 1869 by members of the first Harvard Mining School class.

The class named Mount Harvard while on an expedition with Professor Josiah Dwight Whitney, the namesake of Mount Whitney, which is the highest peak in the contiguous United States. Its elevation is 14,495 ft. Judge Langham said he considered Mount Harvard the hardest mountain he has ever climbed as he "scrambled up a sheer rock face for the last 30 feet to reach the top."

They're a team

Sales tax office gets new license inspectors

By Sheryl Marsh
Communications Director

The county's Sales Tax Division has two new license inspectors, who consider themselves a team as they go about seeking to make sure that businesses are properly licensed and mobile homes are registered.

Anthony Funderburk and Dennis Langham joined the sales tax operation in October. Langham transferred from the Maintenance Department and Funderburk transferred from the sheriff's department.

Langham is responsible for checking mobile homes in the county to make sure they've been registered and decals are current.

During his short time on the job he's established a plan to execute his duties.

"We've established a list of all the mobile home parks, and come December (this month) we will begin enforcement of regulations for mobile homes," Langham said.

Funderburk covers business licenses. He checks with businesses to make sure they have appropriate licenses for each section of their operations.

"We have to make sure all the various sections of the business are licensed," Funderburk explained. "For instance if a drug store sells cigarettes, it would have to have a separate license for cigarettes. If the store sold clothes as well, it would have to have another separate license."

Each inspector has the authority to issue citations for non-compliance, and if matters are not satisfactorily resolved they could progress to court, which would be the last effort for settling issues.

While doing their jobs the men plan to work with the businesses and mobile home owners professionally and amicably.

"We're not trying to head hunt and put people in jail," said Funderburk. The paperwork, sending letters and such might be tedious, but it's a lot easier than court proceedings. If it comes down to it and we develop a paper trail, so be it."

Langham agreed.

"We're not trying to single anybody out," Langham said. "We're going to be fair and equitable across the board. I want to help



Anthony Funderburk, left, and Dennis Langham are the county's new license inspectors in the Sales Tax Department.

make this community better while doing my job. I don't want people to hate to see us coming."

Both believe prior employment experiences prepared them for their current positions.

Funderburk amassed 25 years in law enforcement in New York before retiring and moving to Alabama. His employment with the county began at the county jail as a corrections officer, and he transferred after Sales Tax Director Michelle Echols selected him for

his current job.

Langham came to work for the county's Maintenance Department in 2013 and worked there until October when Echols chose him for his current post. Prior to his county employment he worked in the propane gas business gaining experience in every aspect of the operation.

"One thing is consistent—dealing with people," Langham said. "It's a new challenge, but I'm up to it."

He said dealing with people in the gas businesses helps him in his new job.

Funderburk said his past experiences working with various people are helpful to him as well.

"I take pride in being able to communicate with people and I love people," Funderburk said.

They work as a team.

"I think the county is going to be well served on his (Funderburk's) side," Langham said. "And, I hope I can do as well on my side."

Morgan Archives on historic tour

The Morgan County Archives facility is on the list of historic sites during the annual tour of homes in Old Decatur and Albany historic districts on Dec. 12.

Archivist John Allison and staff

are preparing to receive visitors for the grand tour of the facility located on Bank Street.

The building used to be the Tennessee Valley Bank, and a huge vault inside is a main attraction.

"We're looking forward to the tour, and we are hoping for a good turnout of visitors," said Allison. Among other exhibits, visitors will see an exquisite display of the Civil War.

LIFESouth Patriot Day Blood Drive yields 45 donations



LIFESouth Community Blood Centers held its annual Patriot Day Blood Drive at the courthouse in September. The event honored victims and heroes of terrorist attacks in this country fourteen years ago on Sept. 11, 2001.

County employees, officials and people from the general public dropped by the blood mobile to donate blood. Former donor recruiter Cherry Hammonds grilled hot dogs on site and served donors lunch.

“We’re giving for a worthy cause, and I’m glad to be able to do it,” said County Commission Chairman Ray Long.

District 2 Commissioner Randy Vest drove from his district shop in Hartselle to give blood, and several courthouse employees were donors.

Hammond said the drive yielded 45 units of blood.

“We are so thankful for the donations,” Hammonds said. “We always do really well at the courthouse and today was no exception.”

Morgan County employees and elected officials gave blood during LIFESouth’s annual Patriot Day Blood Drive on Sept. 11. Above left, Kathy Austin, a Board of Registrars employee waits for an attendant. Right, Commission Chairman Ray Long is prepped for giving blood. Bottom left, Tracey Lemmond, an employee in the district attorney’s check unit, gives a donation; and right, District 2 Commissioner Randy Vest gives blood.



About The Voice of Morgan County

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Please be sure to view community videos on our website by going to www.co.morgan.al.us There, click on county departments, then select Communications/Community Relations and click on multimedia.



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The Morgan County Commission still has free Rx discount cards for county residents. Collectively, the cards have resulted in more than \$200,000 in savings for people who have used them.

To get your card please go to our website: www.co.morgan.al.us and click on Coast to Coast to request one. We will mail it to you. There are no eligibility requirements.

Passports

Continued from page 1

not active in the new office. I think the public will really like this because they don't have to wait in line."

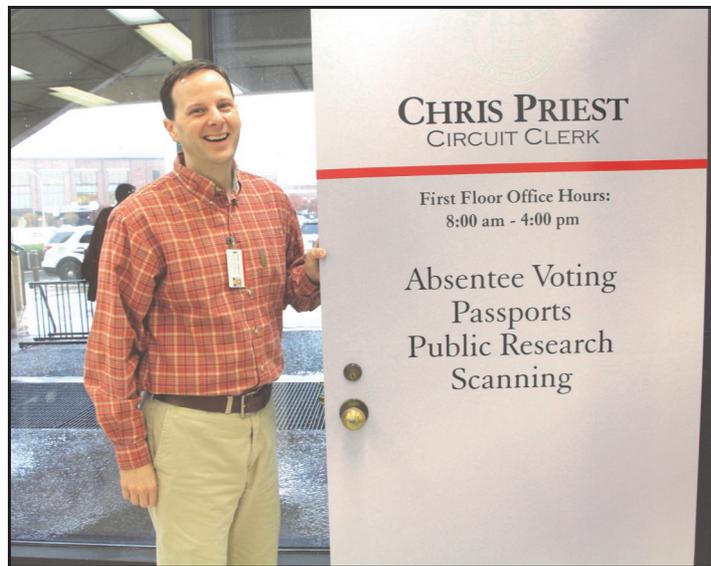
The consolidation of operations and separation of passports and absentee voting should do away with a lot of confusion for people about where to go for certain matters; and shorten visits to the offices.

In addition to passports and absentee voting the new office offers space with a table, chair and computer for the public to do research of cases that are public record.

"They can research and if they need assistance or a copy of a record the employees will get it for them," Priest said.

Kathy Allen and Jan Kalonick work in the office, which is located in a portion of the old Community Corrections facility.

The entrance is located directly



Left, Priest stands at the entrance of the new location of passports, absentee voting office. From right, Kathy Allen, Jan Kalonick and Circuit Clerk Chris Priest inside new office.



behind the security station and visitors must first go through security before entering the office.

Combined operations

Traffic violations, criminal and civil divisions are in the fourth floor office; and the family division, which comprises domestic relations, child support, juvenile and modifications, is located in the third floor office.

Allen's and Kalonick's primary duties

are scanning court documents into the system and shredding paper files.

Paper files that were stored at the courthouse have been scanned and shredded, and now they've started on those stored in the old jail, Priest said.

"There are so many that we've had to go over into the jail storage area of

other entities," said Priest. "We hope to scan the old cases to clear up space and cut out the infringement on other entities' storage areas."

The first floor office opens from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m., but Priest's other offices keep regular hours from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.

Unopposed

Continued from page 1

during the qualifying period which ended on Nov. 6.

"We are humbly grateful that no one came out to run against us," said Long, who is completing his first six-year term as chairman. "We have put our best foot forward to do good for the people of Morgan County, and to help with efforts to bring jobs to the area so that our residents may have a chance at some of them. This commission has worked extremely well together, and I think the people can see that. "I vow to work even harder during my second term."

Stisher and Abercrombie share his sentiment.

"I would like to thank the people of Morgan County for trusting in me to serve another term," said Stisher. "Just like in a business, I think competition is healthy, and

I also think in politics opposition makes a better leader. I have had my share of opposition in the five terms I've served you on the commission, and I will not take this lightly. I will continue to serve you with focus and dedication. I truly love working for the citizens of Morgan County and District 3. I've dedicated half of my life to serving you and I look forward to continuing that service this next term and into the future because it is an honor for me to work for you."

Abercrombie says he's thankful that he has no opposition and grateful to voters for electing him eight years ago.

"I will remain humble and continue to do the best job I can for the people we serve," Abercrombie said. "The commission works great together, making sound de-

Continued on next page



Continued from page 1

ing is nearing an end.

Although a lot of work has been done, there's still a lot more to do, and maintenance is forever.

For these reasons a group of elected officials, community leaders and citizens have formed a coalition called DRIVE Alabama (Developing a Road and Infrastructure Vision for Everyone in Alabama), to keep the public aware of the growing need for infrastructure improvements and about limited funding for such projects.

Maintenance costs are extremely high, and future improvements look bleak.

"The amount of money needed to improve and preserve the county's road and bridge network is 192% higher than what is currently available to per-

form basic maintenance," said Bodley. "We simply don't have the resources to complete all the infrastructure work that needs to be done."

Bodley based the percentage on figures from a 2010 study conducted by the Association of County Engineers of Alabama, which at the time showed Morgan County with 1,010 miles of paved roads and an annual resurfacing cost of \$10.5 million. The county's federal allotment is about \$475,000 for roads and bridges. The total revenue, which mainly comes from a state gasoline tax, amounts to about \$5 million, and it is not solely for infrastructure, according to Bodley.

Commission Chairman Ray Long, who is also president of the Association of

Continued on next page

Morgan EMA Director Eddie

Hicks earns international honor

By Sheryl Marsh
Communications Director

Morgan County Emergency Management Agency Director Eddie Hicks is now recognized around the globe.

His continuing education and training, and state and national achievements placed him there.

For 20 years Hicks has been doing exceptional work for the county and it paid off recently when he was tapped for international honor.

The International Association of Emergency Managers honored him with an award for having maintained his Certified Emergency Manager designation.

It is the highest honor of professional achievement from the international association.

Hicks is one of 9,000 emergency managers who are members of the organization from around the world.

Only 1,582 men and women in the emergency profession hold the

CEM designation.

“Eddie demonstrated a high level of competency and ethical fitness for emergency management. Your County is to be commended for having a professional of this caliber on staff,” CEM Commission Chairman Kevin Sligh wrote in a letter to Commission Chairman Ray Long.

In order to maintain certification Hicks has to continue a program of professional development over five-year periods.

“Training and education are important in emergency management,” said Hicks. “I plan to continue to keep it going. It’s an honor to have received the award of certification.”

Hicks encourages his staff to pursue education and training, and he gives all of them an opportunity to do so.

Hicks' EMA career as a leader began in Colbert County in 1979, and he became director of the Morgan operation in the 1990s.



EMA Director Eddie Hicks, seated, holds conference call during a practice drill prior to the actual exercise on Nov. 4th. The Browns Ferry exercise was graded by FEMA and Morgan passed under Hicks' leadership.

Coupled with his tenure as Morgan's director, Hicks is nearing 40 years. He built the department into one that's

respected throughout the state, nationally and internationally. Hicks says he will keep his department prepared.

DRIVE

Continued from page 8

County Commissions of Alabama Board of Directors, said as the end nears for ATRIP projects, counties will face challenging times with funding for infrastructure.

“Now that the program is coming to an end we must find ways to deal with the remaining road situations without extra money coming from the state,” Long said.

There is absolutely no way we could have improved our roads and bridges without ATRIP.”

Before ATRIP money, counties were able to acquire GARVEE funds from the state in 2000 that accelerated bridge replacements in the county.

Known as the Grant Anticipation Revenue Vehicle program, GARVEE bonds were used for roads and bridges based upon urgent need. ATRIP is an extension

of GARVEE.

Members of the Association of County Engineers of Alabama are at the center of DRIVE Alabama to keep the public informed about the need for infrastructure funding, and to seek ways to finance projects.

Bodley, who has always been on top of acquiring money for Morgan's projects, says he remains hopeful for money in the future.

Unopposed

Continued from page 8

decisions for the county and its residents. I look forward to serving another term.”

In recent history, records show that this is the first time the chairman's seat has gone uncontested for re-election.

“I'm grateful, and will continue to do what the citizens of this great county elected me to do, which is run county government efficiently and with integrity,” Long said. “We work for the people and it is our job to move this county forward, making it a place they love to call home.”

Annual United Way Silent Auction fun

Local merchants donated items from their respective businesses that lured Morgan County employees, officials and some outsiders to the county's annual Silent

Auction to benefit United Way on Nov. 5th.

Each winning bidder walked away with merchandise or items they wanted.

A \$500 airline ticket vouch-

er from Huntsville International Airport and two Iron Bowl tickets/hospitality passes donated by Cook's Pest Control, as well as other big ticket items were coveted.

Kohl's Department Store was another major contributor, providing five employees to assist with the auction, and issuing a \$500 check on behalf of the county to Unit-

ed Way of Morgan County.

All participating merchants gave quality merchandise from their inventory, and several local restaurants and

Please see Auction, page 12

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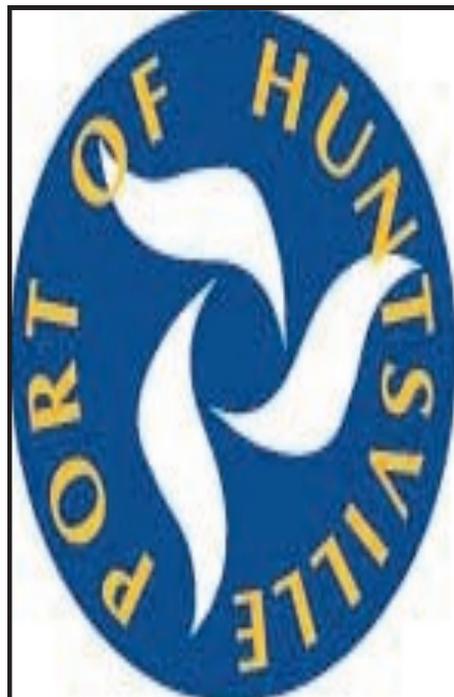
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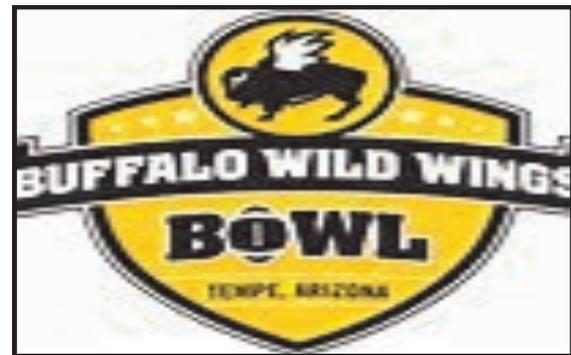
AutoZone

Sixth Avenue

AutoZone

Beltline Road

THANKS!



Auction

Continued from page 10

stores provided breakfast and beverages for the event. We have acknowledged them all following this story.

“We look forward to the event each year,” said County Commission Chairman Ray Long. “We couldn’t do this without our generous business and industrial communities. We had a wonderful turnout of employees, who won bids and took home nice items that were donated. We look forward to the auction again next year.”

Throughout the day employees checked on bids they had placed to see if they needed to increase them. They appeared to be having fun as the end drew near. They stood by, some almost guarding their bids as others placed final offers just minutes before bidding ended.

Overall, it was a fun occasion, and it was all about giving to United Way to help others.



Missey Cox, assistant director of the Pre-trial Intervention Program in the district attorney's office, won several bids, including the \$500 airline ticket voucher.



George praises commission

Former two-term District 4 Commissioner Stacy George attended an October County Commission meeting where he told Chairman Ray Long and the commissioners that they were doing a great job running the county. George said he has nothing but praise for all of the commissioners. He said this commission is really making the county look good and it is prospering under their leadership.

Morgan County American Legion
Post 15 Sponsor of this publication



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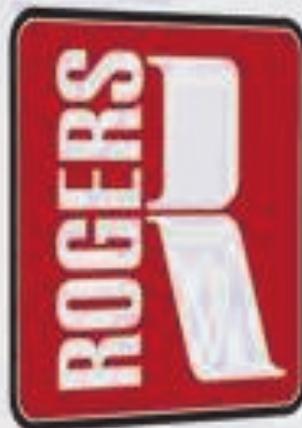
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More scenes from the silent auction



Left. District Attorney Scott Anderson places bids on items. Right, employees chat while perusing bid items. Bidders came in groups throughout the day.



CIRCUIT CLERK CHRIS PRIEST

WHY HAVE A PASSPORT?

A passport is an internationally recognized travel document that verifies the identity and nationality of the bearer. A valid U.S. passport is required to enter and leave most foreign countries. Only the U.S. Department of State has the authority to grant, issue or verify United States passports.



MORGAN.ALACOURT.GOV

Requirements for a passport

PHOTOGRAPHS:

You must submit ONE 2" X 2" color passport photo taken within the last six months. Photographs must meet U.S. government requirements, which are listed on their website.

PROOF OF CITIZENSHIP:

Expired passport issued to an adult or Naturalization Certificate (must be original) or Certified Copy of your Birth Certificate in the state in which you were born). Persons born in Alabama can go to any local Health Department to purchase a certified copy of their Birth Certificate. It will be issued at the time of purchase. If you were born in another state, you must contact that state's Division of Vital Statistics. There are several sites on the Internet that can assist you in this matter. Persons 15 and older, who held a prior passport, can use that Passport in lieu of the certified birth certificate. This instrument will be submitted with your application and returned within two weeks after receipt of your passport.

PASSPORT FEE:

Personal check, cashiers check or money order payable to U.S. Department of State. (cash not accepted). Fees can be combined for persons applying at the same time.

Book Fees:

\$110.00 16 years of age or older
\$80.00 15 years of age or younger

Card Fees:

\$30.00 16 years of age or older
\$15.00 15 years of age or younger

IMPORTANT:

If you are flying, a book is REQUIRED. The card is valid only for travel by car or ship. Be aware that any emergency requiring flight will require a passport book.

- Children 16 or 17 may appear with one parent or legal guardian to sign the application in the office.
- Children 15 and younger must appear with both parents or legal guardian to sign the application in the office.

EXECUTION FEE (Book and Card):

\$25.00 cash or check made payable to Chris Priest, Circuit Clerk.

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A State issued ID (i.e. Driver's License) or federally issued ID (i.e. military) is required. We cannot accept privately issued forms of identification (i.e. work badges). If you do not hold identification issued by the State of Alabama, you must present a second form of identification.

Passport Acceptance Office hours are 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m., Monday - Friday.

You must arrive so that all transactions are completed by closing.

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