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THE GAFFNEY LEDGER

GAFFNEY, SOUTH CAROLINA

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50 CENTS

School budget

Attrition would help balance spending plan; taxes would not increase

By SCOTT POWELL
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The Cherokee County School District could leave 61 positions unfilled in order to produce a balanced \$59.5 million budget with no tax increase.

Retirements and normal employee turnover would allow the district to save \$2 million in expenses, said Dr. Linda Sellars, assistant superintendent for instruction and curriculum. The district will rely on state and federal funds to pay the salaries for some employees so the district can maintain its current programs.

"We have made a significant effort to lower class sizes. Unfortunately, we have not seen the increase in student achievement we had hoped for," Sellars said. "We are looking at every position and have tried to recommend changes that will not duly impact any school or individual position."

Personnel costs make up 90 percent of a preliminary budget that totals \$59,586,228 for the 2008-2009 school year. School trustees won't meet to finalize the budget until June after the state budget is approved by lawmakers.

School budgets are funded through property taxes, 1-cent sales tax and federal funds.

An uncertain economic outlook is forcing the district to be cautious in its spending plan for the upcoming school year.

This year's budget goals are to fully fund a 3.85 percent raise for all employees, hold budget expenses to \$59 million and increase the reserve fund to 10 percent (\$5.9 million).

The average Cherokee County teacher salary will be \$47,138 this coming school year. A first-year teacher with a bachelor's degree will make \$31,543.

District administrators plan to maintain an average class size of 24 students in elementary through high school. Class sizes would drop to 20 students in the early grades.

"With the 2008-2009 budget, there are several driving forces that create a unique challenge to accomplishing the goals," finance director Ben Childs said. "The economic outlook is not very good based upon information we have received from the Board of Economic Advisors. The

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BUDGET AT A GLANCE

Here are some expenses in the proposed \$59.5 million budget for the 2008-2009 school year:

- **THE SUBSTITUTE** teacher budget would increase to \$500,000. This would be a \$200,000 increase over last year.
- **COACHES WOULD** receive additional pay for state championships. This incentive was presented to school trustees in January. No details on the coaching incentive are in the current budget draft.
- **ENERGY AND** utility costs would increase \$382,000 over the current budget. Finance director Ben Childs said the increase will help cover a rate hike by Duke Energy.
- **PROPERTY AND** insurance coverage will go up \$26,000 due to new school buildings, such as the Gaffney and Blacksburg ninth grade additions.
- **\$45,000 FOR** school resource officers and school security.
- **\$100,000 FOR** home-bound instruction.



Day 26 released its self-titled debut album on Tuesday. Local residents flooded record stores around the country in support of the all-male R&B group, which includes Gaffney native Michael McCluney (right).

CD featuring local phenom flying off the shelves

By JOE L. HUGHES II
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Last August, Gaffney residents celebrated as native son Michael McCluney was chosen by Bad Boy Entertainment president and CEO Sean "Diddy" Combs as one of five men to be part of the label's next all-male R&B group.

The town showed its support for the local talent again Tuesday, flooding record stores in hope of securing a copy of the band's self-titled debut album, "Day 26."

"It is definitely good to see someone from your hometown who you went to school with make it big," Gaffney High School senior Brandee Bonner said.

"He has made us all very proud of him," Gaffney resident Asia Littlejohn said. "I heard a friend's copy of the CD and fell in love with it. I cannot wait to pick up a copy of my own."

Local music distributor Carousel Records received its shipment of the album last week, expecting a number of fans, friends and family to request copies in advance. Despite its efforts, the record store was still forced to request more copies to be shipped after selling out early Tuesday afternoon.

"That album has been flying off the shelf... a lot of people want it," said Carousel Records owner Steve Petty. "The fact that (McCluney) is a local guy definitely has something to do with that and why it is in such high demand."

McCluney was known locally not only for his

musical prowess. The talent was part of Gaffney High School's 2003 Class 4A Division I championship team in addition to its step team. However, his surviving auditions and criticism from Combs earned him a place in the national spotlight.

According to Gaffney High School senior David Dewberry, McCluney always felt he would have his time in the limelight.

"(McCluney) always had the confidence he would be able to make it," Dewberry said. "He showed that while he was on 'Making the Band.'"

Though McCluney is making waves in New York and a number of other cities across the country, he is still making an impression on his peers in Cherokee County.

"He is a big inspiration to the younger kids...giving them belief they can do something with themselves," Dewberry said. "He has shown us that dreams do come true. Anything is possible if you work hard and don't give up."

The group is currently on tour promoting its album with other "Making the Band" artists Danity Kane and Donnie Klang.

Day 26's first single off its self-titled album, "Got Me Going," is currently 42nd on Billboard's R&B/Hip-Hop chart.

With the album's release, some expect it to rise even more.

"I believe they will definitely do well," Littlejohn said. "The album is going to knock its competition out of the water."



"It is definitely good to see someone from your hometown who you went to school with make it big."

— Brandee Bonner



"I'm happy to see someone from Gaffney live out their dreams in front of a national audience. Mike's showing that we are talented in more than sports."

— Damar Bridges



"(McCluney) has shown us that dreams do come true. Anything is possible if you work hard and don't give up."

— David Dewberry

City of Gaffney officials off to Greenville for three-day workshop

By LARRY HILLIARD
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Instead of squabbling, Gaffney Mayor Henry Jolly hopes Gaffney City Council members can come together in a spirit of cooperation at a 3-day workshop in Greenville.

"I'm looking forward to this

with great anticipation," Jolly said. "I'm going with a positive attitude."

Jolly said the purpose of the workshop is to "prioritize council projects to improve the quality of life for city residents."

Council members are expected to have a healthy debate on a number of topics, including the proposed performing arts center

and the installation of security cameras at city parks.

In February, the Building and Grounds Committee agreed to acquire two buildings to renovate them into a cultural events center with the Gaffney Little Theater as the primary tenant.

But, by a 4-3 vote, council voted down the recommendation to the chagrin of Gaffney Little Theater

supporters who packed council chambers. Council members will discuss the issue again at Thursday's session of the workshop.

The Ledger reported earlier this month that city officials were eyeing deploying security cameras at city parks. Jolly has said he would like to see the city

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"I'm looking forward to this with great anticipation. I'm going with a positive attitude."

— Gaffney Mayor Henry Jolly



SC EDUCATION LOTTERY

Pick 3 Tuesday Midday: 3-2-0
Tuesday Evening: 3-5-0

Pick 4 Tuesday Midday: 3-3-2-3
Tuesday Evening: 2-6-5-3

Cash 5 TUESDAY:
2-6-17-18-31 X5

PERSPECTIVE PAGE 4

Several months or maybe a year or more ago, representatives from a certain telecommunications company came by the office for what they described as a "courtesy" call to inquire about their company's service. And thus the saga begins.

OBITUARIES PAGE 8

- Mitcham, Cubie Lee, 88, of Gaffney
- Dawkins, Thomas E., 56, of Gaffney
- Logan, Johnny, 92, of Gaffney
- Medley, Evelyn, 76, of Gaffney

WEATHER PAGE 16

Mostly clear tonight.

Mostly sunny, breezy and warm Thursday. Partly sunny and very warm Friday.

Tonight's Low: 40
Thursday's High: 75
Friday's High: 78