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# MADISON COUNTY JOURNAL

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**NO TAX INCREASE**

## Supervisors adopt \$130.1M budget

By SCOTT HAWKINS  
scott@onlinemadison.com

The Board of Supervisors during a Tuesday meeting adopted Madison County's \$130.1 million Fiscal Year 2022 budget that includes \$10.3 million in federal COVID-19 CARES Act relief funds and the county's general millage rate of 38.18 mills will remain the same.

Madison County Administrator Shelton Vance during the meeting held Tuesday instead of Monday because of the Labor Day holiday, told supervisors the budget is about \$2 million less than last year's fiscal year budget. "Our budget this year included \$10.3 million in federal funds, about \$16, almost \$17 million worth of state funds primarily for roads,"

Vance told supervisors when presenting the budget. "It includes a total, including state and local monies, of \$26 million for road activity. That includes everything from digging out ditches to laying asphalt to putting bridges in as well as the major projects down in the Reunion area." Also included in the budget, Vance said, is \$1.75 million for the library and \$3.8 million for

Holmes Community College. "This proposed budget also includes raises for most county employees and that raise would be 4% for those making \$35,000 or less and \$3,000 for the remaining employees that are subject to your determination of their salary," Vance said. Before supervisors voted unanimously to adopt the budget Vance advised them

that the county's general millage rate would remain the same as last year at 38.18 mills. A mill is \$1 per \$1,000 assessed property value, or \$200 for a \$200,000 home. "For the 2022 fiscal year, the newly incorporated city of Gluckstadt and the newly incorporated areas of Canton, which are out near Kings Ranch, and then over toward

off of Fulton Street in the city, those areas of the city that do not normally have our garbage tax collected from them will have the garbage tax, the 3.85 mills of solid waste tax, collected because they will be in our service area for our garbage collection," Vance said, adding that the City of Canton had filed a letter

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Firefighters from the Madison Fire Department prepare to travel to Baton Rouge to help with Hurricane Ida recovery efforts. Pictured, from left, Paramedic Blakeney Wyman, EMT Josh Hudgens, EMT Peyton Clark, Training Coordinator Nick Brooke and Lt. EMT Tommy Stewart.

## Firefighters in Louisiana for Ida relief

By JOHN LEE  
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Five Madison firefighters and four from Gluckstadt are in Louisiana helping with Hurricane Ida recovery, a deployment that could last two weeks, officials said. A grateful Lee Road Fire Department in Covington, Louisiana, posted pictures on social media upon Madison's arrival last Wednesday night. "Relief from the City of Madison Mississippi and the Mississippi State Fire Academy arrived tonight to assist our agency!" a Lee County Road Fire Department Facebook post said. "We appreciate the support that we have received and welcome them to our community, they too are now

part of YOUR fire department." There were pictures of the first responders in a group photo, at a briefing, Madison's Disaster Response trailer along with a Madison Fire Department pickup. Madison Fire Chief Derrick Layton said the group left the morning of Sept. 1 escorted by the Mississippi State Fire Marshal's Office. The contingent of Madison firefighters includes Paramedic Blakeney Wyman, EMT Josh Hudgens, EMT Peyton Clark, EMT and Training Coordinator Nick Brookes and EMT Lt. Tommy Stewart. From the Gluckstadt Fire Department are Nick Rushton, Station 3 battalion chief; Lt. Chad Perry of Station 3; Pvt. Joshua Burge of Station 2; and

Lt. Andy Divine of Station 3. The Gluckstadt firefighters were sent to the Hammond Fire Department. The Madison firefighters and Fire Academy personnel were sent St. Tammany Parish, where they worked clearing trees from roadways, looking for any missing people and putting tarps on houses, among other things. Layton said he was happy the local firefighters could help. "It's our job to help people," Layton said. "If our Louisiana neighbors need help, we want to help them out as best we can and I know they would do the same for us." Layton said he does not know when the fire-

See IDA, page A3

**AMAZON**

## Megasite fire district abolished

By SCOTT HAWKINS  
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The Board of Supervisors voted 3-2 to abolish a newly formed Megasite Fire District and to place the district's responsibilities with the Central Madison County Fire District during a regular meeting Tuesday. Also, during the meeting, the board agreed to transfer ownership of a building on Main Street in Madison to the city, a request that had come up earlier this year. Abolishing the Megasite district came up late during the "Old Business" portion of the meeting held Tuesday because of Monday's Labor Day holiday and appeared to take a couple of supervisors by surprise. District 5 Supervisor Paul Griffin said, "I would like to make a motion for us to abolish the fire district at the Megasite and put it back into the Central Fire District." District 4 Supervisor and Board President Karl Banks quickly seconded the motion and called for a vote at which point District 1 Supervisor Sheila Jones voted in favor of the motion along with Banks and Griffin passing 3-2 with District 2 Supervisor Trey Baxter and District 3 Supervisor Gerald Steen voting no. After the vote, Steen said, "You would like to abolish the MegaSite District?" Griffin responded, "And put

See FIRE, page A2

**NATIONAL BRAND**

## Club Pilates now open at Renaissance

By DUNCAN DENT  
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RIDGELAND — A large fitness brand with more than 600 studios worldwide recently opened at the Renaissance. Club Pilates Renaissance has been a long-running project for owner John Kaiser, a nearly 30 year resident of Madison County. They opened on Aug. 26. They currently offer 10 classes consisting of about a dozen participants a day and growing. Kaiser said the response has been unbelievable. The location is the only one in the state. "I didn't get into this to get rich, I really wanted to bring something to the community," Kaiser said. Kaiser is originally from Brandon and attended college at Delta State. About 28 years

ago he married his wife, Stacy, a school teacher, and moved to Madison where he has lived since. His background is in banking and most recently he started working with the Veteran's Home Purchase Board of Mississippi in November. Stacy has been teaching for the past five years at Boyd Elementary in Jackson. He retired from the Mississippi National Guard at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in 2017. Kaiser started looking into investment opportunities about two years ago in 2019 when he found Club Pilates. With his 25 years in banking, Kaiser was well aware of the pitfalls of venturing out. He said for a long time he had apprehensions about starting a business of his own but when he did finally begin looking and

found Club Pilates he knew he found a company he could work with. "I really like their corporate structure," Kaiser said. "Felt like a family." The Renaissance location was secured in late 2020 and Kaiser was able to begin selling memberships by March 2021, of which they have sold almost 200 to date, he said. In April he made his first big hire for the club, Amber Epperson, his manager. Growing up, Epperson took the physical activity seriously. She was always involved in sports such as gymnastics, cheerleading and softball and had taken that competitive attitude into a career working in gyms for the past 10 years. Epperson said she had recently found pilates after

See PILATES, page A2



Club Pilates Renaissance owner John Kaiser and manager Amber Epperson stand in front of their new location next to Smoothie King at Renaissance at Colony Park.



# Madison Central receives distinguished national recognition

By SCHOOL REPORTS  
news@onlinemadison.com

Madison Central High School has been recognized as a 2020-2021 Project Lead The Way (PLTW) Distinguished School.

Madison Central is the first high school in Mississippi, and one of only 204 high schools in the nation, to be honored with this distinction which highlights the best of STEM and career learning programs. PLTW is a nonprofit organization that serves millions of PreK-12 students and teachers in over 12,200 schools across the U.S.

The Madison Central Academy of Engineering, which partners with PLTW Engineering, empowers high school students to step into the role of an engineer and adopt a problem-solving mindset. Madison Central's Academy of Engineering students engage in collaborative, real-life activities such as creating apps for mobile devices, designing alternative energy power systems, and creating circuits for security systems. Students have also designed insulation from recyclable materials, designed and tested new composites for air-



Pictured are: PLTW Director of School Engagement Sherry Worsham, Madison Central Principal Sean Brewer, engineering teacher Cam Ogletree, aerospace engineering teacher David Wilbanks, Superintendent Charlotte Seals, MCHS Academy of Engineering Director Michelle Robinson, biomedical interventions teacher Betsy Sullivan, Assistant Superintendent Edith Mitchell, Assistant Principal Mary Edwards, and MCS Director of Career and Technical Education and Career Academies Blaise King.

data, and even programmed a graphical map from remote material sorter for recycling center. The PLTW Distinguished School recognition honors schools committed to increas-

ing student access, engagement, and achievement in their PLTW programs. "We are incredibly proud of all of our school for their commitment to

"It is a great honor to recognize Madison Central's Engineering Academy for their unwavering commitment to provide students with an excellent educational experience despite the unusual circumstances and unique challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic presented to the educational landscape this past year," said Dr. Vince Bertram, President and CEO of PLTW.

"They should be very proud of their achievements in unlocking their students' potential and equipping them with the knowledge and skills necessary to thrive in life beyond the classroom no matter what career path they choose."

In Madison County Schools, Project Lead the Way STEM programming is included in elementary, middle, and high schools as part of the rich, value-added curriculum designed to help students learn to create, communicate, and collaborate.

## Fire

Continued from page A1

it back into the Central District."

Steen said, "Sheila, you understand what that motion was?"

Jones did not respond to Steen's question.

In June, the Board of Supervisors agreed to purchase a \$1.4 million fire truck, paid for in part by \$750,000 in state funds and later set up a new Central Fire District in Canton in part to serve a Madison County Megasite that will house an Amazon distribution facility and other buildings.

The board is expected to

receive the truck Thursday, Sept. 9, afternoon in a ceremony with state and local officials in Canton.

Last month, the board, on the motion of Steen, took the truck out of the new Central Fire District in Canton and created a MegaSite Fire District with Supervisors serving on the board.

In response to Steen's question of whether everyone understood the motion during Tuesday's meeting Banks said, "We are going to rescind and abolish the MegaSite Fire District and put it back in the Central District where it belongs, and we will have one fire district that will be handling all of that. OK?"

Steen said again, "Does everybody understand what that motion is?"

Jones, Griffin and Banks replied, "Yes!"

Griffin then moved to appoint board members for the Central Fire District: Timmy Chambers, April Love, Robert Jackson, Andrew Hughes and Dustin Bullock. That motion passed 3-2 with Steen and Baxter voting no.

Banks amended an earlier Griffin motion to direct the board attorney to work with the new commission to set up a contract to bring back to the board's next regular meeting. That motion passed 3-2 with Steen and Baxter voting no.

Jones then said she had a motion of her own. "I've got some new business," Jones said. "There is a little yellow building in the city of Madison that is kind of across the street from the Methodist Church that the county owns. It has been used by the Junior Auxiliary since the early-'80s because I was involved in it back then. Long

story short, the city of Madison would love for us to quit claim that building to them and that would be my motion."

Griffin said he would second the motion and asked Espy if the board could do that.

Espy said the board would have to first declare the property surplus to quit claim it to Madison.

Banks said the building is of no value to the county unless they give it to someone who can use it like "the Junior Auxiliary or whoever in Madison."

"The motion is that it is declared surplus and we can go ahead and give it to the City of Madison," Banks said.

The motion appeared to pass 4-1 with Steen voting against it.

In other matters during Tuesday's meeting:

- The board granted Harvest Church Madison's request for a property tax

exemption.

- The board approved hiring Stantec Consulting Services, Inc. to design geometric improvements to the intersection of Mississippi 463 at Stribling Road for a cost not to exceed \$282,000 in preparation for building a new junior high school.

- The board approved requesting that the Mississippi Department of Transportation activate Intersection Improvements at the intersection of Mississippi 463 at Stribling Road.

- The board approved an Interlocal Agreement with the City of Ridgeland for Highland Colony Parkway, which states that the county will reimburse the City of Ridgeland up to \$1.5 million to complete the project and that the City of Ridgeland will perform the necessary work through contractors, city employees and will use city equipment for completion.
- Following board action

seeking Requests for Qualifications regarding rural broadband, the Board approved hiring Waggoner Engineering to help determine a path forward and budget to bring broadband to rural areas of the County that do not currently have access to it.

- The board approved hiring JH&H Architects to obtain a budget to improve the county's emergency fuel tank facility.

- The board approved the appointment of Russ Latino to the Citizens Services Board.

- The board approved a contract with Central Mississippi Planning and Development District for redistricting services.

The Madison County Board of Supervisors will meet again at 3 p.m. Thursday, September 9, 2021, at 3 p.m. in the Administrative Building in Canton.

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## Pilates

Continued from page A1

years of rough activity and intense, often competitive, workouts had sent her to the back doctor with four bulging disks. Epperson said pilates has been a key part of her recovery and prevented her from having to undergo a number of inva-

sive procedures.

"It is just a great way to get a good workout without having to beat your body up," Epperson said. "I can say it has been beneficial for me."

Now she directs her competitive energy to Mario Kart sessions with her husband, Kevin, after they put the kids to bed.

Kaiser said he was originally dismissive of the "giggling girl" applying to run his pilates studio but she quickly won him over with her "infectious per-

sonality."

"I told her to come work for me you just got to have faith," Kaiser said. "Trust me and trust in God above."

The two have an immediately recognizable rapport. They can talk business while peppering in a number of inside jokes and mutual movie references. Kaiser said that the aforementioned personality has been a key to Epperson's ability to interact with customers and sell as many memberships as they have.

They have currently hired about six instructors including Reesheda Carter, who has more than 15 years of experience teaching Pilates on top of the 500 hours of training required for Club Pilates teachers.

Club Pilates Renaissance is located just across the street from Zea Rotisserie and Bar in the Renaissance next to the Ridgeland Tourism Commission and Smoothie King. For more information visit clubpilates.com.

## Budget

Continued from page A1

acknowledging the levy.

Gluckstadt, which was incorporated in June this year, will also have the solid waste garbage mills which they have been paying, Vance said, adding he and board attorney Mike Espy have had a conversation with the city of Gluckstadt officials about the garbage levy "because they have not been able to get a

garbage contract in place at this time."

Vance said he expects Gluckstadt to send a letter stating the city is opting out of the fire coverage from the county but has not yet received the letter.

"For the fiscal year the fire protection tax will by law apply to a city unless the city notifies us that they are taking responsibility for certain fire protection activities," Vance said. "We do expect based on our conversation with Gluckstadt to have that letter from Gluckstadt by your next meet-

ing, but it is not available today, so until we have that letter in place by statute we have to impose that fire protection tax on everyone including municipalities until we get that letter in hand."

Vance said he expects to have the letter in hand by the end of the week.

"My recommendation to you is that you levy the tax on the city of Gluckstadt, remember they have already been paying this tax, this is not a new tax to them, that you levy that tax until the city of Gluckstadt provides that letter, and if that letter is provided we will acknowledge that in a future meeting," Vance said.

No one other than Vance spoke during the public hearing on the county's Fiscal Year 2022 budget and supervisors unanimously adopted the budget.

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# Aldermen approve budget that includes 5% pay raise

By DUNCAN DENT  
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RIDGELAND — The budget has been approved and the city will offer across-the-board raises to employees and will not raise taxes.

Mayor Gene F. McGee said he is pleased with the FY 2022 budget and is excited to see it put into effect after the city board unanimously approved the proposed budget in a 7-0 vote at Tuesday's regularly held city board meeting.

"I think our department heads put together a great budget and once again we will be passing a budget without an increase in taxes," McGee said after the meeting. "I think this budget will do a lot of things our citizens deserve and need."

Raises will be a key feature of the FY 2022 budget. City

employees are expected to receive a 5% raise.

This will make the fourth year of a five-year plan to offer raises to the Fire Department. Original discussions had featured a 3% raise for the department only.

Officials discussed raises for the mayor and aldermen. Ward 1 Alderman Ken Heard declined his raise citing his status as a retiree from the state.

All board members will receive a \$1,250 raise and McGee will receive a \$2,500 raise. The mayor currently makes \$96,000.06 and the aldermen make \$21,147.36.

McGee called the raises, specifically the 5% increase for employees, "deserved."

The board voted at the last meeting in August to levy tax millage at 11.27 for the general fund and 8.76 for the debt serv-

ice fund and a total of 20.03 mills. McGee noted that is the same millage the board has levied for more than 30 years and has been a point of pride for his administration year after year.

The proposed FY2022 budget has estimated total revenues of \$23,214,032 and estimated total expenditures of \$25,763,538. The estimated general fund balance for the beginning of the fiscal year is \$19,239,259 with an end-of-year balance at \$16,689,753.

City Clerk Paula Tierce has noted that the initial estimates look like the city may have some deficit spending but noted that the revenue estimates are conservatively calculated and have traditionally been exceeded year in and year out.

# Weekly COVID cases down 33%

By JOHN LEE  
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Madison County has recorded 312 new COVID-19 cases and four new deaths in the past week, according to the Mississippi State Department of Health's Sep. 8 report.

That is a drop of 156 new cases from last week's 468 new COVID-19 cases reported in Madison County but an increase

of three deaths from last week's one reported COVID-19 death in Madison County.

Madison County has now recorded a total of 13,665 cases of COVID-19 and 260 deaths have been reported since the pandemic began in March 2020.

Madison County continues to have one of the state's highest vaccination rates with 53% of residents having received two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine and 60%

of residents having received at least one dose.

The statewide vaccination rate stands at 38% of residents having received two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine and 45% of residents having received one dose.

Statewide, since the pandemic began in March 2020, 265,508 confirmed COVID-19 cases have been recorded by the MSDH. There have been 5,955 confirmed COVID-19 deaths.

# Ida

Continued from page A1

fighters will return, as the mission could last as long as two weeks.

In addition to the firefighters who traveled to Louisiana, two other firefighters, inspector Kevin Miller and EMT Bradley Page, went to Gulfport on Friday, Layton said.

Gluckstadt Fire Chief Henry Davis said Texas sent in a lot of fire engines, and the firefighters from Gluckstadt are set to work those engines.

"Along with these guys, we also sent two rescue units," Davis said. "I believe they'll make a good impact. We're here to help, that's what we do. If people need aid, we'll try our best to help them."

Davis said the four firefighters in place now will stay for seven days and when they come back, four more will travel to Louisiana to take their place.

"They need cover for 14 days," Davis said. "They'll be doing structural firefighting and electrical work. I know they'll do good work and help the people in need there."

Hurricane Ida came ashore

as a category 4 storm in south Louisiana on the morning of Aug. 29 devastating much of south Louisiana and south Mississippi 16 years to the day after Hurricane Katrina hit the same areas. The storm killed as many as 13 people in Louisiana and another 50 from Virginia to Connecticut.

As of Sunday, Sept. 5, the Associated Press reported that "more than 630,000 homes and businesses remained without power in southeast Louisiana, according to the state Public Service Commission. At the peak, 902,000 customers had lost power."

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# Homecoming season



### Madison Central Senior Court

Madison Central High School senior homecoming court members are pictured. Back row left to right are Landon Parrow, Rob Hill, Vic Hollins, JT Evans, CJ Barney and Isaiah Wilson. Front row left to right are Mia Valentine, Megan Staehling, Rowan Gentry, Jamiyiah Cotten, Reid Hewitt and Sneha Cherukuri.



### Madison Central Junior Court

Madison Central High School junior homecoming court members are pictured. Back row left to right are Vic Sutton, Jake Norris, Aiden Allen, Bryman Williams and RJ Smith. Front row left to right are Avery Chambliss, Ava Dear, Mattie Dupuy, Kinsley Wilson and Bergen Bianchi.



### Madison Central Sophomore Court

Madison Central High School sophomore homecoming court members are pictured. Back row left to right are Camden Hood, Ty Miller, Tyrone Richardson and Harry Singh. Front row left to right are Hollin Brewer, Brooke Bumgarner, Kylira Griffin and Lauren Sutton.



### Madison Central Freshman Court

Madison Central High School freshman homecoming court members are pictured. Back row left to right are Jaiden Johnson, JP Baldwin and Micah Jones. Front row left to right are Lana Nabulsi, Pearl Magee and Sara Reeves Thomas.

### Tri-County Academy Court

Tri-County Academy's Homecoming is Oct 1, 2021 with the court presentation beginning at 6:00 pm. The theme for this year is "Rolling it out for the Rebels...Hollywood Style." Pictured are: (Front) Madeline Harber, K5 Flower Girl; Lily Peyton Shepherd, Seventh grade maid; Ashlee Rae Bowman, Sophomore maid; Macee Dunn, Junior maid; Kayleigh Kirk, Senior maid; Anna Leigh Ainsworth, Senior maid; Ellie Williamson, Senior maid; Mary Ella Brooks, Junior maid; Mia Hatfield, Sophomore maid; Alana Childress, Freshman maid; Allie Hart Boatner, Eighth grade maid (Back row) Escorts Jack Brown, K5 Ring Bearer; Colton Jones, Pearce Giles, Trace Dearman, Brayden Presley, Hayden Tyer, Jacob Clearman, Ty Milner, McGraw Hatfield, Bryce Warriner and Leif Dearman.



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# Engagements

## Alexandria Lauren West to wed Bobby Garrett Hill Sept. 25

Raymond and Stephanie Walters of Madison and Greg and Kim West of Waynesboro announce the engagement and forthcoming marriage of their daughter, Alexandria Lauren West, to Bobby Garrett Hill, son of Woody and Kim Hill of Grenada.

The bride-elect is the granddaughter of Nonnie Harrison of Abbeville, AL, L.V. and the late Elizabeth Walters of Laurel, and Willie and the late Dorothy West of Waynesboro.

The prospective groom is

the grandson of Charlene Denley and the late Bobby Denley, Christine Latimer, and Burley Hill, all of Grenada.

Lexie is a graduate of North Forrest High School in Hattiesburg. She received her bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and her master's degree in Special Education from William Carey University in Hattiesburg. She is currently a sixth and seventh-grade special education teacher at Germantown Middle School in Madison.

Garrett is a graduate of Kirk Academy in Grenada. He received his bachelor's degree in Geological Engineering from the University of Mississippi. He is currently a sales engineer for Titan Engineering in Madison.

The couple will exchange vows on September 25, 2021, at Emerald Bay Resort in Great Exumas, Bahamas. Following the wedding and honeymoon, the couple will reside in Madison with their two dogs, Flora and Max.



Alexandria Lauren West and Bobby Garrett Hill



#WeRStR

strichardschool.org



Madison Station Elementary receives award

Madison Station Elementary received a 2020 Education Institution Award from Keep Mississippi Beautiful earlier this year. Celebrating the award are, from left, Brande Winstead, first grade teacher; First Lady of Mississippi Elee Reeves; Principal Martha Hanna; and Mary Ann Blakeney of Keep Madison the City Beautiful.

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