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AWAITING RESPONSE

Erwin BMA allows mayor to pursue grant funds to begin local service

By Brad Hicks
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The town of Erwin will pursue additional grant funding to be used for the establishment of a new local ambulance service.

On Monday, Feb. 13, the Erwin Board of Mayor and Aldermen approved a resolution authorizing Erwin Mayor Doris Hensley to request up to \$300,000 in Community Development Block Grant funds for the 2017 fiscal year, plus any ThreeStar bonus allowance the town may be entitled to, for the purpose of establishing the service.

"I think that we're all in agreement that we've got to do something," Hensley said Monday.

The Unicoi County Commission's Ambulance Committee and the separate Unicoi County Ambulance Study Task

Force, formed last year to study the feasibility of county-operated ambulance service, have been meeting for several months to discuss the possibility of having Unicoi County establish its own ambulance service. These discussions were initiated due to MedicOne Medical Reponse's failure to comply with its contractual obligations, according to local officials.

County officials have stated issues that exist with MedicOne, the county's current ambulance services provider, include a lack of available ambulances and the company's inability to keep a third truck operational during times of peak call volumes.

"The county has kind of indicated that they're going to leave it up to the city on which direction to go," Hensley said.

Hensley said citizens across the county are continuing to encounter problems with MedicOne's local service, adding

there are times when no ambulances are available. She said patients awaiting transport have waited "anywhere from 40 minutes to 4 hours" for an available ambulance. Hensley also said there have been instances in which members of the Erwin Police Department have waited with patients until ambulance units could arrive.

"We deserve better than that, and we should provide it," Hensley said.

If the grant is awarded, the town would provide any required match with money from its general fund, according to Town Recorder Glenn Rosenoff.

Rosenoff also said survey results are required as part of the CDBG application process. He said the town has collected around 310 surveys, with 370 being required.

"I do foresee that the surveys will reach that number," Rosenoff said.

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Officials request meeting with MedicOne CEO

By Brad Hicks
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Should county officials decide to pursue the establishment of a county-operated ambulance service, Unicoi County Mayor Greg Lynch said he wants to ensure the proper steps are taken before any conclusion is reached.

These steps, Lynch said, include another audience with the man in charge of the county's current ambulance services provider.

On Friday, Feb. 10, Lynch's office sent a certified letter to MedicOne Medical Response CEO Jim Reeves that outlines the issues which local officials have expressed exist with MedicOne's local operations and requests that Reeves meet with the Unicoi County's Ambulance Committee later this month.

The county's Ambulance Committee met on Feb. 6 at which time officials scheduled another meeting for Feb. 13 to further discuss the ambulance situation. But Lynch said he spoke with County Attorney Doug Shults following the committee's Feb. 6 meeting. The two agreed the best course of action would be to provide Reeves with a

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"I think that we're all in agreement that we've got to do something."

— Erwin Mayor Doris Hensley

ELM STREET SCHOOL

Developers close on purchase of property

By Brad Hicks
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The Elm Street School property is now in the hands of the developers who wish to breathe new life into the nearly century-old building.

On Friday, Feb. 10, a group referring to itself as Elm Street School, LLC closed on its purchase of the now formerly town-owned property, clearing the way for developers to convert the school into a residential development.

Erwin Town Recorder Glenn Rosenoff said this benefits the town in that the property is now back on the municipal tax roll. The successful closing is also good news for developers, as it allows them to begin work on the renovation project.

The closing was briefly discussed during the Monday, Feb. 13, meeting of the Erwin Board of Mayor and Aldermen. On Nov. 14, that board approved a land sales agreement between the town and the development group. According to the agreement approved late last year, the town was to sell the Elm Street School property to the group for \$50,000.

Lee Naylor, a developer with the Georgia-based PlanSouth, told the Erwin Board of Mayor and Aldermen in November that he would like to see the Elm Street School building, which he came across while completing other projects in Erwin, converted into a "for sale" loft condominium development. He said the building's three floors could be converted to house eight to 10 condominium units, each measuring 1,000 to 1,200 square feet with two bed-

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YOUNG MUSICIAN

STRUMMIN'



Erwin Record Staff Photo by Brad Hicks

Above, Kevin Beddingfield strums out a tune while sitting on a bench located on Gay Street.

Aspirations coming true for 8-year-old banjo player with sights on the Opry

By Brad Hicks
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Kevin Beddingfield's fingers move quickly up and down the strings of his banjo as he frails out a rendition of the folk music standard "Mountain Dew."

But the 8-year-old's musical aspirations, which include making it to the stage of the Grand Ole Opry before the age of 10, are perhaps being accomplished even more quickly.

It wasn't that long ago that the Flag Pond resident and budding musician first played

before crowds on Monday evenings during the Pickin' on the Porch jam sessions held at the Town of Unicoi's Bogart-Bowman Cabin. Since then, Beddingfield has performed at several fairs, was featured on a radio program dedicated to showcasing the style of music he performs, has secured an endorsement deal, and has been invited to audition for a network television talent show.

"It's amazing," Beddingfield said of the speed in which his goals have come together.

Beddingfield first took an

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"I'm looking forward to being on the Grand Ole Opry."

— Kevin Beddingfield

NEW HOSPITAL

MSHA: State approves certificate of need

From Staff Reports

Mountain States Health Alliance announced Monday, Feb. 13, that it has received permission from the state of Tennessee to proceed with the project to build and open a replacement facility for Unicoi County Memorial Hospital via a certificate of need.

The Tennessee Health Services and Development Agency granted the certificate of need, or CON, in December. A certificate of need is a state permit for the establishment or modification of a health care institution, facility, or service at a designated location, a release issued by MSHA states.

"We are pleased to reach this milestone and receive affirmation from the state of Tennessee regarding our plans," UCMH Administrator Eric Carroll stated in the MSHA release.

According to MSHA, the replacement hospital will have inpatient acute-care services, as well as resources for in-

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Contributed photo

Beddingfield is pictured with country music star Sylvia.

