

UNICOI COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM

Board of Education OKs budget

By Brad Hicks
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Uncertainty remains regarding revenue, deficit, employee insurance contributions

Although the Unicoi County Board of Education does not yet have the answer to the lingering question of just how much revenue Unicoi County Schools will receive in the upcoming fiscal year, a looming deadline to ensure the receipt of state funding forced the board to take action last week. The board unanimously approved the school system's general purpose budget for the 2017-18 fiscal year during a brief

special-called meeting held Tuesday, May 30. The overall 2017-18 budget for Unicoi County Schools is \$21,930,101. The original budget for the 2016-17 fiscal year reflected both revenues and expenditures in the amount of \$23,804,277. "We know it was a very difficult budget year with another round of cuts," Unicoi County Director of Schools John English said to the board during last week's meet-

ing. "I appreciate your work over the last couple of months working through this, talking through some different possibilities." The unavoidable uncertainty surrounding 2017-18 revenues had been discussed at meetings leading up to last Tuesday's session. To make sure their system receives state Basic Education Program funding, school boards must pass their system's new fiscal year bud-

get by June 1. However, final BEP estimates and other projected revenues needed to paint a clearer budgetary picture are often unavailable until after early June. The new fiscal year begins on July 1. This is the situation the Unicoi County Board of Education found itself in with the 2017-18 fiscal year budget for Unicoi County Schools. Still, revenues totaling \$21,930,101 are projected in the

budget approved last week by the county's school board. State education funding makes up the bulk of a school system's funding, and that figure is currently projected at more than \$13.7 million for Unicoi County Schools in 2017-18. But English said this number could change in either direction between now and the end of June. The county schools system began receiving Basic Education Program, or BEP, funding estimates from the state in April. From April to May, the system saw its estimated share of state funding increase. Please see BUDGET, Page 7-A

"But, no question, we've had to take a hard look at some cuts and some positions where, maybe three years ago, we had enough students to justify those positions but now we don't."

— Director of Schools John English

RISE ERWIN

Summertime adventure series begins this week

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The RISE Erwin group is gearing up to kickoff what its members have described as a "summertime adventure series" of free events designed to offer fun and education for the whole family. The first of the group's RISE & Shine family events will be held this Saturday, June 10, beginning at 10 a.m. Different events, which are the result of partnerships with local organizations and agencies, will be held each Saturday beginning at that same time throughout the summer. "Part of our initiative at RISE is to support our community, and one thing that we have realized is there's not a lot of events within our community during the summer months of June and July, and we have so much locally to offer. There's just no organized activities," Kristin Anders with RISE Erwin said. "So that's how the RISE & Shine summer series came to be." This Saturday's activity will be held at the Unicoi County Family YMCA. Anders said RISE Erwin has partnered with the YMCA to offer a free YCMA day. From 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., attendees will have free access to the facility and classes offered there. Those taking part in the free YMCA day may also participate in outdoor field games, which will begin at 10 a.m. and include cornhole hopscotch and four square, to be held on the grounds of the facility. The June 17 RISE & Shine event, which will be held at Rocky Fork State Park, will be Rocky Fork volunteer day and will include a guided hike. Anders said participants will aid the efforts at Rocky Fork State Park by helping to clean creeks and trails within the park to keep them accessible and safe. Staff with Rocky Fork State Park will also be on hand to lead attendees on a leisure hike through the park following the cleanup. June 24's RISE & Shine activity will feature bicycle safety training. Please see SERIES, Page 7-A

LAW ENFORCEMENT

NEW THREAT



Above, Sheriff Mike Hensley, right, and Chief Deputy Frank Rogers inspect drug paraphernalia believed to be used in a butane lab found inside a room at the Best Southern Motel. Left, an officer in protective gear removes items from the motel room. (Erwin Record Staff Photos by Keeli Parkey)

First butane lab found in county

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A new threat has made its way to the Valley Beautiful, according to local law enforcement officials. On Monday, June 5, the Unicoi County Sheriff's Department discovered what Sheriff Mike Hensley described as the first "butane lab" to be found in the county in a room at the Best Southern Motel located on Jackson-Love Highway in Erwin. Hensley said a deputy visited the room to serve a warrant for failure to pay fines and costs and spotted the lab, which led to the investigation and the arrest of Katrena Star Bowers, 36, of Erwin. Hensley said Bowers had been living there for approximately two years. "They use wax to enhance the THC in marijuana," Hensley said of the lab and its process. "It is highly flammable. We have called in the Meth Task Force to come

and dispose of the materials." A UCSD meth technician, wearing protective clothing in order to enter the motel room and remove materials, was working the scene on Monday. The Erwin Police Department and Erwin Fire Department were also at the scene. Erwin Police Chief Regan Tilson also confirmed that this was the first butane lab his department has seen in the county. According to information available online from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), a butane lab is used to create a marijuana concentrate that can have a THC (Tetrahydrocannabinol) level of 40-80 percent, which is much stronger than the average 20 percent level of "high grade" marijuana. "Being a highly concentrated form of marijuana, the effects upon the user may be more psychologically and physically intense than plant marijuana use," the DEA said. Please see LAB, Page 7-A



TOWN OF ERWIN

Welcome Home Veterans Parade set for July 4

From Staff Reports

Veterans from Unicoi County - and across Northeast Tennessee - are invited to come to an annual event which will be held in downtown Erwin next month. The Welcome Home Veterans Parade will be held on July 4 at 11 a.m. and will honor veterans for their service. The parade will travel along Main Avenue and end at the Unicoi County Veterans Memorial Park on South Elm Avenue where hot dogs and snacks will be served. According to parade organizers, there will be special transportation for any veterans who would like to ride rather than walk the parade route. There will also be a special place in the parade to honor local Medal of Honor recipients. Everyone is invited to come and bring their flags to help welcome home veterans who have sacrificed for their country. For more information, call 341-4417.

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This Week's Weather

Thursday 70° 51°
Friday 78° 56°
Saturday 81° 59°
Sunday 87° 63°



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