

School system could get over \$2 million through Governor's bond issue

Funds would be earmarked for construction projects only

By Dee Ann Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

MONTGOMERY — If Governor Bob Riley's school construction bond issue is passed by the legislature, the Choctaw County public school system could gain up to \$2.1 million dollars for capital construction projects.

During his 'State of the State' address last week, Riley laid out his plan to issue a bond issue totaling up to \$850 million for schools across the state. The funds would be

earmarked for construction projects in an effort to help school systems build new schools and classrooms or renovate old ones.

Should the bond issue pass, distribution of the funds is expected to be calculated by each system's Average Daily Membership (ADM) — the population of students within the system. With ADM used for the calculation, an \$850 million bond issue would net the Choctaw County system a total of \$2,181,737.

If the bond issue totals \$700 million, the county school system would be awarded \$1,909,020.

However, some legislators are hoping to add another factor to the calculations. Senator Hank Sanders is pushing to add the poverty rate as one of the factors that would determine how much of

the bond issue would be awarded to each system.

The use of the poverty rate in the calculations could significantly boost the amount awarded to counties in the Black Belt region in particular — including Choctaw.

While the proposed bond issue is widely expected to pass the legislature in the coming weeks, it is still unclear how the distribution will be determined.

If the bond issue passes, systems will be allowed to use the funds for projects set down by their Capital Outlay Plans. Topping the list on Choctaw County's plan are new classrooms for Southern Choctaw Elementary.

The school system would not be allowed to use the funds for other projects or expenditures outside of capital improvement plans.



Choctaw Sun photo by Dee Ann Campbell

SCES students sing for BOE

GILBERTOWN -- Students in the 5th grade at Southern Choctaw Elementary entertained the Board of Education and a room full of visitors during the March 13th meeting of the BOE which was held at their school. Principal Jacqui James gave an overview of the history of the school and also gave highlights of the school's progress toward making all Adequate Yearly Progress goals for this year, getting them out of Year I Delay. "There are extra funds given to schools who in school improvement," James said, "Our goal is not to have these funds next year. I fell confident we will reach that goal."

BOE: No new vehicle for now

By Dee Ann Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

GILBERTOWN — Whether or not to purchase a new vehicle for the school system was the issue of intense debate on Tuesday evening during the March 13th meeting of the Choctaw County Board of Education.

"I have been informed by Edward Dubose (Transportation Supervisor for the Choctaw County School System) that the board vehicle has exceeded its useful life," Superintendent Sue Moore told the BOE. "I recommend that it be declared surplus and that the board seek bids for the replacement of the vehicle."

The board currently owns a 1999 Crown Victoria, which has primarily been used by superintendents over the past 8 years to attend out-of-town meetings and other events on behalf of the school system. Moore stated that she had been using the vehicle for many such trips recently, but was told by Dubose that the condition of the vehicle was a safety concern.

However, Moore's two-

part recommendation to sell the vehicle and purchase a new one immediately sparked discussion from the board.

"If we put it (the old vehicle) up for bids, we're not going to get anything for it," BOE member Wayne Taylor stated. "Why don't we keep it for someone to use?"

"If it's unfit, why do we need to keep it?" asked Ronald Hampton.

"If you're going to drive it 18 to 20 miles, it should be o.k." Taylor responded. "Unfit' is one person's opinion."

"We'd still have to keep insurance on it," added Sharon Shepherd.

Taylor voiced his concerns about the timing of the purchase in light of ongoing financial problems within the school system.

"The time is not right," he said. "We're \$100,000 in debt."

Moore contended that her travels to meetings on behalf of the system were primarily in an effort to find solutions to those financial problems, and she needed a safe vehicle to do so.

"I am doing the business of this board," she

explained. "I'd like to have a car that is safe so I can do that."

BOE member Turk Phillips added that if Moore used her own vehicle and charged the board for mileage, there would still be costs involved.

Moore responded that she was reluctant to put that many miles on her own car because of wear and tear that was not paid for by mileage fees.

"I know in the past superintendents have been given cars," Shepherd said. "But when teachers go on trips, they have gotten 44 cents a mile. We're putting priority on one thing and not another. Can that (new) car be used by teachers, too, instead of paying them 44 cents a mile?"

"It's not the superintendent's car," answered Moore. "It's the board's car."

"That would be nice," Shepherd said. "I guess it could be like an overhead projector or other equipment. You could just check out the vehicle when you needed it."

Taylor repeated his earlier concerns about the timing of the purchase.

"I'm not against a vehicle," he said. "I'm just against the timing of it."

"I'm like Wayne, Shepherd agreed. "I'm just worried about it. The money worries me. We've got to get to the point where we have one month in reserve. We've got to do some cut backs. Maybe we can have a work session to see if the money is there."

"That's a good idea," Moore agreed, adding clarification on her earlier statements about the older car. "Mrs. (Seketha) Mitchell and I were going on a trip and Mr. Dubose asked if he could take us in his own truck because the vehicle was so unsafe."

With the recommendation to sell the old vehicle and purchase a new one still on the table, the measure died for lack of motion. The matter is set to be discussed again during an upcoming board work session.

Moore told the Sun on Wednesday that, for now, she will be driving her own car to a series of state meetings in Montgomery and other areas this week in exchange for mileage fees of 44.5 cents per mile.

BOE wants local control of school starting dates

By Dee Ann Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

GILBERTOWN — "The state wants to mandate the time school starts," Superintendent of Education Sue Moore told members of the Choctaw County Board of Education during Tuesday evening's meeting. "We want to have our own voice to make it fit what Choctaw County needs."

In response to a proposed bill that would mandate schools to begin new school years on a schedule set by the state and require uniform statewide adherence to a school calendar, the BOE passed a resolution on March 13th that counters such a measure.

The bill, which is being promoted primarily by school systems in Mobile and Baldwin counties, would set the start date after Labor Day to accommodate late-summer tourism in the

coastal area. But other systems throughout the state want to control their own start dates, with most preferring to begin school in mid-August.

According to Moore, superintendents from around the state are pushing for control of the start dates to remain with local systems.

The resolution passed by the BOE on Tuesday cites such reasons as the already established process for involving parents and teachers in the development of the local school calendar, the importance of maintaining a local calendar that contains adequate instructional time prior to assessments, and the fact that decisions on such matter should remain under local control with academics and instructional issues of primary concern.

Copies of the resolution are being forwarded to members of the Alabama legislature.

Head Start Program taking applications

BUTLER — The Head Start Program in Choctaw County will accept applications at the Butler Civic Center on Wednesday, March 21, for pre-school children between the ages of 3-5 for the 2007-08 program year.

Head Start is a comprehensive early education program for young

children, including children with disabilities.

Applicants must provide the following information to determine eligibility:

- Child's birth certificate
- Proof of income
- Immunization Record (Blue Slip)
- Social Security and

Medicaid Card

For more information call Judith Hardy, Family and Community Partnership Manager/Social Service Specialist at 334-875-2450 ext. 255, or Lillie Chess, Area Coordinator

at 251-843-4635 or 205-459-2062.

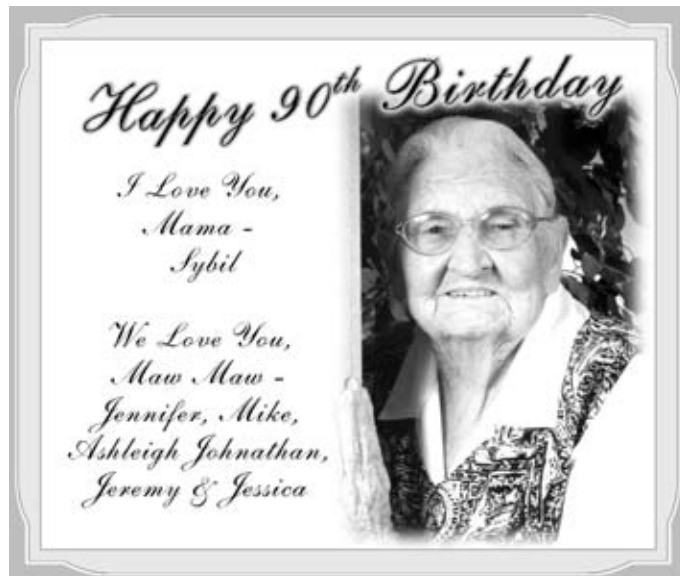
The local program is administered by the Dallas-Selma Community Action Agency's Community Development Corporation, Inc.

Nominations now being taken for
Teacher of the Month

Call Dee Ann at 251-843-6397

Happy Birthday, Katy!
We love you!

Tommy and Dee Ann



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