Local reserve funds to stay safe for now

Lexington schools rake in $265,000 of stimulus funds.

BY ERIN GALLIHER

LEXINGTON, Va. — Lexington City Schools can leave their rainy-day savings untouched for the time being. With federal stimulus money for the schools now certain, the savings are no longer needed to fill holes in next year’s budget.

But that won’t keep the school district from having to freeze teacher salaries next year.

On March 5, the Virginia Department of Education announced how much each school division will receive of the stimulus money designated to help make up for shortfalls caused by Gov. Tim Kaine’s school budget cuts. Of the $14.7 million statewide pot, Lexington’s share is about $265,000.

At its meeting March 23, the Lexington School Board approved an amendment to Lexington’s already approved budget for the coming year.

The change involves using the stimulus money to replace money that otherwise would have come from the school district’s savings. Although the amendment will have an immediate impact, Superintendent Dan Lyons also sees long-term benefits.

“When the stimulus money runs out, we’ll still have our reserve funds to fall back on,” Lyons said.

School Board member Kirk Luder said the incoming stimulus money will buy the board more decision-making time if the recession continues.

He said the extra money means it will be at least two years before the board will have to consider budget cuts big enough to cause staff reductions.

“The stimulus money coming in was an unequivocal relief,” Luder said. “It gives us more time to plan for that contingency [staff reductions]. We would generally prefer to reduce staffing … as staff retire or otherwise leave employment on their own.”

Until the stimulus money is confirmed, the city schools were going to have to use about $100,000 to make up for the stimulus money loss.

“Any time you see Bison people helping out, you were really come together,” Grubb was working furiously, public works official Bruce Grubb was struck by the variety of people helping out.

“Any time you see Bison volunteers for the buyouts. It is the fourth round of buyouts at the newspaper since 2003. About 230 employees, including famous names like Bob Woodward, David Broder and Tony Kornheiser, took the most recent buyout offered last year.

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“Reporters and Fargo officials were heeding the mayor’s call Thursday to add another foot of dike protection against further rising water.

In the FargoDome, where a sandbag-making operation was working furiously, public works official Bruce Grubb was struck by the variety of people helping out.

"Any time you see Bison football T-shirts and Sioux hockey T-shirts working side-by-side and smiling, we’ve really come together,” Grubb said, referring to students from North Dakota State and its rival, the University of North Dakota.

The river was at 38.19 feet early Thursday.

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Continued on page A3

HOT SPRINGS, Va. (AP) — Authorities searching for a man suspected of killing two of his supervisors at a posh resort are using dogs that specialize in finding human remains.

Bath County Sheriff Larry Norfolk said Wednesday that a number of dogs were searching for 59-year-old Beacher Ferrel Hackney. He said the extra money means it will be at least two years before the board will have to consider budget cuts big enough to cause staff reductions.

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Virginia State Police Trooper J.T. Brendel checks the back of a car at the intersection of 220 and 687 in Hot Springs, Va., near The Homestead Resort, seen in the background, on Sunday, March 22, 2009. A manhunt continues this afternoon for the man suspected of killing his two supervisors at The Homestead resort Saturday evening. Officials are searching for 59-year-old Beacher F. Hackney.

Fargo, N.D. (AP) — Volunteers and Fargo officials were heeding the mayor’s call Thursday to add another foot of dike protection against the rising water.

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Continued on page A3

Students produced all the humor in the Rockbridge Report.
New jobless benefits could be on the way

By MICHAEL MORELLA

When the topic of jail ex-

Jail expansion to move forward after city council non-decision

By NED OLIVER

Cigarette prices have gone up by more than a dollar a pack during the past two weeks, a price hike that raises $3.49 two weeks ago. In an interview with the Stop-In, said he had already increased prices by 12 cents. “I am so sick of the rise in prices,” Sutton said. “It’s a bit rude to attempt to make up other shortfalls think it’s a bit rude to attempt to make up other shortfalls

Connecticut to Arkansas are eyeing higher taxes on cigarettes and booze. (AP Photo/Roger Alford)

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Business

Audience members leave the Broadway show "Spring Awakening" in New York. Several Broadway shows closed in January due to the economic downturn and declining ticket sales.

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Independent oversight role for agency, says SEC chair

By MARCY GORDON
AP Business Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) —

The head of the Securities and Exchange Commission said Thursday the agency must play a key role as an independ- ent watchdog, protecting investors in the new system of financial regulation that is being crafted.

At a Senate hearing, SEC Chairman Mary Schapiro staked out the agency’s posi- tion in the sweeping overhaul of the financial system that Congress and the Obama ad- ministration have started. She and key senators agreed it could be harmful for an agen- cy, designated as overarching regulator to monitor against risks to the financial system, to become too powerful.

“The devil is in the details,” Schapiro said, adding she was concerned that “we don’t cre- ate a monolithic entity” that would diminish the role of investor protection. “A college of regulators,” each oversee- ing different areas of potential risk according to their expert- ise, would be constructive in the new system, Schapiro sug- gested.

Such a regime would be relatively decentralized but more rational than the current patchwork system of financial authorities, which dates to the Civil War, supporters say.

SEC chair Mary Schapiro states her position in Congress.

Schapiro told the Senate Banking Committee the SEC’s independence is essential to ensuring investor protection in a revamped regulatory struc- ture.

The creation of a so-called

Continued on page C3

Business identity in limbo for Rockbridge area

By ALEX SCAGGS
The Rockbridge Report

Virginia has been ranked the top state for business by Forbes magazine for the third year running.

But the Rockbridge area’s approach to business is less consistent than the state’s, and County Administrator Claire Collins says the county needs to make a plan about what types of business it wants to pursue.

“We don’t have a product truly developed that could be marketed for businesses, nor have we identified what types of businesses to be targeted,” Collins said. “It depends on what the residents of the county and the two cities truly want — do they want to ensure there are jobs for the future?”

Tim Reamer, Buena Vista’s director of economic development, has a plan for his city. Fifteen new businesses opened in Buena Vista in the last fiscal year alone, thanks in part to Reamer’s push to bring in more businesses through an incentive program that the city started in July 2006. Of the 15 businesses, four have closed in the economic down- turn, but four new ones have also opened.

In Buena Vista, businesses

Continued on page C5

Small slaughterhouse makes ends “meat”

By ANDREW JENNER
The Daily News-Record

HARRISONBURG, Va. (AP) —

The T&E Meats building sits along Charles Street on the north side of Harrisonburg, one of the neighborhood’s many squats, nondescript and easily overlooked industrial buildings.

And in another sense, it sits on nearly ground as a lo- cal, federally inspected meat processing facility an essential link between producers and consumers of animals.

“There are very few places like us left,” said Joe Cloud, who bought the processing plant last summer. Joel Salatin, of Polyface Farms and foodie renown, is a co-owner.

According to the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, there are 34 slaughterhouses in the state that, like T&E Meats, are inspected to meet federal food standards that number excludes large poultry pro- cessors, which have separate inspection arrangements. In the seven Shenandoah Valley counties between Augusta and Clarke, there are just six such facilities.

A small barn in back serves

Continued on page C4

GM says 7,500 hourly workers decided to leave

By KIMBERLY S. JOHNSON
AP Auto Writers

DETROIT (AP) —

About 7,500 General Mo- tors Corp. workers — roughly 12 percent of the automaker’s U.S. hourly work force — have signed up to take buyouts and early retirement incentives to leave the company, GM said Thursday.

Also, Chrysler LLC said Thursday it would extend its deadline to entice blue-collar workers to leave. The old deadline, set for Jan. 10, is now April 30.

GM offered $20,000 cash and a $25,000 voucher to buy a car to all of its 62,400 hourly U.S. employees in an effort to further trim its blue-collar work force to match reduced sales.

Most of those who chose to leave took early retirement offers, said a person familiar with the numbers who did not want to be identified because the breakdown had not been made public. There were very few who took the buyouts, the person said.

The deadline to decide

Continued on page C6

Artists sing the blues in recession

By JIM ABRAMS
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) —

Artists, too, are sing- ing the blues in these eco- nomic hard times, telling Congress that layoffs and art orga- nization closures are hurting communities across the country.

Representatives of the arts industries told the House Education and La- bor Committee last week that the reper- cussions of the recession were hurting communities that go well beyond musicians having to put down their guitars and get “real” jobs. The nonprofit art and cul- tural industry alone sup- ports 5.7 million jobs and generates $166 billion in economic activity every year, they said.

Robert Lynch of Ameri- cans for the Arts said his group estimates that one- tenth of all those organiza- tion’s 16,000 groups, are at risk of closing down this year, with a loss of 260,000 jobs.

He said ticket sales, which make up 50 percent of income for nonprofit groups, and donations, which comprise another 40 percent, are due to decline. “The arts in America are at risk,”

Actor Tim Daly, co-president of The Creative Coalition, said it was his mission “to make America understand that the arts are part of our cultural and economic main course, they are not dessert.”

Daly, a cast member of the TV show Private Prac- tice, said it takes nine days

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Virginia's Forbes Rankings

Quality of Life

Growth Prospects

Economic Climate

Regulatory Environment

Labor

Business Costs

To compile their listings of the best states for business, Forbes ranked all 50 states on 30 metrics in six main categories. Virginia was the only state to rank in the top 10 for all six main categories.

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GM says 7,500 hourly workers decided to leave

Independent oversight role for agency, says SEC chair
Locals provide medical help for residents in Honduras, Haiti

By ADAM CANCRYN

In the remote mountain village of La Boquita, Honduras, Doris Fredericksen realized how much she was needed. “I saw this woman carrying what I thought was a little boy, but he had so many things wrong with him that it was just the saddest thing.”

Doris Fredericksen realized she has carried much more than just a few things for her children. “I saw this woman carrying what I thought was a little boy, but he had so many things wrong with him that it was just the saddest thing.”

The mother and child were just two of the 2,014 impoverished Hondurans that Fredericksen helped treat during a weeklong medical mission trip in August. One of the 14 Rockbridge County residents to make the journey, Fredericksen shared her experience in a presentation at the Lexington Presbyterian Church, where she is a member of the congregation, last week.

Along with fellow travelers and congregation members Dr. Jane Horton and Dr. Walter Kerschl, Fredericksen also detailed plans to continue Rockbridge County’s medical contributions to Latin America. “The things that are important to them are survival and eating and having things for their children.”

With the help of the Virginia-based nonprofit Friends of Harnabas Foundation, a Christian organization that arranges medical missions both locally and to Honduras, Fredericksen is planning another team for a return trip in May. After seeing the extreme poverty that exists in Honduras’ small villages, she knew she needed to continue helping the area. “They don’t have doctors,” she said. “Many of the people we saw had never seen a doctor before.” Horton agreed, citing the enthusiasm that greeted the team at each of the five villages they visited. As one of the team’s doctors, she said that she routinely treated entire extended families. “We were basically staffing a pharmacy to see whole families,” said Horton.

These Honduran children live where there are no doctors and many have never seen a doctor. The mission trip provided healthcare to area residents.

A mother and baby wait for a checkup during the team’s visit to Honduras.

Fourteen Rockbridge County residents participated in the medical mission trip to Honduras and Haiti.

Boys from La Boquita, Honduras wait to receive medical aid. They were just two of 2,014 patients treated.

Celebrating 50 years: Lilly Pulitzer

“...”

“I designed collections around whatever struck my fancy ... fruits, vegetables, politics, or peacocks! I entered in with no business sense. It was a total change of life for me, but it made people happy.” - Lilly Pulitzer

See page D3 for complete story

Festival in bloom

Cherry Blossom Festival kicks off March 28 in D.C.

By GILLIAN GAYNAIR

WASHINGTON (AP) — It’s that time of year again, when a swath of the nation’s capital becomes awash in a sea of pink. The National Cherry Blossom Festival kicks off March 28 and runs through April 12, with more than a million visitors expected to stroll through the 3,700 cherry trees that circle Washington’s Tidal Basin and participate in a slew of festival events.

Highlights of the celebration include a chance to explore a floating tea house and design your own kirigami structure 46° which is made of cut paper & paper 46° as well as see a performance by Japanese sensation and Pittsburgh native Jerome White Jr., both on March 28.

White, known as Jero in Japan, sings “enka,” which he has likened to traditional Japanese blues, says Maryssa Miller, assistant to the cultural attaché at the Embassy of Japan. White, who is Japan’s first black enka crooner, grew up not only dancing hip-hop, but also singing enka with his Japanese grandmother. The 25-year-old was named best new artist last year at the Japan Record Awards.

“Be’s brought a new breath of fresh air into the enka because it’s been a kind of dying art,” Miller says. A week into the festivities on April 4, chefs from Washington and Maryland will roll their way through the first-ever SushiMasters competition on the East Coast. Founded by the California Rice Commission, contestants will create a sushi combination plate and then design their own signature roll. They’ll have 22 minutes to do so in each category and judges will score them on style, technical skills.
not another baseball drug case: Miguel Tejada busted! E3

Oh, what a night for the NCAA
Tonight, the Blue Devils fight the Wildcats in the East, while the West readies for a catfight

Men's Sweet 16

By JIMMY GOLLEN

BOSTON (AP) — The old Boston Garden has been torn down, and the Celtics' famous parquet will be tucked away in storage along with the NBA championship banners Ger ald Henderson's father helped win.

But when the Duke guard alld Henderson's father helped win.

When the Duke guard

By LARRY O'DELL

Vick accused of pension spending spree

By LARRY O’DELL

Associated Press Writer

The U.S. Department of Labor filed complaints Wednesday accusing suspended NFL star Michael Vick of illegally spending about $1.3 million in pension plan funds for his own benefit, including paying restitution ordered in his dogfighting conspiracy case.

The department filed the complaints in federal district and bankruptcy courts the same day Vick left a federal lockup in Kansas, apparently bound for Virginia to appear at a bankruptcy hearing next week. Vick was at the Federal Transfer Center in Oklahoma City late Wednesday afternoon.

Mark Lichtenstein, one of Vick's bankruptcy attorneys, declined to comment on both the Labor Department allegations and the details of Vick's apparent temporary move to Virginia for the April 2 hearing.

The Labor Department said Vick made a series of prohibited transfers from a pension plan sponsored by MVT, a celebrity marketing company owned by the former Atlanta Falcons quarterback. The department alleges that Vick violated his duties as trustee of a pension plan that covered nine current or former MVT employees.

"This action sends a message that the Labor Depart ment will not tolerate the misuse of plan money and will take whatever steps necessary to recover the assets owed to eligible workers," Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis said in a prepared statement.

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Lance Armstrong to undergo surgery for collarbone. E3

Not another baseball drug case: Miguel Tejada busted! E3

Tigers’ brawl

GLENDALE, Ariz. (AP) -- Missouri and Memphis have much more in common than a nickname.

Energy, intensity and speed will be on display in this Ti ger semifinal at the NCAA West Regional Thurs day night.

"You will see some things that you marvel at," Missouri coach Mike Anderson said. "You will probably see some things like 'Wow, did he do that?'

Anderson needs everybody to keep up with the deep, talented Conference USA champions, and he got a scare Wednesday when one of his most relentless players DeMante Carroll twisted his left ankle in practice and limped off the court. Carroll downplayed the incident.

"Trying to make a move and I twisted my ankle a little."

continued on page E3

Devils hoping to tame Wildcats

By JIMMY GOLLEN


Memphis guard Tyreke Evans, right, signs autographs after practice prior to their men's NCAA college basketball tournament game, Wednesday, March 25, 2009, in Glendale, Ariz. Memphis will face Missouri tonight in a regional semifinal game. (AP Photo)

Local scores

LACROSSE

Boys’ RHSCH 7, James River-Richmond 2
Girls’ RHSCH 15, James River-Richmond 13

W&D 1, Middletown 17
Women’s W&L 11, Middletown 10

TENNIS

Men’s W&L 9, Lynchburg 0
Women’s W&L 9, Sweet Briar 0

BASEBALL

W&L 4, Bridgewater 18

Rockbridge Report

For the latest coverage visit rockbridgeregreport.wlu.edu

THURSDAY, MARCH 26, 2009