

Republicans romp in Rabun

Election smooth but scary, says Whitmire

By Wayne Knuckles
The Clayton Tribune

CLAYTON—Rabun County Supervisor of Elections Tammy Whitmire was able to breathe a sigh of relief Tuesday night as election results were finally being tabulated.

“This has been a scary election,” the 12-year veteran supervisor said. “If you had told me when I took this job that I would be training my poll workers about active shooters, because people are so angry and because we represent elections, to me that’s scary. To realize how angry people are. And I mean, it’s not that they’re just a little angry. One of my hardest jobs is to work with people and

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Newly-elected Rabun County Commissioner Scott Crane (left) receives congratulations from challenger Deidre Howell Tuesday night at the Rabun County Board of Elections Office.

Wayne Knuckles/The Clayton Tribune

Crane handily defeats Howell for seat on county commission, Durpo loses

By Wayne Knuckles
The Clayton Tribune

CLAYTON—Rabun County native Scott Crane picked up nearly eight out of every 10 votes cast in the race for a county commission, incumbent Chip Durpo lost his seat on the Sky Valley City Council, and Sky Valley residents easily approved a referendum on earlier Sunday alcohol sales in Tuesday’s general election.

Over 66 percent of voters registered in Rabun County went to the polls or voted early.

Of all the races on the ballot, the contest between Crane and local businesswoman Deidre Howell was easily the most watched.

Republican Crane defeated Howell handily, winning with 5,853 votes to 1,601 votes for Democrat Howell in unofficial

results released Tuesday night.

Crane was quick to thank his supporters and congratulate his opponent.

“To hear results like I’ve heard tonight, and the overwhelming support this community is showing me and the faith they’re putting in me, I’m humbled,” Crane said. “Deidre ran a great race. This is her first race also. She’s been nothing but a fair candidate. I have nothing but the utmost respect for her, and I wish her well.”

Howell was quick to return the compliment.

“I have all the respect in the world for Scott,” she said. “I appreciate him working toward getting the things done that need to be done in Rabun County. I appreciate my

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Cities reject county’s ‘final’ offer on SDS

Clayton, Sky Valley say they will seek resolution to dispute in Superior Court

By Wayne Knuckles
The Clayton Tribune

CLAYTON – The cities of Clayton and Sky Valley will ask a Superior Court judge to help resolve the long-running and costly dispute with the Rabun County Commission over a Service Delivery Strategy.

Last month, county commissioners extended what they termed a “final” offer to the cities to resolve SDS, and set a deadline of Nov. 7 for a response. They agreed they would turn to the legal system to resolve the dispute after that, but the cities beat them to the punch.

Meeting separately last Thursday, the Clayton and Sky Valley councils approved nearly identical resolutions calling for

the matter to be heard by a judge.

The vote was unanimous in Clayton.

In Sky Valley, council member Connie Larsen abstained.

“To me, it’s a sad situation and a sad day,” Clayton Councilman Carl Butler said last week. “I guess I came in here with a false assumption that we would be able to work something out.”

“The point I want to make is that it’s not a frivolous lawsuit, and it’s not a malicious lawsuit,” Clayton Mayor Jordan Green added. “It’s a part of Georgia law that you have to file this petition. It has to go in front of a judge, and typically more times than not, the

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Rabun County Schools Superintendent Melissa Williams will retire at the end of the current school year. Pictured, Williams, left, works alongside Administrative Assistant Kitty Panell.

Chris Stiles/The Clayton Tribune

Superintendent Williams to retire next year

By Chris Stiles
Staff Writer

TIGER — Rabun County School Superintendent Melissa Williams recently announced she will retire at the end of the 2018-19 school year.

Williams will retire after a 34-year career in education, and by

her retirement next summer will have served in Rabun County for the last five years.

“I’ve been thinking about it for a while and praying about it,” Williams said. “My husband retired from south Georgia about three years ago and moved up. So altogether a lot of things have come together, and I think it’s time

to allow someone else the opportunity to lead in this position.”

Williams says that she’s enjoyed her more than three decades in education, but that they’ve taken their toll, and that she wants to spend more time with family, including aging parents who live in

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SDS

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judge will turn it over to a court-appointed mediator, and nobody has a choice but go and sit and try to talk things through."

Clayton City Attorney Mitch Baker said the judge would most likely rule on any disputes that still aren't settled, based on the law.

"If they can't agree... the various issues would go before the judge, and the judge would have to make a ruling on the facts of the law to tell us who is accurate in their interpretation," Baker said. "The judge's evaluation of the law may be somewhere in between the city's position and the county's position."

Green said he had hoped the matter could be resolved without taking it through the legal system.

"I'm very disappointed," he said. "This council came together and worked through what we thought was a fair and equitable proposition to give the county. Then come to find out at the last commission meeting the commissioners didn't actually work through the proposal themselves. They handed it to an attorney, to an administrator and to a clerk to come up with a response. That has not helped the process at all."

Butler said he found

a recent headline in The Clayton Tribune stating the county has made a final offer on SDS amusing.

"It should have been, county 'finally' makes an offer, because they never had made one before and it wasn't much of one when they did," he said. "I personally don't think they even know what SDS is."

Butler said county commissioners have chosen to hand SDS details off to staff members.

"When I came on (the council) over a year ago, I'd never heard of SDS," Butler said. "The first thing Cissy (Henry, city manager) did was throw a paper in front of me and say 'read it.' I read it, I've listened and I think I understand. I don't think some (county commissioners) do. I think they're disengaged. It's almost like the tail is wagging the dog down there. As Jordan said, I think they're letting other people make decisions for them."

Butler then praised Green for his handling of the negotiations on SDS.

"Jordan, I want to compliment you," he said. "In all these meetings and things we've had, you've remained calm, you've been rational and you've been well informed. We've tried to negotiate in good faith. I feel like that as a council, for the most part we've been respectful in all these meetings. It's sad that it's come to

this."

"I share the same sentiment to this council," Green said. "Everybody has worked to do better."

Council member Elizabeth Chapman also expressed disappointment the cities and county could not come to terms.

"I just want to say that my regrets are very strong that I have to take this vote today, because I really thought that there towards the end we could come to some sort of resolution, other than what we're going to have to do," Chapman said.

The county had agreed to make several concessions on issues raised by Sky Valley and Clayton.

The county's offer did not, however, include a yearly payment to the two cities for road repairs and maintenance

they maintain they are entitled to receive.

Clayton is seeking about \$190,000 annually for street and road maintenance, with Sky Valley seeking \$74,500 per year.

Clayton had asked for \$34,390 annually to fund the city marshal's office, the elimination of landfill tipping fees for the city, a new ladder truck to be purchased by the county for city fire protection, 15 tons of road salt annually, and an extension of their water and sewer service area to include all customers in the southern half of the county.

Sky Valley also sought reimbursement for road repair and maintenance, as well as \$60,000 for city fire protection, \$2,700 to fund the city's planning and zoning office, \$13,000 for the city marshal's office, road salt, a waiver of tipping fees and for

the county to take over maintenance of Bogg Mountain Road.

The county was willing to pay Sky Valley \$65,000 a year for fire protection, and to waive landfill tipping fees for the cities.

The county would only agree to fund town marshals if the fees they generate go into county coffers.

County officials also suggested they were

willing to explore alternate ways to resolve the conflict with Clayton over water and sewer services.

City and county officials met last month to discuss a resolution to the SDS conflict without supporting staff or attorneys present.

They were unable to come to an agreement, however.

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This weekend would be a perfect time to go shopping in Rabun County!

When you plan a big shopping trip, do you often start by thinking about out-of-town destinations?

Before you hop in your car and head towards the county line, think about the hundreds of local merchants who offer tremendous selection, competitive prices and friendly, hometown service.

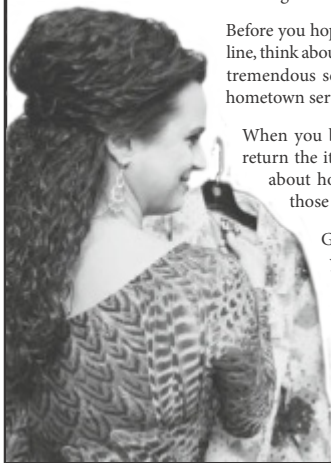
When you buy something out of town, it's tough to return the item if it doesn't fit or doesn't work. Think about how convenient a local business can be in those cases.

Give local merchants the first chance to earn your business and support local jobs.

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