

MARIETTA DAILY JOURNAL

METRO ATLANTA'S ONLY CONSERVATIVE EDITORIAL VOICE.

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COMMENTARY

Collective silence by lawmakers, school board ...

AN INSULT TO TEACHERS

Does anyone around here care about school teachers in Cobb County? I am dismayed — to put it mildly — at the attitude of the Cobb County Board of Education (with one exception), the Cobb County School District (with no exceptions) and the intrepid public servants that make up the Cobb County legislative delegation (with possibly one exception) regarding the treatment of several Cobb educators and the interpretation of a state law on reporting sexual abuse.



Dick Yarbrough
COLUMNIST

The Marietta Daily Journal recently brought the disturbing matter to our attention. However, beyond the MDJ editors and the chairman of the school board, Randy Scamihorn, I'm not sure anybody else gives a rat's bottom.

According to reports in Around Town last week, Scamihorn expressed concern to his colleagues on the board in the case of Kell High Principal Trudie Donovan, accused of not reporting a pair of slapping incidents involving a Kell teacher; the firings of Tapp Middle School principal Dr. Jerry Dority and counselor Yatta Collins for failing to report hearsay information and the effort to suspend Awtrety Middle School Principal Jeff Crawford — without pay — for failing to report hearing of an alleged off-campus sexual assault involving two students.

As of this date, the Cobb Solicitor's Office has dropped the charges against Donovan for lack of evidence and we will see if Dority and Collins have the same results. Crawford's hearing is next month.

Scamihorn told AT, "I wanted the MDJ to know, the public and our educators to know that we hear you. If policies and procedures need to be changed, then that needs to be what happens. I was uncomfortable after reading (the stories) as a retired educator and as a board member. I feel like that whatever the issues are, they need to be looked at in the immediate future."

Alas, Around Town reports that his comments "were met with silence by the other board members." Their silence should speak volumes to the classroom teachers.

What is a piddling matter of people's basic rights of due process when we have the opportunity to rail on the issue of the Common Core curriculum and whether or not to buy several million dollars' worth of textbooks that nobody but bureaucrats seem to want?

Fortunately, that turkey was shot down in Thursday's meeting of the school board by a vote of 4-3. (I loved the picture in Friday's MDJ of

the guy speaking to the school board dressed like an American flag. I have a pretty good idea of how he feels about Common Core. Wonder how he feels about due process?)

I opined a couple of weeks ago that members of the Cobb legislative delegation need to take a look at this law and see if it is being interpreted correctly and applied fairly and if it puts too much of a premium on hearsay evidence. I have heard nary a peep from any of them.

Yet, when the issue of purchasing textbooks that support the Common Core curriculum and, in my opinion, puts us closer to having the feds run our public schools, what to my wondering eyes should appear but Sen. Judson Hill (R-east Cobb) and State Rep. Ed Setzler (R-Acworth) protesting the purchase and the Common Core curriculum.

If they deign to read this far, they should know that I agree with them on Common Core, but if they are so all-fired interested in the doings of education in Cobb County, how do they feel about a law for which they are responsible that seems to deem people guilty until proven innocent?

To paraphrase my old friend, Rhett Butler, "Frankly, my dear, I don't think they give a damn." I'm not talking about just Hill and Setzler. I am talking about the whole Cobb County delegation. I will give Sen. Lindsay Tippins (R-Marietta) a pass at this point because he seems to be the only one in the bunch that knows or cares about public education and the teachers on the firing line. I can tell you that with more assurance after we have had an opportunity to talk. Sen. Hill, on the other hand, is closely allied with the American Legislative Exchange Council, certainly no friend of public education.

So, Cobb County school teachers: Let's summarize. At this point, nobody seems to have your back. Not the Cobb County School District and the faceless bureaucrats contained within; not the Cobb County school board that up to this point has always seemed to enjoy hearing themselves talk and certainly not members of the Cobb legislative delegation who are too busy slurping ideological Kool-Aid to worry about you, your classroom, your morale or your basic rights.

In my opinion, the collective silence of these groups is not golden. It is an insult.

You can reach Dick Yarbrough at yarb2400@bellsouth.net or P.O. Box 725373, Atlanta, Georgia 31139.

Diploma difficulties have Lee, county ...

WAITING ON WILLIE

COBB COMMISSION Chairman **Tim Lee** announced last month that the county was hiring Pompano Beach assistant city manager **Willie Hopkins Jr.** to succeed **Virgil Moon** as the county's new support services director. His expected start date was April 15. But that date is now two

weeks in the rearview mirror and Moon's old desk is still empty. So what's up?

"He's having a hard time finding a copy of his college diploma," Lee explained on Friday.

Hopkins, a retired Army major, reportedly has a bachelor's degree in business administration from Alcorn State University in Mississippi, according to the MDJ story about his hiring.

Lee said he doesn't think there's anything amiss.

"He has given us permission to get it directly from the college, which we're doing," the chairman said. "Why would you sign a release for me to get your college certificate if you didn't have one?"

If he fails to produce the document, Hopkins won't be allowed to start, Lee said.

"But we have no reason to believe it can't be produced," Lee said.

Hopkins, 49, didn't start on time because he is taking care of his son, who is undergoing open-heart surgery, Lee said.

The support services director manages a staff of 320 and is in charge of property management, information services, purchasing and government service centers. He also is the liaison with the tax assessor's office.

The job has a salary range of \$96,800 to \$157,000. Moon, who retired in September to become the chief financial officer at Cobb and Douglas Public Health, was earning \$146,700.

Hopkins is expected to notify the county on Monday as to what his plans are, Lee said.

THE COBB BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS voted 3-2 this week to start Cobb's first mental health court by accepting a \$53,615 grant from the state to cover the rest of this fiscal year. The court received strong support from Superior Court Judge **Mary Staley**, court administrator **Tom Charron** and D.A. **Vic Reynolds**, among others.

Dissenting votes came from Commissioners **Helen Goreham** and **Bob Ott**,

POLITICS: Georgia House Majority Whip **Ed Lindsey's** biggest advantage over most of his opponents in the race to succeed U.S. Rep. **Phil Gingrey** (R-Marietta) in Congress is his expected ability to tap into the deep pockets of many residents of his statehouse district in Buckhead. And Lindsey is wasting no time trying to do so. Though only officially a candidate for less than two weeks, he has already announced a major fundraiser for May 16 at The Georgian Club at the Galleria, featuring Georgia House Speaker **David Ralston**, Speaker Pro Tem **Jan Jones** and Majority Leader **Larry O'Neal**. RSVP to **Patti Peach** at (770) 850-0165. ... State Senator **Barry Loudermilk** (R-Cassville) announced his candidacy for Gingrey's old seat this week, joining Lindsey and former U.S. Rep. **Bob Barr** (R-Smyrna). And sources close to former Georgia GOP Chair candidate **Tricia Pridemore** say she too is thinking hard of running for Gingrey's old seat.

Meanwhile, Around Town has learned that state Sen. **Judson Hill** (R-east Cobb) plans to jump into that race in the not too distant future. The 6th Congressional Dis-

trict might be a better fit for Hill, but a run against incumbent Rep. **Tom Price** (R-Roswell) probably would be politically suicidal. And if Price runs for U.S. Senate instead, as many expect, politicians say the odds-on favorite to replace him in Congress would be former Fulton County Commission Chairwoman **Karen Handel** of north Fulton. Handel has been campaigning as if she's running for Senate, but would drop back to run for the 6th instead if ally and mentor Price announces for Senate, politicians say. ... Republicans elected officers at last Saturday's 6th and 11th District Conventions in Cobb. New 6th District Chair is **Michael Fitzgerald**, with **Larry Savage**, **Brian Anderson** and **Helen Story** as vice chairpersons. New 11th chair is **Scott Johnson**, with **Robert Anderson**, **Matt Watson** and **Billie Dendy** as vice chairpersons.

MORE POLITICS: Cobb Democrats will hold their annual Jefferson-Jackson Dinner May 11 at the Doubletree Hotel in Atlanta with state Sen. **Jason Carter**, grandson of President **Jimmy Carter**, as keynote speaker.

Board. Those state guidelines won't come out until June, Lee said earlier this week. While most in the community agree there is a general need for this type of court, there are wide opinions on how to pay for it. Charron has committed to the commission to return if costs exceed the \$215,000 original estimate. Then the question becomes what then? The commission would have to vote to increase the budget; the Superior Court could cut other services or expenses to cover the shortfall; or the program could be shut down altogether.

One courthouse watcher has already predicted to Around Town that this program will not last more than year, thanks to the high potential for cost overruns and a lack of appetite on the commission's part to dip into the General Fund to pay for the new court.

GOV. NATHAN DEAL gracefully sidestepped a potentially awkward start to finish strong in his remarks at Thursday's Marietta Kiwanis Club. The governor delivered a brisk 25 minute recap of his accomplishments to date before an SRO crowd of 220 people at the Marietta Hilton Conference Center. And so what if Club President **Bobby Tharpe** mangled his name while presenting him to the audience, calling him Gov. Nathan "Dean"? The governor didn't miss a beat.

"I'm traveling incognito today, so anything I say will be held against somebody else rather than me!" he quipped. (For the record, **Nathan Deal** was a Democrat from Rockmart who spent several decades in the state Legislature). And joked Tharpe to Deal as the latter reached the podium, "Hi, I'm club president Bobby Tharpe. I'm not nervous, am I?"

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Nathan Deal

THE DRAWING BOARD



FRIDAY'S CENTENNIAL of the murder of **Mary Phagan** passed with little apparent notice. The slaying of the 13-year-old Marietta girl at The Atlanta Pencil Factory on April 26, 1913, set off a frenzy of events that culminated with the lynching two years later of her former boss, **Leo Frank**, just off Roswell Road near the modern-day Big Chicken. The case was a blot on Marietta's reputation for much of the 20th century and has served as the basis of countless books, movies, TV shows and even a Broadway musical.

PEOPLE: Congratulations to Georgia Supreme Court Justice **Harris** and **Helen Hines** of Marietta, who Wednesday welcomed their fourth grandchild, **Preston Harris Hines II**, namesake of his grandfather. The proud parents are **Hap** and **Kelly Hines**. Hap is a Marietta High School graduate and was a standout kicker for four years for the University of Georgia Bull-

dogs. The couple now lives in Newnan where Hap coaches football and Kelly works for Piedmont Hospital. ... Marietta businessman **Larry Ceminsky** is improving at WellStar Kennestone and might be headed home today after an unexpected hospitalization after his diabetes flared up.

EATING, DRINKING: The Pressed Panini Bar will open in June in the former Blimpie's space in the old First National Bank Building on Marietta Square, reports landlord **Philip Goldstein**. Paninis are pressed, toasted sandwiches. ... The Starbucks that opened Friday just off the Square on Whitlock Avenue — the first-ever in downtown Marietta — is bigger than most other Starbucks. And Goldstein, father of the coffee shop's landlord **Joseph Goldstein**, tells Around Town its opening was pegged to coincide with Sunday's "Taste of Marietta" festival, which is expected to bring more than 100,000 people to the Square.