

MARIETTA DAILY JOURNAL

METRO ATLANTA'S ONLY CONSERVATIVE EDITORIAL VOICE.

Otis A. Brumby III, Publisher

Lee B. Garrett, General Manager

Wade Stephens, VP, Advertising

Jay Whorton, Associate Publisher

Joe Fernandez, VP, Production

Matt Heck, Circulation Director

Billy Mitchell, Managing Editor

Joe Kirby, Editorial Page Editor

Bill Kinney, Editor Emeritus

Harris Kettles, VP, Operations

COMMENTARY

Cobb school board member supports changes in ...

PERSONNEL POLICY

Now there are three. Awtrey Middle School Principal Jeff Crawford has had charges against him dropped by the Cobb County School District for failing to report a female student's allegation of rape. The CCSD had accused Crawford, a 21-year educator with 14 years of administrative responsibilities, of incompetence, insubordination and willful neglect of duties.



Dick Yarbrough
COLUMNIST

Crawford joins retired Kell High School Principal Trudie Donovan, who had charges brought against her for failure to report "in a timely fashion as required by state law" a teacher who allegedly had slapped two students. The solicitor's office dismissed those charges due to "a lack of evidence."

Then there is elementary teacher Gregory Leontovich who was fired by the school system in 2005 on charges he sexually assaulted a 7-year old girl, despite the fact that her teacher swore the girl had not left her classroom on the day the assault supposedly took place and that a hospital exam confirmed no signs of an assault. Leontovich was cleared of all charges, although it took three years, including 26 days in jail, to be exonerated in Cobb County Superior Court.

Still dangling in the wind are Tapp Middle School Principal Jerry Dority and counselor Yatta Collins, both fired by CCSD for failing to report hearsay information. One must presume neither their innocence nor their guilt at this point since there may be further legal action, but given the Cobb County School System's rush to judgment in the other cases you have to wonder.

I had a spirited conversation with a friend who thought I had "jumped to conclusions" in my column last week about the silence of the Cobb's legislative delegation on how the school system seems to be interpreting the law on reporting child abuse. He says there is nothing wrong with the law. Maybe not, but he misses the point of my irritation.

If members of the Cobb delegation felt compelled to speak out on Common Core issues and against the purchase of math textbooks, should they not also feel the need to speak out on the fact that the school system seems to have gone a little overboard on their interpretation of the law and that this wasn't the Legislature's intent? If you are going to meddle in one facet of public school administration, should you not meddle in the other?

It has been one month since I first discussed this issue in this space and I am still awaiting some reasoning from our legislators on how they can discern

the difference between talking about the school system buying books and not talking about the way the Cobb County School System uses a state law in which two of four (so far) educators have had their reputations impugned and then cleared by law enforcement authorities. (The Leontovich case took place before passage of the law in question, but still is indicative of the CCSD's "presumed guilty" approach as it pertains to its teachers.) My door (and my email address) is open to any and all of them. I would welcome their comments and I know you would and school teachers would, too.

I did hear from David Banks, a member of the school board who wrote to say that no comment had come from the school board because the issue centers around a personnel matter to be discussed in executive session.

Banks added, "I assure you, I have expressed very strongly my opinion about the heavy-handed policy and law to the superintendent and CCSD legal counsel. My rulings, when I have served on a tribunal hearing, have reflected this opinion."

"Before Mr. (Randy) Scamihorn and Mr. (Brad) Wheeler were sworn in, I expressed to them that major policy changes concerning personnel needed to occur to stop some of this 'guilty till proven innocent, but you are still fired' practice and they agreed. And there are several instances over the years of this abuse."

"I have high hopes the board will revise its policy in a way that is more supportive of our employees soon. The superintendent has already taken some corrective action that will be more in line with the desire of the board and more is to come. The three old men have just begun." This old man is glad to hear that.

Later over lunch, Banks reiterated to me his view that the interpretation of the state law by CCSD has been "too one-sided and carried too far." He said, "We need to find out the truth in these matters before we take such drastic action."

David Banks and I haven't agreed on a number of things in the past, but we both agree that the current law is being misinterpreted by nervous bureaucrats and doesn't seem to encourage the application of common sense. I assume our legislators in Cobb County would agree with that. I assume, also, that they will let me know if they don't.

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

Mayor says tardy announcement was ...

SENDING WRONG SIGNAL

IT'S (FINALLY) OFFICIAL: Mayor Steve Tumlin is going to run for a second term as mayor in this fall's city elections. That word comes via the text of his announcement "speech" he shared this week with Around Town — even though he hasn't given the speech yet, and doesn't even have a time or place yet to deliver it.

"Ironically, I found that not making this announcement was sending a wrong message of my commitment to Marietta," Tumlin told AT. "I am here to stay and look forward to the opportunity of serving again. The learning curve of the first term will aid in further putting Marietta forward and both to maintain what our heritage has given us, but also to have a vision for this City to continually to grow and improve. Our City has been touched by many who have made this a great City and our history is awesome, but now with four grandchildren living in our City, I am motivated to help mold the City for an even better future."

Printing press operator **Charles Levinson** of southeast Marietta is the only other announced candidate to emerge thus far.

Tumlin, a tax attorney, was first elected in 2009 after having served previously in the state Legislature. The race is officially nonpartisan, although Tumlin ran as a Republican for Legislature and Levinson is a Democrat.

MUCH OF TUMLIN'S "SPEECH" focuses on the need for city redevelopment.

"While government cannot create jobs, we can create the right environment for job growth and that is what I intend to do," he said. "Since the Redevelopment Bond has been proposed recently to the Marietta City Council, interest from Major Developers have emerged as they are attracted to communities that commit to economic development."

Tumlin has proposed voters approve a \$35 million bond issue to buy up dilapidated apartment complexes along Franklin Road, clear the land and then sell it to developers.

"We must fight for change on the blighted Franklin Road corridor once and for all. This concentration of blighted apartment complexes has stained our public education, public safety and public health."

"Fighting back against this must be at the top of our priority list in order to lower crime, and to attract more well-paying, middle class jobs to the city."

CITY BEAT: **Michelle Cooper Kelly** of Marietta announced Friday she will run for the eastside Ward 6 seat on the Marietta City Council long held by Councilman **Jim King**.

EMBASSY ROW: Cobb County Chairman **Tim Lee** was in Washington, D.C., this week at a special dinner held by the Netherlands' ambassador in honor of that country's new king, **Willem-Alexander** of the House of Orange-Nassau. In his private life, Lee is a marketing consultant for the synthetic turf division of TenCate, a holding company based in the Netherlands.

Lee said the cocktail party Tuesday night was at the embassy, while the dinner was at the "Embassy Row" residence of the ambassador of the Netherlands, **Rudolf Bekink**.

LEE SAID since he was in Washington on the company's dime, he also decided to do some county business, visiting with officials from the Federal Aviation Administration to discuss the sequester-related closing of the tower at McCollum Field.

He also met with the Federal Transit Administration to discuss the county's proposed \$1.1 billion transportation project linking Kennesaw State University with midtown Atlanta, he said. Of the FTA, Lee said, "They

DRIVERS on Bells Ferry Road will soon see a new billboard targeting what it calls the "RubiObama Amnesty," courtesy of Marietta immigration reformer **D.A. King**. He and his group The Dustin Inman Society will have the sign installed next week replacing their current billboard, which targeted South Carolina's **Lindsey Graham**, who like Florida's **Marco Rubio** is one of the so-called "Gang of Eight" U.S. Senators trying to craft an overhaul of the country's poorly conceived and enforced immigration laws.

King's new billboard (which was previewed Thursday on the widely followed Drudge Report) will ask viewers to phone Georgia Sen. **Johnny Isakson's** Washington office ((202)224-3643) with the message "No to Legalization — Again!" An additional billboard with Isakson's phone number targeting the bill will go up along Highway 140 in Canton and bear the message

Kelly said she called King to let him know she was running before announcing. She said King told her he was running also. King has been on the council since 2002.

Kelly, a senior resident environmental, health, safety and security manager for Anheuser-Busch in Cartersville, has volunteered on several city committees over the years, including the Citizens Advisory Committee for Marietta Parks in 2009-10.

She was appointed to the Marietta Housing Authority board by Mayor Tumlin and also served as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in Charlotte. She has three children in Marietta city schools.

Kelly said one of her campaign platforms is government transparency.

"We're not always in the loop as to what's going on in the city," Kelly said. "I think a lot of folks in Ward 6 are probably more affiliated toward Cobb County and what's going on there, and it may just be where we're located. But I think that should change. I think folks in our ward should enjoy the things that are going on in the city, spending time in the city, spending money in the city as I have. I hear often we have a void in our area when it comes to open dialogue and conversation and being accessible."

EVENTS: Tickets remain for this evening's "Oakton Abbey Revisited" party at antebellum Oakton house on Kennesaw Avenue. The Cobb Landmarks event at Marietta's oldest continuously-occupied home will feature the first-ever tour of its 1890 carriage house, its extensive gardens, a Maypole dance and lavish food and drink. Tickets are \$75 single, \$140 couple or \$200 family. Go to cobblandmarks.com or call (404) 379-4894. ... State School Superintendent **John Barge** will be the speaker at this morning's Cobb GOP Breakfast at 8:30 a.m. at the party HQ at 799 Roswell St. His support of the Common Core Standards is sure to come in for plenty of questions. ... U.S. Sen. **Johnny Isakson** will be guest speaker at Monday's First Monday Breakfast of the Cobb Chamber, which will also celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Cumberland Community Improvement District. ... The 2013 Galaxy of Stars and "Tommy Awards" Luncheon benefitting the Tommy Nobis Center will be Wednesday at the Renaissance Waverly Hotel. For info, call **Shoshana Ben-Yoar** at (678) 553-3158. ... A Marietta Housing Authority 75th anniversary open house is scheduled for 3 to 5 p.m. Thursday at the MHA HQ at 95 Cole St., reports director **Ray Buday**.

reiterated that money is going to be tight coming forward because of sequestration and other budget cuts."

Lee said Cobb Transportation Director **Faye DiMassimo** accompanied him on the trip.

COUNTY BEAT: **Willie Hopkins Jr.** will assume the duties of Cobb support services director as of July 22, reports Commission Chair Tim Lee. Hopkins' hiring had been halted after he was unable to produce a copy of his college diploma in time for his originally planned April 15 start date. But the county obtained a copy from Hopkins' alma mater, Alcorn State University, where he had obtained a bachelor's degree in business administration, Lee said.

The July 22 start date also will allow Hopkins to take care of his son for the first 90 days after his son's recent heart surgery, as doctors had recommended, Lee said.

"We think he will be a strong asset to the team, so we were willing to extend his start date," Lee said. "We feel real strongly about him."

"Protect American Jobs! No Amnesty for Illegal Aliens!" he said.

King told FoxNewsLatino.com that, "Most people aren't going to play the silly game of defining a word," he said. "It's a legalization program. Maybe we need a redefinition of the word 'conservative.' It's more than just not being a Democrat."

PEOPLE: Happy Birthday to **Florence Rogers** of Marietta, who turns 101 today. She's the mother of retired local salesman **Jim Rogers** and lives in the Rhodes Health and Rehab center in east Cobb.

Marietta businessman **Russ Hedden** and his family drove to Nashville and camped out all night hoping to be among the lucky ones admitted to Thursday's star-packed funeral for country music legend **George Jones**. And it paid off. The Heddens wound up with front-row seats in the balcony.



Lee B. Garrett, Joe Kirby, Otis A. Brumby III



Steve Tumlin



Michelle Cooper Kelly

The Marietta Daily Journal encourages letters to the editor on topics of general interest, but reserves the right to edit them for content and length. Letters should be no longer than about 250 words and must include the writer's name, address and daytime telephone number for verification purposes.

THE DRAWING BOARD

