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The Leader

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WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25, 2018 COVERING NORTH PULASKI, LONOKE AND WHITE COUNTIES **WWW.ARKANSASLEADER.COM**

ONE OF ARKANSAS' MOST HONORED NEWSPAPERS NAMED STATE'S BEST LARGE WEEKLY

2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2015 2016 2017



Strawberry fields forever
Tammi Mason of Jacksonville buys some Barnhill Orchards strawberries from Katie Barnhill-Zehr at Saturday's Strawberry Festival in down-town Cabot. Growers had a good crop this year and turnout was also good because of nice weather. See more photos on page 5A.

JEFFREY SMITH/Leader photos

FUNDING SECURITY

County wide sales tax is under review

■ **Cabot prefers its own millage increase instead of a countywide levy.**

By **JEFFREY SMITH**
 Leader staff writer

The Lonoke County Quorum Court on Thursday discussed bringing a one-cent sales tax increase proposal to voters in November to fund school safety, hire more sheriff's deputies, build a new court center and expand the detention center.

The tax proposal was sent to economic development committee, which met on Tuesday for more discussion and how to distribute funds. Sheriff John Staley opposes using the sales tax for school safety.

The quorum court will have to approve an ordinance

to put the sales tax on the ballot during the November general election.

The sales tax would raise between \$7.5 million to \$8 million annually. After three years, the tax would lower to one-quarter cent for operation and maintenance for the jail. Currently, the county has a one-cent sales tax.

The Cabot School District is asking voters on May 22 to pass a 2-mill increase in property taxes to raise \$1.3 million annually for improving safety and security in the schools. If the millage passes, the county would re-evaluate where the proposed sales tax money would go.

Cabot School Superintendent Tony Thurman, who attended last week's quorum

Please see **REVIEW**, Page 7A

LAKEWOOD SUBDIVISION

Shooting range in county irks its Cabot neighbors

■ **Residents tell quorum court too much noise at Toxic Tactical Outfitters.**
 By **JEFFREY SMITH**
 Leader staff writer

Cabot residents of the Lakewood subdivision last week asked the Lonoke County Quorum Court for help dealing with an outdoor gun range at Toxic Tactical Outfitters on Hwy. 321.

The Lakewood subdivision, established in 2005, has 56 homes with plans for an additional 140 homes. The shooting range is in a wooded area of the county next to the city limits.

Justice of the Peace Bob Morris said, "It's been a peaceful neighborhood for

many years until the advent of a shooting range built adjacent to it. The range is connected to (Toxic Tactical Outfitters).

Lakewood resident Daniel Hayes said, "As a gun owner and gun rights supporter, it is difficult living in the subdivision. People work different shifts and the only time to get sleep is deep into the night."

Hayes said the range is 50 yards from the subdivision and loud sounds are repeated, concerning people. He said there was no announcement the gun range was going to happen. There are no private-property or no trespassing signs.

Please see **SHOOTING**, Page 8A

JACKSONVILLE SEARCH

All 36 police chief hopefuls

■ **Mayor is narrowing down three finalists to two before making decision.**

By **RICK KRON**
 Leader staff writer

The 36 applicants who applied to be Jacksonville police chief ran the gamut, coming from all parts of the country with varying professional backgrounds.

Mayor Gary Fletcher has chosen three finalists: James Bacon, a former police chief in Nixa, Mo. who was previously a Russellville police officer; Assistant Hot Springs Police Chief Chris Champond, and James Jones, a retired senior

lieutenant in the Detroit Police Department.

An applicant from North Carolina, who was also a finalist, withdrew his name from consideration late last week.

Others applying for the job included Kenneth Scott of Louisiana, the second finalist from last year, when Fletcher picked Geoffrey Herweg. Council Member Tara Smith took that choice to court, saying Herweg was ineligible because of a 15-year-old misdemeanor conviction for filing a false report. The state Supreme Court agreed.

Other candidates included a daycare worker, teachers

and instructors, some with no police chief experience or even law-enforcement experience, others who worked decades heading police departments and one with 40 years in law enforcement.

Here is the list of all candidates besides the top three.

IN-STATE

■ Lt. Brett Hibbs is the only candidate from the Jacksonville Police Department to apply. He is a lifelong Jacksonville resident and has been with the department for 23 years.

■ Former Austin Police Chief James Kulesa, who is also a longtime Lonoke

County sheriff's deputy and has more than 40 years of law-enforcement experience.

■ A former Fairbanks, Alaska, police chief with more than 25 years of law enforcement experiencing now working within the UA system.

■ A custom protection officer in North Little Rock who also works as a correctional officer for the state with less than two years of law enforcement experience.

■ A former West Helena police chief with almost 19 years' experience as chief of various police departments.

Please see **CHIEF**, Page 4A

JACKSONVILLE DISTRICT

Superintendent sees bright future

■ **Duffie sounds upbeat as chambers of commerce meet at joint luncheon.**

By **JOHN HOFHEIMER**
 Leader senior staff writer

The multipurpose buildings at Murrell Taylor and Bayou Meto elementary schools are finished and students are enjoying music, art and other activities in them, Jacksonville School District Superintendent Bryan Duffie said Tuesday at the Jacksonville-Cabot Chamber of Commerce joint luncheon at Southern Oaks County Club.

Bobby G. Lester Elementary School is on schedule for a

June 1 completion and occupancy for the August beginning of the 2018-2019 school year, he said.

The superstructure of the main classroom building and the restaurant and cafeteria is up and beginning to make an impressive statement to those driving on the nearby Hwy. 67.

Duffie said Baldwin and Shell and the subcontractors are beginning to make up rain and mud delays at the Jacksonville High School, set for an August 2019 opening.

The district is adding an

Please see **BRIGHT**, Page 8A



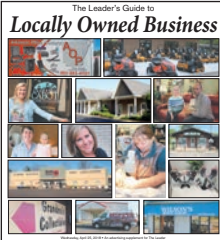
JOHN HOFHEIMER/Leader photo

Superintendent Bryan Duffie at chamber of commerce luncheon.

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