

The Bay Beacon

Police Blotter, page A-7

12 Pages, 2 Sections, 4 Inserts

Wednesday, December 25, 2013

50¢

**UP
COMING**

Wed., 11 a.m.
St. Jude's Episcopal Church,
200 Partin Drive N., Niceville, will hold a **Christmas Day service.** 678-7013.



Fri., 6 a.m.-2 p.m.
Last day to sign up for **Adult Outdoor Soccer League** for ages 17 and up. Cost for Niceville residents is \$60 per player, non-residents, \$80 per player. Register and pay in person with cash or check at the Community Life Center at **Niceville United Methodist Church,** 214 Partin Drive S., Niceville, or online with credit card. 678-4411.

Sat. 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Final day for **The Friends of the Niceville Library** book store's **half price sale.** Books and audio will be half price. Proceeds from sales benefit the Niceville Public Library. 279-4863 ext. 1500.



Tues., 11 p.m.
Rocky Bayou Baptist Church, 2401 Partin Drive N., Niceville, will hold a **New Year's Eve prayer service** in the Genesis Hall. 678-6062.

Calendar, B-3

Valp. mayor backs new city charter

By Mike Griffith
Beacon Correspondent

In an interview with the Beacon, Valparaiso Mayor Bruce Arnold answered questions about proposed revisions to the city charter which he has long championed, and which are slated to be put before Valparaiso voters in a referendum on March 11, 2014.

Arnold said that he drafted most of the proposed revisions to the city charter himself, but added that he did so after reading a previous study by the Institute

of Senior Professionals at Northwest Florida State College, and that he drafted the proposed revisions at the request of other members of the city commission, and coordinated his work with them throughout the process.

Asked why a new charter is necessary, and what problems it is intended to solve, the mayor replied, "The biggest problem is that under the current charter,



Bruce Arnold

city commissioner's duties are not clearly defined." At present, he said, individual commissioners can interpret their duties in different ways.

For example, Arnold said, one former city commissioner, who was once in charge of overseeing the city's public works department, would show up each day to personally supervise the day-to-day operations of the department, to include mov-

ing people from one job to another arbitrarily. This, said the mayor, tends to create confusion within city departments.

Another reason for a new charter, said Arnold, is to help the city "catch up with the 21st century." When the original city charter was adopted in 1921, he said, "Most of the streets in Valparaiso were made of clay, or were sand trails." In such times, he said, it made sense for

Please see MAYOR, page A-3

Gift of a king



Beacon photo by Angela Yuriko Smith

The scene was peaceful as visitors peered at Joseph, Mary and baby Jesus during a hayride event at Valparaiso Assembly of God. Church members reenacted scenes from the life of Jesus, including the Nativity, and were treated to hot drinks and cookies afterwards. A little angel completed the scene as she offered her blessing over the newborn Savior.

County eyes airport cab rules

By Mike Griffith
Beacon Correspondent

The Okaloosa County Commission held a lengthy meeting Dec. 17 in Fort Walton Beach, during which officials discussed proposed new restrictions on taxicab operations at the Northwest Florida Regional Airport, a proposal to rename the airport, sale of some county land, alternative conceptual plans for a new county government building at the Shalimar annex site, establishment of a compliance officer within county government, and county responses to the findings in a report from the Florida Auditor General's Office.

Commissioners held a public hearing to discuss a proposed county ordinance tightening existing regulations of taxicab and van shuttle operations at the airport.

Provisions of the ordinance would include requiring taxi operators to carry at least \$500,000 of insurance rather than the \$300,000 currently required, pay assorted fees in order to operate at the airport, undergo background checks and drug screenings, and would include penalties for such things as unkmpt personal or

Please see CAB, page A-2

\$6.5 million sewer-plant upgrade proceeds

By Mike Griffith
Beacon Correspondent

Progress continues in a \$6.5 million upgrade of the Niceville-Valparaiso regional sewer plant to meet state and federal requirements, according to the engineer for the project.

PolyEngineering representative Glenn Stephens said the project involves modifying each of the three waste-processing "trains," one after the other, while keeping the other two in

operation.

"We are now working on Train 2," said Stephens.

Stephens also said that as part of the modification process, and aerator platform and stabilizer are removed, and an aluminum baffle wall is installed. He said he hoped the modifications to Train 2 would be completed by today, clearing the way for work to begin on the next one.

Early in 2014, Stephens said, the plan is for Train 1 to be taken

offline and fixed. "We may finish the whole project by sometime next spring," he said.

Sewer plant manager Rick Helms said the regional sewer plant processed about 16.9 million gallons of sewage during the month of November, as the modification work was in progress. He said the sewer plant also processed about 17,750 gallons of septic-tank waste pumped from cleanout trucks.

Niceville City Councilman

Heath Rominger had told the Beacon that the entire cost of the renovation project will be close to \$6.5 million.

Rominger said earlier this year that despite the required upgrades, the regional sewer plant is still something of a bargain for Niceville and Valparaiso.

He said the sewer plant had originally been used by the two cities, as well as by Okaloosa County, but that the cities were

in the process of buying out and taking over the county's portion of the treatment plant, since the county's wastewater is now being treated at a county owned plant elsewhere, allowing the entire capacity of the older plant to be shared by the two cities.

Rominger said that this means that Niceville, for example, has enough waste water treatment capacity to handle wastewater from expected residential and commercial develop-

ments within Niceville into the foreseeable future. He said the cost of upgrading the plant to meet current FDEP standards is much less than it would have cost if the city had been forced to either build an entire new plant or build a significant expansion of the existing plant in order to meet expected future wastewater treatment needs.

Stephens also said that the reroofing of some buildings at the sewer plant was in progress.

Tom Thumb store seeks residential lot for parking

By Danielle Tavano
Beacon Correspondent

The City of Valparaiso Planning Commission approved a motion to submit plans to rezone the city's historical district. These plans have been initiated in hopes of creating opportunity for growth and economic development in the city.

The commission also recommended approval of a zoning

change for the Tom Thumb store on John Sims Parkway, and discussed the coordination of land-use planning with Eglin Air Force Base.

Commissioner Tom Browning called the meeting of the planning commission to order Dec. 17, at 7:15 p.m. Eight people were in attendance, including two from the public.

Please see PARKING, page A-7



The Valparaiso Planning Commission recommended approval of a zoning change for the land behind this Tom Thumb store on John Sims Parkway that would allow construction of a parking lot on a residential lot behind the store so the establishment can be expanded.

Beacon photo by Angela Yuriko Smith

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CAB

From page A-1

vehicle appearance, or for drivers caught sleeping in their cabs while waiting in line to pick up fares. A number of cabbies and owners attended the meeting, and spoke for or against the proposed ordinance.

Foremost among those favoring the new restrictions was the owner of Sunshine Transportation, who said his is the county's largest taxi operation with about 60 vehicles. He suggested that the proposed ordinance does not do enough to ensure professionalism and uniformity among cabs and drivers, and that the first impressions given by taxi drivers at the airport create a first impression of Okaloosa County for arriving visitors. He said his own drivers wear uniforms and are thoroughly vetted. He suggested that the county put out a request for proposals to establish a single franchise for taxi operations at the airport.

Most of the other taxi operators who attended the meeting, however, represented much smaller businesses, including several one-person operations. They said the proposed new ordinance is much too strict, and imposes such heavy costs and other burdens on small operators as to threaten to put some of them out of business.

One cabbie, David Hall, said it is unreasonable not to allow drivers to take an occasional five-minute "power nap" while waiting in long lines to pick up fares at the airport. He said drivers often wait for several hours at a time, and that their job is physically stressful. "We are not Olympic people," he said.

Hall said that he is overweight, takes several medications prescribed by his doctor, and that the occasional nap while waiting in line is essential to his health. He also stressed the importance of taxi services to the county, saying that taxi drivers are an important factor in preventing drunk driving.

John Mark, another driver, complained that the airport administration does a poor job in dealing with local drivers. He said drivers were not informed of a recent speed limit change at the airport, and that there has been no meeting between taxi owners and airport administrators in more than a year.

County Commissioner Nathan Boyles said he was surprised to learn that the county has an ordinance to regulate taxis. He said he thought it would be more appropriate to simply allow the airport administration to write its own administrative regulations, subject to approval by the county commission.

Commissioner Don Amunds, however, said he believed in the ordinance, as a law is easier to enforce than an administrative regulation. However, said



Beacon photo by Emily Kent

The Okaloosa County Commission is considering new rules governing taxi operations at the Northwest Florida Regional Airport.

Amunds, he supports keeping the insurance requirement at the current \$300,000 level rather than increasing it to \$500,000.

After some further discussion, commissioners voted 4-1 to table the issue until their next meeting in the south end of the county, scheduled for 6:30 p.m., Jan. 21. Commissioner Kelly Windes cast the dissenting vote, saying he thought the issue could be settled right away.

In other business, the commissioners approved a proposal to refinance several Series 2013 bonds, totaling \$8,950,000, in the form of a bank loan from Compass Bank. Airports director Sunil Harman said that Compass Bank was the low bidder among 19 banks who had competed for the loan, and that the new bank loan will save the county approximately \$1.7 million in interest costs, compared with the interest on the current bonds.

Commissioners approved an interim report of the research effort through MDRG for the market positioning and naming (branding) of Northwest Florida Regional Airport (VPS) to most effectively identify the airport by the market it serves.

The report did not contain any specific recommendation for a name change for the airport. It did contain comments from various people who were apparently interviewed or surveyed during the study, most of whom seemed to favor a name referring to Fort Walton Beach as more recognizable than one mentioning Northwest Florida.

Commissioners accepted the interim report by a 4-1 vote but took no action, with Commissioner Dave Parisot dissenting.

"I first learned of this when I read in the Daily News that \$35,000 was being spent on this study," said Parisot. "We've been way overcharged for minimal work," he said.

Commissioners heard an informational briefing from representatives of Lord & Sons Construction Co., in which they showed drawings of several conceptual designs for a proposed new county government building at the Shalimar annex site. The concept drawings showed buildings ranging from one to three stories in height, and with similar but slightly varying floor plans. The building, if constructed, would provide a single, county-owned location for a number of county government offices now housed in various locations rented by the county.

After the presentation, County Administrator Ernie Padgett proposed that the county commission appoint a working group to include one county commissioner and representatives from the county administrator's office, facilities management department, and from Lord & Sons, to work out details as to what such a building should include. The motion to do so was approved by a 4-1 vote, with Parisot dissenting. Amunds was appointed as the county commission's liaison to the group.

Padgett also proposed that the county create the position of "compliance officer" to assist county departments in ensuring that their financial and accounting procedures are in accordance with all laws and regulations. The recommendation followed a Florida Auditor General report critical of lax county-government financial controls following the 2012 scandal in which Mark Bellinger, then county tourist-development director, embezzled or squandered hundreds of thousands of dollars of taxpayer funds under the nose of the county commission.

In a report to the commission, Padgett stated, "In response to the Auditor General reported

Please see RULES, page A-3

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Valparaiso named a 'Purple Heart City'

Sam Houston, past commander of the local chapter of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, addressed the Valparaiso City Commission as current Commander Meredith McQuagne and Vice Commander Gus Siningier presented a plaque to Valparaiso Mayor Bruce Arnold Dec. 9, declaring Valparaiso to be a "Purple Heart City." Houston said the plaque was awarded to the city as a way for wounded military veterans to "give back" to the city for the support the city has provided to local veterans, military personnel and their families. After the presentation, MOPH members shook hands with city officials.

Photo special to the Beacon



RULES

From page A-2

findings at the Tourist Development Department in January 2013, and the Preliminary and Tentative Findings in report on the BCC in October 2013, the Board has directed the County Administrator's office to bring a recommendation on implementing internal controls with regard

to compliance and financial transactions. After considering from three alternatives, including funding additional employees at the Okaloosa County Clerk of Courts Office, contracting a CPA firm, and hiring an employee, the County Administrator has determined the best solution is to create a position for a Compliance Officer assigned under the County Administrator's Office. Specific to the duties of this position, if approved, several respon-

sibilities will include:

- Conducts reviews for compliance of internal policies, procedures and practices, general ledger account balances, grants, contracts, revenue collection, purchasing, disbursements, inventory as well as facilities and equipment management.
- Determines whether the BCC Departments are performing their planning, custodial, accounting or control activities in compliance with policies, pro-

cedures, standards, laws, and regulations, and in a manner consistent with objectives and standards of administrative practices and applicable federal, state, and local laws and ordinances.

- Develops internal control policies, processes, and procedures and makes recommendations.

Commissioners unanimously approved the establishment of the compliance officer position.

MAYOR

From page A-1

city commissioners to directly oversee the workings of city departments.

Now, however, city infrastructure is much more complex, and includes such things as a water and sewer department that did not exist in 1921. Today, he said, it makes more sense for city departments to be overseen by hired, professionally-qualified managers, while elected city commissioners concentrate their attention on broader issues, such as interacting with state and federal regulations and government agencies, and lobbying such state and federal agencies, including Eglin Air Force Base, to protect the interests of the city, as well as dealing with such entities as the Florida League of Cities.

Arnold was asked whether the city could afford the likely higher pay needed to attract or retain a city administrator qualified to carry out new duties more closely related to those of a city manager. He replied that the new charter will not turn the city administrator into a city manager, and that the professional chiefs of some key city services, such as police and fire protection, will still be directly under the supervision of the mayor or city commission. However, he said, it makes sense for the city administrator to have direct oversight of most other city services, such as the city library, TV/cable system, and public works.

Although the earlier study of alternative forms of city govern-

ment performed for the city by the Institute of Senior Professionals recommended that the city adopt a city manager form of government, Arnold said, simply strengthening the position of the current city administrator will be adequate to meet the city's needs. He added that Carl Scott, the current city administrator, is well-qualified to assume such responsibilities.

Asked why attempting to revise the charter now is likely to succeed, after a previous attempt to rewrite the charter in the 1990s failed, the mayor said that the previous charter committee had recommended that the city adopt a city manager form of government—something that would have been too expensive to do, then or now. He estimated that hiring a city manager could cost the city more than \$100,000 a year. Scott currently earns about \$59,000 a year as city administrator, according to Arnold.

Arnold said the proposed charter revision will not change the "at-large" manner in which city commissioners are elected, or institute a "ward" system for electing them. He said that although the city commission already has the option of setting up a ward system under the current charter, and would have the same option under a revised charter, he does not foresee that happening, and no one has proposed doing so.

Arnold was asked whether he sees the adoption of a new city charter as a sort of final capstone to his long career as mayor. "No," he replied. "I would like for the city to have

done this many years ago, but the need for it has become more acute in the last 10 years." The mayoralty is also on the ballot for March 11, along with two city commissioner seats. Arnold, who is believed to be Florida's longest-serving elected mayor, has not said whether he will seek reelection.

Arnold summarized his position by saying that public offices in Valparaiso should be well-defined, with well-defined duties, and that both elected and unelected officials should "know the bounds" of their duties, and what they are responsible for. The current system, he said, establishes "five fiefdoms," each controlled by a single commissioner, with each commissioner having the authority to spend tax money to order supplies, execute contracts, and make other key executive decisions for his or her departments, but with little opportunity to coordinate their activities with other commissioners outside of formal monthly commission meetings. Outside such monthly meetings, the mayor said, commissioners are forbidden to discuss city business with each other under the provisions of Florida's sunshine law.

In the modern world, said the mayor, providing day-to-day city services should be handled from a "central focal point," such as the city administrator, who would be overseen by and accountable to the city commission as a whole. The city commission would retain ultimate authority, especially including authority over the city budget, and to hire or fire the city

administrator.

In any case, said Arnold, the decision as to whether to adopt the proposed new charter is no longer in his hands, or in those of any other city official. "It will be up to the populace during the election," he said. He added that he would be working to provide Valparaiso citizens with more information about the proposed charter revisions, especially during the period between Jan. 1 and the March 11 referendum.

Arnold was one of two elected city officials to answer the Beacon's questions about the proposed city charter. The other was Commissioner Joe Morgan, whose comments were published earlier. Morgan questioned the need for a new charter, expressing general satisfaction with the current form of city government.

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E. Niceville panel curbs late insurance claims

By Mike Griffith
Beacon Correspondent

From now on, East Niceville firefighters who receive medical care for themselves or their families must follow up to ensure that their doctors, hospitals, or other care providers send bills to the fire district's health insurance company in a timely manner, or face having to pay the entire medical bill themselves.

The East Niceville Fire Commission agreed earlier this month that the fire district will not pay medical bills that arrive too long after medical care is actually provided to East Niceville firefighters or other district employees covered by the district's health insurance program.

The East Niceville Fire district provides fire protection to unincorporated areas of the Niceville community outside city limits but west of Rocky Bayou. The East Niceville fire department, although independent, works in close cooperation with the City of Niceville fire department, often responding jointly to fires and other emergencies in East Niceville and Niceville.

During a meeting Dec. 9 in the East Niceville firehouse on 27th Street, the fire commission discussed the health insurance program with Floyd Schweppe, an agent from The Insurance Center in Mary Esther, who represents

Please see CLAIMS, page A-6



The East Niceville Fire Commission met Dec. 9 to discuss its policy concerning late submission of employee medical-insurance claims.

Beacon photo by Mike Griffith



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Pictured left to right:
Dawn Putynkowski (Office Manager)
Kevin Kelleher (Property Manager)
Bobbie Housand (Broker-Owner)
Sue Pfahler (Realtor)
April Harrison Welsh (Realtor).
Not pictured:
Stacey Driver (Realtor)
Kurt Buchanan (Realtor)
Marcella Phelps (Realtor)
Ana Kelleher (Asst. to Property Manager)

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Jumbo Shrimp Cocktail-with a spicy remoulade
Lobster & Shrimp Bisque-Maine lobster and Gulf shrimp bisque finished with a hint of sherry

★ Salad Choices ★
Spring Mix-honey roasted nuts, mandarin oranges & a mango vinaigrette
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★ Entree Choices ★
Price includes 3 course dinner: Appetizer, Salad & Entree

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Chicken Piccata	\$24
Sun-dried tomatoes, artichoke hearts and capers, with saffron rice & sautéed vegetables	
Lobster & Shrimp	\$35
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Filet & Baked Stuffed Shrimp	\$36
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Police Blotter

The following accounts of the activities of police are according to records of the Niceville and Valparaiso police departments, the Okaloosa County and Walton County sheriff's offices, other law-enforcement agencies, and the Okaloosa County and Walton County jails.

Arrests

On Dec. 2, Valparaiso police arrested William Richard Davis Jr., 22, a painter, of 324 Okaloosa Ave., Apt. B, Valparaiso, for one count of possession of drugs paraphernalia. An officer responded to an address on Lincoln Avenue as backup for a domestic issue. Upon arrival, the officer made contact with Davis, who stated that he was wrestling around with his girlfriend, which led to her calling the police. The officer then made contact inside the residence with the girlfriend, who provided the officer with a black serving tray with a glass pipe, which the officer knew from his training and experience to be commonly used to smoke

marijuana. The tray also contained a box, inside of which was a small amount of marijuana "shake" which later showed a presumptive positive for the presence of THC. The officer then presented Davis with the tray of paraphernalia, at which time Davis admitted to being the owner of the items.

On Dec. 4, Niceville police arrested Soleil Arden Stanley, 19, of 335 Pontevedra Lane, Niceville, on one count each of possession of less than 20 grams of marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia. The police report stated that when police stopped Stanley's vehicle, he attempted to throw three smoking pipes and a marijuana

grinder out the window. He was found to be in possession of less than 20 grams of marijuana in the front seat of his vehicle. The grinder was found to have marijuana residue on it.

On Dec. 4, Niceville police arrested Edward Desmond Moree, 35, of 412 Paradise Road, Niceville, on one count of contempt of court. The police report stated that Moree willfully violated an injunction for protection against domestic violence, which specified no third-party contact with the petitioner. The report stated that on Oct. 1 Moree attempted to send a message to the petitioner through two other people, asking the petitioner to bail him out of jail.

On Dec. 12, Niceville police arrested Michael Casey Wilkinson, 27, of 304 Reeves St., Lot C-11, Niceville, on one count of resisting an officer without violence. According to the police report, police responded to a 911 call by Okaloosa County Emergency Medical Services. As an officer arrived, Wilkinson approached him in a very aggressive matter and was immediately detained by the officer. Wilkinson refused to identify himself to the officer, and was placed under arrest.

On Dec. 14, Valparaiso police arrested Susan Denise Dugan, 47, 331 Virginia Ave., Valparaiso, for DUI. An officer observed Dugan slumped over the wheel of her vehicle at the intersection of Chicago Avenue and SR 397, with the vehicle's brake lights on and the engine running. The officer stated that after observing the driver slumped over the wheel, he turned around to check on the driver, at which time the vehicle began moving across the north-bound lanes of traffic, striking the curb and then stopping.

On Dec. 14, Niceville police arrested Cynthia Lynn Lawson, 24, and Jordan Drew Harris, 24, both of 310 Washington Ave., Valparaiso. Each suspect was charged with one count each of burglary and grand theft. Lawson and Harris

were seen by witnesses to enter the backyard of a home on Hickory Avenue, where they allegedly broke a back window, entered the residence, and removed a jar containing more than \$300 worth of change.

On Dec. 3, Niceville police arrested a 17-year-old male from Niceville on one count each of retail theft and resisting a merchant. The defendant exited the Niceville Walmart with a case of Budweiser beer valued at \$16.97, which he had not paid for. When store employees attempted to stop him, he threw the beer down on the sidewalk and ran. When police contacted the youth, he admitted to leaving the store with the beer without paying.

On Dec. 4 Jeremy Langston Alford, 30, a carpenter, of 1510 27th St., Niceville, was arrested by Niceville police for one count of criminal mischief.

On Dec. 14, Valparaiso police arrested Susan Denise Dugan, 47, 331 Virginia Ave., Valparaiso, for DUI. An officer observed Dugan slumped over the wheel of her vehicle at the intersection of Chicago Avenue and SR 397, with the vehicle's brake lights on and the engine running. The officer stated that after observing the driver slumped over the wheel, he turned around to check on the driver, at which time the vehicle began moving across the north-bound lanes of traffic, striking the curb and then stopping.

Upon exiting his patrol car, the officer saw Dugan's vehicle again begin to roll, riding the curb until correcting at the intersection of SR 397 and Edge Avenue, and coming to rest. The driver then began to drive north on SR 397, striking the curb at the corner of North Bayshore Drive, and then turned right onto Bayshore, where the driver finally stopped and placed the vehicle in park. Dugan was found to have a blood or breath alcohol level of 0.236.

On Dec. 7, an Okaloosa deputy responded to an address on Bluewater Boulevard regarding a report of a theft that had ready occurred. The case remains active.

On Dec. 9, an Okaloosa deputy responded to an address on Old Post Road, Niceville, in regard to a landlord-tenant dispute. The case was closed as it is a civil rather than criminal matter.



Jordan Drew Harris



Michael Robert Lake Jr.



Cynthia Lynn Lawson

Fire Department Reports

Niceville

The Niceville Fire Department responded to the following calls from Dec. 16, 2013 through Dec. 19, 2013.

3 Structure Fire	13 Emergency Medical Calls
0 Vehicle Fire	1 Vehicle Crash
0 Other Fire	0 Vehicle Crash with Extrication
0 Illegal Burn	3 Other Emergency Calls
0 False Alarms	0 Hazardous Conditions



STREET	SITUATION	DATE	TIME
N. Partin Dr.	Medical	12/16/13	05:04
Everglade Dr.	Medical	12/16/13	05:12
Edgewater Dr.	Medical	12/16/13	09:01
29th Street	Medical	12/16/13	09:40
Woodlark Rd.	Medical	12/16/13	12:27
22nd Street	Structure fire	12/16/13	13:21
N. Partin Dr.	Medical	12/16/13	13:27
Winding Water Way	Alarm activation	12/16/13	14:44
Nutmeg Ave.	Medical	12/16/13	17:23
E. John Sims Pkwy.	Vehicle crash	12/17/13	06:52
College Blvd.	Structure fire	12/17/13	16:38
Ivy Ave.	Structure fire	12/17/13	13:27
Ellis Ave.	Medical	12/16/13	08:02
Coral Dr.	Medical	12/16/13	08:54
E. John Sims Pkwy.	Service call	12/16/13	09:33
Duncan Dr.	Medical	12/16/13	21:24
N. Partin Dr.	Medical	12/19/13	08:23
N. Partin Dr.	Medical	12/19/13	10:06
N. Partin Dr.	Medical	12/19/13	11:16
Bullock Blvd.	Alarm activation	12/19/13	22:06

Weekly Safety Tip: Don't burn evergreens, wreaths or wrapping paper in the fireplace or in wood stoves, they can quickly flare out of control and some wrapping paper contains metallic materials that can cause toxic fumes.

Like the Niceville Fire Department on Facebook

North Bay

The North Bay Fire Department responded to the following calls from December 16, 2013 through December 15, 2013.

Street	Situation	Date	Time
Parkwood Pl.	Medical	12/16/13	09:29
Caribbean Way	Medical	12/16/13	12:15
22nd Street	Dispatched & cancelled	12/16/13	13:22
N. Partin Dr.	Medical	12/16/13	13:30
Windlake Dr.	Public assist	12/16/13	22:33
Garden Oaks Cove	Medical	12/16/13	23:16
E. College Blvd.	Electrical	12/17/13	11:16
Ridgewood Way	Dispatched & cancelled	12/17/13	11:21
Ivy Ave.	Building fire	12/17/13	13:29
Range Rd.	Forest fire	12/18/13	16:11
Parkwood Ct.	Dispatched & cancelled	12/18/13	19:54
Oaklake Lane	Medical	12/19/13	10:50
N. White Point Rd.	Medical	12/19/13	23:35

Visit northbayfd.org for more information.



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Fire officials: Hair dryer didn't cause fire

Beacon Staff

The Niceville Fire Department said it has finished its investigation of a minor fire that occurred at the Holiday Inn Express Dec. 13.

The department, which declined to release its report, said it has that determined the fire was not started by a handheld hair dryer.

Merry Christmas
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THE INQUIRING PHOTOGRAPHER —by Mike Griffith



What do you like best about Christmas?

Location: Niceville civic complex



"I love everything about Christmas, and watching the happy children having fun."

Becky Rigel, 67, Niceville, homemaker



"I like singing Christmas songs."

Alex Rigel, 3, Niceville



"Normally, being with family – but this year is the first time that's not happening, as my family is back in the United Kingdom."

Rebecca Fenton-ree, 36, Niceville, teacher



"I like the way feuds can be put aside, at least for the duration of the season."

Ian Kampert, 16, Crestview, Rocky Bayou Christian School student



"Going to church with my family on Christmas Eve."

Emme Hardy, 13, Niceville, Ruckel Middle School student



"I like all the stories, especially Dickens' Christmas Carol."

James Evans, 13, Niceville, Ruckel Middle School student

What should we ask next week? Email your suggested question to: info@baybeacon.com Include "Suggested IP question" in the "subject" field.

PARKING

From page A-1

At the beginning of the meeting, Carl Scott, city administrator, swore in the speakers representing the general public, Ruckel Properties, and Tom Thumb.

Browning made a motion to approve the minutes of the Nov. 19 meeting. The motion was seconded, and approved. He then made a motion to defer the discussion of old business to the end of the meeting. This motion was approved.

New business was then opened for discussion. This consisted of a request by Ruckel Properties and Tom Thumb to change the zoning of 306 Okaloosa Ave., which Ruckel owns, from R1A-single-family residential, to C-1-limited commercial. This would allow them to expand the adjacent store, which Tom Thumb owns, to use the residential lot to the west.

Property owners within 400 feet have been notified of the request. Thus, the legal requirements for this hearing were met.

A representative of Ruckel Properties, lawyer Jeff McInnis, announced that Tom Thumb plans to expand its store, making it bigger and including a deli and other services that he said will have a positive impact on the community without needing to make changes to existing infrastructure.

Ruckel Properties will raze a currently occupied house on the Okaloosa Avenue property, and expand the Tom Thumb parking lot, allowing it to be incorporated into the existing commercial property.

McInnis said that a privacy fence and a landscaped buffer area will be built along the perimeter of the parking lot, as a courtesy to neighboring residents. He assured that stormwater retention systems are up to code, and that security cameras will be installed on the building's exterior.

After hearing the proposal, Browning asked McInnis about the lighting of the parking lot, expressing concern that it will be close to adjacent residents and thus may pose a nuisance by shining into their homes.

At this point, landlord Alan

Richardson spoke up, expressing the same concerns for his tenants, of which he said he has three or four, all in the area adjacent to the Tom Thumb. "They are good people, and we don't want to lose them as tenants," he said.

Richardson requested that diffused or downward-facing lights be added as a stipulation to the request, as well as time restraints that would only allow lights to be in use from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

At this time, Scott cracked open the city ordinance book and found that it is illegal to place time constraints on business lights. He pointed out that since Tom Thumb is a 24-hour store, the lights would need to be kept on from sunset to sunrise, to ensure the safety of patrons and employees.

A Tom Thumb representative then stepped up to the podium to explain that the lights used by Tom Thumb are LED lights, which are directional in nature, and therefore would not pose a disturbance to nearby residents as they would be aimed downward and inward. He also added that the lumen count is regulated by the state.

Looking at the plans, Richardson requested that fencing be added along the Okaloosa Avenue side, to block the light from those houses across the street. The Tom Thumb representative conceded that they could indeed add that into the plan.

Richardson asked the committee to add a condition that a lighting plan be submitted along with the building plan, but his request was denied.

Planning Commissioner Jack Carson asserted that lighting requirements were already outlined between the building plan and existing city ordinances, thus they didn't require additional documentation on the matter.

Carson then made a motion to approve the zoning change proposal, which was seconded and unanimously approved.

The planning commission then moved on to the discussion of old business. The focus of this discussion was on rezoning areas of the city to open up options for developers interested

in these spaces. Among these areas being considered for rezoning are the Historical District of Valparaiso, which would be rezoned from HP to C-1. This will allow developers and residents to open new businesses in the area as well as build new houses. It was agreed that Perrine Park, at the center of the Historical District, in "Old Valparaiso," would remain.

Carson then voiced a proposal to rezone the boatworks tract on Toms Bayou from I-1 to C-1, since it is dilapidated and an eyesore.

In other business, both Scott and Marion Cook, community planner for Eglin Air Force Base, suggested that new language be drafted for the creation of mixed-use zones in the city. This new land-use zone would allow developers and residents more freedom as to their land use, since the thin strip of C-1 zoning currently skirting John Sims Parkway south of Toms Bayou does not allow enough space for any substantial businesses to develop there.

Scott and Cook asserted that developers would sooner seek contracts in other places where they would not have to request a rezoning, since it is a hassle and costs a lot of money, thus they are currently losing business from potential developing contractors.

The planning commission conceded that deals would need to be made with Eglin over the proposed rezoning, since much of the land inside the limits of Valparaiso, south of Toms Bayou, belongs to the base.

Scott emphatically said that the Air Force has a list of things that they want, and that the city of Valparaiso needs to draw up its own list of things it wants to see done, in an official document, so that both parties can work together to accomplish a compromise between their respective goals. Scott and Cook agreed to work together to draft language for the proposal of the new mixed-use zone.

Certain decisions of the planning commission, including rezonings and the creation of new zones, are subject to ratification by the city commission, which is scheduled to meet next on Jan. 13.



Aerial view of neighborhood of Tom Thumb store on John Sims Parkway, Valparaiso. Store tract is marked with red boundary. Owner proposes to demolish a house just to the west (at left of store in aerial view) for a parking lot.

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Beacon photo by Angela Yuriko Smith

This house at 306 Okaloosa Ave. is at the center of a request by Ruckel Properties, owner of the house, and the Tom Thumb on the next lot to demolish the house and replace it with a parking lot.

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Who's News

Steve Manthey of Niceville recently celebrated 20 years of service with MetLife Financial Group of the South in an office of MetLife. Manthey started his career at MetLife in 1993. Since then, he has devoted his career to helping clients in the Gulf Coast area build financial freedom. Manthey is a Life Underwriter Training Council Underwriter, LTCE.



Steve Manthey



Opus One performs for library

Niceville High School's Opus One chorus was at the Niceville Public Library Dec. 11 to serenade a standing room only crowd with holiday song for a patron appreciation party hosted by Friends of the Niceville Library and library staff.

Beacon photo by Angela Yuriko Smith



Retired officers' wives send out 2013 with fete

The North West Florida Retired Officers Wives Club celebrated with a Christmas luncheon and a performance featuring the Sugar Beach Chorus, directed by Karen Boisjolie, Dec. 12, for their last event of the 2013 year. NWFLROWC meets on third Thursdays at 10:30 a.m. at the Eglin Bayview Club. For reservations please call Glenda 651-3177.



BWB girl lauded at horse competition

Maggie Bowers won High Point awards for the year awards at the Baker Open Horse Show in Baker Horse Show on Nov. 2 after winning over 90 ribbons for the year in Western, English and Hunter/Jumper with her horse, Old Money Talks. In every category except Youth, she competed against adults as well as youth, often the youngest against riders that had many years over her. She is a seventh grade student at Ruckel Middle School and the daughter of Joseph and Cynthia Bowers in Bluewater Bay.



Middle School students selected for the All-State Band, from left, Mandy Martin, Meredith Freeman, Camille Miles, Zachary Verzwylt, Ryan Murphey and Colton Williams. Pictured with Director Eddie Steadman.

Ruckel band students selected for All-State

Six Ruckel Middle School students have been selected as members of the Florida All-State Band.

The musicians include eighth graders Meredith Freeman on alto saxophone, Mandy Martin on tenor saxophone, Camille Miles on flute, Ryan Murphey on clarinet and Zachary Verzwylt on baritone saxophone. Also chosen was seventh grader Colton Williams on tenor saxophone.

Auditions for the All-State band were held in September and had five parts: seven major scales, in 2 minutes or less, from memory complete with

arpeggios, memorized chromatic scale covering the range for their instrument, a lyrical musical study, a technical musical study, and a sight-reading exercise with music the student hadn't seen before. Auditions are recorded and evaluated by a trained judge who scores each audition.

The All-State band will rehearse and perform during the 2014 Florida Music Educators' Association Conference which will be held in Tampa January 8-11. The Middle School All-State Band Concert will be held Saturday, January 11 at the Tampa Convention Center.

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All campuses will re-open for business and registration services on January 2nd.

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- Chautauqua Center-DeFuniak Springs
- South Walton Center
- Robert L. F. Sikes Education Center-Crestview

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Parrot Heads choose volunteer of the year

Betty Leffue was presented the Emerald Coast Parrot Head Club's Volunteer of the Year Award by Parrot Head President Hank Bittmann, at their volunteer recognition party Dec. 7. Betty served on the publicity committee and did many jobs at all of the club's events. Leffue received a plaque, a special volunteer name tag and a free club membership for next year.



JROTC gives to food bank

The Niceville High School JROTC recently held a canned food drive collecting over 652 pounds of food to give to the Niceville Sharing & Caring. Pictured making the delivery from left, Rachel Gold, Zak Steffens, Caleb Brown, Bryce Fejeran, Johnny Nygen, Tanner Roberts and Sergeant Hensley.

Ruckel singers selected for All-State

Ruckel Middle School Chorus is proud to announce the 14 chorus students who earned seats in the 2014 All State Mixed and Treble Choruses. Pictured from left, John Hencinski, Richard Brown, Elijah Sutton, Wesley Krist and Joe Walker. Middle row from left, Olivia Reneau, Katrin Woods, Kali Kerrigan, Madelyn Huston and Emma Ladd. Front row, from left, Julia Freeman, Abby Bonilla, Mandy Martin and Meredith Freeman.



WWII veterans honored in Christmas parade

WWII veterans were honored during the Niceville-Valparaiso Rotary Club's annual parade Dec. 7 by serving as grand marshals. Each veteran was driven by a corvette from Sunset Vettes of Northwest Florida. Each car was decorated with a banner on the door with the veteran's name, rank and which division they fought in. Pictured, William Kaunzinger waits for the parade to begin.

Photo courtesy of Lou Kaunzinger



CHURCH DIRECTORY



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NHS Leadership promotes literacy at Edge and Lewis schools

The Niceville High School Leadership program traveled to Edge Elementary School and Lewis School Dec. 16 to present literacy lessons to the younger students. The Leadership students read popular children's stories to the kids, presented a literacy lesson that related to the book, played a game, completed an activity and treated them to a snack that was themed to their books. Some books that were presented were "Chicka Chicka Boom Boom," "Green Eggs and Ham," "The Polar Express," and "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory."

2013
CALENDAR
E-mail items to info@baybeacon.com

Shop locally

The Heritage Museum Shop and Bookstore, 115 Westview Avenue, Valparaiso, features old-fashioned games and toys, locally and regionally handcrafted items including baskets and quilts, books on local history for all ages and HMNF merchandise. Gift certificates are available.

Hours are Tuesday-Saturday, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. For more information, call 678-2615.

Benefit book sale

The Friends of the Niceville Library book store will be having a half price sale during the month of December. The book store is open Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Books and audio will be half price for the month. Book store will be closed Dec. 24 and 31. Proceeds from sales benefit the Niceville Public Library.

Christmas Day mass

Holy Name of Jesus Catholic Church, 1200 Valparaiso Blvd,

Niceville, will hold its Christmas Day mass at 10 a.m. The service is free and open to the public.

Christmas Day service

St. Jude's Episcopal Church, 200 N. Partin Dr. Niceville, will hold its Christmas Day service at 11 a.m. The service is free and open to the public.

New Year's eve service

Rocky Bayou Baptist Church, 2401 Partin Drive N., Niceville, will hold a New Year's Eve prayer service at 11 p.m. Dec. 31 in the Genesis Hall. The service is free and open to the public. For more information, call 678-6062.

Audubon meets

The first Audubon meeting of the year will be Jan. 2 with "The Shark Tank" by Charidy "Sharkie" Krouse, shark biologist and conservationist who will present an overview often misunderstood shark.

The meeting will be held in room 130 on the ground floor of the Student

Services Center at the Niceville campus of Northwest Florida State College, and will begin at 6:30 p.m. with socializing and light refreshments. The meeting is free and open to the interested public. For more information, call Walt Spence at 582-7064.

History weekend

Make history part of your future with "Home School Fridays" and "Hands-On History Saturdays," a monthly program based on the Florida core standards for education for children ages 5-12 at the Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida, Valparaiso. Each month, until June a different program will be presented related to Northwest Florida history for children and families.

January's program will be "Native American Legends" on Jan. 3 and 4 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

\$7 per child or \$5 for museum family members. Special deal for new family members. Groups welcome, space is limited so please pre-register at 678-2615.



Adult soccer league

Adult Outdoor Soccer League for ages 17 and up. Register now until Dec. 27. There will be one game per week, from Jan. 5-Feb. 23, on Sunday afternoons at the Howard Hill Soccer Fields. Cost for Niceville residents is \$60 per player. For non-residents, \$80 per player. Register and pay in person with cash or check at the Community Life Center at Niceville United Methodist Church, 214 Partin Dr. S., Niceville, or online with credit card at nicevilleumc.org/recreation.

Got fines?

Do you have library fines? Start the new year off right with a clean conscience.

The Niceville Public Library will be accepting canned goods and non-perishable food items in December for Sharing & Caring in lieu of fines. These items will help families in our community enjoy this holiday season.

The value of the canned goods and non-perishable food items should be close to the amount of the fine owed.



Lewis students selected for All-State chorus

Three Lewis School students were selected for the Florida All-State Mixed and Treble Choruses and will be traveling to Tampa in January to attend workshops and perform in these prestigious ensembles at the Florida Music Educator's State Conference. Pictured, from left, 8th graders Danielle Davis and Michael Schneider and 7th grader Holly Chavis completed three rounds of auditions for musicianship, sight-singing and vocal quality. The Choral Director at Lewis School is Kristen Bowne.

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Call for members

The Pastel Society of North Florida is accepting new members.

Included with the annual membership dues of \$35 is the ability to have a presence in the Member Artist pages of the website, inclusion in the Biennial Members Show (odd numbered years), a members discount when entering paintings in the Biennial National Juried Exhibitions (even years), email newsletters, educational meetings, painting demonstrations, and opportunity for early

members only signup for art workshops with nationally acclaimed instructors.

The Pastel Society of North Florida is also a member of the International Association of Pastel Societies which enables members to attend the highly acclaimed IAPS Pastel Convention held on odd numbered years in Albuquerque, N.M.

Please contact Carrie Raeburn at psnf@centurytel.net or visit the website, pastelsocietyofnorthflorida.org.

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Ruckel lauds staff of the year

Bill Breitenbeck has been selected as Ruckel's Teacher of the Year and Janet Simpson has been selected as Ruckel's Support Person of the Year.

'I bring you tidings of great joy'

'Unto you is born this day in the City of David a Savior'

Luke 2:1-20

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.

(And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)

And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David;)

To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.



And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us."

And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

And when they had seen it, they made known abroad

the saying which was told them concerning this child.

And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

Merry Christmas!



And a Happy, Healthy New Year!

— from the staff of the Bay Beacon