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there for 22 minutes for almost 3 miles between barricades.”

Elliott assured him the north end would be “polished up” before workers leave, and the maximum allowed space for barricades is 2 miles.

“If it’s more than that, we need to correct it immediately,” Elliott said.

The project has a tentative completion date of Nov. 15, he said, which could be extended because of weather.

Resident JoAnn Cooley discussed drainage issues on her road.

“Carmichael Road has drainage problems,” she said. “In some areas it is impassable, and the rest is just in bad shape. Last time we discussed this, the board said they would send an engineer out. Did you?”

County Engineer Whitney Nelson from Melvin Engineering told the board he did go out, plans were drawn and he met with a foreman, but work was never done.

The board agreed to allow Nelson to meet with the foreman again and see that the project moves forward.

Holmes County State Housing Initiatives Partnership Administrator Kathy Ahlen told the board Gov. Rick Scott agreed to fund the State Housing Initiatives Program in August.

SHIP provides funds to local governments as an incentive to create partnerships that produce and preserve affordable homeownership and multifamily housing. The program was designed to serve very low, low and moderate income families.

The board agreed to a three-year extended contract with SHIP with the option of canceling with a minimum 60-day notice.

Commissioner Bobby Sasnett told the board he was down to two employees on his road and bridge crew, and the board approved of creating a temporary, six-month position and to advertise it.

After much discussion, the board approved of allowing Cat-

erpillar to fix one of Sasnett’s graders for \$12,962.86.

Sasnett said it had no brakes and that the turntable needed to be overhauled. Caterpillar estimated a two-week period to repair it.

“Park it and see if they will lend you a piece of equipment until the work is done,” Merchant said.

Merchant told the board he met with the Department of Transportation in regard to repairing County Road 2 from County Road 82 to the Walton County line.

“There’s a small portion, about a 2-mile distance, that is being left out,” Merchant said. “I’ve talked with DOT, and there may be a way to get funding for that stretch of road.”

The board approved postponing the awarding of the bid until they hear from DOT.

“I’ve also heard there are some negative comments coming from board members,” Merchant said. “Comments about other commissioners and about how they will and will not do certain things. I am not so naive to think that employees won’t talk about our commissioners, but it is about time that we look at employees to do their job and stop blaming commissioners for work not being done.”

Merchant also suggested they have a budget workshop soon.

“There’s a lot of expenses coming down that we’ve got to be prepared for,” Merchant said. “Like the increase for retirement. Where they want us to pay for it in full, which would be almost a quarter of a million dollar increase.”

Goodman also said Washington County was facing a 10 to 20 percent increase in health insurance because of Obamacare and that Holmes County shouldn’t overlook the same possibility.

The next scheduled meeting of the Holmes County Board of County Commissioners is set for 6 p.m. June 25 at the BOCC boardroom, behind the Holmes County Courthouse.

GAETZ from page A1

discuss health care issues.

Gaetz serves as President of the Florida Senate. He was elected to the Senate in 2006 after six years as superintendent of schools in Okaloosa County. His senate district includes Okaloosa, Walton, Washington, Holmes, Jackson and Bay counties.

When the senate district boundaries were redrawn, Gaetz inherited Holmes, Jackson and Washington Counties. “I won the redistricting lottery,” Gaetz said. “I grew up in the rural Midwest, and this is where I feel more at home, more than anywhere else in Florida.”

A resident of Niceville, he said the economy in Niceville is tied to the military bases, tourism and the hospitality industry. Though having a strong economic factor such as a military base can be a blessing for a community, if the base is shut down, then the community is severely affected.

“Every time Washington gets a cold, we wind up with pneumonia,” Gaetz said. Sequestration has resulted in hundreds of furloughs for employees of the military bases, which will affect those surrounding communities.

Tourism is also an industry that is subject to downturns. “If you have a lot of people drown, or someone sees a shark, that can have a huge negative impact,” Gaetz said.

Northwest Florida, however, is poised to be a center of industrial growth, he said, given the opportunity.

“If you are looking to relocate your company, or your family, Northwest Florida has a lot to offer,” Gaetz said. “Taxes are lower here than in other parts of the state, as are living expenses.”

Area schools are good, and getting better, Gaetz said, and the recently enacted Career And Professional Education (CAPE) Act was designed to give Florida high school graduates a “diploma that has career currency in the workplace.”

Half of college and university graduates under 25 are unemployed or underemployed, Gaetz said. And having a high school diploma alone does not mean a student is qualified to get a job.

“This started when I was superintendent of the Okaloosa Schools, where we began the CHOICE Institutes,” Gaetz said. Since then, he has worked to “lash our education system to the realities and opportunities of the economy.”

Degree programs and high school studies need to prepare students for the real economy, and the CAPE Act will pay school districts \$750 per middle school or high school student who receives an industrial certification while they are attending school.

“If Washington County School District does the same thing next year that they did this year, then under the CAPE Act, the district would receive an additional \$300,000,” Gaetz said.

Having students who are job-ready upon graduation is also essential for future growth, not only in Northwest Florida, but throughout the state. Student education is key to attracting employers, especially employers on the scale of a Nissan, BMW or Toyota plant, such as Georgia, Mississippi and South Carolina have landed in recent years.

Florida has been in competition for such facilities, and plans are underway for a megasite — an industrial site dedicated for use by a big employer such as an auto plant — to be located in Jackson County.

“My son, Matt, went on his own to one of these companies and asked why they chose South Carolina over Florida,” Gaetz said, referring to State Rep. Matt Gaetz of Fort Walton. “They were told by South Carolina that whatever community they located in, the state guaranteed that when the local graduates would walk across the stage to receive their diplomas, they would be qualified to go to work at that plant with no further training.”

Gaetz said colleges and universities also should start incorporating industry certifications into their training courses for students.

“We want our students to graduate with a degree or a diploma that gives them some real career currency,” Gaetz said.

ADVOCACY from page A1

“It was a horrific experience that I would never want any mother to have to live through; however, it is through this tragedy that I hope to help others as so many have helped me,” Williams said. “Being there for young victims, to sit closely by them and to be a comforting presence is what it means to be a victim advocate. This has filled a need within me to give back to the community that had done so much for us.”

She thanked the local law enforcement agencies and state attorney’s office for all they have done for her family.

“It was a horrible experience, but with the help of those agencies, the support of the community and the Lord above, we were able to move forward,” Williams said. “In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, ‘You may never know what results come of your actions, but if you do nothing, there will be no results.’ Thank you for your time, and God bless.”

CORRECTION POLICY

Coleman S.

Beasley was arrested in connection with contempt of court, according to the Holmes County Sheriff’s Office. The charge was incorrectly listed in the May 22 edition of the Holmes County Times-Advertiser.

It is the Policy of the Washington County News and the Holmes County Times-Advertiser to correct all errors that appear in news stories. If you wish to report an error or clarify a story, call 638-0212 or email news@chippypaper.com.

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