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Seven Springs man faces murder charge

From staff reports

A Seven Springs man is charged with an open count of murder after deputies say he stabbed a man to death in a fight.

Through an investigation by the Criminal Investigations Division of the Wayne County Sheriff's Office, Antonio Sabina Arnulfo, 36, of 1133 Camp Jubilee Road was taken into custody without incident on April 30.

According to a WCSO report, Wayne County EMS responded that day to an early-morning medical emergency at Arnulfo's address. While en route, a 911 dispatcher informed EMS that the victim had been involved in a fight and was not responsive.

Dispatch sought assistance from WCSO before the EMS crew arrived. Deputies located the victim, 26-year-old Mateo Hernandez Shilon and discovered he suffered multiple stab wounds. Shilon died on the scene and was taken to Wayne UNC Healthcare. His remains were later taken to the state's medical examiner's office for an autopsy.

Authorities took Arnulfo to Magistrate G.T. Laws, who issued no bond and ordered that he be placed in the custody of the Wayne County Detention Center.

Arnulfo



Arnulfo

Water woes dampen election

By RUDY COGGINS
Assistant Editor

Mount Olive's commissioners hope their current board remains intact after the May 22 municipal election.

Four challengers are vying for seats, including mayor.

Aware that some residents aren't too ingrained with the current board, one commissioner is adamant the group remains together.

"I'm not politicking, but it's important for this board to stay together because of the amount of time we've put into getting these issues solved," Dr. Dennis Draper said at a recent Rotary Club meeting.

Jammie Royall agreed.

The town manager stressed that new faces could "set the board back five years" due to "training" new commissioners on subjects including the moratorium. "We're good right where we are," Royall said.

State authorities placed the county's second-largest town under a moratorium in 2015 due to consistent raw sewage spills that occurred when extra water overwhelmed the inflow and infiltration system at the wastewater treatment plant.

Draper told the small gathering that nearly two decades ago, the town borrowed \$14 million to put in a new wastewater treatment program. The engineers designed a poor program and contractors failed to properly build the system.

Each company eventually went bankrupt.

And, the system was poorly maintained. Draper said the town continues to pay a \$620,000 bill that won't be off the books until 2048.

"I won't live to see that," Draper said.

In 1985, town commissioners approved a \$57,000 project to repair decaying and leaking sewer lines that also affected the town's inflow and infiltration. They

See **Water**, Page 8



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The new purpose-built cell site tower in Wayne County will give first responders access to a plethora of FirstNet devices and apps specifically designed to meet their needs.

FirstNet aims to shorten first responder time

By RUDY COGGINS
Assistant Editor

Communication deserts exist throughout eastern North Carolina. Wayne County is no exception.

Inadequate transmission on 911 calls have led to longer response times in emergencies.

AT&T's FirstNet is hoping to improve emergency response times with apps and tools more accessible on Wayne County's new cell tower.

"FirstNet is important because it is a dedicated band strictly for the use of first responders, especially in the times of disasters

where we have to have the ability to communicate," said Al Laws, chief of New Hope Volunteer Fire Department and Rescue. "It's dependable and the coverage is wonderful, especially now..."

FirstNet is a subscriber-paid program very popular with volunteer fire departments and volunteer EMS because those agencies don't have the devices to provide to firemen.

"Emergencies happen everywhere [and] we want to be the network that public safety chooses to have all of their vital communications on," said Gerald Risner, FirstNet

See **FirstNet**, Page 8

Newton challenging Talton for mayor's seat

By WILLIAM HOLLOMAN
Staff Writer

Two Mount Olive natives, incumbent Kenny Talton and newcomer J. Jerome Newton, are vying for the town's mayoral seat.

Both are retired Marines. Talton currently serves as the planning director for the city of Goldsboro. He said he is proud of the accomplishments since he was elected and the opportunity to work alongside a fantastic group of people.

As part of the town's board of commissioners, Talton said the group has worked tirelessly in numerous areas to get the town "back on track."

"[We've worked] in many areas such as wastewater treatment plant rehabilitation, repairs to sanitary sewer infrastructure as they relate to inflow and infiltration, new leadership consisting of a town manager, new police chief, new finance director and new town clerk," Talton said.

"[We've] improved financing and improved record keeping, downtown revitalization and beautification, new policies and procedures allowing citizens to have a voice in the decision-making process of local government through citizen advisory committees."

However, Talton said work remains to be done.

Commissioners are seeking grant funding to improve issues associated with a century-old sewer system that runs underneath the

See **Mayor**, Page 5



Newton



Talton

Royall looks back on 'wall to wall' fest

By WILLIAM HOLLOMAN
Staff writer

It has been two weeks now since the massive crowd of the 36th annual North Carolina Pickle Festival left town and attendees took their made memories with them.

It also left breathing room, something Town Manager Jammie Royall said was getting hard to find during the height of the popular event.

Royall said by mid-morning on Saturday, the festival had drawn "wall to wall" people.

"I have never in my 17 years

seen anything like it, and the thing is we did not have any problems whatsoever. There were three incidents of children getting separated from their parents, but it was resolved quickly," Royall added.

"Overall, I was really proud to be a part of it."

He said he estimates the crowd between 40,000 and 50,000.

Other festival officials did not use numbers, but said it was the biggest crowd they have ever seen.

There were several emergency

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TRIBUNE PHOTO/EMILY WEAVER

Crowds fill downtown Mount Olive streets during the recent N.C. Pickle Festival.

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WEATHER

Wednesday

90 High



61 Low

Thursday

82 High



59 Low

Friday

83 High



65 Low

TODAY IN HISTORY

1626 - Dutch explorer Peter Minuit landed on Manhattan Island. Native Americans later sold the island (20,000 acres) for \$24 in cloth and buttons.



TRIBUNE PHOTO/RUDY COGGINS

And the winners are...

Congratulations to three eastern North Carolina residents who won gift baskets raffled by the Mount Olive Tribune during the 36th annual NC Pickle Festival. The movie night baskets, left and right, were won by Megan Haislip of Stokes and Jennifer Kiefer of Hookerton. Ryan Lane of Pikeville won the middle basket that included \$120 in gift cards from local businesses.



CAROLINA JOURNAL PHOTO

The Britt family farm exterior at sunrise.

Rising fertilizer, diesel prices affecting farmers

By **THERESA OPEKA**
Carolina Journal

Farmers across the country, including North Carolina, are "taking it on the chin" when it comes to diesel and fertilizer prices, which have risen to unprecedented levels. The U.S. is dependent on and a major importer of foreign fertilizer.

Factors driving costs up include Russia's war with Ukraine, a limited supply of the relevant minerals and high energy costs, high global demand and agricultural commodity prices, reliance on fertilizer imports, and lack of competition in the fertilizer industry.

"Farmers understand they produce the only absolute essential energy in the world, food," Rep. Jimmy Dixon, R-Duplin, told Carolina Journal about the importance of the farmer's role in people's lives. "I don't think we have come up with a system yet that would allow us to get along without food."

Dixon, a semi-retired farmer, said of the gate receipts or agriculture product sold in North Carolina, nearly 70% is livestock, like chicken, turkeys, hogs and cattle. "That's an amazing statistic," he said. "It's a big part of our agricultural economy, which is the biggest industry in the state. We are approaching \$100 billion."

He said about 90% of agricultural output uses diesel engines, which include transportation, seeds, chickens, hogs, products, etc.

Dixon said farmers have it in their DNA to get up and go out and get the job done, but there is some worry with the trends happening with the economy.

"It's dramatically affecting the thinking of every farmer that I come in contact with," he said. "There is heightened anxiety about who will survive and who won't."

Ralph Britt of Britt Family Farms near Mount Olive in Duplin County and Wayne County grew up on a farm and worked in chemical agricultural sales for 10 years after he finished his master's degree at North Carolina State. He has been farming full time for 28 years and told Carolina Journal the prices for diesel and fertilizer are historic.

"Some of our fertilizers are up four-fold from last year," he said. "Nitrogen is produced through natural gas and a process that makes

it. Fuel is double what it was last year. The cost of transportation is driving up the cost of inputs, delivery costs are all going up, but our biggest increase has been in fertilizer."

Britt said they use 500 gallons of diesel a day and with it costing well over \$4 per gallon, nearly \$5 in some areas, compared to being below \$2 last year, it is definitely having an impact.

Britt's main crops are corn, soybeans, small grain, livestock, cattle, hogs, broilers, occasionally sweet potatoes, and peanuts. He plans on planting 1/3 less corn and replacing the acreage with more soybeans, mainly due to the rising costs of fertilizer. He said 99% of corn produced in the U.S. goes into feed grains for livestock, which will impact the cost of beef, chicken, pork, and sausage. About 10% of feed-grade corn also goes into the oil supply, impacting the cost of ethanol.

He said in addition to a rise in costs for livestock, people will see an increase in the costs of fruits and vegetables as well. It comes after COVID, when supply chains were already struggling and not as many people working. There was an especially impactful shortage of truck drivers. All these factors led to lower agricultural production.

While Britt isn't sure if the current situation will impact his farm's ability to get paid for production, he said they will definitely have to put a lot more money into their crops this year.

"An example would be a margin on an acre of corn for \$100 per acre," he said. "Last year, we would have invested \$500 in input-variable costs to grow that crop of corn to make \$100. This year, that investment would be more like \$800 or \$900 an acre to make that same return."

"This is going to be a year of very high risk," Britt said. "We have a chance to have a good year if we have a good crop and do a good job selling it. But our budgets are double what they were last year."

Britt said they invest a couple of million dollars every year in their row-crop operation. While they had some people out due to COVID and have had some trouble filling positions, they are currently doing well with their labor force, despite rising costs.

"Nobody is making minimum wage anymore, it's a moot point," Britt said. "That's a political ploy. Typically, our wages are double that on the farm. Our payroll is significantly higher than it was a couple of years ago."

Britt said they are also having trouble getting lime, one of the basic products needed for farming. It is used to affect the pH of the soil. Since the southeastern U.S. doesn't have any, they normally get it by barge from Canada or by rail from Tennessee. But with ongoing problems with barges in the world and the fact the railway system has been behind in delivery due to COVID, the supply is almost non-existent. He said they haven't run out of nitrogen due to planning ahead of time, but they will have to buy it throughout the season.

"The risk of planting this crop and not having fertilizer available to feed it could be a catastrophe," Britt said. "If we don't have the additional fertilizer we will need in May and June, to feed this crop, the crop won't produce. Supply issues are definitely a problem."

He said that while some tariff protections put in place for the fertilizer industry may have driven up the cost, predominantly, the Russia-Ukraine situation and post-COVID supply issues have had the biggest impact.

"We hoped we would be getting back to normal, and that hasn't occurred," Britt said. "The political climate in the world hasn't helped either. Not to be political, but things that were done for political or environmental reasons to slow down the U.S. production of fossil fuels have bit us in the behind at the worst possible time."

Britt said while there may not be a quick fix to the problems rising costs have created, he hopes the country can learn a lesson.

"The only thing I hope we learn is that we cannot be dependent on China for chips or the Middle East for fuel or Russia," he said. "Even though a microchip may be cheaper in China, for us to be completely dependent on it long-term is not in the interest of our economy or national security. The whole 'Made in the USA' thing is more important today than it has ever been. We can't be dependent on an adversary that may hold that over our heads in the event of sanctions or political wars."

WATER

Continued from Page One

for assistance from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which would fund 55%. A state grant would match 22% and the town would pay the remaining costs.

Yet, century-old lines still remain in use underneath the town. Royall said public works personnel have smoked lines and used cameras to discover problems, but plenty still exist.

Mount Olive, along with Pikeville, are two of 96 distressed water systems that currently exist in the state.

"It's been a steep

learning curve for those of us (who) are working with this," said Commissioner Barbara Kornegay. "Those of us who have been on the board for a couple of terms now or longer - Harlie (Carmichael), Dennis and I ... we've never had or expected to have on our 'bucket list' learn all you can about wastewater treatment."

"We have put our heads down and learned, and there is still much to do, but I'm a firm believer that if you tell people what's coming they'll at least help us get it done. In this case, it's the right thing to do because it's also what is required of us."

FIRSTNET

Continued from Page One

Authority senior public safety advisor. "We realize coverage is not everywhere it needs to be, but we ask them to contact us about coverage and test it. They just might be surprised."

"Hearing public safety on the ground is what is key to them and important to us at AT&T."

Congress passed a law in 2012 that originated from the 9-11 Commission Report after the attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon to create the First Responder Network Authority.

The document stated that a nationwide high-speed broadband network dedicated exclusively to public safety needed to be created.

Former President Barack Obama signed the legislation.

"We've traveled around the country, listening and learning [from emergency personnel] about what they want in a network ... coverage and the ability

to stay up to date with technology," said Lori Stone, NC senior public safety advisor for the First Responder Network Authority.

Today, there are nearly 190 apps and 464 devices approved for use on FirstNet.

Law enforcement, volunteer fire departments and emergency management personnel now have access to modern communication devices, apps, tools and other resources that will strengthen emergency response.

According to Stone, there are 3.3 million connections to FirstNet via devices such as smart phones, smart watches and Pads. Nearly 20,500 agencies or organizations across the country are FirstNet customers.

Earlier this year, Wayne County received a new purpose-built cell site tower. The infrastructure is providing fast, reliable broadband service so local first responders can access the best tools and capabilities to respond anywhere and any time.

ALUM

Continued from Page 7

"I've learned a lot to be able to move forward," said Hines.

The Trojans logged 16 wins, including 14 against conference opposition, during Higginbotham's final campaign. According to the current online roster, 11 players are expected to return. Hines also inherits a solid recruiting class. He has met with the

team and explained his philosophy.

"It's going to be similar in some ways [to Higginbotham] and different in some ways," Hines said. "We've got everything filled, except for one or two spots. Some of the returners who played behind the seniors [last season], it's a great opportunity for them to showcase what they can do, also."

"I think they're very excited and ready for next year."

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