



Superintendents lean in favor of tax-free holiday

By ED HOWELL
Eagle Senior Writer

While they still had to talk with board members, superintendents of the Jasper City and Walker County school systems this week were leaning in favor of the county participating in the sales tax holiday later this summer.

"I personally don't see a problem with it, but I'll just have to recommend it to the board and get their feel of it," Walker Superintendent of Education Vonda Beaty said.

Robert Sparkman, superintendent of Jasper City Schools, said with the Jasper City Council voting Tuesday to participate in the sales tax holiday Aug. 3-5, the school system will likely follow the city's lead on the matter.

"We don't have any taxing authority anyway. I see no problem with participating in that," Sparkman said.

Sparkman still planned to talk to board members this week before giving an opinion on the tax holiday to Walker County Commission Chairman Bruce Hamrick.

Hamrick sent letters recently to the

two local school systems seeking their ideas about participating in the sales tax holiday. The commission will likely make a decision at its June 18 meeting on whether to suspend county sales tax collections for education during the tax holiday.

The deadline is two weeks before the actual state deadline to participate because Hamrick wants to give businesses more time to get ready for the event, designed to help families that are buying clothes and school supplies before the start of the fall semester.

"I personally don't see a problem with it. I'll just have to recommend it to the board and get their feel of it."



Vonda Beaty,
superintendent of
Walker County Schools

On a normal 8 percent sales tax in Jasper, 4 percent goes to the city, while 2 percent belongs to the state and 2 percent goes to the county. Regardless of local action, the state's portion will be dropped, leaving 2 cents in tax on purchases.

See TAX HOLIDAY, A12 ►

INSIDE

Girl missing for a year returns home

The 15-year-old girl who was missing for a year until police found her locked in a tiny storage room in a West Hartford home plans to return to school Monday to restore a sense of normalcy to her life, her parents said. / A3



care or rehabilitation after being treated by their physician or at a hospital. If the extra care is needed, the patient would be discharged to Shadescrest where he or she would stay for a typical 21 days, while undergoing physical therapy, rehabilitation and stabilization of medication.

Twilley said there is a need for geriatric care in Walker County because of the growing number of baby boomers aging and life expectancy continuing to increase.

"I think we've got great facilities in our area," he said.

Twilley said it is hard for physicians who want to be more active in long-term care to balance it with their regular practice.

"It's very difficult," he said. "I think my involvement in the American Geriatrics Society and also the American Medical Directors Association for long-term care facilities has really opened my eyes to the long-term care need."

Havens said this determination to improve care for the elderly is the main reason he wanted to get Twilley involved with the revitalization of Shadescrest.

"We feel really fortunate in having a physician whose love for the elderly is overwhelming," he said. "We feel fortunate to have a dedicated physician and resident advisor to come on board with the Shadescrest team to continue a proud tradition of excellence in patient care."

group that encourages... to do the same.

"They're not going to pay me much in terms of my regular rate anyway," Romberg said. "So I'm actually feeling positive that I've given, rather than feel-

efficient reimbursement," the Defense Department's mental health task force said last month after reviewing the military's psychological care system.

The Tricare office that serves Fort

ticipate, said Austin Camacho, a Tricare spokesman. In some locations, such as Idaho and Alaska, the Defense Department has also raised rates to attract physicians, he said.

Tax Holiday

From A1

However, a number of surrounding cities and counties have eliminated all the tax. For example, Hamilton and Marion County recently voted to drop their taxes for this year's event.

Last year, the first time the event was held statewide, both Jasper and Walker County did not join in, preferring to observe effects for the first year. Some local businesses complained about losing business to surrounding areas, such as Tuscaloosa and Birmingham.

The Walker County cities of Cordova, Kansas, Oakman and Parrish participated last year, and some businesses offered tax-free sales, paying the tax themselves.

The Alabama Department of Revenue's Web site reported sales in the state were up 10 percent last August over the previous year. Some state businesses that specialize in

items which qualified for deductions reported increases of up to 300 percent.

Beaty said the county school board will likely vote on a recommendation Tuesday night. A meeting set for Thursday was moved to Tuesday when a couple of board members said they would be out of town.

"I think it will pass, to be honest," Beaty said Wednesday. "I've been in classes and I haven't talked to any of the board members about it. We'll miss a few dollars but I think it is a good thing."

Beaty said the school system requests parents purchase so many things these days.

"For those with multiple children in school, I know it's hard. I've been there," Beaty said.

Sparkman said he and Beaty could give an opinion and it wouldn't matter, as it

will still be up to the commission.

Sparkman said some county sales tax funds, as well as city sales tax revenue, does come to the Jasper system. Because of the complex formula used, he said it is hard to determine how much county sales tax the city receives.

"You look at month-to-month sales tax receipts, and unless there is really a huge drop or a really large peak, you really don't know how much it impacts things," Sparkman said.

Sparkman said he thinks the views of business owners who felt they were missing out on revenue last year are leading government leaders to try out the sales tax holiday this year to gauge its impact.

He also was "greatly appreciative" of the city's decision to reimburse any revenue the schools might lose from the sales tax holiday.

Bishop

From A1

hand in the decision. Their conversation led to Bishop hitting Barron.

"I said, I'm disappointed that you would go that far. You just about carried this stuff too far, just completely ignoring your own rules and the constitution of Alabama. This is a mockery in this Senate."

"I don't know what in the hell you're talking about," Barron replied, according to Bishop.

just like you did that young man," but a trusted witness corrected him, as Bishop told Barron he would "f---" him.

Barron recalled Bishop using the "F" word, but denied calling Bishop a "son of a b----." Bishop said the witness backs up that Barron said the statement.

Barron on Thursday said Bishop approached him.

"He said 'you better watch your back,'" and used a foul expression, Barron said.

phone that Bishop had been a friend since 1982 but that "this is wrong, he should be ashamed of himself and go home." He called it the most embarrassing thing he had ever seen in the Senate.

"He committed an outrage in the Senate that was intentional, it was premeditated and he ought to be ashamed of himself," he said, calling it "childish and criminal behavior."

Barron, who said he still considers