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# Newton Citizen

Wednesday

August 6, 2008

Volume 4, No. 77

## PRIMARY ELECTION RUNOFFS

# Ready for November

Watterson,  
Schulz,  
Morgan  
win runoffs

BY CRYSTAL TATUM  
Staff Reporter

COVINGTON — Businesswoman Kathryn Morgan beat developer Hubert White in the Democratic Party runoff for the Board of Commissioners chairman's seat Tuesday night, taking 55.75 percent of the vote.

A total of 3,216 votes were cast in the race. Morgan garnered 1,793 votes to White's 1,423 votes.

"After the primary, I said I had faith in the voters of Newton County. Even though my opponent used negative campaign tactics, the voters of Newton County came through and voted for a person with a vision for a prosperous future for Newton County and for a great community to raise our families in," Morgan said. "That doesn't mean we don't have a fight between now and November, and I'm up for that challenge, too."

White could not be reached for comment.

Morgan will face incumbent Aaron Varner in the Nov. 4 General Election.

In the Democratic race for the District 3 county commission seat, Nancy Schulz bested Jimmy Clark Jr. with 57.49 percent of the vote.

In that race, a total of 1,155 votes were cast, with Schulz receiving 664 votes to Clark's 491 votes.

"First, I want to thank the voters. I want to thank my volunteers also. There's no way I could have done this without my team of great volunteers," Schulz said. "The voter turnout in my race was higher than predicted, and that's a testament to the voters. I've heard them loud and clear, and I will be responsible to them, and I will do the best I can to represent them."

Clark could not be reached for comment.

Schulz will face Republican Keith Mitcham in November.

Maintaining a lead throughout the night as election results

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Staff Photo: Su Ann Kuhn-Smith



Above, "Daddy, you won," was the chant of Bill Watterson's two sons Tuesday night when the results showed he was besting his competitor Covington Police Chief Stacey Cotton. Here, elder son McKenzie gives his father a congratulatory hug. Left, Tamara Richardson congratulates Democrat Nancy Schulz as Schulz learns she will face Republican Keith Mitcham for the District 3 commission seat in November.

# Testimony begins in shooting death trial

Man accused of killing wife

BY COLIN M. STEWART  
Managing Editor

COVINGTON — Jurors heard Tuesday a recording of the anguished voice of 52-year-old Denise Michelle Francis as she made a desperate call to 911, moments before she died from multiple gunshots, during the first day of testimony in the murder trial of her husband, Thomas Marlin Francis, 61.

Denise Francis, known as Shelley, identified herself and gave her address to the dispatcher, saying that she had been shot and saying, "Please help me." Then she said, "He's kicking me." Shortly thereafter, the line went silent.

Jurors also heard a recording made a few minutes later of her husband as he spoke calmly with a 911 operator, saying, "My wife and I

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Staff Photo: Sue Ann Kuhn-Smith

Conyers defense attorney David LaMalva, right, confers with his client, Thomas Francis, on Tuesday during a break in Francis' murder trial. Francis is accused of killing his wife, Denise, on the morning of Oct. 31, 2006.

# City accepts bids for renovation

Covington office to get new look

BY CRYSTAL TATUM  
Staff Reporter

COVINGTON — The Covington City Council accepted three sealed bids from interior designers for the renovation of the elected officials office at City Hall on Monday night.

Bids were received from Susan Dario of DARIO/Associates Inc. out of Atlanta and Beth Miller of Embellishments in Covington. The third bid was received from a company called Indoff, and did not contain an address.

The bids will be evaluated by Mayor Kim Carter and a committee consisting of Mayor Pro Tem Mike Whatley and Mayor Pro Tem Elect Hawnethia Williams to determine if they meet the scope of work

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# Porterdale votes to annex Elks lodge

City to hold liquor-by-the-drink referendum

BY ALICE QUEEN  
Executive Editor

PORTERDALE — If an intergovernmental agreement between the city and Newton County is approved by the county, and a referendum is approved by the residents of Porterdale, the Covington Elks Lodge could be serving mixed drinks by the first of the year.

The City Council agreed Monday night to annex the Covington Elks Lodge property on Crowell Road, to change the current zoning of the 6.7-

acre property to Neighborhood Commercial and to call for a referendum in conjunction with the Nov. 4 General Election to decide if private clubs in the city limits will be allowed to serve liquor by the drink. Porterdale already allows sales of liquor by the drink for on-premises consumption, but the ordinance does not include private clubs.

Porterdale's approval of the annexation is conditional on the Board of Commissioners accepting the annexation petition. The issue was scheduled to be discussed by the board at its reg-

ular meeting Tuesday night.

According to City Attorney Tim Chambers, Porterdale and county officials have already met to discuss the county's concerns with the proposed annexation and rezoning. Under the intergovernmental agreement that was reached, several conditions were placed on the Elks Club property for a period of five years. Some of the excluded uses are adult book store, movie house, auto and motor sales and repair, billiard hall, dry cleaners, massage business, private school and tattoo parlor.

All five council members voted in

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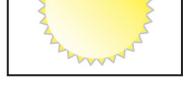
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More weather, 2A

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## Renovation

### • From Page 1A

laid out by the city. The committee will then make a recommendation to the City Council, Carter said.

City Manager Steve Horton may also help with the evaluation, Carter said.

"So much of the city staff uses that as a conference room," she said.

The city is in the process of revising its purchasing policy and procedures manual, which will outline when sealed bids are necessary, and also which projects are required to be put to bid versus those that are not, Carter said. She added that the renovation project did not require a bid "but we went ahead and did it anyway."

way so everyone would know what was going on."

In June, the council agreed to hire Dario to renovate the office for a base charge of \$6,000. Dario estimated renovation costs would come in at \$25,802, putting the total cost estimate at \$31,802.

When asked by a council member why the project was not put to bid, Carter replied that she has a personal relationship with the designer, who gave the city a discounted rate. Later, Carter said Dario is a client of Business Works Solutions Inc., Carter's consulting, book-keeping and payroll solutions company.

The motion to hire

Dario passed 3-3, with Carter casting the tie-breaking vote.

Both Whatley and Williams voted in approval of hiring Dario, along with Councilwoman Ocie Franklin.

Two weeks later, it was announced that the project would be put out to bid.

Carter has said the renovations are needed to replace furniture that is old and in disrepair, adding that it's important to make a good first impression when entertaining state and federal officials.

She said the office, previously known as the mayor's office, is used by council members and city staff, and is actually an elected officials' office.

In other news, the council agreed to change its regular meeting time from 7:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. The council will still meet on the first and third Mondays of the month.

However, due to the Labor Day holiday, the council will only meet once during the month of September, on Sept. 15.

Finally, the council agreed to waive permitting fees for Newton County for the District 4 Community Center planned for the corner of Puckett and Laseter streets in the Green Acres neighborhood.

The land, approximately 8 acres, and building, are being paid for through \$500,000 in special pur-

pose local option sales tax revenues.

The building will include a meeting room for 75 to 100 people, a catering kitchen, restrooms, a 200-square-foot office and storage space.

The council previously agreed to donate .48 acres of land and give \$21,000 worth of in-kind services to the project.

Monday night, the council agreed to waive \$7,215 in fees, including water and sewer tap, inspection, building permit, mechanical, electrical and plumbing fees.

Carter said the waiving of fees is allowed between one government entity to another.

Councilwoman Janet

Goodman expressed disappointment that despite participation in many county projects, the city is often given credit on signs or plaques displayed once the project is completed.

"The city always contributes, but the city's name is never on there and we contribute heavily to almost every project," she said.

Cheryl Delk, special projects coordinator for the county, assured the council that the city would get due credit.

"You've always been most cooperative with my projects, and I appreciate it," she said.

Crystal Tatum can be reached at [crystal.tatum@newtoncitizen.com](mailto:crystal.tatum@newtoncitizen.com).

## Newton County

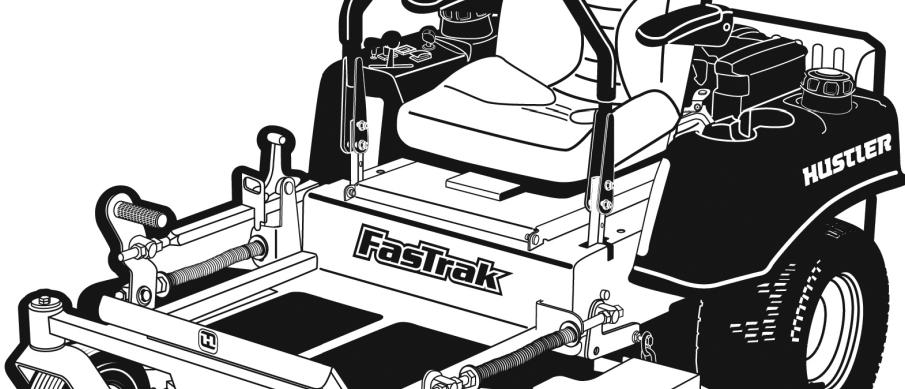


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## Runoff

### •From Page 1A

were compiled, Newton County Republican Sheriff's candidate Lt. Bill Watterson will face Democratic candidate Ezell Brown in the General Election.

Even though Republican opponent Covington Police Chief Stacey Cotton took the lead in the July 15 primary election with 49 percent of the vote, compared to Watterson's 28 percent, Watterson's votes stayed between 52 and

53 percent of the Republican votes Tuesday night, for a total of 3,584 votes.

"Wow. It's very exciting," Watterson said after all of the votes were in Tuesday night. "I had a lot of good people working on my campaign. ... And we had some tough opponents."

He said he has lots of hard work ahead of him before the November election — he wants to continue to meet more community members and share his values.

"You can never meet too many people," he said. "I will always have an open door policy. That's how I am now; it's important for me."

Cotton was unavailable for comment as of press time late Tuesday.

More than 51 percent of Newton County voters cast their ballots for Democratic U.S. Senate candidate Jim Martin over Vernon Jones.

Martin will face Republican incumbent Saxby Chambliss in the Senate race in

November.

At 14 percent, voter turnout was higher than election officials predicted.

After a poor turnout in the July 15 primary, Board of Elections Chairman Hugh Steele predicted less than 10 percent of voters would participate in the runoff.

*Staff Reporter Michelle Floyd contributed to this story.*

*Crystal Tatum can be reached at crystal.tatum@newtoncitizen.com.*

## Elks

### •From Page 1A

Friday nights and for those who rent the club for events such as wedding rehearsals dinners.

"Any parties always had to be BYOB," Edwards said. "We feel like it's an accommodation for our members and also for those who rent the lodge."

We can handle that particular area ourselves, so it's less worry for them."

Edwards said the lodge members are also looking forward to the garbage pickup service offered by Porterdale and police response times that "will be as good or better as what we have already with the county."

Edwards said quite a few of the lodge's 225 members live in Porterdale.

Covington Elks Lodge BPOE 1806 was chartered in 1953. Before moving to the Crowell Road location in 1991, the lodge was located on Brown Bridge Road.

*Alice Queen can be reached at alice.queen@rockdalecitizen.com.*

## Trial

### •From Page 1A

got in a fight. I shot her, in the head, I think ... The gun is on the sofa, the clip is right beside it."

The Social Circle resident was taken into custody outside his home at 15 Rutherford Drive in the Surrey Chase subdivision around 9 a.m. on Oct. 31, 2006. The body of his wife was found

had witnessed several of those arguments between his wife's sister and Thomas Francis. Moore added that he had taken out a warrant against Denise Francis after she made harassing phone calls to his home.

Two weeks after Thomas Francis' arrest, Moore said he visited him in jail, during which they discussed the shooting.

"I said to him, 'It must have got bad,'" Moore said. "He said, 'We got into it that night. The next morning, I went into the bathroom and asked her what she was going to be like today. Was I going to see Dr. Jekyll or Mr. Hyde.' Then she jumped up at him and he started shooting."

McCrorey called several police officers and first responders to the stand to describe the scene when they arrived at the Francis home that October morning. Among them were agents with the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, who took over the investigation once it was ascertained that Francis was a former law enforcement officer.

Responders described Denise Francis' body as lying in the doorway between the home's master bedroom and the master bathroom. Photographs were

the cord had been ripped from the phone.

Found lying on the ground near the body was a large kitchen knife. Both McCrorey and LaMalva focused heavily on the location of the knife and asked each of the witnesses whether they had moved it or were aware of anyone else having tampered with it in any way. They each replied that it had not been moved.

GBI Special Agent Todd Crosby testified on his investigation of the blood spatter evidence found at the scene and explained the conclusions he had reached as McCrorey presented photographs to jurors. Members of Denise Francis' family were visibly distraught as pictures revealing her body lying on the floor were shown to the jury. Taking a short break, McCrorey whispered to several family members and they exited the courtroom before several more graphic photos were displayed.

Crosby asserted that the blood drops found under the knife on the floor revealed that the knife had been placed there after the wound or wounds were inflicted on Denise Francis.

In his cross-examination, LaMalva asked Crosby if it were possible that an investigator or Thomas Francis had kicked the knife into the location which was found after Denise Francis was killed.

"To my knowledge, it was not inadvertently kicked," he

replied. Upon further questioning, Crosby revealed that a battery of fingerprint tests found no fingerprints on the knife, the gun, the gun's magazine or on the bullets contained within.

When asked about abrasions found on Denise Francis' buttocks, Crosby said, "My opinion is she was kicked."

GBI medical examiner Eric Eason went into detail concerning each of Denise Francis' three gunshot wounds. He told jurors that Denise Francis may have been able to place the 911 call following the shots to the chest and her mouth, but said the shot to the back of her head would more than likely have instantly killed her.

"The mouth shot would have been painful, but not incapacitating," he said. The shot in her chest, however, did more damage, traveling through her ribcage, diaphragm, liver and right kidney. "She would not lose consciousness, but it would not be instantly lethal."

"The back of the head would have had to be after (the 911 call)," he concluded.

The presentation of evidence is scheduled to continue at 8:30 a.m. today, during which jurors will watch a videotaped interrogation of Thomas Francis.

*Staff Photographer Sue Ann Kuhn-Smith contributed to this story.*

*Colin M. Stewart may be reached at colin.stewart@rockdalecitizen.com.*

## DEATHS, FUNERALS

### CONYERS

**JONES, BARBARA**  
Barbara Ellen Elaine Mitchell Jones age 50 of Conyers died August 4, 2008. She was born October 5, 1957 to Geraldine (Moss) and the late Stewart Mitchell of Conyers. She is survived by her two daughters and

their families. Sheena and Eddie Lawrence of Covington and their sons Jeffrey and Zachary, Khrystle and Nathan Wagner of Conyers and their sons Roman and Jasper, her sister Caroline Collins of Conyers, her mother Geraldine Mitchell of Conyers and several nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her father Jasper Stewart Mitchell and her brother Tony Mitchell. She was a loving mother and grandmother who loved gardening and helping others. She will be greatly missed. Her family takes comfort that she has gone on to be with Jesus. A memorial service will be held

August 6, 2008 at 7pm at Greater Love Church, 5325 Hwy. 81 South Covington, Ga.

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View the Rockdale/Newton Citizen complete list of obituary notices at [www.rockdalecitizen.com](http://www.rockdalecitizen.com) [www.newtoncitizen.com](http://www.newtoncitizen.com).

## Rockdale/Newton Citizen

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