

# The Sentinel-Record

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## RPGC opposes referendum on compensation for city directors

DAVID SHOWERS  
THE SENTINEL-RECORD

The Republican Party of Garland County opposes the referendum on city director compensation that voters will decide in the March 3 elections.

The resolution it adopted by unanimous voice vote last week at the local party committee's February meeting "strongly opposes" the measure to pay members of the Hot Springs Board of Directors \$750 a month and make them city employees.

Directors receive no pay. The city pays their work-related expenses such as mileage, registration, travel and lodging for conferences, such as the

Arkansas Municipal League Winter Conference directors attended in Little Rock last month.

More than \$24,000 was spent on board travel last year, according to information the city provided in response to a records request.

Several committee members said they didn't oppose a monthly stipend similar to what justices of the peace receive. The \$113 million 2026 budget JPs adopted for Garland County government pays them \$915 a month.

Changes the 2023-24 quorum court made to the county personnel policy allow JPs to participate in the county's self-funded employee health insur-

ance program, provided they pay the monthly premium. The county pays the employee's share of the premium for individual coverage.

Most of the opposition focused on directors becoming employees of the city. In addition to the city withholding their payroll taxes and contributing an amount equal to their contribution, directors could participate in the city's self-funded employee insurance program and state retirement system, pending eligibility requirements and adoption of an ordinance authorizing their participation.

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## Pearcy woman charged with murder in shooting death on Cypress Street

STEVEN MROSS  
THE SENTINEL-RECORD

A Pearcy woman was arrested Monday night on felony charges, including murder, in connection with the shooting death of a Hot Springs man earlier that day on Cypress Street.

Monique Nicole Wimbley, 35, who lists a Ware Trail address in Pearcy, was taken into custody at her residence around 8:15 p.m. on charges of first-degree murder and committing a terroristic act, each punishable by up to life in prison, for the death of Rodrick Lakeith Harris, 44, of Hot Springs.

Wimbley, who lists no prior felony history, remained in custody Tuesday on zero bond and is set to appear today in Garland County District Court.

According to the prob-



WIMBLEY

able cause affidavit, at approximately 1:45 p.m. Monday, Hot Springs police responded to 115 Cypress St. regarding a shooting that had just occurred. Upon arrival, Officer Jared Wilson saw an unresponsive Black male, later identified as Harris, lying in the front doorway of the residence.

Garland County Coroner Jayson Neighbors arrived on scene and declared Harris deceased from a gunshot wound.

A female witness, who lives at the residence, was later interviewed at the HSPD and said she was inside the

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## Lake Catherine State Park to hold prescribed burns on Thursday and Feb. 18

GABRIEL BASS  
THE SENTINEL-RECORD

Arkansas State Parks officials announced in a news release that two prescribed burns will take place at Lake Catherine State Park Thursday and Feb. 18.

The burns will begin at 9 a.m. both days, weather permitting, the release said.

The burns will cover "approximately 138 acres" as part of the Horseshoe Mountain burn plan.

During Thursday's burn, the Slunger Creek Trail will be closed to the public, while the Feb. 18 burn will close the Falls Branch, Horseshoe Mountain and Dam Mountain trails.

"Smoke may be visible in and around the park and could impact park guests and

nearby areas. Closures will remain in effect until conditions are safe for reopening," the release said.

Nick Lowe, assistant superintendent at Lake Catherine State Park, told *The Sentinel-Record* the burns are part of routine maintenance at the park and are held to reduce the risk of forest fires.

"One of the main reasons we do it is to reduce the hazardous fuel loads after just years of leaf drop and trees dying and it starts to build up, and that's what causes those really intense forest fires that we get if there's like a drought or something," Lowe said.

"A lot of these plants kind of evolved with fire every three to five years or so, and some of them kind of really

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From left, Garland County Library Executive Director Adam Webb, Fountain Lake School District Superintendent Darin Landry and Jessieville School District Superintendent Melissa Speers on Tuesday sign a lease agreement for the library to construct a new satellite branch on property jointly owned by the schools near Hot Springs Village. (The Sentinel-Record/Thomas Buckman)

## School districts, library sign lease for new satellite library

BRANDON SMITH  
THE SENTINEL-RECORD

JESSIEVILLE — A new satellite library in north Garland County moved closer to reality Tuesday as the Garland County Library signed a lease with the Jessieville and Fountain Lake school districts.

The lease clears the way for the construction of a full-service branch on jointly owned school property along East Highway 7 near the Hot Springs Village West Gate and the east end of Strawberry Cutoff, formerly used by the Cedar Mountain Boys and Girls Club.

The agreement was signed in the Jeff Click Administration Building board room on Jessieville's campus.

Garland County Library Executive Director Adam Webb said the next phase is putting the project out for bid once construction documents are finalized.

"We'll put a package together, put it out for bid and keep that window open for the statutory amount of time," Webb said. "Then we'll choose a contractor and go from there. ... We're hoping to have some shovels on the ground by, hopefully, early summer."

Under the lease, the library has up to five years to begin construction. Webb said the anticipated construction timeline is up to about 12 months, though that could vary.

Plans for the 9,150-square-foot branch call for dedicated children's

and youth areas, two small meeting rooms, a conference room for up to 10 people and a community education and presentation space that can accommodate about 30. A community courtyard will separate the adult circulation area from youth spaces.

"This will be a full-service branch," Webb said. "So we'll have programming. We'll have Baby Steps, Storytime, teen programs, we'll have adult programs, meeting rooms, study rooms — all the services we would typically have, ... just on a one-third scale."

Jessieville School District Superintendent Melissa Speers said the partnership has been years in the making

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Lake Catherine State Park's sign welcomes visitors. The state park will have two prescribed burns over the next week, one on Thursday and one on Feb. 18. (The Sentinel-Record/Thomas Buckman)



Angel Martinez and Kingston Ferrand, age 5, work on a craft as part of the scavenger hunt for Bring Your Child to the Library Day at the Garland County Library on Saturday. (The Sentinel-Record/Gwen Kudabeck)

## GC Library celebrates National Take Your Child to the Library Day

JACOB L. MILLER  
THE SENTINEL-RECORD

The Garland County Library participated in the 15th annual National Bring Your Child to the Library Day on Saturday, encouraging children to develop a love of reading.

The day's festivities for the children ages 10 and under who participated included a scavenger hunt, a bunny ear craft, a book display and a special "Lego Club" event.

Jessamyn Carter, the library's public relations coordinator, said the event's turnout was great.

"We had 50 sheets of each craft printed out," she said. "I would say

that we had about 40 to 45 children that came in, hung around and did crafts with us. Their grown-ups were also there with them."

Carter said the scavenger hunt took the children who participated all over the library.

"It was a really big hit because we had quite a few locations around the library to visit," she said. "That's helpful because sometimes when you come to the library, and you already know that you're going to the children's department, you don't think of all of the other resources we may offer."

Teresa Withers, a library patron

who has been bringing her grandchildren since the COVID-19 pandemic, said the library's children's section ensures that children who come through its doors are well-cared for. "You can genuinely tell the librarians love the kids," she said. "They go above and beyond to come up with ideas and programs."

The Lego Club, which was free, took place in the library's multipurpose room at 10:30 a.m. Saturday and included building challenges, snacks and a chance to win a Lego set.

"Each time we do it on Saturdays,

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