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'26 city budget includes \$65K for board travel and training

DAVID SHOWERS
THE SENTINEL-RECORD

Two city directors voted against authorizing \$4,226 in general fund money for their colleague's trip to a conference next month in Washington, D.C.

Mayor Pat McCabe and District 1 Director Erin Holliday opposed the resolution funding District 2 Director Phyllis Beard's trip to the National League of Cities Con-

gressional City Conference March 16-18. A majority of the Hot Springs Board of Directors endorsed the authorization at the board's Feb. 17 business meeting.

Expenses include \$2,310 for six nights of lodging, the \$880 registration fee, \$552 for meals and incidentals and \$404 for travel. Beard, vice chair of NLC's Small Cities Council, will attend two days of pre-conference activities. She also sits on a com-

munity economic development panel, she told the board last week.

According to reports she has given the board on her previous trips, she's established contacts in government agencies who have updated her on disbursement schedules for federal grant funds the city has been awarded but has yet to receive.

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Library board OKs hiring bond counsel

JAMES LEIGH
THE SENTINEL-RECORD

Garland County Library will soon be contracting with Little Rock-based law firm Wright, Lindsey & Jennings in connection with the library's proposed main branch at the former site of the Majestic Hotel.

While the library has contracted with John Adams for general legal counsel, Executive Director Adam Webb told the board of trustees Monday afternoon that Adams recommended the firm for bond counsel.

"I talked to John, he said bond counsel is highly specialized," he said. "It's kind of out of his scope. And, additionally, he's running for Arkansas Supreme Court, and if he is successful in his campaign, he will not be our attorney after next month. So we need to get our ducks in a row in other ways."

Trustee Philip Montgomery, who is an attorney with Legacy Law Group, agreed with Adams on bond counsel.

"I used to work at a firm where we had bond counsel, and I can tell you, you don't dabble in bonds," he said. "If you do bond work, that's all you do, and Wright, Lindsey & Jennings is a great law firm. I don't know the attorney personally, but I mean, I know it's a great law firm. And if they do bond work, then they know what they're doing."

Webb said if the city approves the library's proposal for a new main branch, there will be a need for a millage increase to pay for the construction.

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Lakeside High School broadcasting student Brody Rima talks about the program alongside classmates Dylan Smith, center, and Jackson Davis at the Feb. 19 school board meeting. (The Sentinel-Record/Brandon Smith)

Lakeside broadcasting program draws praise and a push for state recognition

BRANDON SMITH
THE SENTINEL-RECORD

Lakeside School District is growing its career and technical education offerings, adding new pathways and expanding student opportunities while continuing to build a broadcasting program that administrators say rivals the best in the state.

Susie Walker, an assistant principal at the high school, spoke about the growth of the school's CTE programs during the Feb. 19 Lakeside School Board meeting, singling out broadcasting as a model of student achievement and real-world career preparation.

Last year, Lakeside offered 17 CTE programs, she said, with 11 on campus and six technical programs in partnership with National Park College. She noted 48% of graduating seniors completed 152 programs.



Lakeside broadcasting teacher Jaycie Dodd assists a member of the Lakeside TV crew at the video production console inside the school's broadcast control room in September 2025. (The Sentinel-Record/File photo)

"So many of our students two or more," Walker said. "So don't just complete one of our pathways, but they complete that is awesome news, and that goes into our letter grade, the

certifications they get in the pathways they complete."

This year, the district has expanded to 19 programs, 13 of them on-site. Despite state-mandated restructuring that will combine or adjust some pathways next school year, Walker said Lakeside expects to offer 21 programs moving forward.

The state requires districts to offer at least one "H2" pathway, defined as high demand and high wage. Walker said Lakeside currently offers 15 such pathways. However, broadcasting is not classified as H2, a designation district leaders say overlooks the program's workforce relevance.

Walker recognized juniors Brody Rima, Dylan Smith and Jackson Davis for their commitment to the broadcasting program under teacher Jay-

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Woman sentenced to max of 15 years for theft after faking pregnancy at trial

STEVEN MROSS
THE SENTINEL-RECORD

A jury sentenced a local woman on trial for theft to the maximum of 15 years in prison last week after it was discovered she had faked being pregnant during the trial, even using a prosthetic "baby bump."

Christina Marie Gaston, 47, who lists a Morphew Road address, was found guilty Feb. 12 of theft by receiving of a credit card and fraudulent use of a credit card, and during the sentencing phase the next day, after the jury discovered her ruse, they recommended the maximum sentence of 15 years in prison and a \$10,000 fine on the felony theft charge.

Gaston, who was classified as a habitual offender, was formally sentenced in Garland County Circuit Court on Tuesday, Feb. 17, which included an additional fine of \$67.67, the amount she charged on the stolen card for gas, for the misdemeanor fraudulent use count, with no additional jail time.

According to court records, Gaston was convicted in 2008 in Clark County of fraudulent use of a credit card and sentenced to

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GASTON

Arkansas HOSA kicks off largest state leadership conference in history

JACOB L. MILLER
THE SENTINEL-RECORD

Health Occupations Students of America aims to equip Arkansas medical students to be "champions of change" who impact their community for the better.

HOSA kicked off its annual state leadership conference Monday morning at the Hot Springs Convention Center, featuring competitions, connections and the process of electing new state officers.

Arkansas HOSA State President Joann Kim opened the conference by urging the packed room of students interested in healthcare to "seize the day" and get as much as they can out of the conference.

"For more than 40 years, Arkansas HOSA has prepared students to become champions of change in the global health community," she said. "Today, those champions are you. You all embody a community powered by passion, discipline and dedication, and we are united by a shared vision for the future of medicine."

State Advisor Cathy Gunter told the students this year's conference was the largest state leadership conference in the history of Arkansas HOSA.

Monday's keynote speaker was Bhavesh Manne, a former HOSA Eastern Region vice president, coach and sophomore at the University of Pittsburgh, who started by encouraging the hundreds of students in attendance.

"Every single one of our journeys has started with a single step," he said. "I'm here to talk about how all of our steps culminate in the greatest journey that we have."

Manne's address revolved mostly around the concept of quitting, with Manne himself noting he had quit many pursuits at different points in his life.

He told the audience his story of beginning and quitting activities like soccer, skating and karate.

However, Manne said he found his true purpose was to find and stick with the one thing he was truly passionate about.

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The current Arkansas HOSA Executive Council greets the audience during the opening session of the 2026 Arkansas HOSA State Leadership Conference on Monday at the Hot Springs Convention Center. (The Sentinel-Record/Gwen Kudabeck)



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