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VOLUME 109, NO. 31

\$1 PER ISSUE

WEDNESDAY, JULY 30, 2025

\$35 IN-COUNTY SUBSCRIPTION

Former Road Dept. Worker Pleaded Guilty to Embezzling from County



TYLER LOPER

BY DYLAN HODGE  
NEWS REPORTER  
LYNDY BERRYHILL  
EDITOR

A former county employee must serve five years of probation and repay over \$4,500 in fines after he pleaded guilty to one count of embezzlement in Stone County Circuit Court this month. On July 24, 2025, the Mississippi State Auditor's Office reported that Tyler Loper, a former Stone County road department employee, pleaded guilty and reportedly admitted to selling scrap metal he picked up from the county-owned dump for personal profit.

• See EMBEZZLEMENT

Page 6

Public Upset, Confused Amid Over SES Leadership's Future


BY DYLAN HODGE  
NEWS REPORTER

It is unclear if Stone Elementary Principal Sandy Danzey will remain with the school district for the upcoming academic year, which starts on Friday. What is clear is that many community members and parents are upset at the thought of losing an educator with Danzey's accomplishments and passion for helping children learn. Following a tense special-called meeting with the Stone County School Board on July 24, 2025, Danzey told a crowd of supporters that she had put in her two weeks' notice with the school district. The emotional moment left several in tears, clinging onto one another for support and hugs. "Thank y'all for coming, I love you," Danzey told the crowd gathered

• See DANZEY

Page 2

Stone County School District Preps for Back-to-Class this Friday



Enterprise photo by Dylan Hodge

BY DYLAN HODGE  
NEWS REPORTER

On Monday, July 28, the Stone County School District staff members dusted off their boots and cowboy hats to kickstart the new school year. The school district office organized a country and western-themed event. Superintendent Boyd West spoke to hundreds of staff members about climbing a metaphorical mountain of success, challenging beliefs, and anchoring masses. "If you're a new teacher in the room, I don't expect you to climb to the top of El Capitan, but I do expect that to be your goal at some point in your career," West said. He added that, to start the climb, they have to use every resource possible. "You're gonna need a good team... good clips to tie into the mountain... good

• See BACK-TO-SCHOOL

Page 2

'Vicious' Dogs Put Down 14 Months After Near-Fatal Attack on Child

LYNDY BERRYHILL  
EDITOR

Three dogs involved in the near-fatal attack of a Stone County child last year were euthanized this month after their owner exhausted appeals through the court system. The three dogs were originally deemed vicious by Westside Justice Court Judge Kevin Hines in June 2024 after multiple witnesses testified their owner, Tamatha Melom, allowed the dogs to roam freely, killing chickens and growling at neighbors before the dogs attacked 6-year-old Liam Martinez in his front yard on April 17, 2024. The ruling included two more of Melom's dogs, not involved in the attack against the Martinez child, but referenced in other court testimony for being vicious in separate incidents. Before 2024, all but one of Melom's five dogs had been removed from her care for biting or attacking other people while she resided in Mobile County, Alabama. By her own admission in

• See VICIOUS

Page 10

Inside

OPINION.....3  
OBITS.....4  
DEVOTION.....5  
ARRESTS.....6  
PUZZLES.....7  
CLASSIFIEDS.....8  
LEGALS.....9  
OUTDOORS.....10  
EVENTS.....11

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School Hosts Annual Budget Hearing for Next Fiscal Year

BY DYLAN HODGE  
NEWS REPORTER

The Stone County School Board held a hearing for the 2025-2026 proposed budget on Monday, July 28. The school district's proposed budget is estimated to be \$32,071,092. Of that total amount, 22 percent, or more than \$6 million, would be derived from local property taxes in addition to bond proceeds. This would be \$126,000 more than their budget last fiscal year, according to the school district's business manager, Cassie Hardy. The rest of the proposed budget would largely come from state and federal funding sources. Fifty-eight percent of this year's budget is projected to come through the Mississippi Department of Education's Mississippi Student Funding Formula. The MSFF distributes tax dollars to public school districts based on the characteristics of the students within the district.

The board will vote on the final budget at the next regular meeting on August 4, 2025. Parents had questions and concerns based on the budget. Amber Plumber, a parent of fourth and seventh-graders, said she wanted to see the district's clerical workers get a more substantial pay raise than the 50 cents allotted in the budget. She said numerous district workers were getting bigger pay raises this year. "They're dealing with kids, parents, [and] they are taking care of everybody," Plumber said. "A lot of times, they don't get very well taken care of by the people from the public." Board president Mohamad Schuman said some of the staff members in the district office were doing multiple jobs, and the hiring of another staff member was the reason there could be an increase. Edna Bond, who is a retired teacher and has grandchildren in the school district, said she wants to see improvement in special needs care at Stone Middle School. Bond said her grandson suffers from dyslexia. She is afraid he will not receive the same care at SMS as he did while attending Stone Elementary School. Schuman said the board has been actively working toward getting better help for students with special needs like dyslexia in the school district. The board will approve the final budget at its next public meeting on Monday, August 4.



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