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SUNDAY, MARCH 23, 2025

Camden Clark Ambulance to add 7 vehicles, 38 employees

Wood County purchasing 6 ambulances

By EVAN BEVINS
City Editor

PARKERSBURG — The Wood County Commission plans to purchase half a dozen ambulances to assist WVU Medicine Camden Clark Medical Center in providing emergency coverage once St. Joseph's Ambulance Service shuts down. Commission President Blair Couch made the announcement Friday at a meeting of the county's

newly established Ambulance Authority, where a Camden Clark representative said they've arranged to acquire another vehicle and hired more than two dozen new employees. "The crisis has been resolved," Couch said. St. Joseph's Ambulance announced Monday it would cease operations on March 31, citing Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements not keeping pace with costs. Marjean Kennedy, vice president of marketing, business development and strategy for Camden Clark, said at least five ambulances and 35 personnel were needed to provide coverage for emer-

gency ambulance calls. "The five will be just to meet the status quo," she said. "We know there's a greater need out there." Kennedy noted that ambulance service is not a money-making activity for the hospital, saying it runs at a deficit of about \$500,000 a year. "But we know that this is a primary need of the community," she said, adding the primary focus at this time is on emergency transports. In addition, Jan-Care Ambulance has offered to assist with emergency calls and medical transport starting the evening of March



Photo by Evan Bevins
Wood County Commission President Blair Couch, left, speaks during a county Ambulance Authority meeting Friday morning at the 911 Center as authority members, from left, Dale McEwuen, Patsy Hardy and William C. Arnold listen.

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The resource fair inside of the armory hosted roughly 65 vendors for guests to discover.

Photos by Amber Phipps

Welcome Home Vietnam veterans honored at annual National Guard Armory event

By AMBER PHIPPS
Staff Reporter

PARKERSBURG — A Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day event occurred Friday in the National Guard Armory at 1500 Blizzard Dr., south Parkersburg. The front lawn of the armory was lined with American flags to honor every fallen Vietnam soldier from West Virginia. Also on display at the entrance of the armory was a race car from Veterans of Foreign Wars for visitors to observe. Event coordinator and Vietnam veteran Jerry Smith has run the event for the past 13 years. He was amazed to see how much it's grown over the years as the event gained more attraction from the community and surrounding cities. What started out as a small ceremony years ago has grown to become an annual event with a resource fair and over 700 visitors. Roughly 120-130 of those visitors are veterans from Vietnam. "We have the Welcome Home Vietnam Veteran celebration because the welcome home celebration we first got wasn't good," said Smith. "This is a way to honor those veterans." The resource fair consisted of more than 65 vendors featuring veteran assistance programs,



A wooden sign at the front of the armory commemorates a historic event and honors those who served.

health care, education and more. Rows of tables lined the armory with vendors providing resources and outreach opportunities for veterans and their loved ones. For lunch, visitors and veterans enjoyed fresh brisket from KCBS champions T&S BBQ. Each meal included a sandwich with fresh coleslaw and a slice of cheesecake for dessert. Starting at 11 a.m. Friday, there

were a few speeches and a poem reading from one of the veterans while he was in Vietnam. Following the daytime event at the armory, a concert was held Friday evening in the Parkersburg High School Auditorium. The concert featured Jimmy Fortune and all proceeds from the concert general admission went towards the Welcome Vietnam Veteran mission.

The community has responded well to the event over the years and Smith has hopes to keep the momentum going, he said. "It's just gotten bigger and bigger and the community response has been so amazing," said Smith. "I generally try and go out to do door prizes but I haven't been able to this year."

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Parkersburg City Council agrees to \$2-an-hour raise for CDL operators

By EVAN BEVINS
City Editor

PARKERSBURG — Parkersburg City Council agreed Thursday to increase wages for workers with commercial driver's licenses by \$2 an hour in the upcoming fiscal year, but Mayor Tom Joyce warned sustaining those raises will require another sanitation fee hike next year. "Just be mindful, 11 months from now, when you get a new budget, there's going to be continued rate increases," he said during the third and final municipal budget hearing before council, sitting as the Committee of the Whole. "When you're talking about salaries, that's forever money." The budget already includes a \$4-a-month sanitation fee increase starting July 1, adding \$48 a year to customers' bills. "I do not have a problem paying that. Maybe some people do," Councilwoman Sharon Kuhl said. "But we listened to the people." Sanitation workers and residents began calling for an increase in pay for employees in the department last fall, when raises - that ultimately did not pass - were proposed for the mayor and council. The budget included a 4.2% cost-of-living adjustment for all employees, excluding elected officials. On Thursday, Finance Director Eric Jiles presented council with updated valuations from the Wood County Assessor's Office, which are due March 1, after the budget was submitted. Of the \$228,913 in additional projected revenue, \$75,076 goes toward the Mid-Ohio Valley Transit Authority levy and \$10,029 to the Parkersburg & Wood County Public Library.



Joyce



Kuhl

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