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THE INDEPENDENT VOICE OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY SINCE 1912

Cities split on council-manager government

By Evan Belanger
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If you haven't decided whether Decatur should change its form of government next term, you've got 20 days to make up your mind and few examples to look to for guidance.

Decatur voters will consider a referendum April 13 that could bring a council-manager form of govern-



'It's all about people and leadership. You can have a good strong mayor and good strong city managers or poor mayors and poor city managers.'

Mike Schmitz
Dothan mayor

9 Alabama cities have council-manager forms of government, **A4**.

hand as to which system is better — council-manager or council-mayor.

An informal survey of municipal officials at Alabama cities that have council-manager governments returned mixed opinions.

"It's all about people and leadership," said Dothan Mayor Mike Schmitz. "You

can have a good strong mayor and good strong city managers or poor mayors and poor city managers."

Growing popularity

Nationwide, the council-manager form of government has been growing in popularity as modern cities are run more like businesses.

In almost every case, the system grants powers typically reserved for an elected

mayor to a professional city manager hired by a board or council.

According to the International City/County Management Association, 63 percent of U.S. cities with populations of 25,000 or more operated under council-manager governments in 2009, and more than 92 million Americans lived in council-manager cities.

Please see **Cities**, page **A4**

A hole no more



Daily photo by Brennen Smith

Crews work to repair the site of a sinkhole and create a temporary lane along the northbound lane of Interstate 65 near Priceville on Tuesday.

'Gravity Cavity' edges out 'Pain in the Asphalt' in sinkhole name contest

By Paul Huggins
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Charlie Ezell knows something about large holes in central Morgan County.

The 71-year-old Decatur resident has a grave site already picked out at Burningtrees Cemetery, but it was another hole that captured his attention this past weekend — the sinkhole on Interstate 65, which is near Ezell's grave site.

Ezell submitted the name "Gravity Cavity" for *The Decatur Daily's* Name That Sinkhole contest,

which the newspaper offered to bring some comedy relief to the pressure pot of traffic jams following the temporary closure of 16 miles of Interstate 65 between Falkville and Priceville.

Tuesday's good weather helped road crews progress on repairs, and highway officials remain optimistic about completing work by the weekend if good weather continues.

Ezell's entry proved to be the winner among more than 125 entries after winning a runoff with "Pain in the Asphalt."

He said winning surprised him because he rarely wins anything and usually doesn't enter contests.



Daily file photo by Gary Cosby Jr.

"Gravity Cavity," a descriptive and catchy name for the Interstate 65 sinkhole, won Charlie Ezell \$25 for submitting the entry in *The Daily's* Name That Sinkhole contest. The sinkhole caused the temporary closure of 16 miles along I-65. The highway could reopen this weekend now that repair crews have begun paving.

"I thought of it like a dentist filling a cavity in your tooth, and then I thought, 'Well, gravity is what caused it all,'" he said of picking the winning phrase.

Ezell used to travel I-65 sometimes when he worked at Copeland Corp. from 1978 to 2001 as an electronic technician. He said he seldom travels I-65 now, but added, "I'll be settled there some day," referring to his nearby grave site.

Charlie Gooch, 37, of Athens submitted the second-place entry of "Pain in the

Asphalt."

The idea came to him as he read the Saturday newspaper while playing dominoes at Marie's Country Store near Tanner.

"As soon as I read about that (contest) in your paper, it popped in my head," he said.

"Everybody laughed their head off when I said it."

Please see **Hole**, page **A5**

Police: Weapon bought in 1989

Friend purchased gun for Bishop's husband, investigator testifies

By Desiree Hunter
Associated Press Writer

HUNTSVILLE — The gun used to kill three people during a faculty meeting at The University of Alabama in Huntsville was bought for the suspect's husband two decades ago when he said he was having problems with a neighbor, an investigator testified Tuesday.

The investigator told a judge that an acquaintance bought the gun in New Hampshire for Amy Bishop's husband to skirt a waiting period where the couple lived in Massachusetts.

Huntsville police investigator Charlie Gray also testified that Bishop denied to officers that she had anything to do with the rampage at a biology department faculty meeting Feb. 12, which also wounded three others.



Bishop

Please see **Bishop**, page **A4**

Hartselle man won't get chance to save his home

By Deangelo McDaniel
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HARTSELLE — Max Sutton will not get an opportunity to save his boyhood home.

After almost an hour of discussion, Councilman Don Hall's motion to give Sutton a 15-day extension to comply with nine items outlined in a city letter failed to get a second.

That means Hartselle will move forward with razing the home at 1903 Pinehurst St.

Sutton, 21, and his father, Edwin Sutton, expressed disappointment with the council's decision.

"Are you going to deny him the opportunity to own this home?" Edwin Sutton asked.

The council vote came after Jeff

Please see **Hartselle**, page **A5**



TODAY'S WEATHER, A2
High: 73 Low: 48

Partly cloudy and warmer. Light winds becoming southwest.



7 18122 07460 0

AREA DEATHS

Elizabeth Coughlin, Athens
Linda Duran, Priceville
Edna Gibson, Town Creek
Verdia Hawkins, Boaz
Edna Heard, Toney
Gabriel Johnson, Athens

Hosey Taylor, Danville
Therman Tipton, Hartselle
Doris Wilhite, Cullman

Death notices, obituaries, **B5**.

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Decatur, Alabama 99th year, No. 27, 74 pages

NATION

It's now law

Democrats celebrate President Barack Obama's signing of \$938 billion health care reform bill. **A3**



SPORTS

Bama loses NCAA appeal: Tide must vacate 21 wins from '05-'07 **C1**