

LIFE, 1D: Songwriters teach kids to create their own tunes.

SPORTS, 1B: Let's dance: Dogs get NCAA tournament bid.



The Times

Your news. Your Times. | gainesvilletimes.com

GAINESVILLE, GEORGIA

MONDAY
MARCH 14, 2011

50 CENTS

Hall panel to analyze outsourcing

Commissioners may consider private-sector companies to save money

BY MELISSA WEINMAN
mweinman@gainesvilletimes.com

A Hall County committee will be meeting regularly to research options for privatizing and outsourcing county functions.

Interim County Administrator Jock Connell assembled the group after several commissioners asked

him to look into privatizing some county departments.

Some commissioners believe the county may be able to save money by having some county business conducted by companies in the private sector.

Connell appointed Planning Director Randy Knighton to head the committee.

"I want to emphasize I have not asked or tasked Randy with the mission of going out and privatizing or outsourcing anything," Connell said. "I have asked him to go and look at things such as what are we doing, what are the services we're providing, what's our cost structure and things like that."

Knighton said the committee will

be assessing the planning, building inspections, parks and leisure, and public works departments.

Knighton said the committee will "examine current departmental functions and evaluate other cities and counties that are engaged in privatized activities and then assess the feasibility of privatizing aspects of county activities by evaluating

customer service effectiveness, efficiency and cost analysis."

The committee has met twice so far and plans to continue meeting on a weekly basis.

"Each team member has begun working on providing detailed listings of the responsibilities and functions of each department as they currently exist," Knighton said. "This seems to be somewhat

■ Please see **PANEL, 6A**

DOT forum is set for Tuesday

Speakers may address planned 1-cent transportation sales tax

BY JEFF GILL
ggill@gainesvilletimes.com

The Georgia Department of Transportation is set to give the latest updates on Hall County road projects.

But those attending the Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce's Annual Transportation Forum at Gainesville State College on Tuesday also will likely hear about a larger initiative that affects area roads: the state's planned 1-cent sales tax for transportation.

Todd Long, the DOT's planning director, is the scheduled speaker. The former head engineer at the Gainesville-based District 1 office now is helping guide regions in developing project lists for the August 2012 statewide referendum.

Emily Dunn, the 9th Congressional District's representative on the State Transportation Board, also plans to speak.



Long

Learn about roads

What: the Greater Hall Chamber's Annual Transportation Forum
When: 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Tuesday
Where: Gainesville State College, Continuing Education Building
Admission: \$15 for chamber members and \$20, others. Fee includes lunch. Reservations are required.
Contact: Jean McCullough at 770-532-6206 or jean@ghcc.com

State lawmakers in the 9th District voted in February to appoint Dunn, a Fannin County businesswoman, to replace Steve Gooch, who had resigned to run for the state Senate and now serves in that chamber.

Also scheduled to speak at the event are Todd McDuffie, District 1 engineer, and chamber officials.

■ Please see **FORUM, 6A**

LEGISLATURE 2011 *A taxing change*

The cost of communication



TOM REED | The Times

Tony Carattini, a territory manager for Amylin Pharmaceuticals, does some work on his computer using the Wi-Fi system at Inman Perk Coffee in downtown Gainesville. Wi-Fi is one of the items that could be impacted by a new communications services tax.

A taxing change

This article is the second in our weeklong series outlining the coming tax changes.

Tuesday: The bill would eliminate the 4 percent state sales tax exemption for groceries, which are currently taxed at 3 percent by local governments.

Wednesday: In an effort to move away from income taxes, the overhaul would place the burden on consumer services by taxing things like haircuts, veterinary services and lawn care for the first time.

Thursday: The bill could eliminate income exemptions for senior citizens.

Friday: Gas would go up by 6 cents per gallon under the bill.

Saturday: Cigarette taxes would almost double, moving from 37 cents to 68 cents per pack.

Legislation could mean higher bills for cell phone, cable service

BY CAROLYN CRIST
ccrist@gainesvilletimes.com

Satellite subscribers, cell phone users and cable customers could see a jump in their bills if state lawmakers approve a proposal to change Georgia's tax code.

Leaders in the House introduced four similar 127-page pieces of legislation at the end of February and formed a special committee to tackle the overwhelming changes that would move Georgia from income-based taxes to consumption taxes.

The bill, based on recommendations released in January by the 10-member Special Council on Tax Reform and Fairness, would essentially raise sales taxes and shift the burden onto consumers.

One feature would place a new 7 percent tax on all communications services, with 4 percent going to the state and 3 percent back to lo-

cal governments. It would earn the state between \$190 million and \$200 million in new revenue annually, according to bill supporters.

Increases would only add up to a few dollars per month, but the change likely won't be embraced by consumers.

"I'm all for the Fair Tax and consumption-based taxes, but I'm against further increased taxation," Gainesville resident Bill Hall said. "We already have so many taxes to pay."

Hall, who uses cell phone service, satellite and wireless Internet, could see the spike across several bills.

"We pay a lot, and we don't have any control over those taxes," he said.

Modeled on a system in place in North Carolina and Virginia, the new tax would replace the patchwork of taxes and franchise fees

■ Please see **TAX, 6A**

Conference to address economic growth in N. Ga.

BY TRICIA L. NADOLNY
tnadolny@gainesvilletimes.com

Innovators from Microsoft and Intel will be in Dahlonega on Wednesday at a conference aimed at stimulating economic growth in North Georgia.

Gov. Nathan Deal will present the keynote address at the 2011 Economic Development Summit being held at North Georgia College & State University.

Ruben Boling, director of the school's Center for the Future of North Georgia, said the full-day event will center on using technology to spur development.

"What we're aiming to explore

in the summit is how technology and economic development come together and how they work together to create jobs and to improve the economy in the region," he said.

The event is a partnership between the college's Mike Cottrell School of Business and the North Georgia Network, among other sponsors. Boling said about 250 people are expected to attend.

The morning sessions will focus on growth at existing businesses and will include a demonstration by Microsoft on how its Cloud platform can be used to

■ Please see **GROWTH, 6A**



Boling



INSIDE

Advice **5C** Life **1D**
Bridge **5C** Lottery **2A**
Calendar **2A** Opinion **4A**
Classified **2D** Sports **1B**
Comics **6C** TV/puzzles **5C**

WEATHER 2A

High **69** Low **48**
Lake Lanier level: **1,071.57 feet**
Down 0.14 feet in 24 hours

DEATHS 2C

Bronscile "Tommie" Bennett, 85
Betty Tuck Brown, 66
Grace Elizabeth Morrison
Christopher, 94
George Dudley Graham
Allen Burdette Denson, 62
Ilse Krug Gonzalez, 86
A.P. "Pat" Saunders, 83
Ruth Benalee Scroggs, 73
Gregory Thomas Seagraves, 49
Junior Lee Smith, 72
Billy N. Tucker, 77

To all those who serve in the nation's military...



... Thank you for our freedom.

The Times
gainesvilletimes.com
Your news. Your Times.