

# MORNING NEWS

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## SOLDER SURGERY



STAFF PHOTO SAMANTHA BAKER

**Gary Cash**, a traffic signal technician and electrician for Rogers, solders wires together Thursday that control the traffic light at Dixieland Road and Walnut Street. The wires were damaged Wednesday afternoon when surveying crews working on the Walnut Street widening project punctured the underground wires with a surveying pin. The widening project will add a center turning lane from Dixieland Road to Eighth Street and correct drainage problems on Walnut Street.

## ROGERS SCHOOL DISTRICT

# Buyout To Save Millions

## PERSONNEL REPLACEMENTS OFTEN EARN ENTRY-LEVEL PAY

By Amye Buckley  
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**ROGERS** — The ripple effect from the June 30 buyout of 89 district employees is expected to save money in the long run for Rogers School District.

A report released to the School Board on Tuesday indicated officials expect to save at least \$4.1 million over eight years. That estimate comes from limited data. The savings will be much greater, said Kathy Hanlon, district treasurer.

"It's not scientific, but from what I'm looking at with the numbers, I think it's closer to \$7 million," Hanlon said.

Additional savings are possible when a district promotes from within, said Katy Rose, senior vice president Educators Preferred Corp., the company that oversaw the buyout plan and study.

"It is hard to put on paper," Rose

said of the savings from in-district changes stemming from buyout retirements.

Rogers has a large pool of qualified applicants to choose from for first-year teachers, Rose said, and moving local applicants up the ladder makes financial sense.

"They better understand the culture of the School District," Rose said.

Eighty-nine took the buyout option: 51 teachers, 11 administrators and 27 classified staffers. The early retirement program cost the district \$2.8 million, but \$2.6 million was supported by American Reinvestment and Recovery Act money, Hanlon said.

Early retirement plans create savings for the School District. As senior teachers retire or move into administration, their replacements are often at entry level. A starting teacher makes \$42,500 in Rogers,

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## Proposed County Budget To Include Pay Raises

By Tom Sissom  
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**BENTONVILLE** — Raises of about 5 percent for Benton County employees and most elected officials will be part of the proposed 2012 budget to be considered by the Finance Committee beginning Tuesday.

The Personnel Committee heard a report Thursday on the county's pay structure that included recommendations for a 2.2 percent across-the-board increase for employees and additional merit increases ranging from 1.5 percent to 3.3 percent.

County officials salaries also were considered in the study by the Johanson Group of Fayetteville. Blair Johanson, company president, presented the findings along with Barb Ludwig, the county's human resources director.

Johanson told the committee the county's salary structure has become skewed in recent years when compared with both other governmental entities and private businesses. He said the county needs to consider the 2.2 percent cost-of-living raises and the merit

SEE BUDGET PAGE 3A

# Mayor Places Springdale Fire Chief On Leave

## POLICE DEPARTMENT INVESTIGATES ALLEGATIONS

By Steve Caraway  
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**SPRINGDALE** — Fire Chief Duane Atha has been placed on administrative leave.

Mayor Doug Sprouse placed Atha on leave with pay Wednesday. Atha will be on leave while allegations are investigated by the Police Department, Sprouse said. He declined to say what the allegations are.

"We have to let it go through the process," Sprouse said.

Atha did not return phone calls Thursday. Atha started working for the Fire Department on June 1, 1986, and was named chief March 2, 2003, according to city records.

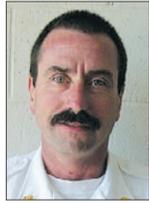
"We would like to complete the investigation as quickly and thoroughly as possible," Sprouse said. "That would be the best for

all concerned."

Kevin McDonald, assistant fire chief, will be in charge of the department while Atha is on leave, Sprouse said.

An employee may be placed on administrative leave when the nature of the allegation compromises the ability of the employee to perform their duties, according to the city personnel and procedures manual. If the charges are found to be true, disciplinary action will be taken according to the nature of the offense. If the allegations are false, the employee will be returned to duty, according to the manual.

Fire chiefs are civil service



Atha

"We would like to complete the investigation as quickly and thoroughly as possible."

DOUG SPROUSE  
Springdale mayor

employees of the city, according to Jeff Harper, city attorney.

Sprouse is the supervisor for Springdale's fire and police chiefs but he does not hire or fire them. The Civil Service Board oversees the hiring and firing of those chiefs.

The section on administrative leave in the city's civil service manual is similar, stating the leave is not considered a disciplinary action.

## GETTING STARTED

### IN THE NEWS

#### Bush Solidifies Rogers Defense

**ROGERS** — Seeing a lack of depth on the defensive line just two weeks from the season opener, Rogers High football coach Shawn Flannigan decided to move sophomore Zane Bush from offense to defense. The move has worked out well for Rogers.

FULL STORY, 7A



#### Julius Finds Perfect Fit

**ROGERS** — Utah Julius admitted he was a player looking for a position last year. But when Rogers Heritage changed its defensive scheme in the spring, Julius found a home at the War Eagles stud position, a hybrid of a linebacker and defensive back.

FULL STORY, 7A



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