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Century-Old Tree Reveals Village Roots

Historic Maple Cut Down on Burton Square

By Danielle Young

With the start of a new year, many people are looking to branch out and start anew, but in order to do so, it is also important to look back at our roots.

A century-old maple tree was recently cut down in Burton Village Square.

The tree was estimated to be at least 125 years old to a possible 135 years old, after observing the rings in the wood, said Amy Blair, who is in charge of retail sales for the Burton Chamber of Commerce at the Burton Log Cabin.

One of the “old girls” of the square, or one of oldest and biggest of the trees, the maple was cut down due to rotten upper limbs, which could fall on someone, Blair said.

Village trees that are hollow or diseased, or a danger to others, are marked to be cut down, Burton Village tree commission member Judy Beaumier explained.

The criteria is determined by village Arborist Debbie Palmisano.

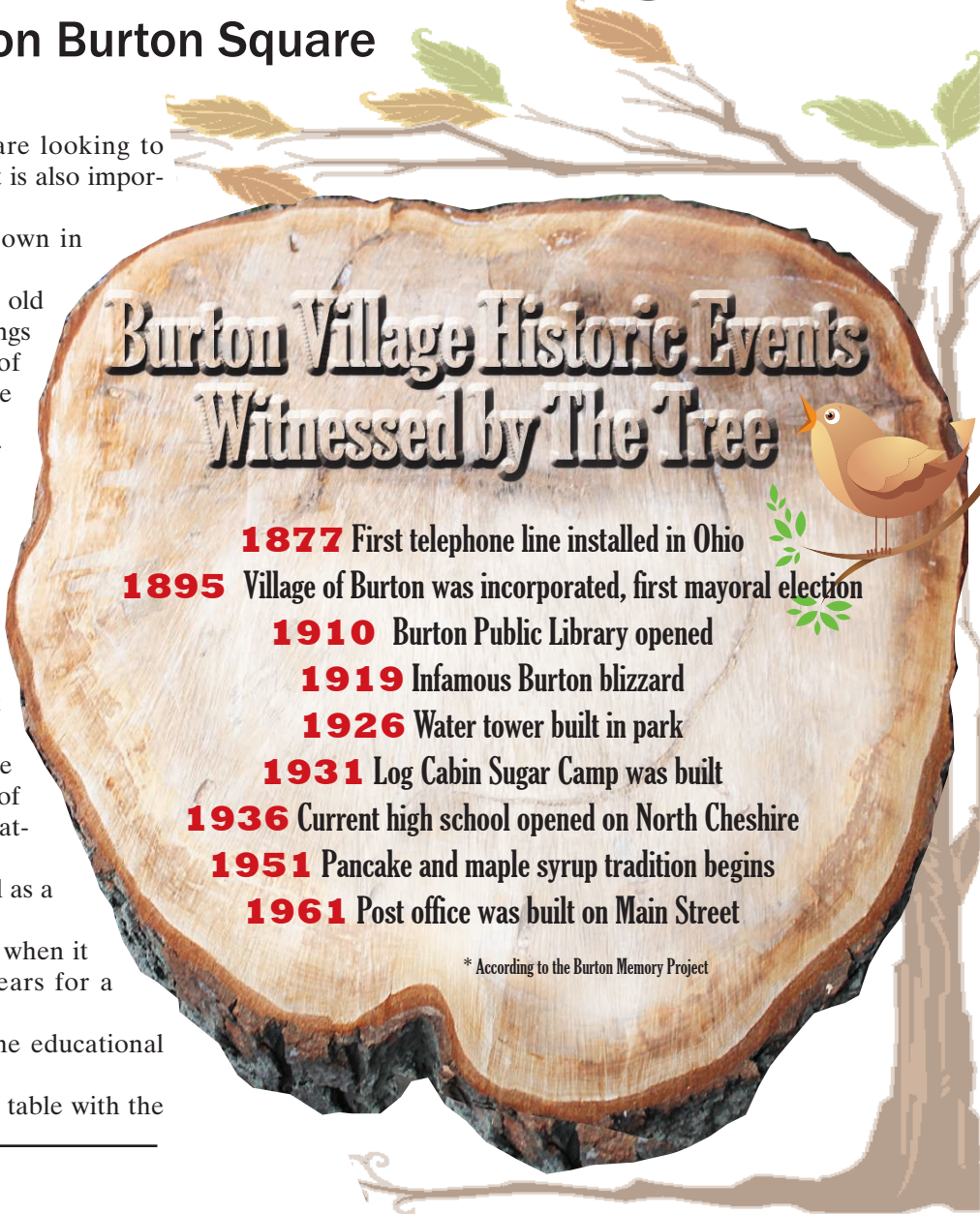
This includes any trees in Burton Village that are at any right-of-ways, such as those on the edges of the park, which is where the old maple tree was located.

All of the wood was saved from the tree as well as a cross section, where one can see the old tap holes.

Looking at the rings, it was about 19 years old when it was first tapped. Normally, it takes about 30 years for a maple tree to be big enough to tap, Blair said.

“That’s really what I wanted to capture for the educational piece that we do here in the cabin,” she said.

Blair said she would love to eventually make a table with the



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ANN WISHART/KMG

The front room at the Geauga Lyric Theatre Guild offices on Water Street has been stripped to the studs and is waiting for grant money to become available so it can be decked out in flooring stacked on the concrete.

Theatre Guild Gets \$80K In Grants for Renovations

By Ann Wishart

The Geauga Lyric Theatre Guild board has big plans for the building it leases from Chardon City at 106 Water Street.

Jessica Boalt, GLTG board vice president, brought exciting news to the city legislative committee last Thursday about a grant for interior renovation of

the building across the street from the Geauga Theatre.

The board has secured \$80,000 in grants to update and expand usage of the old building where classes and rehearsals are held, said city Zoning Administrator Steve Yaney.

Grants include \$50,000 from the Ohio Cultural Facilities

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Claypool, Rear Sworn In

By John Karlovec

Geauga County Commissioners-elect Walter “Skip” Claypool and Blake Rear were sworn in to office Monday during separate ceremonies with family and friends.

“The oath that I say today, while a legal requirement, is

really a commitment to you, the people who helped to get me elected, it’s a bond and a contract between us, me and God,” Claypool said during the event held at the county commissioners’ offices in Chardon.

Claypool brought with him

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DANIELLE YOUNG/KMG

Commissioner Blake Rear, center, was sworn in again as Geauga County Commissioner Monday by Geauga County Sheriff Dan McClelland, left. Joyce Rear holds Rear’s Bible while Chief Deputy Scott Hildenbrand, right, looks on.

Newbury Schools to Join Study Committee

By Ann Wishart

Newbury Schools Board of Education voted unanimously Monday to participate in a study on the possible combining of four school districts into one.

Newbury was the last of the four to agree to investigate the concept.

At a 7:30 a.m. meeting, board President Marty Sanders said the idea of combining Newbury, Cardinal, Ledgemont and Berkshire districts into one district with a new high school on the Kent State University Geauga campus in Burton Township is in the very early stages of discussion.

“I’m getting a lot of feedback. A lot of people realize this is just a first step,” he said.

The resolution was to participate with KSU-Geauga to form a collaboration committee to study the concept of a four-district consolidation.

KSU Geauga Interim Dean Jarrod Tudor has proposed the consolidation as a benefit to area students and a more fiscal practical plan.

Having the proposed high school on the 88-acre university campus could make it easier for students to take part in a program that will allow them to earn college credit hours while still in high school.

Last week, Ledgemont Schools, which is in fiscal emergency and owes money to the state, announced it is in discussions with Berkshire and Madison school districts to join one or the other.

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Chardon City Revenue May Be Less than Projected

By Ann Wishart

Chardon City income tax revenue will likely be less than projected in 2014 based on collections through November, said city Manager Randy Sharpe.

Last year, his office anticipated a municipal income tax revenue increase of 3 percent in 2014, but now it seems that is unlikely, he told council last Monday night during a two-hour special meeting.

“Net profit was down (in 2014) compared to (2013),” he said, adding the bump in 2013 was an anomaly.

The increase in 2013 was not a predictor of income tax to come, Sharpe said, adding the uptick for 2014 will be closer to 1 percent, and 2015 income tax doesn’t look good.

“The 2015 estimate represents a 1.9 percent decrease over the budgeted

fiscal year 2014 revenues,” he wrote in the summary he provided to council members.

Municipal income tax accounts for about 74.5 percent of the city’s revenue, Sharpe said.

Adding all funds into the budget for 2015, the city will have about \$17.5 million in revenue, including a general fund of about \$6.8 million, as shown on the summary.

Expenditures are projected to be about \$19.7 million with a general fund of about \$7.5 million, numbers that concerned the mayor and at least one member of council.

“We cannot continue to spend more than we take in,” said Mayor Phil King.

Sharpe said the city’s reserve fund is sufficient to cover three months of expenses and the summary is traditionally very conservative.

Council member Andrew Blackley also observed expenditures are projected to be more than revenues.

Expenses for public safety are significantly higher than they were in 2012 and 2013, he said.

Water and sewer revenues are expected to go up due to billing increases approved in 2012, Sharpe added.

Efforts to economize include having no full-time payroll clerk for the city finance department and not filling the position of assistant city manager, he said.

Two full-time employees in the municipal court are expected to retire in 2015 and the abnormal lack of an increase in medical insurance premiums will also provide a savings, Sharpe said.

A negotiated 2 percent wage increase for staff has been figured into the budget as revenues allow, as has part of the cost of a school resource officer.

Sharpe asked if council would like him to contact Claridon, Hambden and Chardon township trustees to see if they will contribute to the SRO salary for the 2015/2016 school year.

Council member Nancy McArthur noted this is the last year council agreed to help fund the position.

King said Claridon trustees contributed the first year, but haven’t had the funds to do so since. Sharpe said he will send a letter to the trustees asking if they can participate in 2015.

Other notable expenses included the continuing residential sidewalk repair and maintenance program, support of Chardon Tomorrow and the Chardon Square Retail Business Grant Program.

Overall, Sharpe said the final figures for 2014 and projections for 2015 won’t be complete until after the end of December.



DANIELLE YOUNG/KMG
The wood from the 135-year-old tree will still have a use as firewood and possible artistic purposes.

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wood or even have local artists make something out of the pieces.

“Another thing that hit me was ‘Okay, so if you’re talking that tree is a 135 years old, what was happening then? You’re talking the late 1800s,” Blair said. “They were tapping trees in this village park that far back, which is so interesting to me.”

The mighty maple would have seen two different turn-of-the-centuries, and witnessed historic Burton Village events like the first mayoral election, the Burton Public Library, water tower and log cabin being built, as well as the start of the pancake and maple syrup spring tradition that still exists today.

“What if that tree could talk? Imagine what that tree has seen over its lifetime,” Blair said. “That’s a long time to be living in that spot — and how much Burton has changed in 135 years — its pretty amazing.”

So, why should people care about these wooden witnesses?

“They are our history, they clean our environment,” Beaumier said. “People need to realize that they are important.”

Blair hopes to perhaps work with Kent State Geauga campus’ greenhouse to

replace the saplings of any cut-down trees.

“All I know is, if you do cut a tree down, it should be replaced,” Blair said.

Blair pointed to modern technology as a reason why she believes people, especially children, are not in touch with nature as much anymore.

The tradition of the maple trees and maple syrup is another reason why Burton Village, with the motto “Where History Lives,” is also known as “Pancake Town U.S.A.”

“It’s just such a big part of the history of this county in particular, but also this part of the world,” Blair said of maple syrup production.

Less than 10 percent of the world has four distinct seasons. And only a small portion of that percentage has native maple trees, namely the northern United States and Canada, that make up the Maple Belt, Blair explained.

“The bottom line, for us and all the volunteers here (at the log cabin), is that the people need to let us know if they still want us to do this. Because this is the history of this town,” she said. “It’s so much work to make the maple syrup, and we could frankly find something else to do in the spring. But we do it because of the love and rich history of this part of the county and this part of the state.”

“Maple syrup is still a very vibrant industry in this area. And that’s why I care about it.”

Park Commissioner Won’t Seek Reappointment

Staff Report

Geauga Park District Commissioner Brian Johnston said he has completed the two goals he hoped to achieve when he was appointed to the board in June.

Those were the collective bargaining agreement, which the park commissioners ratified Monday morning, and unspecified personnel issues in the park district’s ranger department, which he said has been addressed.

Johnston, therefore, has notified Geauga County Probate Court Judge Tim Grendell that he would not seek reappointment to the park board after his term expires Dec. 31.

“It has been an interesting experience serving the residents of Geauga



Johnston

County, the tourists and stakeholders of the Geauga Park District,” he said in an email to Grendell.

Johnston is the second park commissioner this year to either resign or not seek re-appointment to the park board.

In November, park district Commissioner Louis Mucci submitted a letter of resignation to Grendell, who is statutorily responsible for appointing park district commissioners.

In his two-page letter of resignation, Mucci blamed Grendell’s “reflexive, whack-a-mole tactics” of dealing with his critics for inflaming a “highly toxic environment.”

Said Mucci, “I have no desire to continue to serve and be collateral damage.”

Last month, Grendell appointed Hambden Township resident Bill Gertz to fill Mucci’s seat on the park board.

Prior to Gertz’s appointment, four of the five park commissioners that Grendell has appointed during his term in office have left the park board.

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