

MARIETTA DAILY JOURNAL

METRO ATLANTA'S ONLY CONSERVATIVE EDITORIAL VOICE.

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GUEST EDITORIALS

A 2015 BRAC

THE GRIM REALITIES

There is a grim reality to President Obama's budget. While we've become accustomed to hearing billion- and even trillion-dollar figures thrown around, that is real money and a lot of it.

The grim reality for our area centers around Robins Air Force Base. Our reality is no different from other military installations around the country that will be impacted by some of the cutbacks — if approved by Congress.

If you didn't know it already, Robins is in a more precarious position since the command of the base was moved to Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma. Chances are, during the next Base Realignment and Closure commission, scheduled in Obama's budget for 2015, Tinker would be safe.

That leaves Robins in competition with Hill Air Force Base in Utah. That state is represented by the most senior Republican in the Senate, Sen. Orrin Hatch.

There is no consensus as to what the BRAC might do. Its approach could mean a reduction, shift or increase in

missions at some of the depots. It could also mean the Air Force might be looking at two depots rather than three.

The 21st Century Partnership, headed by former base commander retired Maj. Gen. Robert McMahon, is being proactive. It's commissioned studies to see how the Middle Georgia community matches up with Tinker and Hill communities, but Air Force thinking could be along an entirely different line.

THE
MACON
TELEGRAPH

It may be looking at overall reductions and deciding what missions have priority for future spending.

It's well known that the Air Force is flying many aircraft that are twice or more the age of the pilots who fly them. The Air Force could decide to put more emphasis on developing new platforms rather than continuing to jury-rig obsolete airframes.

It is the uncertainty that could grip the area, but 2015 will be here in a blink of an eye. The community should get ready to strap it on and get ready for a tough, hard, competitive process. The only personal agendas that are acceptable are those that place the base in the No. 1 priority position.

Bridge a two-state problem

South Carolina officials are right to raise a caution flag about Georgia's plan to build a new Back River Bridge on the border between the two states.

What the estimated 19,000 motorists who drive this route daily between Savannah and the Hilton Head, Bluffton and Hard-eeville areas need is a safer, more efficient passage — and the best way to get that is with a four-lane U.S. 17 on the South

Carolina side of the Savannah River and a four-lane Back River Bridge on Georgia's side. This current route just north of Savannah isn't just an accident waiting to happen. It has happened. Repeatedly. And it's no wonder. Northbound traffic that flies down from the four-lane Talmadge Bridge toward South Carolina gets funneled into a two-lane bottleneck, which starts immediately at the narrow Back River Bridge and extends for several miles into South Carolina.

In the other direction, southbound traffic from South Carolina to Georgia often gets stacked up. The speed limit is 55 mph. But that's more like a suggestion. So the slow pokes and speed demons often play a risky, real-life game of chicken when it

comes to passing.

Highway planners in both states know what they need in the way of improvements. Unfortunately, they have come up short in the execution.

Georgia is building a new Back River Bridge, which was needed yesterday. And while the new span will be wider, it's still going to be only two lanes.

South Carolina is apparently going to widen U.S. 17 to four lanes at some point. But it's South Carolina's obligation to build a second, two-lane bridge over the Back River to eliminate the bottleneck. Unfortunately, there's no timetable for any of this work — probably because no money has been found.

Georgia Department of Transportation Commissioner Keith Golden and S.C. Transportation Secretary Robert Onge need to schedule a meeting of the minds. And pronto.

Daily traffic on U.S. 17 between the two states is expected to grow to 35,000 by 2016, when Georgia expects to complete its Back River Bridge project. Since this is a two-state problem, it's ridiculous not to coordinate a larger, two-state solution. Mr. Golden and Mr. Onge must find a way to be on this ride together.

THE
SAVANNAH
MORNING
NEWS

The Marietta Daily Journal encourages letters to the editor on topics of general interest, but reserves the right to edit them for content and length. Letters should be no longer than about 250 words and must include the writer's name, address and daytime telephone number for verification purposes.

THE DRAWING BOARD



ON THE PROWL

This and that about bobcats and bees

MARIETTA 'WILD KINGDOM'

PART 1: Coyotes are so commonplace in Cobb these days that sighting one of them is almost unremarkable.

But panthers and/or bobcats? That's another story.

Yet such a feline might be on the loose in Marietta.

Residents of the Forest of Arden Subdivision off Powder Springs Road have received an email alert Sunday from Neighborhood Watch director Steve Helms alerting

them to the possible presence of such a cat there over the weekend.

The sighting was reported to Helms by a neighbor on Longwood Drive near the southern end intersection with Arden Drive about 4:30 p.m. Sunday.

Emailed the neighbor to Helms: "You are not going to believe this. ... I hardly believe it myself and have started questioning what I saw today. But I know what it was; from the animal's gait, long tail, fawn color, whiskers. ... I saw a panther. It trotted away from me in the woods and at first I thought it was one of the coyotes ... but then I saw the long tail. It stopped, sat down, looked at me with a big cat face and then turned and went down the hill to Olley Creek."

Continued Helms: "The neighbor has notified the state Department of Natural Resources. Note: Last summer residents in this same area reported hearing large cat-like sounds and thought they may have heard a bobcat. Now this sighting. This could be the same animal. All residents in Dunleith should exercise caution outdoors

with their children and pets."

UNLIKE COYOTES, both panthers and bobcats are native to Georgia, although panther sightings are extremely rare. Wildlife officials

believe they are extinct in the state. A panther killed near West Point Lake in 2008 was thought to have wandered north from Florida. Bobcats are much more numerous, with a range that covers most of the continental United States.

Bobcats

are about twice as large as typical domestic cats and more muscular, with shorter front legs than hind legs. They feed mostly on rabbits and small rodents — but like coyotes, also will eat cats and small dogs. They typically hunt from shortly before sunset until about midnight, then again for several hours just before and after sunrise.

'WILD KINGDOM,' PART 2: Ed Bentley tells AT that Marietta beekeeper **Dustin Kay**, son-in-law of he and wife **Candace**, was called the other day to the Church Street offices of Marietta insurance company Little & Smith to deal with a honey bee swarm in one of their magnolia trees.

"He removed it and relocated it to his hives on the our farm off North Marietta Parkway," Bentley says. "But the next day he was called again about a second swarm in the same tree — which is very unusual."

Unusual, yes, but apparently something that was meant to be.

MORE ON THE CSD: And more on Cobb School Board Chairman **Randy Scamihorn's** unexpected critique of the District during last Wednesday's board work session for its overzealous prosecutions of veteran Cobb educators under a state law that requires them to report any instance of alleged child sex abuse within 24 hours. Failure to do so can mean a \$1,000 fine and a year in jail — plus the loss of one's profession and reputation.

The HR Department in the Cobb system already has created its share of martyrs under that law. You'll recall that Kell High Principal **Trudie Donovan** was forced to retire; Tapp Middle School Principal **Dr. Jerry Dority** and counselor **Yatta Collins** were fired; and Awtrey Middle School Principal **Jeff Crawford** is facing a one-day suspension without pay; all for failing to report what in essence is hearsay. And the Cobb Solicitor this month dropped the charges against Donovan for lack of evidence.

Scamihorn said the system needs to re-examine its policies, and thanked the MDJ for bringing the situation to the attention of the board and public.

ADDED SCAMIHORN in a later interview: "I wanted the MDJ to know, the public and our educators to know that we hear

you. What the articles did for me was focus everybody together. The recent articles really listed the issues and it was like, 'Whoa!' So, I felt that as a board member and the chair, that we should at least acknowledge that the MDJ did a good job. It zeroed in on it."

SCAMIHORN DECLINED to speculate for AT on whether the problem is overzealous prosecution by the CSD's HR department (which several informed observers have suggested to AT is the case); or whether the problem lies with the statute itself; or both.

"We aren't that far yet," he said. "I don't want to place blame because people may be following what they should be doing, kind of like the state law, reporting within 24 hours."

As for the procedural changes he referenced on Wednesday? "I'm working with the attorney and the other board members and staff to see what those might be. We are really just getting started."

Do Scamihorn's comments signal an end to the witch-hunt days in the CSD? Stay tuned. But for what it's worth, his comments at Wednesday's meeting were met with silence by the other board members — not an auspicious sign.

LOCAL GROUPS will kick off Preservation Month with a May 2 reception at Cobb Landmarks and Historical Society headquarters, the Anderson House, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. The event is sponsored by Cobb Landmarks, the Marietta Historic Preservation Commission and the new Cobb Coalition for Historic Preservation.

The next day will kick off the Cobb Landmarks Garden Party weekend, starting with the annual Plant Sale at the Root House from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Friday and Saturday. After the Plant Sale on Saturday, the Cobb Landmarks Spring Garden Event will take place from 4 to 8 p.m. at historic Oakton House and Gardens on Kennesaw Avenue. Call Cobb Landmarks at (678) 594-4994.

EVENTS: Jazz pianist **Boozer McClure** will be tickling the ivories at Friday's Martinis & Music at the Marietta/Cobb Museum of Art. Tickets for the 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. event are \$8, reports director **Sally MacAulay**. ...

Islamic World expert **Dr. Timothy Furnish** of Cobb, a former guest lecturer at the military's Joint Special Operations University and former professor at Georgia Perimeter College, will be guest speaker at Saturday's 8 a.m. breakfast meeting of the Madison Forum at the Rib Ranch on Canton Road in east Cobb, reports president **Michael Opitz**. Furnish will speak on "Islamic Related Topics and The War on Terrorism."

PEOPLE: The McDonald's Corp. has named former Cobb resident **Paige Smith Mamula** as senior director of real estate for the United States. She is daughter of long-time Cobb residents **Gene** and **Connie Smith** and a graduate of North Cobb High School and the University of Georgia.

Many mistakenly believe McDonald's makes all its profits from hamburgers and French fries. However, the McDonalds business model focuses on buying prime land and franchising it out to the operators.

The apple clearly has not fallen far from the tree in the Smith family. Paige's mother **Connie** was an advertising representative in the 1970s for the Marietta Daily Journal and went on to a successful real estate career as one of **Johnny Isakson's** top agents at Northside Realty. **Connie** still remains active in real estate at Remax Around Atlanta.

While obviously proud of their daughter,

they are saddened that **Paige** will be required to move to McDonald's corporate office outside of Chicago with her husband, **Neil**, and two children, **Alexander** and **Brooklyn**.

SICK BAY: Popular Marietta businessman **Larry Cepinsky** is on a ventilator at WellStar Kennestone Hospital while doctors deal with an underlying medical issue. Send cards to Marietta Mower Repair, 779 S. Marietta Parkway, Marietta, GA 30060-2017.

LATE Lockheed Georgia President **Bob Ormsby**, who passed away last week, was remembered in absentia at Tuesday's breakfast meeting of the Lockheed Management Retirees Association. Members turned around what would have been Ormsby's chair in honor of his passing, reports member **John Delves**.