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Marietta Daily Journal

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Cobb manager pulls out in Fulton

Official says he was top choice for job but couldn't get majority council votes

By Jon Gillooly
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MARIETTA — County Manager David Hankerson has withdrawn his name from being considered as the new county manager of Fulton County.

Hankerson was one of three finalists for the position.

Cobb Board of Commissioners Chairman Tim Lee said Hankerson contacted Fulton officials on

Monday to let them know he was no longer interested in the job.

"Mr. Hankerson just informed me that he has informed the Fulton County Board of Commissioners that he has officially withdrawn his name from consideration of the county manager's job of Fulton



David Hankerson

County," Lee said Tuesday evening. "He just felt that he's better served here, and he loves Cobb County, and this is where he needs to be. This is his home, so he wants to stay here and finish his career in Cobb."

Hankerson, 67, who receives a total compensation as manager of Cobb County of \$274,007, has been eligible to retire since Dec. 1, 2003. That means he could retire and begin collecting his

pension, while being paid the new salary as Fulton County manager, a practice known as "double dipping."

While Lee said Hankerson withdrew his name because he loves Cobb County, that may not have been the only reason.

Bobbie Battista, spokeswoman for Fulton Board of Commissioners Chairman John Eaves, said

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The Associated Press

Trio of troubles threaten Obama's 2nd term

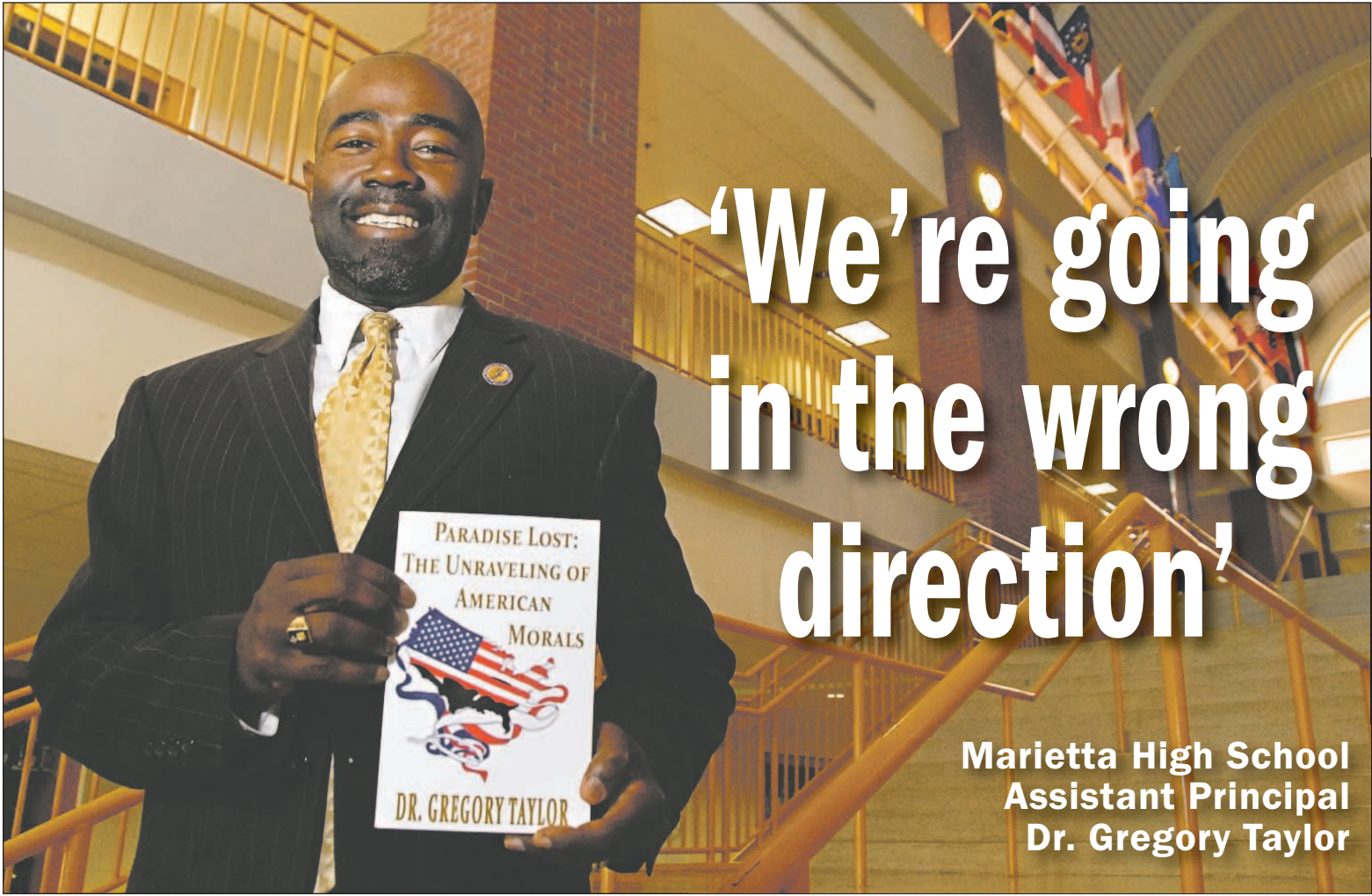
By Charles Babington and Julie Pace
Associated Press Writers

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama seemed to lose control of his second-term agenda even before he was sworn in, when a school massacre led him to lift gun control to the fore. Now, as he tries to pivot from a stinging defeat on that issue and push forward on others, the president finds himself rocked by multiple controversies that are demoralizing his allies, emboldening his political foes and posing huge distractions for all.

It's unclear how long he will be dogged by inquiries into last year's deadly attack in Libya, the IRS targeting of tea party groups and now the seizure of Associated Press phone records in a leak investigation. But if nothing else, these episodes give new confidence and swagger to Republicans who were discouraged by Obama's re-election and their inability to block tax hikes as part of the Jan. 1 "fiscal cliff" deal.

Taken together, these matters will make it harder for the administration to focus on its priorities — racking up a few more accomplishments before next year's national elections.

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Marietta High School Assistant Principal Dr. Gregory Taylor

Staff/Laura Moon

Marietta educator pens book on what he sees as a collapse of morals

By Megan Thornton
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The assistant principal of Marietta High School recently released his first book, highlighting the breakdown of American morals and how he believes this collapse is a result of Hollywood influence and national media.

Dr. Gregory Taylor, a 22-year veteran of Marietta City Schools, titled his first release "Paradise Lost: The Unraveling of American Morals."

Born and raised in Laurel, Miss., Taylor is the first African-American Marietta Schools' staff member to

earn a doctorate. At age 12, he was also the youngest boy in Mississippi history to become an Eagle Scout.

Taylor isn't afraid to tackle controversial topics in his book. He includes chapters on homosexuality, abortion and race relations. He said he was inspired to write the book through his day-to-day work as an administrator compared to his previous work more than two decades ago, where he taught in the college of education at Tennessee State University and the Comprehensive Sickel Cell Center at Meharry Medical College.

"It just kind of struck me how

our attitudes on freedom have changed and our moral base has changed," he said. "I deal with kids every day. As I've dealt with kids over the years, I saw a change in their respect for adults and leadership. ... I thought, 'We're going in the wrong direction.'"

Taylor said his thinking on morality comes from a biblical and historical perspective, but is applicable to present-day society.

"I think our moral base is starting to degrade to the point that we're becoming a country that's

See Book, Page 6A

Commissioners close spa

Vote follows sex charges against Q Massage

By Jon Gillooly
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MARIETTA — The Cobb Board of Commissioners on Tuesday declined to renew the license of a Barrett Parkway massage business after two women who work there were arrested and charged with prostitution.

No one from the business — Q Massage at 1200 Barrett Pkwy. in west Cobb near Cobb Parkway — showed up during the hearing to contest the vote.

In 2012, the county issued Qiyi Hao a health spa license to operate the massage business, but when Hao applied to renew his license this

year, the county denied the request at the recommendation of the Cobb Police Department.

Hao appealed to the Board of Commissioners, but was denied by a 5-0 vote.

Two undercover officers with Cobb Police testified to visiting the massage parlor on different dates, one on Nov. 5 and one on April 24. The officers stood in the hallway just outside the board room to remain off camera, as they told commissioners what they found on their visits.

On the Nov. 5 visit, one undercover officer, armed with a concealed



Qiyi Hao



Jing Wang

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CCSD investigator's resignation follows supervisor's termination

By Megan Thornton
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MARIETTA — After Cobb County School District lead investigator Mary Finlayson confirmed her termination, one of only two other employees in her department said Tuesday he's also planning to jump ship.

Jay Morrissey, an investigations manager with the school system, confirmed Tuesday he was resigning from his position effective May 31. He said his resignation was for "personal reasons" and wouldn't comment further on the decision.

Finlayson, former Cobb Schools director of professional standards and



Mary Finlayson

ethics, sent an expanded version of her letter (which ran Tuesday in the Journal's editorial page) to all school board members Sunday night, detailing her firing and what she alleges was treatment more befitting of a common criminal than a seven-year employee in good standing.

According to the school district's response to an Open Records Request by the Journal, there was no paper trail leading to a disciplinary file, and

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OUTSIDE

85
HIGH

61
LOW

Mostly sunny
More on Page 6C

POLLEN COUNT

YESTERDAY INDEX

164
HIGH

0-14 = LOW
15-89 = MODERATE
90-1499 = HIGH
1500+ = EXTREME

Resignation

Continued from Page 1A

Finlayson did not have a letter of termination or a resignation letter.

Jay Dillon, director of communications for the school district, said it is district policy not to comment on personnel matters.

Finlayson said Tuesday she was told last Thursday that she was fired simply because of budget cuts and reductions in central office staff. The school board is scheduled to vote Thursday to cut 16 central office positions to save \$1.1 million.

Finlayson said she's exploring her options to obtain legal counsel as the district does not have a policy in place allowing non-certified employees to appeal termination.

On the CCSD website, Finlayson's name and contact information have been removed and replaced with contact information of secretary Christy Black.

Finlayson and her team have been widely criticized after leading investigations into several high-profile cases accusing Cobb administrators of allegedly failing to report instances of alleged sexual assault. Several cases resulted in termination or suspension.

Critics argued that the district took a heavy-handed approach to the state's mandatory reporting law, taking the stance that Cobb teachers and principals were "guilty until proven innocent."

One recent case was that of Tapp Middle School Principal Jerry Dority, who was charged criminally for failure to report in 2012.

Finlayson said she recommended Dority not be terminated.

Just three months after those charges, Kell High School Principal Trudie Donovan resigned after similar allegations were made. Criminal charges against Donovan were dismissed by the Cobb Solicitor General's Office last month citing lack of evidence.

"When the issue arose with Donovan, the attorney advised (human resources chief Michael Shanahan) that there was no other option but to terminate Donovan since they terminated Dority who had also been arrested and that not firing Trudie would lead to a discrimination charge against the district by Dority," she said.

Finlayson also disputed claims that employees were forced to defend their innocence, noting that upon tak-

ing her role as director, her department implemented an electronic case management system to track investigations and required all investigations to be digitally recorded to ensure professional conduct and accountability.

"It is not true that staff are assumed guilty until proven innocent and a review of any investigative file and the audio tapes would prove that," she said.

Though questions about the way her department handled cases swirled following the recent dismissals, Finlayson said the facts support each of the findings made by her department.

Finlayson said her office worked with law enforcement to look into state mandated reporting cases and she presented findings of fact to Shanahan, who brought forward the information to several district officials, including the superintendent and board attorney, who then brought each recommendation to the board for approval.

"I did the job that was asked of me, providing thorough investigations and detailed facts to the decision makers," she said.

Treated as a criminal?

In Finlayson's email to the school board, she said she was only given 30 minutes to leave her office after being notified of her termination Thursday and hoped her story would help remaining employees that will potentially be laid off in the face of this year's budget crunch.

"I hope that they will not be treated in the same undignified way," she said. "I believe it is important for you to know the manner in which this was handled."

She said she was told to meet with Shanahan on Thursday at 2 p.m. and not given a reason. She cited district policy as requiring advance notice be given to an employee of his or her termination.

"I was not afforded the same rights I was required to give all (my former) employees," Finlayson said.

Finlayson said Shanahan "read a script" telling her her position was cut due to the budget and told her to be out of the building within the next 30 minutes. She said the official reason given for her firing — budget cuts — doesn't hold water, as her job was budgeted alongside the rest of the district employees for the fiscal year through June 30.

"They cleared out all staff from our office suite,"

she said. "I was not allowed to say goodbye to anyone. I was treated as if I had committed a crime or was a danger to others."

Finlayson also cited policy stating the district requires "progressive discipline" prior to terminating an employee for performance concerns. If that was the case, she hadn't received any, she said.

"I have never been told by anyone in administration of any concerns with my job performance or with the way investigations were conducted, and my performance evaluations have been excellent," she said.

Finlayson said she wrote Shanahan a note expressing her concern about two recent cases that were connected. She said she considered the handling of the cases inconsistent and a potential liability.

Shanahan didn't respond to the note, she said. That was the week before she was fired.

Board members respond

Regarding the district's policy on the handling of accused educators, Board Chair Randy Scamihorn said the district is still in the process of reviewing its policies.

"Things are still changing and things are still being reviewed and there's no conclusive results yet," Scamihorn said.

Board member Brad Wheeler said he didn't know about how Finlayson's termination was handled, but felt that all district employees should be held to the same standard and treated with respect.

"I think there's been a lot of concerns lately with HR," Wheeler said. "Every one of them needs to be thoroughly looked at and dealt with in a fair and impartial manner. We need to treat people the right way and do the right thing. ... I'm concerned as a board member that we're doing the appropriate things, but I'm not part of these investigations, that was done by senior staff. I hope they are doing jobs as they should because it's important that they do."

Simon Says...



Convicted abortion doctor gets life in prison

By Maryclaire Dale
Associated Press Writer

PHILADELPHIA — A Philadelphia abortion doctor convicted of killing three babies born alive at his rogue clinic dodged a possible death sentence Tuesday in a hasty post-verdict deal with prosecutors.

Dr. Kermit Gosnell, 72, waived his right to appeal in exchange for a sentence of life without parole. Gosnell was convicted Monday

of first-degree murder in a case that became a flashpoint in the nation's abortion debate.

Former clinic employees testified that Gosnell routinely performed illegal abortions past Pennsylvania's 24-week limit, that he delivered babies who were still



Kermit Gosnell

moving, whimpering or breathing, and that he and his assistants killed the newborns by "snipping" their spines, as he referred to it.

Prosecutors had been seeking the death penalty because Gosnell killed more than one person and his victims were especially vulnerable given their age. But Gosnell's own advanced age had made it unlikely he would ever be executed before his appeals ran out.

Threaten

Continued from Page 1A

"It's a torrential downpour, and it's happening at the worst possible time, because the window is closing" on opportunities to accomplish things before the 2014 campaigns, said Matt Bennett, who worked in the Clinton White House. From here on, he said, "it's going to be very, very difficult."

So far, there's no evidence that Obama knew about — let alone was involved in — the government actions in question. But a president usually is held accountable for his administration's actions, and Republicans now have material to fuel accusations and congressional hearings that they hope will embarrass him, erode his credibility and bolster their argument that his government is overreaching. Even some of his Democratic allies are publicly expressing dismay at the AP phone records seizure.

Obama advisers on Tuesday cast the trio of controversies as matters that flare up in an institution as complex as the U.S. government, and they questioned the impact of them. The one exception, advisers said, was the brewing scandal at the Internal Revenue Service, which they see as the

issue most likely to strike a chord with Americans.

The IRS has apologized for what it calls "inappropriate" targeting of conservative political groups, including tea party affiliates, that were seeking tax-exempt status in recent years. Attorney General Eric Holder said Tuesday he had ordered a Justice Department investigation.

But he distanced himself from the decision to subpoena the AP records, saying he'd had no part in it, stepping aside because he had been interviewed in a government investigation into who provided information for a news story that disclosed details of a CIA operation in Yemen.

The press case sparked

bipartisan outcry, with several GOP and Democratic officials questioning Holder's department's actions in the matter. Republican National Committee Chairman Reince Priebus said the attorney general should resign over the issue, adding: "Freedom of the press is an essential right in a free society."

Connecticut Sens. Richard Blumenthal and Chris Murphy, both Democrats, called on the Justice Department to explain the records seizure. And Rep. Steny Hoyer of Maryland, the House's second-ranking Democratic leader, said, "This is activity that should not have happened and must be checked from happening again."

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