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Mustang News

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OKC man given life sentence for killing MHS alumna in DUI case

By **HALEY HUMPHREY**
newseditor@mustangnews.info

Malcolm Penney, 41, of Oklahoma City was sentenced to life Tuesday in Canadian County District Court for killing Mustang High School alumna

Marissa Murrow in a head-on collision.

Judge Paul Hesse also sentenced Penney to serve 10 years in the Department of Corrections for leaving the scene of the fatality crash. The years will run consecutively with his life

sentence for second-degree murder.

Penney will also pay a \$100 court fee.

"We are very relieved to have this case decided," Marissa's

See **DUI**, Page 6A

MUSTANG NEWS DELIVERY NOTICE

Due to expected inclement weather, and in the interest of employee safety, delivery of The Mustang News Feb. 3 edition could be delayed. Office hours will also be impacted. Follow The Mustang News on Facebook for updates. We apologize for any inconvenience. Access our e-edition any time at www.mustangnews.info.



City attorney Jon Miller (left) swears in Ward 4 council member James Waugh during Tuesday's Mustang City Council meeting. Waugh gave his oath of office sooner than May, as his seat was vacated by former council member Terry Jones. Waugh was the only one to file for the seat. Photo / Haley Humphrey

'Growth is tough'

Council approves residential rezoning for 80 acres near Morgan Road

By **HALEY HUMPHREY**
newseditor@mustangnews.info

After listening to more than 10 residents

voice concerns during a public hearing Tuesday night, the Mustang City Council approved 6-1 to rezone

80 acres west of Morgan Road from agricultural to residential.

Ward 5 Travis McKenzie motioned to

table the item and then voted no.

Residents shared

See **GROWTH**, Page 6A

School district, city cautious of winter storm

By **HALEY HUMPHREY**
newseditor@mustangnews.info

Mustang Public Schools and the City of Mustang are remaining cautious of the winter storm Wednesday and Thursday.

The district announced Tuesday all sites would be remote learning Wednesday because of the National Weather

Service issuing a Winter Storm Warning for the majority of Oklahoma. School officials also informed parents MPS has a limited number of snow days and reserves those for conditions that would prohibit remote learning.

As of early Wednesday morning, OG&E reported more than 1,500 customers throughout

Canadian County were without power.

During the Tuesday night Mustang City Council meeting, Vice Mayor Michael Ray advised residents to be careful the next several days, as road conditions will be affected by ice and snow.

See **STORM**, Page 6A

Around Town

Voting begins Feb. 8

People can head to the polls to vote for Mustang Public Schools' Board of Education Seat No. 2 Feb. 8.

Polls are open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Parks and Rec hiring workers

Applications are being accepted for Mustang Parks and Recreation concession workers and site supervisors.

People can apply at cityofmustang.org/jobs.

Leisure Services Board taking applications

Mustang's Leisure Services Board is taking applications for citizens in Ward 2.

The board acts as an advisory board to the Mustang City Council on matters concerning the Parks and Rec department. It meets the fourth Monday of every month.

To apply, fill out a Talent Bank Application at cityofmustang.org/cmo/webform/talent-bank-application or email jheasley@cityofmustang.org.

Legislators share positives, concerns of state business

New session begins Feb. 7 at the Capitol

By **HALEY HUMPHREY**
newseditor@mustangnews.info

Rep. Brian Hill and Sens. Paul Rosino, Lonnie Paxton and Michael Brooks provided legislation updates, ranging from teacher shortages, marijuana grow operations and more, to community members during the Jan. 25 annual legislative breakfast.

Mustang First Baptist Church pastor Michael Staton was the moderator of the legislative panel, asking questions that were submitted by city officials and Mustang



Local legislators discussed the pandemic, public education, teacher shortages, medical marijuana and more during the annual Mustang Chamber of Commerce Legislative Breakfast Jan. 25. From left to right, Rep. Brian Hill, Sens. Michael Brooks, Lonnie Paxton and Paul Rosino made up the panel inside the Mustang Town Center. Photo / Haley Humphrey

Mustang, Oklahoma



USPS No. 595-120
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See **SESSION** Page 6A

Trial slated for Yukon resident accused of lewd acts to minor

STAFF REPORTS

A trial date was set for Yukon resident Jason Drylie during his latest status conference at the end of January.

Drylie, who was charged with felony lewd, lewd or indecent acts to a

child under 16, in addition to providing beer to a person under 21, was set for a call docket and hearing of motions Feb. 15 and a jury trial March 7 in Canadian County District Court.

Charges were originally filed against Drylie June 12, 2017.

Session From page 1A

Chamber of Commerce members.

The panel discussion began with if local businesses' employees should be required to be vaccinated. Local businesses know how to run their businesses much better than the state of Oklahoma, Paxton said.

"That is their job, not ours whether I agree with that or not," he said.

Brooks agreed, saying local businesses also have the authority to enforce mask wearing.

'OSSBA per student funding not accurate'

The second question regarded Oklahoma being the last state in the region for per student spending and what legislators were going to do to increase it to meet or exceed the regional average.

Hill said the per student formula is difficult to understand. About 53% of every appropriated dollar goes to public education.

He said there has been an increase in funding the last five years. The dip in funding because of COVID-19 has been rebalanced, Hill added.

This fiscal year is the largest state budget in Oklahoma's history, and many of those dollars will go toward public education, he said.

"I think at the end of the day, this comes down to making sure our students have the best opportunity to thrive, to compete against anybody else in the U.S. and across the world," Hill said.

Since 2017, Rosino said education funding has increased by \$2 billion. Though, there is still much to be accomplished, he added.

Before the breakfast, Paxton came prepared with different data than what the Oklahoma State School Boards Association released on its website. The senator researched the number of students OSSBA is using and the appropriation funding, of which it used numbers from

fiscal year 2019.

"I do not think it's accurate and I do not think it comes near painting a clear picture of what you as taxpayers are doing to fund public education in Oklahoma," Paxton said.

The association claimed the state appropriated \$6.4 billion to education in 2019, which comes out to about \$9,200 for each student. Paxton said the numbers do not consider another \$700 million from gross production, property, sales taxes and more.

The number Paxton came up with was \$7.1 billion.

The number of students reported that OSSBA used is 698,000. However, Paxton noted that some are counted twice or more, as students move to other districts.

Paxton figured about a \$500 per student funding negative that did not exist because of this counting.

Another source of funding not included in OSSBA's numbers is about \$330 million that the state allocates to the Oklahoma Teacher Retirement system for benefits that have been given and were not paid for.

Local bond issue funds are also not counted as school funding, he added.

Waiting game continues for debris cleanup reimbursement

The third question asked legislators if they are in support of municipalities receiving a 12.5% reimbursement from the federal government for the October 2020 ice storm and February 2021 winter storm debris cleanup. Like many municipalities, Mustang is still waiting to receive its reimbursement.

While all the legislators are in favor of the reimbursement, Rosino said the state is still paying claims from 2008 and 2011 when Oklahoma was in a budget crisis. He said they will eventually get the 12.5%, it will just take more time than expected.

Legislation aims for more control over medical marijuana

The fourth question was about recreational marijuana and how the legislators are prepared to address it this legislative session. Rosino said law enforcement and communities are struggling with the amount of dispensaries throughout the state,

which was made possible by State Question 788.

A problem that officials with the Oklahoma Medical Marijuana Authority and Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation see is that medical marijuana is taxed at a lower percentage, the senator added. It's also very simple to get a medical marijuana card.

Brooks said he would be very surprised if the Legislature passed recreational marijuana without some vote of the people.

Hill said there are 100,000 displaced people from pre-COVID to now, and about 60,000 are now working in the medical marijuana industry. It does not require a certificate or form of education and the starting pay is typically \$20 an hour.

About 30 bills passed by legislators concerned tightening ownership requirements, which would cap the number of commercial licenses in an area, a proposed moratorium on existing operations until they become compliant with the law and more. Hill said he was in favor of medical marijuana businesses posting their OMMA number and who is in charge.

Throughout the state, there have been shadow companies making large purchases of land for nefarious activities related to marijuana, he noted.

"It was a skeleton is what we were handed," Hill said. "There are some serious issues our neighbors are facing, and I think we have to address it."

The Oklahoma Municipal League has been working with agriculturists to see what can be done, Paxton added.

Rosino also has a bill for grow operations to be 1,000 feet away from schools.

Domestic violence victims' protection to be addressed this session

As of now, City Hall must release a former wife's new home address to her abusive former husband. The fifth question regarded how this loophole could be closed to protect domestic violence victims.

Paxton said this was taken up in the Legislature last year, as there are privacy issues.

Rosino said Mustang City Manager Tim Rooney was helpful in determining what can

MPS transitions away from individual contact-tracing

STAFF REPORTS

Mustang Public Schools announced Monday that it will no longer individually contact trace. The Oklahoma State

Department of Health, the Oklahoma City-County Health Department and the Tulsa County Health Department also recently transitioned

away from universal case investigation and contact-tracing for COVID-19. For more information, email MERCcontact@mustangps.org.

"Do not let the headline be the only thing that drives your decision. Dig in. Provide (officials) with information that may be helpful to them."

- Charles Bradley

Mustang Public Schools Superintendent

be done to resolve the issue. Legislation was developed last year to block this requirement, but it stalled in the Legislature.

The senator expects to take up the issue again this session.

"Really we have to protect victims of domestic abuse," Rosino said.

There is a current database for domestic abuse offenders, Brooks said. The Violent Crime Offenders (Mary Rippey) Registration Act serves as a place people can identify people who have been convicted of domestic violence.

Through one of Brooks' bills, domestic violence offenders would be required to register on the database to better address these issues.

'Teachers are underappreciated'

How to address teacher shortages was the sixth question. At one of their most recent meetings, Brooks said he discussed with a charter school board ways in which teachers can be retained. "Time and money — those are the two things that make someone feel appreciated," he said.

Most teachers throughout the state make less than \$50,000. Some education programs have been cut at universities because not enough students are wanting to become teachers, as the salary would not be adequate to pay back loans and have a decent standard of living, Brooks said.

An apprenticeship program could allow high school students a chance to be in the classroom to see if they would like teaching before incurring tuition and fees in college, he added. Ideally, they would also be able to get paid while completing the apprenticeship.

Paxton said as a society, people must recognize how worn-out teachers and first responders are because of the pandemic. The social media attacks on teachers, schools, hospitals and elected officials must stop, he added.

Rosino said

Oklahoma is not the only state being affected by teacher shortages.

Data about Pennsylvania, which is in the Top 10 for teacher salaries, indicated there were 27,000 teachers who graduated from teaching colleges in 2012 in the state. In 2021, there were 6,000.

"It is a national phenomenon," Rosino said. "Teachers are underappreciated, we don't talk to them enough. I think parents need to be more involved."

Many teachers are also trying to meet students' first needs, like food and mental health, he added.

Foreign real estate purchases tied to marijuana

Foreign real estate acquisitions throughout the state was the seventh question. These acquisitions are directly related to marijuana issues, which Paxton said is being addressed this session.

Senators differ on virtual meetings

The eighth question was if the legislators were in favor of emergency virtual meetings. Paxton said he is a proponent of in-person meetings because elected officials need to be accessible to their constituents and members of the press.

"Sometimes as officials, we don't like what people say about us, we don't like what the press writes about us, but they absolutely have the right to be there and ask us questions," he said.

Brooks disagreed, saying local governments can define what an emergency is and hold virtual meetings at their discretion, as local control is paramount. Although virtual meetings were established at the beginning of the pandemic as a safety precaution, Mustang city officials said that was not what they wanted.

'Oklahoma Standard shines among faith communities with Afghan refugees'

How Afghan refugees are being helped acclimate in the state was

the ninth question. Rosino said the federal government has designated Catholic charities to take care of them by providing basic necessities, places to live, go to school and find employment.

About 600 of the Afghans in the state are children between 5 and 18 years old, Brooks said.

"Our faith community has done an amazing job of stepping up for these 1,800 refugees," Hill said.

Legislators look forward to session next week

The last question was about what the legislators are most excited about in the upcoming session, which begins Feb. 7.

Hill noted the workforce gap, as he will be looking at universities' and trade schools' programs and how they can best serve students. He said they should be doing more in the nursing, engineering and teaching fields.

Brooks said he is most excited about the \$1.4 billion of federal funding coming to Oklahoma as part of the American Rescue Plan Act. The money has the potential to make generational change with projects throughout the state, he said.

Paxton noted the state's revenue is setting records. He would like to see the savings account continue to grow.

Paxton also looks forward to stopping bad legislation. Since the redistricting process has been finalized, Paxton now represents everyone west of Czech Hall Road, which is 40% of Mustang.

Rosino said he is looking to future at how the state will pay the federal funding back, as there are concerns with how and where to spend it. He was also pleased with reducing taxes last year.

In closing remarks, Mustang Public Schools Superintendent Charles Bradley encouraged the attendees to be engaged about issues that affect them and communicate with their elected officials.

"Do not let the headline be the only thing that drives your decision," he said. "Dig in. Provide (officials) with information that may be helpful to them."

Storm From page 1A

Many offices, including Canadian County offices, closed Wednesday due to the weather.

Gov. Kevin Stitt signed an executive order Tuesday, declaring a state of emergency for all 77 counties in Oklahoma, due to the severe weather. The order will be in effect for seven days.

Growth From page 1A

flooding, traffic and overall growth concerns with the council for nearly two hours regarding the 209 Homes by Taber that will be constructed in the new development, which will be in close proximity to three other subdivisions.

There will be a minimum of 1,800 square feet required to build for the 7,200-square-foot lots and 2,200 square feet for the 14,000-square-foot lots.

The Mustang Planning Commission recommended approval 4-2 at its January meeting. This was the third time the developer had applied for rezoning and the commission and council said it was the most well-thought-out plan by far and addressed previous concerns.

With the exception of the south end of the property, the zoning matches the surrounding areas of single-family development.

Many residents said they did not want Mustang to cram as many houses in an area as

possible and wanted the council to pause on expanding residential growth until water and traffic issues were addressed. A traffic analysis has yet to be initiated for the area.

The developer's engineer said they have thought out drainage issues with the property, as they will stay out of the flood plain. A crash gate for emergency services entry will be installed near Bittercreek on the property, as well.

With the 209 new homes, a \$1 million increase in sales tax for the city is expected, the engineer said.

Mayor Brian Grider said growth is difficult and reminded attendees that with more residential area, more revenue will be generated for the school district and more commercial development will come to the city.

More information about the new subdivision will be provided in the Feb. 10 edition of the Mustang News.

In appointment news, Ward 4 council member James Waugh took his oath of office. Waugh, who is a local minister, was the only person to file for the seat.

In more appointment news, the council appointed local broker John Gassen to the Planning Commission. The commission recently had someone retire and Gassen had applied for the position about a year ago.

Gassen said he appreciates the opportunity to serve on the commission.

In council reports, McKenzie said he is happy with the new playground at Heights Park.

Vice Mayor Michael Ray also mentioned the Mustang Public Schools' Board of Education Seat No. 2 election coming up Feb. 8 and encouraged residents to be engaged.

In member news, Assistant City Manager Justin Battles filled in for City Manager Tim Rooney.

DUI From page 1A

parents Jeff and Kristy Murrow said in a statement to the News. "We believe Judge Hesse's sentence was appropriate and represented justice for Marissa. We are so grateful to the Oklahoma Highway Patrol troopers involved in her case, as

well as the Canadian County District Attorney's Office for all the work they did and for how passionately they pursued justice for our daughter. It is our hope that in the future, stronger sentences would be given and served (versus

suspended) for earlier offenses before an innocent victim's life is taken and so many more lives changed forever."

The crash occurred Oct. 3, 2020, and Penney was driving under the influence with a blood alcohol

content more than double the state's legal limit. Penney had several DUI offenses prior to the crash.

The Mustang News will print a more in-depth article about the sentencing hearing in the Feb. 10 edition.