

Board of Ed...from Page 1A

tax that is collected by school systems for up to five years, for the purposes of building new facilities, renovating existing facilities, upgrading HVAC systems in the schools, adding to aging bus fleets, updating technology and more.

Currently, the schools are collecting revenues from ESPLOST IV – originally approved by voters in 2013 – and the board office hopes that voters will approve the upcoming referendum in May to allow the system to continue its educational mission of providing Union County students with only the best opportunities.

The current ESPLOST collection has paid for a variety of big projects and upgrades, including the Union County Schools Fine Arts Center, the Union County Schools Agriscience Center, classroom additions at the schools, 10 brand new Blue Bird school buses and other items.

Should it be approved by

voters, ESPLOST V calls for an extensive list of projects to be completed over its five-year collection period, which will begin in 2018, after ESPLOST IV expires.

As per the board's wishes, in a 3-1-1 vote – three votes cast in favor, one against and one to abstain – ESPLOST V will retain the same parameters as ESPLOST IV.

Janna Davenport Akins voted no, while Tony Hunter abstained.

The collection cap of ESPLOST V will be set at \$21 million over the five-year collection period, just like ESPLOST IV, and the board has retained the ability to sell bonds for up to \$13.5 million in the event of an emergency.

Not everyone on the board agreed with the bonding parameter, which would allow the schools to take on debt to pay for future projects; the board has been, after all, strongly committed to a pay-

as-you-go model of funding ESPLOST projects, and two board members took exception to keeping the ability to sell bonds.

The measure carried, however, as three of the board members felt it would be beneficial to hold on to the ability to borrow money in case of a disaster, such as a tornado or other catastrophic event taking out one or more school facilities.

Borrowing money would put the system in a position of having to pay costly interest on its debt, and all board members doubled down in the Nov. 21 meeting on their commitment to remain a pay-as-you-go board.

Addressing the board, Dr. Rayfield discussed a list of proposed ESPLOST V projects compiled by system administrators, school principals, and the system's maintenance department.

"I'm probably as proud of this list of projects as any one I've ever done, because it's a really diverse list," said Union County Schools

Superintendent Dr. Rayfield. "It has something happening in just about every department that we work in."

"It has things happening on every campus. It has things happening that need to happen in terms of upgrades and maintenance and upkeep on our facilities, as well as replacing some things."

The ESPLOST V project list includes the following areas of concentration:

Transportation and maintenance equipment, including 10 new buses over five years; technology innovations and system upgrades; roof renovations and repairs; parking lots and roads; cafeteria renovations and expansion;

Athletic facilities and renovations; HVAC renovation and repair; a teaching greenhouse at the middle school; systemwide kitchen equipment replacement; CTAE building and shop expansion; and miscellaneous maintenance and system upgrades.

Also in the Nov. 21 board meeting, Dr. Rayfield



Union County Board of Education Members Tony Hunter and Cindy Odom. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

recognized Union County Schools' own David Murphy for his work on the system's Emergency Operations Plan.

In turn, the schools received recognition for their school safety plan via David Shanks, a representative from the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency.

Dr. Rayfield continued the recognitions that evening by honoring the Union County

Fire Department in the meeting, presenting an award to Fire Chief David Dyer and several of his firefighters for being Partners in Education.

The board also approved a date change for the December board meeting, switching it from Dec. 19 to Dec. 12 to accommodate the upcoming Christmas break.

Check back next week for continued coverage of the 2017 Teachers of the Year.

Stalcup...from Page 1A

ever before.

And anyone who knows Stalcup knows this – once she sets her mind to it, there's no stopping her. Before long, she was well on her way to competing in her first competition, bikini division, in Franklin, North Carolina this past March.

"I was originally gearing up for a competition in April, which was huge," said Stalcup.

"I would have been crushed there, like no coming back crushed at that one. So I met Yvette and Mark (Ray) doing the fit tank and they said, 'hey, why don't you come to this show, it's smaller and you can get your feet wet.'"

"They worked with me on posing and helped me with my first show in Franklin."

Even though it was her first competition, Stalcup

took the stage with strength, confidence and her hard work shined, sending her back to Union County with a first place position, for her first ever competition.

While Stalcup returned to her daily routine of giving back to the community through her work at the Wellness Center and her community boot camp, the excitement of competition clung to her. Though she had planned to wait until the spring to compete again, the anticipation had her back training for the stage in August.

"I wasn't planning on doing another show until next year," said Stalcup. "Originally, all of this was to keep me busy while my son was in the military. I started with the March competition and I was up and down since then, trying to figure out what I was going to do."

Early in the fall, Stalcup began training with Young Harris College Trainer Debbi Yamo and had decided to take a giant leap and enter a larger competition, Clash of the Carolinas, in Lancaster, South Carolina, on Saturday, Nov. 18.



Stalcup performed well in the competition. It was her first experience inside the world of professional figure competitions.

While the competition was different for the larger show, Stalcup again committed to the process and worked hard, training five days a week and cracking down on nutrition to lean out for the South Carolina show, with the help and support from Yamo.

"Debbi is always very direct with me," said Stalcup. "If something changes, it's

because something in my body has changed. She knows what she's talking about. There's always a purpose. If I'm doing something, there's a reason. If there's a change or I'm lacking somewhere, there's a reason."

"And I appreciate that. And I trust her."

Stalcup walked away from the Clash of the Carolinas, her second competition of her first year competing, with two

second place prizes and a third place prize, and she is already anticipating her next show this upcoming spring, where she intends to gain her pro card, moving up in competitions.

"I couldn't have done it, or continue to do it, without all the support I've gotten from friends and family," said Stalcup. "I'm excited to see where this journey takes me."



Kevin and Susan Stalcup at the Clash of the Carolinas competition.

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