

ADE DAILY NEWS CLIPS

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State sees rosier revenue outlook (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

Gov. Mike Beebe's administration increased its general revenue forecast by \$34.2 million for the fiscal year ending June 30 and by \$11.7 million in the next fiscal year, citing slightly stronger-than-expected economic growth.

The state Department of Finance and Administration increased its forecast for gross general revenue to \$6.095 billion in fiscal 2013 and to \$6.228 billion in fiscal 2014, department Director Richard Weiss wrote in a report to Sen. Bruce Maloch, D-Magnolia, and Rep. Joe Jett, D-Success, who are co-chairmen of the Legislature's Joint Committee on Economic and Tax Policy.

"Rebound in the state economy from business and household economic activity continues at a modest pace, but with better-than-expected income tax receipts," Weiss wrote in his 10-page report.

Weiss said in an interview that state officials decided to increase their "very conservative" general revenue forecasts from last November for fiscal 2013 and 2014 because the economy is growing a little more.

In November, state officials were worried particularly about the possible effects of the federal government's "fiscal cliff" - a combination of tax increases and spending cuts - and the economic downturn in Europe, he said.

"We think there are lots of problems out there [and] the economy is not performing at the top of things at all, but it is better than it was in November, and we think it is going to slowly get better," he said Wednesday.

The Beebe administration increased the general revenue forecast nearly two months after Beebe said he didn't plan to change his administration's general-revenue forecast for fiscal 2014 "unless something wild changes, and nothing has changed."

Beebe spokesman Matt DeCampbell said the increase in the general revenue forecast is "a small increase" within a state budget of about \$5 billion a year, but the finance department "likes to be exact."

The administration increased the forecasts for fiscal 2013 and 2014 a day before the finance department releases the general revenue report for April, the month in which the state typically collects the largest amount in state tax revenue.

The state's "gross" general revenue outlays include income tax money that was collected and must be returned to taxpayers in the form of refunds. It also includes a more than half-dozen other things that have been given priority on funding, including court-mandated desegregation payments. Once those obligations are met, what is left is "net" revenue that is available for agencies to spend.

The finance department increased its forecast for net general revenue by \$38.2 million to \$4.865 billion for fiscal 2013 and by \$10.3 million to \$4.957 billion for fiscal 2014, department officials said.

The increased forecast for fiscal 2013 means the Legislature is expected to have at least \$38.2 million in surplus funds that it can dole out to programs or projects during its 2014 fiscal session or 2015 regular session, according to Weiss.

The increased forecast for fiscal 2014 means the state is projected to fully fund the general revenue budget that the Legislature enacted during this year's legislative session, as well as put \$18.9 million in a rainy-day fund and still have \$13.8 million left to carry over into next year, said John Shelnutt, the state's chief economic forecaster.

Act 1517 of 2013 divided the projected general revenue into Categories A, B and C with the first \$4.786 billion going to fund projects in Category A, the next \$131 million to Category B projects and \$6.65 million for Category C projects in fiscal 2014. The three categories total \$4.924 billion.

The state's previous forecast in November fully funded only projects in Categories A and B.

Category C includes \$2.6 million for the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, \$1.7 million for the Department of Human Services' Behavioral Health Services, \$1.587 million for the Health Department and \$687,500 for the Department of Correction.

Woodlawn Board Interviews 5 Finalists for Superintendent (Cleveland County Herald)

RISON – The Woodlawn School Board is expected to wrap up their interviews today (Wednesday, May 1) of the remainder of the five finalists selected for the superintendent's job, Board President Ray Gavin said Tuesday night in a phone interview.

The board met last Wednesday, April 24, to select five finalists from a field of 15 candidates for the job. The person selected will succeed Billy Williams, who will become superintendent of the Drew Central School District on July 1.

Williams submitted a letter of resignation to the board during its April meeting. His last official day as Woodlawn superintendent will be June 28, which coincides with the end of his current one-year contract.

Gavin said the board is not working on an particular timeline as to when to name a successor, but he did say he would like to have someone hired and ready to step into the job on July 1.

Once all five finalists have been interviewed, Gavin said he will likely call another board member later this week to review the five candidates. He said he hopes to have a consensus as to which candidate the board wants to go with when it holds its regular monthly meeting on May 13.

Gavin said they received applications from Arkansas, Oklahoma and Missouri for the job. He said the candidates included people with and without experience as a superintendent. All the candidates were from school districts of similar size to Woodlawn.

Police beat (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

Wanderer spurs school lockdown

A transient was arrested Wednesday after he walked into an elementary school, prompting it to lock down, police said.

About 3 p.m., Little Rock officers were called to Gibbs Magnet Elementary School at 1115 W. 16th St., where the man, later identified as Robert Tucker IV, entered the school and passed the office, police said. A teacher stopped him, and Tucker said he was there to deliver a message to another teacher, police said.

The principal was notified and approached Tucker, who said he was there to fill out a job application, police said. The principal gave Tucker directions to the library to fill out an application, but he went in the opposite direction, prompting the school lockdown, police said.

Police received several 911 calls after the lockdown, including one from the school nurse's husband, who told them about the intruder, police said.

Tucker kept walking through the school and when another teacher stopped him, he changed his story again, police said. Tucker then left the school and sat on bleachers between the elementary and Dunbar Middle School, where officers found him shortly after, police said.

He told officers he was picking up his children at the middle school, but officers learned he lied about that. He was taken in for questioning and when he tried to force his way out of the interview room, officers pinned him to the floor and arrested him, police said.

Officers then took him to the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences for a psychiatric evaluation, after which he was taken to jail on charges of criminal trespass, obstructing government operations, possessing an instrument of crime. He was being held without bail.