

## BRIEFS



Submitted photo

The weather balloon that Fairmont State University is searching for.

Staff, submitted reports

### Fairmont State seeks aid in finding weather balloon

Fairmont State University is seeking the public's help to locate a high-altitude balloon.

Fairmont State's Physics and Aviation program launched a weather balloon as an educational experiment April 27. During liftoff, the GPS and satellite tracking malfunctioned. This made it impossible for accurate tracking during the balloon's flight and landing.

The estimated landing spot, based upon pre-launch conditions, has the coordinates of 40.6455 (latitude) and -79.2345 (longitude). This is near the Trim Tree Road area, slightly northwest of Indiana, Pa.

The latest calculations estimate the balloon may have dropped 6-9 miles short of the estimated landing.

If you have found this item, please contact one of the following at FSU: Siegfried Bleher, 304-367-4582; Galen Hansen, 304-367-4176; Jason Vosburgh, 304-367-4283; or Travis Miller, 304-367-4246.

### Sheriff's dept. is investigating theft at Cheat Lake BFS

Monongalia County Sheriff's deputies are investigating an armed robbery at the Cheat Lake BFS that occurred early Saturday morning.

Chief Deputy Al Kisner said a white man entered the store around 3:50 a.m. with a knife, and demanded the clerk give him cash from the register. The suspect fled the scene afterwards, and nobody was injured during the robbery.

The employee told police that the suspect, wearing camo and a baseball cap, entered the store earlier that night.

Anyone with information on the robbery can contact the department, at 304-291-7260.

### Tickets available for DAR dinner and fundraiser

Thursday's charity to benefit Wreaths Across America

**TICKETS TO** the fundraiser can be purchased at the door on Thursday or purchased in advance by contacting Shinkovich, at 304-278-5573 or emailing her, at mdsn@comcast.net. Buyers can also contact Anne Smittle, at 304-777-6266 and email, at wasmittie@comcast.net along with Rebecca Davis, at 304-328-5491 and gmaudie@frontiernet.net.

The Dominion Post

Two chapters of the Daughters of the America Revolution (DAR) still have tickets available for a fundraiser to honor the country's veterans.

The Elizabeth Ludington Hagans-Col. John Evans Chapter and Col. Col. Zackquill Morgan Chapter will hold a dinner, along with accompanying live and silent auctions, at the Morgantown Elks Club from 6-10 p.m. Thursday. Guests will also be treated to musical performances by Mark Palmer and the University High School Band.

Brenda Shinkovich, vice regent of the Elizabeth Ludington Hagans-Col. John Evans Chapter, said the effort is part of Wreaths Across America. One hundred percent of the proceeds, she said, will be used

SEE FUNDRAISER, 6-A

# Groups protest plant purchase

## Another plant joins list of those opposed

BY DAVID BEARD

The Dominion Post

Several groups and businesses that have opposed state approval of Mon Power's purchase of the Pleasants Power Station from a corporate sister are also opposing federal approval.

Mon Power and its FirstEnergy sister company, Potomac Edison, are seeking state Public Service Commission approval to buy the

coal-fired Pleasants Power Station from another sister, Allegheny Energy Supply, to make up for a projected capacity shortfall.

Mon Power also has a concurrent application for approval, filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. The PSC has oversight of the transaction's effects on retail rates, while FERC examines its effects on wholesale power rates. One or both could block the transaction.

FERC received protests from Longview Power LLC; jointly from the Electric Power Supply Association and the PJM Power Providers Group (EPSA/P3); and jointly from the Community Power Network, WVSUN and the West

Virginia Citizens Action Group.

The PSC's consumer Advocate Division also filed with FERC comments in opposition to the transfer.

Mon Power explains in its FERC application that it and Allegheny Energy are affiliated companies, so the transaction falls under FERC oversight. FERC is concerned that the transaction is the result of a "transparent, fair and non-discriminatory Request for Proposals," and that a competitive RFP process is the best way to assure no affiliate preference.

FERC is also concerned that no "cross-subsidization" of a non-utility affiliate occurs. In simplest

terms, cross-subsidization in this context means that the cost burden of the Pleasants plant would not be shifted from private stockholders to the ratepayers of Mon Power, which is a public utility.

Mon Power maintains that the application meets both criteria. The RFP was open and fair. And the transaction will not affect competition, transmission rates or wholesale power rates.

In addition, Mon Power says the transaction is entitled to "safe harbor" from FERC cross-subsidy oversight because the PSC also is overseeing the transaction.

The opponents disagree with Mon Power's assertions. Their

SEE PLANT, 6-A

## Flocking together



William Wotring/The Dominion Post

Lauren Martin shows the group Westley, an American kestrel, on Saturday during the Morgantown Migratory Bird Day, at Coopers Rock.

## Coopers Rock hosts Migratory Bird Day

**FOR MORE** information on the Avian Conservation Center of Appalachia, visit [accavv.org](http://accavv.org). For information about Coopers Rock State Forest, visit [coopersrockstateforest.com](http://coopersrockstateforest.com).

Submitted to The Dominion Post

The Avian Conservation Center of Appalachia (ACCA) celebrated Morgantown Migratory Bird Day on Saturday, at Coopers Rock State Forest.

Festivities included a guided bird walk on the Raven Rock Trail, two live raptor presentations, a bird walk for children, kid's crafts, owl pellet dissection and educational displays. All activities were free and open to the public.

International Migratory Bird Day is celebrated annually at nature centers, zoos and parks across the Americas. The theme for 2017 is "Helping Birds Along the Way," which celebrates the importance of stopover sites — crucial refuges where migratory birds rest and refuel before continuing their jour-



William Wotring/The Dominion Post

Ruth Bergen shows the crowd Tundra, a peregrine falcon, at the Morgantown Migratory Bird Day, on Saturday.

**The theme for 2017 is "Helping Birds Along the Way," which celebrates the importance of stopover sites — crucial refuges where migratory birds rest and refuel before continuing their journeys.**

neys. Migratory flights can stretch thousands of miles across continents and oceans, and birds depend upon a handful of resource-rich and strategically placed habitats to acquire the energy-rich fat stores

they need to survive.

Founded in 2012, the ACCA is a Morgantown-based nonprofit organization dedicated to conserving the region's wild birds through research, education and rehabilitation.

## Man shoots dog in head accidentally

Animal was not his, charged with felony

BY ALEX LANG

The Dominion Post

A 20-year-old shot a dog in the head with a rifle at close range and faces a felony charge, according to an arrest report.

The Monongalia County Sheriff's Department charged Melieck T. Gardner, of Morgantown, with wanton endangerment. He was arraigned in Monongalia County Magistrate Court on Saturday. His bail was established at \$102,750. He also had outstanding citations for possession of a controlled substance and shoplifting.

According to his criminal complaint: On Saturday, deputies went to a Whisper Creek apartment for a report of a dog shot.

When they arrived, deputies found the dog already dead in a bedroom. It was shot in the head near the ear.

Deputies spoke to Gardner, who did not own the animal. He said he did not intentionally shoot the dog. Gardner told police that he was handling the rifle and it went off. He added that he knew the gun was loaded.

Gardner showed signs of being impaired and deputies found Alprazolam on him, which is a depressant.

Deputies found the rifle, which had another six rounds in the magazine and the gun's safety was off.

The gun's owner told police that Gardner did not have permission to handle the rifle and was a guest in the apartment.

The apartment is located on the second-floor and the bullet traveled down through the floor after killing the dog.

Wanton endangerment is punishable by one to five years in prison. As part of his bond conditions, Magistrate Sandy Holepit ordered that Gardner is not allowed to have contact with any animals.

## Xuzhou delegation visits 'sister city' Morgantown

Submitted to The Dominion Post

The Morgantown Sister Cities Commission recently hosted a delegation from Xuzhou, a city in China's Jiangsu Province.

The city of Morgantown established a "Sister Cities" relationship with Xuzhou, Quanshan District, last year, after holding a "Friendship City" status since 2012. Xuzhou is in east-central China, about 400 miles south of Beijing. The urban city has a population of about 3.4 million. Coal mining and higher education form part of the economic base of both Xuzhou and Morgantown.

The Xuzhou Delegation included Chen Hui, vice mayor of municipal government; Xu Pin, deputy director of the Municipal Urban Management Bureau; Zhang Yuanling, deputy director of the Urban and Rural Construction Bureau; Li Yongmei, section chief of Xuzhou Municipal Government Office; and Xu Hongwei, deputy secretary gen-



Submitted photo

Mayor Marti Shamberger (left) displays a scroll given to Morgantown by Xuzhou Vice Mayor Chen Hui.

eral of the People's Association for Foreign Affairs.

Paul Brake met with the delegation to explain his duties as

Morgantown city manager.

City Engineer Damien Davis discussed the department's responsibilities and duties with

his equals from Xuzhou — Xu Pin and Zhang Yuanling. He briefed the delegation on projects the department is working on and its budget.

Mayor Marti Shamberger and City Councilor Nancy Ganz, members of the Sister Cities Commission, exchanged gifts with the delegation. The city of Morgantown gave the delegation locally made and marketed supplies, including a pen, while Xuzhou Vice Mayor Chen Hui presented the city with a scroll and a silver plate.

The Xuzhou delegation finished the visit by participating in a walking tour of downtown Morgantown with members of the Sister Cities Commission and the Morgantown Convention and Visitors Bureau, before departing for Washington, D.C.

The Sister Cities Commission will host another group from Xuzhou in the fall.

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arguments are summarized below.

**Longview Power**

Longview Power and Mon Power both sell into the PJM regional market. Morgantown-based Longview is also a Mon Power customer.

Longview CEO Jeff Keffer said in a phone interview that the Pleasants proposal is part of a FirstEnergy effort to get old coal and nuclear plants out of the unregulated market, where they can't compete, into the regulated market where the rate of return is guaranteed.

The ratepayer subsidies, Keffer said, can keep the old plants operating and out of any potential bankruptcy filings.

The plants, he said, face price pressure from new, low-cost gas-fired plants. Gas plants and renewable energy also are subject to tax benefits not available for coal. And unlike Mon Power, privately owned Longview can't rely on subsidies to stay profitable — it has to sell competitively at the rates PJM dictates and try to keep costs down.

At some point, he said Mon Power will have nothing but old coal plants. "That is a recipe for disaster for the near future for West Virginia," he said. This is evidenced by Mon Power's Harrison Power Station, which it bought from Allegheny and is costing \$80 million more to operate than first expected. He believes the Pleasants

operation will also prove costlier than projected.

The letter spells that out: "Mon Power will likely have to invest substantial capital to update and maintain the Pleasants facility, and those costs will be passed along not only to Mon Power's customers, but to Potomac Edison and its customers."

Mon Power said that keeping the Pleasants plant running will preserve 200 jobs. Keffer said it's unfortunate those jobs are on the line and all jobs are important, but nobody asked the state to take over the mines when they began closing.

Ultimately, the problem of the coal plants losing money is FirstEnergy management's problem, he said, not the problem of West Virginia residents.

In its letter of protest to FERC, Longview said that the transaction does constitute a cross-subsidy by shifting the burden of the money-losing plant from stockholders to Mon Power ratepayers, creating a safety net that companies without affiliated utilities lack.

The letter cites FirstEnergy's CEO Charles Jones saying the company wants to get out of the competitive market and alleges that Mon Power rigged the RFP so that the Allegheny bid to sell Pleasants was the only suitable bid.

Longview is asking FERC to do one of several things: Set an evidentiary hearing before an administrative law judge or request more information from Mon Power and Potomac Edison; and, at a min-

imum, hold the issue until discovery is completed.

**EPSA/P3**

EPSA is a national trade association of independent power producers and marketers. P3 is a nonprofit policy group of power providers focused on the 13-state PJM region.

They said that while Mon Power conducted an RFP process, it was not competitively neutral.

They are asking FERC to either deny the application, initiate further proceedings or hold the current proceedings in abeyance until parties can make certain the RFP process was fair.

**WVSUN/CAG**

These groups also want FERC to deny the application. Like Longview, they say the deal is a cross-subsidy. Pleasants' profits are tied to PJM wholesale market income. Allegheny and FirstEnergy bear the market risks, and the market has gone south in recent years. Under Mon Power, captive customers would bear the burden of a guaranteed return.

This cross-subsidy is not in the public interest, they say.

They note that FirstEnergy has declared its plans to leave the competitive market by mid-2018.

They also point out that Mon Power's safe harbor argument is incorrect. While Mon Power says the PSC will review any cross-subsidy issues, the PSC instead deferred to FERC in the 2013 Harrison sale, and FERC

did nothing in that case.

The PSC CAD echoes all the above arguments and adds that no one else wants the money-losing Pleasants plant. "There is no evidence that a reasonable, well-informed entity in the business of electricity generation ... believes that Pleasants facility is a good investment."

**FirstEnergy responds**

FirstEnergy spokesman Todd Meyers provided this statement: "Mon Power will review the protest letter and evaluate whether to respond. We continue to believe Mon Power's proposed purchase of the Pleasants Power Station to resolve a significant projected capacity shortfall is in the best interest of our West Virginia customers and the communities we serve."

"The proposed transaction would lower rates for our customers and help preserve coal-related jobs. The plant employs about 200 people, consumes more than 3.5 million tons of coal and pays millions of dollars annually in property taxes.

"We expect our residential customers to save about \$1 on their monthly electric bills if the transaction is approved. Pleasants' winning bid price of \$195 million is far lower than the next bidders who were roughly at \$1.66 billion for an equivalent amount of generation capacity."

**Judge prohibits doctor from prescribing narcotics**

Associated Press

BECKLEY — A southern West Virginia judge ordered a physician to stop operating his practice as a pain clinic and prohibited him from prescribing narcotics, including opioid painkillers.

West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey's office said in a news release Friday that Raleigh County Circuit Judge Andrew Dimlich verbally entered his order regarding Dr. Yasar Aksoy. The order prohibits Aksoy from pre-

scribing Schedule II and III narcotics.

Morrisey's office filed a petition in March alleging that Aksoy operated his practice as a pain clinic by prescribing narcotics to more than half of the patients he saw. Pain clinics are allowed in West Virginia but must meet increased educational requirements and stricter regulations.

Aksoy said in a phone call he didn't believe he had done anything wrong and felt he was performing a public service for people with chronic pain.

**FUNDRAISER**

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to purchase wreaths to lay at the grave sites of veterans buried in Morgantown's Oak Grove Cemetery.

"They date all the way back to the French and Indian War. Some of them are unmarked," Shinkovich said, noting that at least 100 wreaths will be placed there in December. Any remaining money will be used to buy wreaths that will be placed at the West Virginia National Cemetery in Grafton.

There are still at least 50 tickets available for purchase at \$25 each, the same cost of a wreath.

Wreaths Across America originated with Morrill Worcester — owner of Worcester Wreath Company of Harrington, Maine visiting Arlington National Cemetery at the age of 12 and the impression left on him. Years later, in 1992, Worcester had a surplus of wreaths during the holiday season and made arrangements to have them placed in one of the cemetery's older sections that received few visitors.

As time passed more and more volunteers, business-

es and organizations — such as the VFW and American Legion chapters, to name a few — joined the endeavor until photos of the snow-covered stones adorned with wreaths went viral in 2005 and launched a nationwide effort.

In 2014, Wreaths Across America and its national network of volunteers laid more than 700,000 memorial wreaths at 1,000 locations across the country such as the Pearl Harbor Memorial, Bunker Hill, Valley Forge and the sites of the Sept. 11 attacks. The organization's goal of covering Arlington National Cemetery was met that same year with the placement of 226,525 wreaths. Wreath-laying ceremonies are held on the second or third Saturday in December throughout the country.

"Our veterans deserve this, and I wish I could do more, Shinkovich said.

Along with tickets, she said the DAR is also accepting items to be auctioned off. So far, wine baskets, homemade quilts, Lakeview resort gift certificates and jewelry are among the items up for bid.

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