



Arrest reports are in today's paper.  
**INSIDE, A5**

COVID-19 IN SPALDING COUNTY

3324

CASES

108

DEATHS

# The GRIFFIN DAILY NEWS

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2021

PUBLISHED FOR EUGENE DABBS AND ALL OF OUR READERS SINCE 1872

VOL. 148, NO. 23 | \$2 DAILY / \$3 WEEKEND

## No action taken on Dutton ethics complaint

Item to be placed on county BOC's Feb. 15 agenda

BY TIM DALY  
MANAGING EDITOR  
TIM@GRIFFINDAILYNEWS.COM

A discussion and subsequent vote on an ethics complaint against Spalding County Board of Commissioners member James Dutton resulted in no action Monday night.

A motion by Dutton for the board to discuss and vote on the complaint at the board's next meeting on Feb. 15 resulted in a 2-2 vote, which means no action

was taken Monday night. In order for an ethics complaint to be forwarded to an ethics review board, three commissioners must vote in favor of sending the complaint to a review board.

Griffin resident Sharon Royle, a resident of Dutton's district, filed the complaint with the Board of Commissioners on Jan. 14. Royle wrote in the complaint that Facebook posts made by Dutton in December and January "go against the Constitution of the United States, United States Code, and State of Georgia Code."

In the complaint, Royle accused Dutton of "advocating for the overthrow of the United States government" in a post Dutton

made on Jan. 6. The board on Monday night discussed establishing a date to review the allegations to determine if there had been a "prima facie" violation of the county's code of ethics.

"Prima facie" is defined as "accepted as correct until proved otherwise."

After a lengthy discussion Dutton made his motion. The motion resulted in a 2-2 vote, with Dutton and Commissioner Ryan Bowlden supporting the motion and board Chairwoman Gwen Flowers-Taylor and Commissioner Rita Johnson opposing the motion.

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## Residents defend and criticize Dutton

BY TIM DALY  
MANAGING EDITOR  
TIM@GRIFFINDAILYNEWS.COM

Spalding County Board of Commissioners member James Dutton was defended and criticized Monday night as several local residents spoke about the ethics complaint filed against him.

During the citizen comment portion of the Board of Commissioners meeting two residents defended Dutton while one criticized him.

Griffin resident Yoshonda Jones said she was "extremely disgusted with the nature of these (Facebook) posts."

"We cannot have an elected official advocating for the overthrow of the government," Jones said.

Jones said Spalding County residents "will not stand for things like this."

SEE DUTTON/PAGE A2

## COVID-19 variant found in Georgia

BY KAREN GUNNELS  
STAFF WRITER  
KAREN@GRIFFINDAILYNEWS.COM

The Georgia Department of Public Health has confirmed there are now 19 cases of the COVID-19 variant that have been identified in Georgia.

This is the same variant discovered recently in the United Kingdom, in several other countries, and other U.S. states.

So far, no other COVID-19 variants have been identified in Georgia.

"We must assure we are taking every precaution right now to prevent transmission of COVID and to avoid a surge in hospitalizations and loss of life," said Kathleen Toomey, state public health commissioner.

The COVID-19 variant cases in Georgia have affected individuals between the ages of 15 to 61, including eight males and 11 females. According to the DPH, the cases live in Carroll, Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fulton, Gwinnett and Paulding counties.

In a statement released by the DPH, the agency is working to identify close contacts of the individuals and will monitor them closely.

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Griffin High's Jeff Johnson (2) takes down a Northgate ball carrier during a game this past season at Memorial Stadium in Griffin.

PHOTO COURTESY OF STEVE KNIGHT

## Five Bears expected to sign today

BY JOHN SULLIVAN  
SPORTS EDITOR  
JSULLIVAN@GRIFFINDAILYNEWS.COM

Five Griffin High players are expected to ink National Letters of Intent during a ceremony 10:45 a.m. in the commons area at the school when college football's traditional signing period opens today.

Linebacker Jeff Johnson is expected to sign with NCAA Division I Presbyterian College in South Carolina, while quarterback/receiver Quamari Williams and lineman Davari Wright are expected to sign with NCAA Div. II Notre Dame College in Ohio, and lineman Gerald Pope and defensive back Mikian Bouie are expected to ink with

NAIA William Penn University in Iowa.

Joining them will be three Bears — cornerbacks Prince Green (Illinois) and Brandon Calloway (Purdue) as well as safety/running back and return man Jordan Favors (Appalachian State) — who signed with NCAA Division I schools during the early signing period in mid December but who will hold formal signings today.

"We're hitting at a good clip there, to get the kids to the next level," Griffin High head coach Kareem Reid said back in December of his projections for a class with only 11 seniors, including only eight who were major contributors.

Bears backup defensive end Marcus

Brown Jr. might also sign too.

"He hasn't confirmed whether or not he is," Reid said on Tuesday.

Across town, Spalding High head coach Carl Kearney said three of the Jaguars players — Jelani CoPenny, Keshon Seay and Rockdrez Yarbrough — could likely also sign at some point during the traditional signing period.

Both local private school head football coaches, Skipstone Academy's Dan Salvador and Griffin Christian's Mike Freeman, said they didn't expect to have anyone sign today, although Freeman said Daniel Gibbs has garnered some interest from several schools and could be a candidate to sign later in the period which ends in Aug. 1 this year.

## Georgia Senate GOP introduce bills to limit mail voting

BY BEAU EVANS  
STAFF WRITER  
CAPITOL BEAT NEWS SERVICE

ATLANTA — Republican state senators have rolled out a legislative package aimed at overhauling Georgia's election laws by limiting who can vote by mail, outlining how to prove identification and outlawing absentee-ballot drop boxes.

The eight bills, filed late Monday by top Senate Republican leaders, mark the most

sweeping attempt to change local voting laws after the 2020 election cycle stirred mistrust among many conservative Georgians over the state's election integrity.

The bills especially target absentee voting in Georgia after all three major elections in the 2020 cycle saw more than 1 million mail-in ballots cast amid the COVID-19 pandemic, helping Democrats carry Georgia in the 2020 presidential election and flip both



of the state's U.S. Senate seats. Democratic lawmakers quickly cried foul, slamming

the move by Republicans as attempts at voter suppression seeking to halt Democrats' momentum in statewide elections that are likely to be close for the next several years.

Republican lawmakers including Gov. Brian Kemp and Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger have called many of the proposed changes necessary to restore voter confidence in the state's election system and rein in mail-in voting

after local elections officials complained they were overwhelmed during the 2020 cycle.

Three of the bills focus on absentee voting by requiring a driver's license or other form of ID to request an absentee ballot; banning the mail-in drop boxes voters used often in the 2020 elections; and ending registered Georgia voters' ability to vote

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### Deaths

Martha Henderson Elrod  
John Author Cash



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Today's weather:  
Sunny

51 29  
High Low