

Deer Creek Pilot

Guiding the South Delta for 147 years

VOLUME 148 NUMBER 46

ROLLING FORK, MS

NOVEMBER 14, 2024

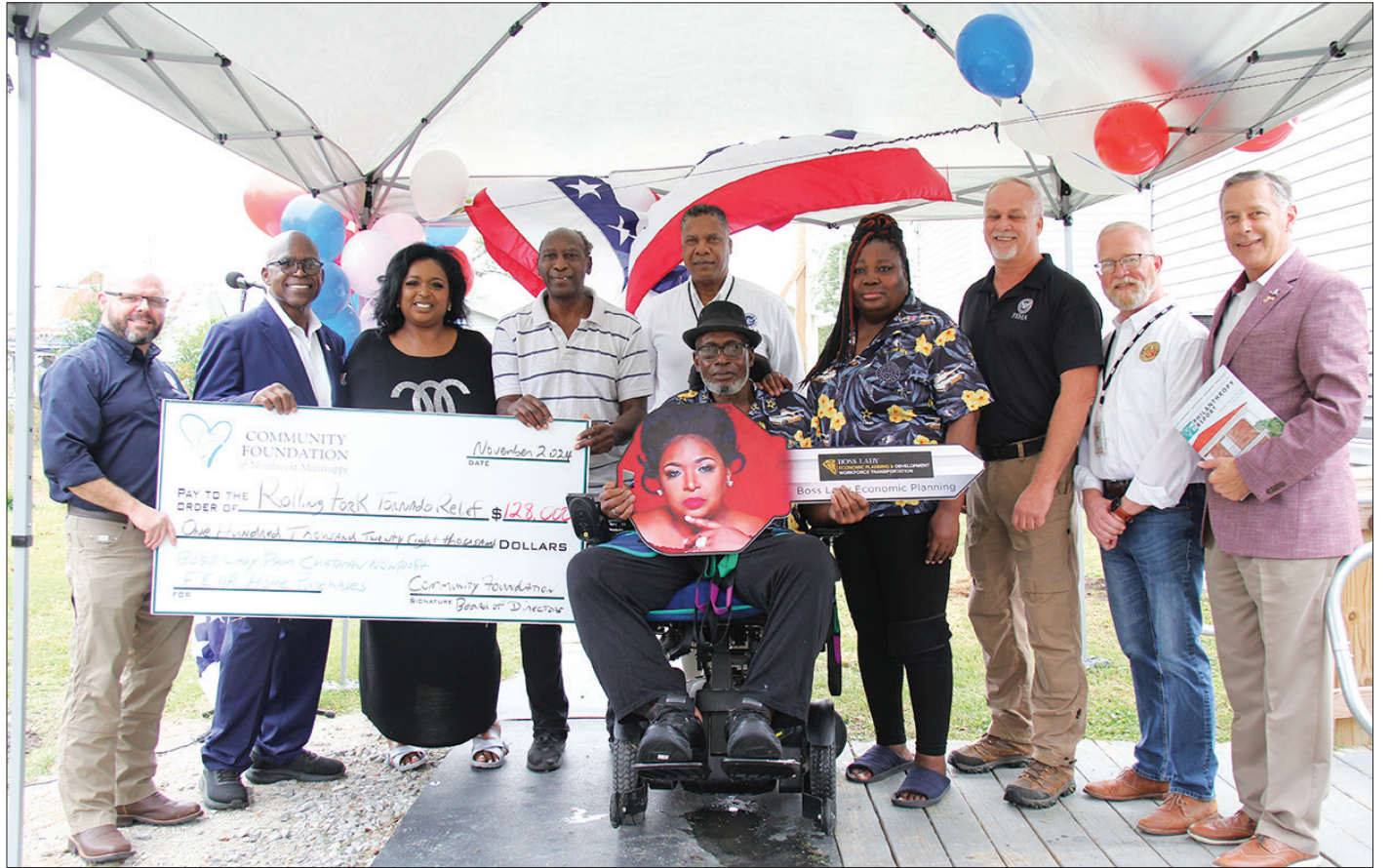
\$1.00

Two Rolling Fork Veterans given keys to new homes

ROLLING FORK—Two Rolling Fork Veterans have become homeowners thanks to a partnership between the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi, Boss Lady Dr. Pam Chatman, Archie and Olivia Manning and FEMA. The veterans, Joseph McGee and Jimmy Barfield, were displaced during the March 2023 tornado. They and their families have been living in FEMA tempo-

rary trailers on Russel Circle since a few months after the storm. On Friday, those trailers, valued at \$100,000 each, were awarded permanently to the men. “No longer will you have to pay rent. No lon-

ger will you wonder how you are going to pay rent,” said Dr. Pam Chatman of Boss Lady Economic Planning and Development. “Today, you will become—you are—the owner of your new home. Thank you FEMA for allowing this to happen for these gracious veterans who have paved the way for us to be able to stand before you.” Chatman, the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi and Ar-



The Boss Lady Dr. Pam Chatman and Keith Fulcher, president of the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi, along with officials from FEMA, MEMA, and Rolling Fork Mayor Eldridge Walker, officially presented two of the city's veterans, Jimmy Barfield and Joseph McGee, with the titles to their FEMA trailers during a special event last Friday morning. Through donations from the likes of Archie and Olivia Manning, 10 residents of Rolling Fork who lost their residences in the March 2023 tornado now own their own homes, free and clear.

“When we see progress happening almost two years behind the event to the degree and the pace that it has happened, it makes it all worthwhile for those who do what we do on a day-to-day basis. More than anything I believe it offers a ray of hope, and nobody offers that ray of hope, in my opinion, like Dr. Pam, The Boss Lady.”

—TODD DEMUTH
MEMA

chic and Olivia Manning have been partnering to help Rolling Fork in a myriad of ways since the tornado. It was their partnership that provided new football uniforms for the South Delta Bulldogs last year when

they were awarded permanently to the men. “No longer will you have to pay rent. No lon-



Disabled veteran Jimmy Barfield thanks Dr. Pam Chatman and FEMA for his handicapped accessible mobile home during an event commemorating the pay-off of his and fellow veteran Joseph McGee's trailers last Friday morning in Rolling Fork.

the team found themselves displaced from their school, their gymnasium and their football field. In addition, the partnership has paid for eight other FEMA trailers providing permanent housing for Rolling Fork families. And last Friday, on the eve of Veteran's Day weekend, they wanted to honor some of the storm survivors who have served their country. “Rolling Fork has consumed a lot of thoughts and a lot of sleepless nights for myself and many others on my staff and certainly our friends with the federal emergency agency,” said Todd DeMuth, private sector liaison for MEMA. “So, when we see progress happening almost two years behind the event to the degree and the pace that it has-

opened, it makes it all worthwhile for those who do what we do on a day-to-day basis. More than anything I believe it offers a ray of hope, and nobody offers that ray of hope, in my opinion, like Dr. Pam, The Boss Lady. If I had the authority to give you the Mississippi Citizen of the Year Award in the last two years, I'd give it to you.” Jeremy Slinker, federal coordinating officer for FEMA agreed. “I've been in Mississippi for not quite a year, but coming up on it, and once I got deployed here, and came to this area and learned about the impacts of the storm and the needs that were here, it was a lot. We had a lot of work to do. But by partnerships and working together, we're getting there, one step at a time.”

No one could be more pleased than the veterans themselves. “Oh man, this home is excellent,” said Jimmy Barfield, a six-year veteran with the U.S. Army. “We have everything I need. It's wheelchair accessible. The floors are fortified. It has a sprinkler system, and my wife is happy in her kitchen. The bathrooms are huge. We really appreciate it. We are truly blessed. Thank you for what you've done for us.” Keith Fulcher, president of the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi, said that the partnership has provided more than \$1 million in total value of homes for Rolling Fork families. He also said the foundation recently received \$10,000 from Google, another partner to help in the restoration of Rolling Fork.

Aldermen take issue with lack of follow-through of board actions

ROLLING FORK—Discussion surrounding a geotechnical survey of the City of Rolling Fork's city hall, police department and fire department properties and a decision by aldermen to advertise for the service seemed to keep coming up at last Monday's board meeting, with aldermen questioning why their action had not been carried out amid some veiled comments as to the motives behind the inaction. The point of a geotechnical survey is to gather the physical characteristics of the soil and rocks on a site or around a building to properly design the foundations and/or make proper repairs because of subsurface shifting and changing. Aldermen had agreed in October, despite their contracted architect William McElroy providing an alternative solution to going through normal procurement procedures, to advertise for the professional services of a firm to conduct the site surveys. At the beginning of last week's meeting, Mayor Eldridge Walker requested the addition of two letters from McElroy be added to the board's agenda. “These are the letters pertaining to the procurement question that came up several meetings back and he is writing to the board on that matter,” Walker said. “Whether we are taking actions or not, I just want to bring forward the letter.” When asked what the letter was about by Alderman Calvin Stewart, Walker said it was pertaining to the procurement of professional services for the geotechnical survey. “The board on October 5 made a motion to advertise,” Stewart said. “I'm glad you

brought that up. It makes it much clearer now why some things were done.” Then, when the October minutes came up for approval, Alderman LaDonna Sias pointed out that the minutes did not reflect that October 5 decision to advertise. Instead, according to Stewart and Sias, the minutes read as if the board agreed with McElroy and voted to move forward with his suggestion to secure the professional services without advertising. “Today being November 4, the advertisement has not been placed,” Stewart said. “It's just not what I remember,” Sias said. “It's not what was said,” Stewart agreed. “I can tell you, I made the motion—we decided to advertise so we could be in line with FEMA guidelines.” “In the interim, Mr. (Kenneth) Webster came back and said we didn't have to do it that way,” he said, “but I can't understand why every time this board makes an action for stuff to happen it does not happen but in the interim people are still going on doing their way of business of the city when there is a board that is designed to make those decisions.” “I'll bring that up later in executive session,” Stewart said, referring to the closed session planned at the end of the meeting to take up what the board said was personnel matters and potential litigation. The board ended up tabling the minutes for that correction to be made. But, that wasn't the last time the matter came up. As the board moved down its agenda of relatively routine matters and the mayor got to the item of the McElroy correspondence, Stewart promptly said “No action” and

See City on Page 2



Sharkey County veterans gathered at a ceremony honoring them for their military service at First Baptist Church on Monday, November 11. Command Sergeant Major Sylvester Tatum (left), who grew up on Reality Plantation and was the first black Command Senior Enlisted Leader over Mississippi's Army National Guard, was the keynote speaker. Sharkey Issaquena Academy seventh grader Owen Stigall (left, with Tatum) honored the veterans for their service and shared the story of his great uncle, Frank Smith, a World War II vet who spent time in a German Prisoner of War camp. Tatum presented Stigall with a Challenge Coin for Excellence during the program. After the service the veterans and their families were treated to lunch. The ceremony was organized by Sharkey County Veterans Affairs Officer Anthony White.



Inside This Week

Supreme Court run-off set for November 26. —Page 2
Honor rolls announced. —Page 6

Profundity

“The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing.”

—Socrates

Weather

Local averages for the week of Nov. 6 - Nov. 12
Temperature (°F) High 78° Low 63°
Precipitation 1.84 (inches)
Source: www.weather.com

