

EBR sheriff says deputies will still patrol in Central

BY EMILY KERN
Advocate staff writer

The Central City Council heard a commitment from East Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff Greg Phares on Tuesday to continue to provide the deputies who will ensure Central remains relatively crime-free despite its growth.

Phares addressed concerns from some council members and the community that four deputies had been reassigned to other parts of the parish.

He presented information showing the Sheriff's Office responded to 90,496 incidents in the parish from May 1 to Jan. 14.

Of those calls, 8,182, or 9.04 percent, were in Central.

The percentage of uniform patrol deputies assigned to Central was 24.2 percent.

Sheriff Greg Phares addressed concerns that four deputies had been reassigned to other parts of the parish.

Phares said reserve deputies will be assigned to the spots in Central.

He said he realized visibility was important and he said he was committed "to helping keep the atmosphere that makes Central a special place."

In other business, the council approved the rezoning of 185.7 acres from rural to traditional neighborhood development for construction of The Village at Magnolia Square.

Developer Jimmy Nunnally

said he hoped workers would begin installing the sewer system and other infrastructure by early summer.

The property is on the south side of Lovett Road, east of Prairie Drive and the Comite Hills subdivision and west of the Woods Edge subdivision.

Some members of the audience expressed concern about connecting the development with the existing Comite Hills, saying joining the two would compromise safety and change the feel of the older neighborhood.

Civil engineer Michael Songy, representing the developers, said they don't have the right to connect the two subdivisions.

The only way that could happen would be through action of the council, he said.

Reading program working, Ascension teachers report

BY STEVEN WARD
River Parishes bureau

DONALDSONVILLE — Primary-school reading teachers told the Ascension Parish School Board on Tuesday night the district's new, comprehensive reading instruction program already is showing signs of improving student literacy skills.

Amy Champagne, Katie Daigle and Robin Anderson, along with Assistant School Superintendent Patrice Pujol, reported the system's new reading text, Harcourt Trophies, is providing for the first time a districtwide, research-based, data-driven type of instruction.

The information was given to School Board members at

Tuesday's Finance and Curriculum meeting.

Harcourt Trophies is a research-based reading program using authentic literature that also is geared to helping students improve in spelling, grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency and writing skills.

Reading teachers are using an assessment tool for Harcourt called Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills that measures whether all major skills are in place to enable students to read on grade level by the end of the third grade.

The Harcourt instruction has been in place districtwide for

just one year, Pujol said.

The comparisons between Harcourt testing so far, and the testing done last year for primary school readers, show improvements across the board, the teachers said.

One challenge teachers cited is the need to have a single data system to warehouse all reading progress information on every student in a format easily accessible to teachers.

Pujol also said it is essential for Harcourt's success that all school principals have a working knowledge of how the new reading program works in conjunction with the district's overall comprehensive curriculum.