

## Backup plan may protect records

### ■ Webster County fire prompts action

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Mindful of a recent blaze that wrecked records in a county to the south, the DeSoto Board of Supervisors Tuesday will hear a proposal on policy and procedures for storage of public files from county Emergency Services chief Bobby Storey.

Aiding in the presentation will be D.W. Gilbert, who conducts fire inspections and investigations for the county.

“There’s statutory rules on how long records must be kept, and we want to be compliant with that,” said Supervisor Mark Gardner of Southaven, president of the five-member governing panel. “But we also want to be focused on safety and have a backup to our records and have a backup to the backup. I guess you can say we’re being redundantly redundant — for a good reason.”

Gardner said records are kept in the courthouse and for protection also are stored via computer in the nearby County Administration Building, “but what if a tornado or earthquake took out both buildings? They’re just across the street from each other.”

He said the county is pursuing off-site storage of records in bank vaults and other secure facilities.

The urgency is prompted in part by Webster County’s recent loss of its courthouse in a predawn fire Jan. 17. Investigators in the north-central Mississippi County blamed the blaze

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in Walthall on an electrical short in a first-floor power strip. Since the blaze that gutted the 100-year-old structure, courthouse work has been crammed into temporary quarters in the county office building in Eupora, and Webster supervisors authorized rental of a refrigerated trailer to store and freeze-dry water-damaged court records.

The Mississippi Association of Supervisors issued an appeal to the state's other 81 counties to look for surplus to help Webster replace furniture and office equipment, and DeSoto has answered the call.

"We have some things that should be helpful," said County Administrator Vanessa Lynchard. "We're assembling them to ship them down. To lose your courthouse — it just affects so many things."

Also Tuesday, board approval will be sought on the following State Aid programs by consulting

engineer Tracy Huffman: bridge replacements on Meadowbrook Road, State Line Road and Starlanding Road.

"They're load-rated for regular vehicular traffic" such as cars and pickups, said Huffman. "What we want are bridges that will allow buses and heavier trucks."

Infrastructure matters on the consent agenda include an interlocal agreement and resolution with the town of Walls to maintain public roads and to provide certain engineering services, and a memorandum of understanding with Southaven for engineering and design of improvements to Swinnea Road. In the latter arrangement, the county will split costs associated with the project to extend Swinnea through Goodman Road to Church Road; the city and county each will pay \$96,000 for the engineering work estimated to cost \$192,000.

Also on the consent agenda are issuance of series 2013 general obligation bonds, not to exceed \$11.5 million, to fund capi-

tal projects, including acquisition of buildings and property. The supervisors at their last meeting approved the Jackson-based law firm of Butler Snow as bond counsel to draw up documents and also endorsed a required resolution of intent.

In new business on the agenda, Jim Flanagan, president and chief executive of the DeSoto Economic Development Council, is expected to bring up two firms in Southaven seeking additional tax exemptions to bolster expansions and job creation — EXCEL and Creedence Holdings, doing business as West Coast Novelty. Freeport (warehouse) tax exemptions were approved for the two industries Dec. 17.

The supervisors usually meet on the first and third Mondays of each month, but Feb. 18 is the Presidents Day holiday and county offices will be closed. The panel will meet at 9 a.m. in their third-floor hearing room in the County Administration Building at 365 Loshier St. in downtown Hernando.