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The Birmingham News

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Sunday, August 4, 2002

Our 115th year ♦ \$1.50

About half of sewer plans not mandated

In budget draft, orders,
options split bond issue

By VICKII HOWELL and BRETT J. BLACKLEDGE
News staff writers

Nearly half the \$1.4 billion that the Jefferson County Commission said it needs to finish a court-ordered sewer overhaul would be used for projects that have nothing to do with the federal order, county records show.

About \$732 million would go toward sewer expansion projects and work unrelated to the 1996 consent decree mandating repairs to old leaky sewers, according to the county's spending plans. Among those projects is the \$141 million super-sewer tunnel to be dug under the Cahaba River, an expansion that commissioners have said they may reconsider.

County environmental services officials drafted a budget last month that shows what they expect to spend on sewer projects in coming years.

Commissioner Steve Small handed out those projections in a packet of materials given to commissioners at a July 11 meeting, where they first voted to borrow the \$1.4 billion. The staff's projections divide spending under the categories "consent decree" and "non-consent decree."

Their budget shows about \$770 million is needed for court-ordered work between fiscal 2003, which begins Oct. 1, and fiscal 2007.

The remaining money is earmarked for sewer work that's not court-imposed, including \$387.3 million to expand sewer systems and treatment plants to accommodate development.

About 40 percent of the county's sewer projects next year would be to expand service or for work unrelated to the court order, the projections show. Starting in fiscal 2004 and continuing through 2007, more than half the spending each year would go to work not required by the decree.

► See **Sewer**, Page 2A

837 operations in 2001 make a UAB thoracic surgeon one of the nation's busiest;
Alabama's high rates of smoking and lung cancer keep doctors in demand

Battling an epidemic



NEWS STAFF/JERRY AYRES

UAB surgeon Dr. Robert Cerfolio, right, zaps cancer tumors with a laser. Cerfolio is one of the nation's busiest thoracic surgeons. He spends about two-thirds of his time treating lung cancer caused by smoking.

By DAVE PARKS
News staff writer

Dr. Robert Cerfolio breezes into the cool, sterile hallway leading to windowless operating rooms at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. It's 7 a.m. Monday, and he's talking excitedly about his weekend of playing hockey and coaching his children at baseball.

He bounces through domestic topics as he prepares to lead a squad of doctors, nurses and medical technicians in a battle against lung cancer. For the next eight hours Cerfolio will cut, burn, staple and stitch lungs and airways.

Cerfolio operates amid an epidemic. Alabama has one of the na-

tion's highest rates of lung cancer — and of smoking. About 3,000 people a year die from lung cancer in Alabama, three times the number killed in traffic accidents.

In 2000, Cerfolio was the busiest thoracic surgeon in the United States, according to records gathered by the American Thoracic Society, and last year he was busier, performing 837 operations. About a third of his cases involve lung cancer that has spread from tumors in other parts of the body. The other two-thirds involve cancer in which the lungs are the primary site, and almost all of those patients have a history of smoking.

► See **Surgeon**, Page 8A

Smoking, cancer grip state, cost billions

By DAVE PARKS
News staff writer

Dr. Michael Crain's patients come up with all kinds of excuses for continuing to smoke after being diagnosed with lung cancer. Mostly they contend it would be just too stressful to quit, particularly after learning they have cancer.

"I can show them the cancer on an X-ray, and they still smoke," said Crain, a pulmonologist who treats lung disease at Baptist Medical Center Princeton. "It's very frustrating. . . . It speaks to how addictive this is."

It also speaks to how strong a grip smoking and lung cancer have on Alabama. The state has the nation's 10th-highest smoking rate and 13th-highest

► See **Smoking**, Page 8A

Gina Wilson
Green

41-year-old
nurse found
strangled in her
home Sept. 24



Charlotte
Murray Pace

22-year-old LSU
graduate
stabbed to
death May 31



Pam
Kinamore

44-year-old
decorator's
throat was
slashed after she
was abducted
July 12



Three women had little in common — except killer

Louisiana deaths linked by
DNA evidence, police say

By MELINDA DESLATTE
The Associated Press

BATON ROUGE — Two of the murdered women drove BMWs, but the third victim didn't. Two loved antiques, but the third had no interest. Two lived on the same street at one point, but the third lived on the outskirts of the city.

There are no obvious threads to bind the three women together, but police say DNA evidence shows their murders over less than a year were committed by the same man. The killer remains loose. Police are tight-lipped.

Relatives are ferreting through scraps of information about each victim to find a link among the three, a clue that could lead to the serial killer who slashed Pam Kinamore's throat, strangled Gina Wilson Green and stabbed Charlotte Murray Pace.

"We have not been able to come up with anything that is common for all three, and believe me, we're trying," Ann Pace, mother of Charlotte Murray Pace, said in a telephone interview from her home in Jackson, Miss.

Authorities won't say if the women were sexually assaulted.

Police connected the murders of Pace and Green first, in early July.

Green, a 41-year-old nurse, was found strangled in her home Sept. 24.

► See **Killer**, Page 8A



NEWS STAFF/JEREMY LYVERSE

Coura Ndiaye, selling incense and necklaces from Senegal, made her first visit to the Heritage Festival this weekend.

Street festival picks up beat, raises eyebrows

By ROBERT K. GORDON
News staff writer

The crowd may have been uninspiring for the Trunk Boiz's Birmingham debut, but the group from Albany, Ga., did not seem to mind.

The trio belted out their Dirty South rhymes over booming bass beats Saturday at the Birmingham Heritage Festival as if they were performing before a standing-room-only crowd. "I'm just glad to be performing anyway," said Hard Rain, who partners with The Lights and Lucky Boi.

The Heritage Festival, in its 12th year, brings together a smorgasbord of music, food, dance and culture in the heart of Birmingham's Civil Rights District. Festival planners are expecting 80,000 people to attend this year's three-day event.

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