

Growth...from Page 1A

2003-2004 with between 46-57 home permits in the good months. Those numbers were still steady through 2006. They began to take a strong dip in 2007 and fell by 2011 to an average of four homes per month. The highest number of new home permits came in June 2005 with 91 permits for new home construction, county records show.

"As long as we stay at the 10-plus each month average, we're okay," Paris said. "It's the key to the economy turning around here and the general shop revenue. Our sales tax numbers are certainly going to go up with folks

building \$200,000 homes."

The most recent sales tax receipts show Union County collected more than \$300,000 in sales tax for July.

"We hope to average \$275,000 a month," Paris said. "Bringing in more than \$300,000 a month gives us some cushion if we do have some bad times. The SPLOST is for a six-year period and during that time you could easily have another recession, but everything seems pointed toward the economy being better.

"Fuel prices are going down, interest rates are holding steady," Paris said. "As

interest rates creep up, that impacts the housing industry. For the most part, we feel good that things are slowly and steadily improving."

Paris said the increase in the number of jobs generated by the housing industry is making a difference on local employment figures.

"Our unemployment numbers continue to go down a little each month," he said. "We're feeling pretty good right now about the way things are going. There are still some folks struggling, but, the good news is it's getting better."

Award...from Page 1A

— actual results compared to thousands of other schools in the nation — in determining which schools make the cut in fulfilling its three steps.

"It's one thing to be one of the top schools in the state of Georgia, but we want to be one of the top schools in the nation," said Principal Hill. "We want our children to have a sense of pride and be excited about the fact that they attend one of the best high schools in the entire country. We want our kids to be prepared to go to college and work in any career that they choose."

Principal Hill looks forward to the school moving up in future rankings, as the data used to award 2015 medals are from the 2012-2013 school year, and the school has made significant advancements since that time.

"We have gone from five AP courses when we were ranked, to 13 this year," said Principal Hill, pointing out the fact UCHS has grown both in student population and AP course richness. "Also, our AP testing participation rate increased by 300 percent from 2013-2014 to 2014-2015 — 300 percent more AP exams taken."

If students make either a 3, 4 or 5 out of 5 points on the AP exam, they get college credit, and AP scores are based on national averages so that students are held to a broader spectrum.

"We don't want to be measured just as the best high school in our district, which we've historically been one of the top few schools — we were the top school in our Pioneer RESA, which is one of the strongest in Georgia,

last year for the CCRPI," said Principal Hill. "We want to be the No. 1 school that we can possibly be.

"I would rather be ranked nationally compared to everyone than just be a big fish in a small pond. I want to be the best school possible. I mean that, our kids know I mean that, our staff knows that we mean it. We have some of the best teachers in the entire state. We have some really good, experienced teachers that have a passion for students learning."

Moving forward, Principal Hill has pledged to make this Bronze Medal a benchmark toward further growth and progress, the foundation of which has been and will continue to be the school's highly trained staff and smarter than average student body.

Council...from Page 1A

"The DDA has asked Bud Akins to oversee the construction process, and as a result, this allows us to end our contract with H&H Resources, thus saving us several thousand dollars," said Harper in the meeting. "Additionally, we are in negotiations with NOVA to perform the necessary testing to ensure our new off ramp meets GDOT standards."

The project should be finished within 120 days of breaking ground, and once completed, the new off ramp from Highway 515 will allow spaces for businesses to build closer to the square, and the area will also provide more greenspace around the downtown area.



City Council members look over the 2015 tax digest information.