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**Today's bonus:
Braves flashback**

Bonus coverage is just one click away at MyAJC.com. With Tuesday's announcement that former Braves catcher Javy Lopez will join the Braves Hall of Fame in May, take a look back on Lopez's career with another installment of Flashback Fotos at <http://on-myajc.com/1ljWz3h>. You'll also have access to all of our in-depth news at MyAJC.com, including interactive content and photo galleries.

**Meeting stirs up
concerns over
Falcons stadium**

Tuesday's vote by the Atlanta City Council's utilities committee on abandoning parts of six streets for the new Falcons stadium roadwork stirred simmering tensions between some city officials and residents of communities where the roadwork already is underway. **B1**

ajc Truth-O-Meter
Politifact Georgia

More than 80 percent of Georgians don't support legislation to ease gun restrictions in houses of worship, in bars and on campuses.

— Georgia state Rep. Mary Margaret Oliver in a meeting Feb. 18. **B1**

**NATION & WORLD
State systems a high
risk during rollout**

Security experts worried that state computer systems could become a back door for hackers during the health care overhaul rollout. **A3**

BUSINESS**Home Depot sees
slow housing market**

Atlanta home improvement giant Home Depot expects a slowdown in the housing market recovery that fuels its business. **A9**

METRO**Second area toddler
this week found dead**

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

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UTILITY LAWSUIT

Cobb EMC settles for \$98M

Utility's customers win 4-year fight to recoup 40 years of unpaid dividends.

By Dan Klepal
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The bitter, four-year dispute between Cobb Electric Membership Corp. and its customers, who said the utility owed them 40 years worth of dividends, ended on Tuesday with

the largest legal settlement in Cobb County history — \$98 million going to hundreds of thousands of current and former co-op members and their attorneys.

The Marietta-based utility was sued in 2010 over profits that should have been re-

turned to members over the past four decades, but instead were diverted for other purposes, including naming rights of a performing arts center and the utility's for-profit subsidiary businesses.

The diversion to some of the subsidiaries by one of the state's largest electric co-ops led to a racketeering indictment in 2011 against Dwight

Utility suit continued on **A8**

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The AJC originally broke the story about Cobb EMC's failure to abide by its charter, which resulted in a massive class-action lawsuit and Tuesday's settlement. Go to MyAJC.com to learn more about how the settlement came about, and get the latest on the case against the co-op's former CEO.



Housing prices up across metro area

Real estate agent Collette McDonald (left) shows client Dawn Ramsey a house for sale in Brookhaven on Friday. According to new data released Tuesday, housing prices in metro Atlanta rose more than 18 percent in 2013. That means houses are now selling at 2002 levels ahead of the spring selling season, which is typically the busiest time of year for people to move into new homes. HYOSUB.SHIN@AJC.COM

Full story in Business, A9

HEALTH CARE

FREQUENT FLIER

Delta changes miles program

Revamped policy aimed at attracting higher-spending fliers.

By Kelly Yamanouchi
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In a major change to its frequent flier program, Delta Air Lines will soon begin awarding free flights based on dollars spent, rather than miles flown.

The move by Atlanta-based Delta is aimed at rewarding its higher-spending customers, an acknowledgement of how valuable those deep-pocketed travelers are to the company. It's also a competitive move to

HOUSING



Agent Collette McDonald (right) shows client Dawn Ramsey a house in Brookhaven. Fewer metro Atlanta houses were sold in January. But the median price of purchased homes rose. HYOSUB SHIN / HSHIN@AJC.COM

Housing prices up 18 percent in 2013

Year-over-year rise, however, is down from April level.

By **Arielle Kass**
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Metro Atlanta housing prices rose more than 18 percent in 2013, though the upward momentum continues to slow.

Prices were up 18.1 percent year-over-year in December, according to the S&P Case-Shiller Home Price Index, released Tuesday. While still high, the year-over-year increase is down from the April peak, when prices were up 20.8 percent.

December was the 13th consecutive month of double-digit gains, but the pace began slowing last spring.

Nationally, prices were up 11.3 percent in 2013.

The increases mean houses in metro Atlanta are now selling at 2002 levels, by the Case-Shiller Index's measure. They had fallen as low as 1996 levels in the recession, according to the widely watched index.

"Atlanta had a particularly good year, well above the national average," said Craig Lazzara, senior director of index investment strategy for S&P Dow Jones Indices. "Is it decelerating? Yes. It's not good to go up 18 percent year-over-year forever."

The slowdown in price increases should continue through 2014, said Eugene James, Atlanta regional director of the housing information company Metrostudy. He expects rises to be in low double digits by next December.

"Moderation is no surprise," James said. "I expect to see the moderation continue."

The number of homes for sale remains low, James said,

WHY IT MATTERS

Home values are important even to people who aren't likely to sell or buy anytime soon. They contribute to the so-called "wealth effect" that helps drive the broader economy by making people more confident about purchases of all types.

RISING PRICES

For more than a year, the S&P Case-Shiller Home Price Index has shown monthly housing price gains in the double digits in metro Atlanta.

Month	Year-over-year percent increase
Dec. 2012	9.9
Jan. 2013	13.4
Feb. 2013	16.5
March 2013	19.1
April 2013	20.8
May 2013	20.1
June 2013	19
July 2013	18.5
Aug. 2013	18.4
Sept. 2013	18.7
Oct. 2013	19
Nov. 2013	18.5
Dec. 2013	18.1

Source: S&P Case-Shiller Home Price Index

and that will affect the spring selling season, typically the busiest time of year for people to move. While James expects prices to go up, the number of homes sold may decrease, he said, because there may not be enough available to meet demand.

Cleve Gaddis, managing partner at Gaddis Partners, RE/MAX Center in Johns

Creek, said inventory will pick up in the spring.

Still, he said, sellers who see the low supply and rising prices are often trying to price their homes to meet the constant increases.

Home buyers are looking for good schools and short commutes, Gaddis said. While they may have looked at their house as a money-maker in the past, they're now more likely to look at it as a home.

Lazzara, with the index, said that mirrors a national shift in buyer psychology.

"That's good," he said. "That's realistic. You don't look at housing as a long-term investment. You buy a house because you want to live in it."

Robert Shiller, a professor at Yale University and one of the index's creators, said because people don't think of their homes as an "exciting investment," there is now less enthusiasm for home purchases. Home prices will probably rise this year, he said, "but not like it's been."

"We're just losing our general sense of optimism about housing," he said.

Nationally, Shiller said, prices may even start to decline toward the end of 2014. The economy is still struggling, prices in many suburbs remain weaker than in the central city and as some people downsize their homes, prices may not pick up as much.

James, with Metrostudy, said the overall outlook is positive.

"Even though there's some negatives out there, there are more pros than cons," he said. "I'm optimistic."