

NEWS

Town is in a buzz over lottery winner

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Fort White residents were buzzing Monday, wondering whether one of their neighbors will soon be a multi-millionaire.

One of the three winning tickets in Saturday's \$20 million Lotto drawing was sold in Fort White, in southern Columbia County. The others were sold in Tampa and Haines City.

The winning numbers were 10-20-31-33-34-48.

"There's been a lot of gossip," said Greg Whitson, general manager of the S&S Food Store on U.S. 27 where the winning ticket was sold. "We're just wondering who it is and where they're from."

In a town of 500 people, word of a potential Lotto winner is big news.

"Fort White has been put on the map," said Jessica Tysdal, a clerk at S&S.

She speculated the winner is a local resident who is keeping a low profile at the moment.

"They probably don't want people asking them about the money," Tysdal said.

Whitson said he has heard through word-of-mouth that the winner is a Gainesville or Lake City resident who bought the ticket while traveling through Fort White.

Most Lotto winners take less than two weeks to claim the money, taking time to get legal and financial advice, according to a Florida Lottery official. Each of Saturday's winners will have the option of taking a lump-sum payment of \$3.8 million, or the full amount, \$6.66 million, over 30 years at about \$222,000 a year.

Even the business that sold the winning ticket receives money. The businesses that sold the winning tickets will divide \$10,000. Whitson, the store manager, said he does not know how its share of the money will be spent.

Tysdal said he expects the Lotto ticket to be a hot topic of discussion around his store until the winner travels to Tallahassee to claim the prize.

"I just want to say congratulations to whoever it is," Tysdal said.

There were 108 players who matched five of the six numbers to win \$5,637; 6,165 players who matched four numbers to win \$80; and 131,357 players who matched three numbers and won \$5 each.

