

## Arson probe nets arrest...continued from page 1

Towns County Fire Chief Mitch Floyd said about a dozen firefighters were able to extinguish the blaze with no injuries, but the mobile home was a total loss.

Floyd said firefighters had suspicions about the cause of the fire early on. Towns County sheriff's deputies felt the same. Deputies quickly interviewed neighbors as well as a possible suspect and became suspicious of a possible arson. Interviews lasted until approximately 4 a.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 4.

The following day, Towns County Chief Deputy Jeff Edge assigned the case to the department's Criminal Investigation Division and detectives Brian Wilson and Pat Williams met with State Fire Marshall Brian Smith, who had

been notified by Fire Chief Floyd as the arson investigation continued.

Detectives Wilson and Williams quickly identified one of the person's interviewed the previous night as a suspect within 12 hours of the fire. After numerous hours of interviewing, taking statements, and gathering evidence, detectives were able to make an arrest. Carpenter was arrested on Wednesday Aug. 5 and charged with third-degree arson, sheriff's reports show.

Fire Chief Floyd said the investigation was good work by the sheriff's office and the state fire marshal. "If you do something like that in Towns County, you will go to jail," Fire Chief Floyd said following Carpenter's arrest.



A 32-year-old Blairsville man has been charged with setting this mobile home on fire. Photo/David Seckinger

## Council vows help with neighborhood's crisis...continued from page 1

about this," said Wye.

She hoped the city, the electric company, and the construction company would share the cost of road repairs.

Hiwassee Mayor Barbara Mathis said the city has been up there, and they knew about the terrible road conditions. She said the city will clean out the ditches along the road and have the property surveyed because there is a question about easements.

City Manager Rick Stancil said the city will look at the problem from parcel to parcel. He said it will not be a simple fix, that ditches will have to be dug, culverts will have to be installed, and the road will have to be cut in places. Stancil added that the city does not even have a road crew.

Stancil said he and City Attorney Stephanie

McConnell were asked about construction ordinances and permits, but none are available yet. He said the city inherited the road about 30 years ago, and it was a shoddy road which is only getting worse.

Stancil said it was not one construction company but three doing damage to the area.

Councilperson Annie Johnson asked if the city could work with the county on road repairs. Councilperson Joan Crothers asked if they could get inmates to do the work using shovels instead of using heavy equipment.

One resident complained about plastic culverts in the ground being crushed by heavy trucks and creating water backups. Another resident said he almost wrecked his vehicle trying to pull a trailer up the road. One woman said cer-

tain ditches in the area stay filled with water during the winter.

Residents should call the city when there is construction in their neighborhood, Mayor Mathis said, adding that since the city doesn't do building permits, that they don't know what construction is going on.

Stancil said the city will take steps to prevent problems in the future, and he hopes the city can get funding for the road repairs.

"We are aware that you do have a problem," said the mayor, "and we are striving to do what we can as quickly as we can."

Later in the meeting, council approved spending up to \$1,000 to survey the area.

## Missing man sought after crash...continued from page 1

cluding checking nearby homes, businesses and rental cabins. Fire and Rescue workers also attempted to locate Lowery using special heat sensing equipment to no avail, Edge said.

Searchers finally left the crash scene at approximately 4 a.m. after checking the woods and along the roadway for a couple of miles each way. Towns County sheriff's deputies decided to make another try to contact Lowery at his home, but no contact was made, Edge said.

The relative who lived nearby told authorities that she had contacted Lowery's father, and that his father was en route to Towns County from the Atlanta area.

Local area hospitals had already been notified early on in the search to be on the lookout for an accident victim who might be the driver of the crashed vehicle. Towns County 911 dispatchers tried again in the early morning hours to contact Lowery at his home, but again no one had made any contact with Lowery.

At mid-morning on Thursday, Aug. 6, Towns County Deputy Mark Marshall

and K-9 partner Dexter along with Deputy Tony Elliott met members of the Dawson County K-9 Task Force in a joint effort to try to locate the individual. Deputy Marshall said that the tracking blood hounds were able to pick up a scent that was believed to be Lowery's and tracked for more than a mile through the woods. Marshall said that the hounds tracked the missing person in a long circle and ended up back on Georgia 75 near Georgia 180. It is believed that the driver either called someone to pick him up or was able to secure a ride from a passing motorist, Edge said.

Searchers left the area late Thursday evening, Edge said.

Once again local authorities made contact with Lowery's family. Once again, they told authorities that they still had not received word from Lowery.

On Friday, Aug. 7, deputies again spoke with Lowery's family and they once again told authorities that Lowery had yet to make contact with them.

The missing person case of James Gregory Lowery remains unsolved at press time.

## BRMEMC gets its wish from Young Harris City Council...from page 1

the site.

Kelley provided Sellers with the test results, and Sellers admitted there was a big difference in water pressure in favor of the authority.

Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby then said that the construction site is in the city's Service Delivery Area. In effect, this means the city (not the water authority) has the right to provide services to the location.

City Attorney Cary Cox said he had a written request from the water authority asking permission to be in the Young Harris Service Area.

After some discussion about Young Harris providing water to the site, the council decided it would cost the city too much. Council approved letting the Towns County Water and Sewer Authority provide water to BRMEMC.

Then Satterfield asked if

they could get the city to provide sewer to the site. Cox said the electric company would have to make the request in writing, and the city would decide during the next meeting.

Satterfield said they needed approval right then because construction was set to begin the next day.

Council member Jennifer Mulkey said, "Construction starts tomorrow and we haven't heard anything about this until today?" She said the council could be making a big mistake by reacting to BRMEMC's request.

Council discussed in length whether to table the matter one more month. BRMEMC seemed at an impasse during the meeting because the company had dealt with city engineers in the past but had not met with the city council.

Council member Donald

Keys said if the city engineers had looked over the plans, then he did not have a problem with it. However, he also said council should wait until the next meeting to vote.

Council member Matt Miller seemed to know the most about the matter. He mentioned previous cases of the city providing sewer outside of the city limits. He had working knowledge of the sewer system's history. Miller believed that it would not be a problem granting approval to BRMEMC during the August meeting instead of waiting a month.

After much debate, the council (excluding John Kelley who did not attend) unanimously approved letting BRMEMC tie on to the city's sewer system.

The BRMEMC project was not delayed and started on time.

## Schools back in session...continued from page 1

graduate."

Perren said increasing graduation test scores was a goal for 2009-2010.

"We would like to improve on last year's graduation test scores," he said. "We also want to focus on our SACS visit this year. We're ready for them to come through."

Towns County athletic teams are excited about the possibilities brought on by a new school year, Perren said.

"We're always looking forward to that," he said. "We're excited about football, the band program, Cross Country and we're really excited about softball. This may be the year we crack the state tournament."

In football, Georgia High School Magazine has listed Indians' wide out John Bleckley as a preseason All-State selection in Class A.

"That's two years in a row," Perren said. "Last year it was Chase Ellis and this year it's John Bleckley. Our pride in our football program continues to grow with each season. Coach Langford turned in his roster today and we've got 28 guys ready to suit it up for Friday nights."

The Indians kickoff the 2009 football season on Friday, Aug. 21 with a scrimmage game against the Union County Panthers in Blairsville.

Meanwhile, the school system as a whole has a number of goals this year, Dr. Behrens said.

"I think we want to continue to work on the things we've been working toward like improving student attendance and getting the graduation scores up," Dr. Behrens said. "We've got SACS coming up in the spring."

Every five years, schools must go through the process of reaccreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). The accreditation process engages the entire school community in a continuous process of self-evaluation, reflection, and improvement. It invites outside independent scrutiny and welcomes the constructive feedback of education peers.

"We're starting that process," Dr. Behrens said. "We're excited. That's a time for us to let someone else come in and let us know what we're doing well and areas that we could improve upon."

"We're prepared for the SACS process," he said.

As usual, the beginning of a new school year started with traffic concerns for Dr. Behrens.

"For the first day, the elementary school teachers were kind enough to park over in the high school parking area," Dr. Behrens said. "That left plenty of room for the parents to park close to the doors. The first day, that's the day that the parents want to come in and walk their kids in the school, especially for the younger ones."

"Afternoon traffic on

Thursday and Friday was a little difficult, but the traffic didn't interfere with the traffic flow on the highway," Dr. Behrens said. "On Monday, everything went like clockwork."

The 2009-2010 school year begins amid a statewide financial crisis as state revenue coffers are sorely depleted of sales tax revenues during a continued flat economy.

A shortfall of revenues combined with increased financial burdens imposed by state cutbacks, increased Local Fair Share obligations and mandated salary requirements will impact the 2010 millage rate set by the Towns County Board of Education.

Behrens has trimmed almost \$200,000 from the proposed \$11 million-plus 2009-2010 budget which comes in below the \$12 million budget for 2008-2009 school year.

The local school board also agreed to adjust the 2009-2010 school calendar to accommodate suggested cutbacks by Gov. Sonny Perdue. Those cuts include three unpaid days off for teachers and administrators as the state cuts \$125,617 from the school system.

The unpaid days off, days taken from the school system's planning schedule, amounts to a savings of \$119,657.79. The school system loses \$5,959.21 to total the \$125,617 in state funding cuts.

## Dixie Fried plays Ga. Mountain Fairgrounds on Friday night

Jim Wood and Dixie Fried will be playing at Anderson Music Hall on Friday at 7:30 p.m. as entertainment for the Georgia Mountain Cruiz-In car show and street dance on Friday night. Admission is \$5.

Wood, a 41-year old Hiwassee resident, has been playing music since the age of 9 years old. Jim became a member of the Georgia Mountain Fair Band in 2003 and was part of the group when it was inducted into the Atlanta County Music Hall of Fame in 2004. Wood became the leader of the group in 2008 when Howard Cunningham retired after 55 years in that position.

Wood has worked with

major recording acts that include Jerry Reed, Ray Price, T. Graham Brown, Brad Paisley, Marty Stuart, The Bellamy Brothers, Gene Watson, Joe Diffie, and The Statler Brothers.

Jim's personal band "Dixie Fried" consists of some of the best musicians in the South.

Bill Cunningham has been playing music since the age of 12 when he began playing bass at local square dances and on the Georgia Mountain Fair Staff Band with his dad, Howard Cunningham. Over the years, he has continued to be a member of the Georgia Mountain Fair Band and just passed

40 years with that group.

Atlanta native Brad Williams performed on the nationally syndicated television program, "Star Search" at the age of 13. Williams recently accepted the bass guitarist position in the Georgia Mountain Fair Band, and is also the Music Director and Worship Assistant at First Baptist Church of Alpharetta, Ga. He has performed or done shows with Rita Coolidge, Patty Loveless, Kenny Rogers, John 'J.T.' Thomas & Doug Derryberry (Bruce Hornsby), Dan Toler (Allman Brothers), Howie Long, and Ryan Seacrest.

Steve Vincent has been the drummer for Boots

Randolph, Floyd Cramer, Donna Fargo, Ronnie McDowell, Stella Parton, Danny Davis and the Nashville Brass, Liberace, and Benny Goodman. He has played on commercials for Opryland, Wrigley gum, and Just Jeans. Vincent has been with the Georgia Mountain Fair Band for the last 10 years.

Geno LeSage was band leader and keyboard player for country music artist Collin Raye for 17 years. He had a writers deal with EMI music publishing and has had 10 songs that were recorded, including the duet for Collin and Bobbie Eakes "Tired of Loving This Way" which was a top 40 hit.



Before the meeting, Young Harris City Council and BRMEMC employees look over a model of the electric company's new headquarters. Photo/David Seckinger

## Theft...continued from page 1

age units. Property valued at approximately \$66,000 was recovered from the storage bins. Detectives Wilson and Williams had initially gained consent to search for the stolen patio furniture. However, due to the detectives' prior knowledge of other theft reports, recognized the contents of the storage units as property that had been reported stolen.

Larrimore, 54, of 5110 Crooked Creek Road, Young Harris, was arrested without incident and charged with theft by taking, Towns County sheriff's reports show.

## What's the deal Congressman?



U.S. Rep. Nathan Deal brought his gubernatorial campaign to Hiwassee last week. Deal, the Ninth District congressman visited Towns County's GOP at Daniels Steakhouse. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

## Stand up and be counted



Local residents listen intently as Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall talks about the 2010 Census. Kendall said only 47 percent of locals were counted during the Census a decade ago. Not being counted costs Towns County significant federal grant dollars, Kendall said. Photo/Lowell Nicholson