

# Towns County Herald

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## Thousands lose power in winter storm as winds topple trees, snap poles

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Editor

A winter storm blasted a large portion of the South on Saturday, resulting in felled trees and downed power lines across many states and throughout the region.

The Jan. 11 storm system ushered in severe thunderstorms, torrential rain, high winds and even tornadic activity in some areas, with multiple national news agencies citing as many as 11 storm-related deaths in neighboring states, though no injuries were reported in Towns County.

Locally, the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC worked around the clock beginning Saturday evening to restore power to approximately 14,000 meters in its five-county area, or roughly 30% of the membership,

making steady progress over the weekend toward getting people's lights back on.

Most of the damage and power outages came from broken power poles and trees falling on power lines, the EMC said Sunday. Forty line crew members arrived eight additional crews arrived as mutual aid from several surrounding EMCs to help with the extensive repairs.

Fortunately, there were no injuries reported locally as a result of the storm, though several instances of minor property damage were apparent around Towns County beyond just the untold number of downed trees blocking backroads and interrupting power and phone services.

A tree lay uprooted on the side of US 76 in Young Harris, and figures from a Nativity

scene of a church using the old EMC headquarters were blown down in front of the building.

Another tree rested dangerously on several powerlines alongside US 76 on Swanson Mountain, with a Hiawassee Police Officer and Towns County Sheriff's Deputy stationed at the scene to await an EMC crew.

On the Hiawassee Town Square, high winds snapped a light pole at its base, toppling it, and a couple of poles on the back of the square's wind stage also broke in the wind.

Mayor Liz Ordiales reported at least three trees blocking one end of her road in Hiawassee, but she was glad to report that the city's sewer or water treatment plants received no damage in the storm.

Several business signs See *Winter Storm, Page 3A*



This tree was leaning on power lines along US 76 on Swanson Mountain Sunday after the big winter storm from Jan. 11. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

## Chastain reviews elementary school projects; Kolby Moss recognized

By Chad Stack  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

The Towns County Board of Education held its first meeting of 2020 on Monday, Jan. 6, inside the recently renovated middle/high school media center and library.

As 2019 closed out, board members approved School Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong's recommendation to change the monthly meeting schedule.

Instead of meeting each month on the first Monday for a work session and the second Monday for a regular meeting, board members voted to consolidate both meetings on the first Monday of each month, with their work session to be immediately followed by their regular meeting.

On Jan. 6, School Facilities Director/Federal Programs Director Eric Chastain discussed the school system's new five-year facilities



TCHS junior Kolby Moss with Principal Roy Perren at the Jan. 6 school board meeting, where Moss was honored for his 1,000th-point milestone on the Indians Basketball Team.

plan during the board's work session.

Included in the plan are proposals for the elementary school building that are in line

with the recent renovations at the middle/high school building.

The plan to update the See *Board of Ed., Page 6A*

Photo by Chad Stack

## Towns FBLA students advance to state level competition



Towns County's Future Business Leaders of America representatives did incredibly well in their recent Region 15 Leadership Conference.

By Chase Reece  
FBLA Reporter

The 2020 Future Business Leaders of America Region 15 Leadership Conference was held at Madison County High School in Danielsville on

Thursday, Jan. 9.

Members of Towns County FBLA had 16 competitors in 14 different business events contending with students from other FBLA chapters in Region 15

for chances to advance to state competitions.

The awards ceremony was exciting, to say the least. Sixteen competitors placed in the Top 10, of which 13 will See *FBLA, Page 6A*

## Mitchell, Noblet and Chastain swear in; Ordiales speaks on crosswalk



Hiawassee City Council Members Ann Mitchell, Nancy Noblet and Jay Chastain Jr. took their oaths of office on Tuesday, Jan. 7. Photo by Chad Stack

By Chad Stack  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Three Hiawassee City Council Members were sworn in for new terms of office during the regular city meeting on Tuesday, Jan. 7.

Anne Mitchell, Nancy

Noblet and Jay Chastain Jr. each qualified unopposed for last year's municipal election, with Mitchell and Noblet continuing directly from previous terms, and longtime former Councilman Chastain returning after being unseated two years ago by Councilwoman Patsy

Owens.

Noblet, Mitchell and Chastain were sworn into office by City Clerk Bonnie Kendrick inside City Hall, with Mayor Liz Ordiales presiding over the meeting.

Chastain previously See *City Council, Page 6A*

## Elections Board talks changes to election law, equipment and more

By Mark Smith  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

In their Jan. 8 regular meeting, members of the Towns County Board of Elections and Registration discussed the many aspects of new election law ushered in by Georgia House Bill 316.

Signed into law on April 2, 2019, the bill essentially changes the voting process in Georgia, requiring new rules and machines, precinct upgrades, more poll workers, and additional trainings for election officials and poll workers.

The law also features a new initiative to educate the public and new registration cancellation guidelines, with all of the above changes significantly impacting election board budgets.

HB 316 was enacted in large part as a response to voter concerns that they were unable to see the ballots they were casting because everything was done electronically.

The new voting process will require each voter to print



Towns County Board of Elections Chair Janet Oliva

his or her ballot prior to casting it, and residents can find an online preview of the new voting process at SecureVoteGA.com.

Posing a particular challenge so far has been the necessity of a whole new voting system that must be implemented in a very short period of time.

This quick turnaround time puts a lot of pressure on everyone involved in the

process, from the Secretary of State's Office to elections boards, individual precincts and vendors.

As of press time, the state had yet to respond with the results of the Towns County precinct inspections from Dec. 27, 2019. These inspections ensure compliance with the new rules for precincts, which are not

See *Elections, Page 6A*

## January Term 2020 Grand Jury Indictments

The following individuals were indicted during the January Term 2020 of the Towns County Grand Jury:

Samuel James Nichols, child molestation, sexual battery against a child under 16.

George Anthony Baldwin, violation of Street Gang Terrorism and Prevention Act; three counts impersonating an officer; exploitation and intimidation of disabled adult, elder person or resident; four counts theft by deception.

Jonathan Benson, violation of Street Gang Terrorism and Prevention Act; three counts impersonating an officer; exploitation and intimidation of disabled adult,

elder person or resident; four counts theft by deception.

Jason Michael Hanson, violation of Street Gang Terrorism and Prevention Act; three counts impersonating an officer; exploitation and intimidation of disabled adult, elder person or resident; four counts theft by deception.

Cristine Ann Ware, three counts impersonating an officer; exploitation and intimidation of disabled adult, elder person or resident; four counts theft by deception.

Toni Jean Perry, possession of methamphetamine; driving on improper registration; failure to maintain lane.

William Raymond

Boyette, battery, Family Violence.

Ricky James Dyer, exploitation and intimidation of disabled adult, elder person or resident; battery, Family Violence; criminal trespass.

Tammy Lynn Davidson, furnishing prohibited items to inmates.

John Michael Koback, possession of prohibited items by inmates.

Fredric Edouard Debray, aka Devray, Fred, possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute; possession of methamphetamine; possession of marijuana, less than an ounce; failure to maintain lane; driving while license suspended.

Jason Eugene Cunningham, possession of methamphetamine; possession of marijuana, less than an ounce; three counts possession of drug-related objects; driving without headlights.

Travis Matthew Reece, possession of methamphetamine; possession of drug-related objects; giving false information to a law enforcement officer; possession of methamphetamine; dangerous drugs - sale, distribution, possession of dangerous drugs; possession of drug-related objects.

Chelsey-Joy Elizabeth Brock, possession of methamphetamine; dangerous

drugs - sale, distribution, possession of dangerous drugs; possession of drug-related objects.

Frederick Thomas Harvey, aka Fredrick Thomas Harvey, three counts obstruction of an officer; driving under the influence (less safe) (alcohol); driving under the influence (less safe) (drugs); driving under the influence (less safe) (combined influence); driving while license suspended; failure to stop at a stop sign.

Brandon Tracy Davenport, aka Davenport, Brannon Tracy, trafficking methamphetamine or amphetamine; possession of methamphetamine; possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute; possession of marijuana, more than an ounce; possession of marijuana with intent to distribute.

intent to distribute; possession of marijuana, less than an ounce; possession of drug-related objects; driving while license suspended; distracted driving.

Taylor Ray Parrott, trafficking methamphetamine or amphetamine; possession of methamphetamine; possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute; possession of marijuana, more than an ounce; possession of marijuana with intent to distribute.

Brandon Todd Odell, possession of marijuana, more than an ounce; possession of drug-related objects; driving while license suspended; failure to maintain lane.

Jason Joseph Williams, possession of See *Indictments, Page 6A*

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**BASKETBALL**

Jan 14 @ Hebron 6 PM

Jan 17 vs. Commerce 7 PM

**STALKING**  
KNOW IT NAME IT STOP IT

January is National Stalking Awareness Month

**We Are Towns County Schools**

**Towns County Civic Association General Meeting**