

## Schools...from Page 1A

However, the actual bids for the renovations and improvements came back at approximately \$4.3 million, which is more than the system is able to pay at this point in time.

The board has subsequently decided to postpone the majority of the new wiring, including schoolwide LED lighting, until the summer of 2019, when more SPLOST funds are available.

Work to be completed this summer includes the new roof and HVAC systems at the

middle/high school, new drop ceilings to accommodate larger HVAC units, and a heating unit at the elementary gym, all of which will cost approximately \$3.6 million.

The modernization grant works by way of reimbursement, said Dr. Berrong, meaning that, as the projects move forward, the school system will pay the contractors then submit the bills to the state for reimbursement.

Since this is the first time the schools have used the modernization grant, Dr. Berrong said it is not clear what

the turnaround time will be for the reimbursements, though he is hopeful that the system will be reimbursed at least 50 percent of project costs, if not more.

Dr. Berrong's big concern is maintaining payroll and operating expenses while still being able to pay the contractors in between reimbursements from the modernization grant. The plan, he said, is to use SPLOST funds to cover any budget overages while waiting for reimbursements.

These modernization projects will begin on May 21 or May 22 so that the work can be completed by the beginning of the 2018-2019 school year.

The last week of school before summer 2018 will be hectic, said Dr. Berrong, because every item in every classroom will have to be labeled and moved before the modernization work begins. Everything will be stored in the auditorium, both gyms, and possibly the wrestling facility and the cafeteria.

If the weather cooperates, the plan is to be finished with the summer 2018 construction phase by the last week in July, after which all the classrooms will need to be put back in order before classes start again in August, said Dr. Berrong.

## Young Harris...from Page 1A

council meeting, which will take place at Young Harris City Hall at 7 p.m. that day.

Engineer Reid Dyer said that the upcoming paving on School Street will cost an additional \$10,050 because a resident doesn't want to grant right-of-way for the initial paving plan, and the council adjusted the project costs from \$20,000 to \$31,000.

Mayor Andrea Gibby pointed out that her main concern on School Street was the problem of water puddling and freezing in the winter, and she remains hopeful that this project will fix that problem.

The mayor gave an update on the Young Harris Apartments, a representative of which had lamented in the April council meeting that their water/sewer rates were higher than they could afford.

According to Mayor Gibby, members of the city's Water/Sewer Committee have met to discuss the issue, but they will need to meet again to consider some suggestions by engineer Chris Poje.

City Councilmember Matt Miller said he was approached recently by a resident: requesting the paving of Sunset and High Street; reporting the problem of Young Harris College students parking on Maple Street; and pointing out a need for speed bumps on the road to Cupid Falls.

Mayor Gibby said that School Street was No. 1 in paving priority, followed by Bryson Drive, though High Street can look forward to being paved in the next two years.



Photo by Shawn Jarrard

**In the May 1 council meeting, Mayor Gibby recognized Young Harris Deputy Clerk Nicolette Wade for recently completing her Clerk Certification.**

She also said that she will be working with the college over the summer toward the goal of educating students about not parking along Maple Street when classes let in for the 2018-2019 school year.

In other business, Mayor Gibby recognized Young Harris Deputy Clerk Nicolette Wade for having obtained enough credit hours to earn her Clerk Certification through the Carl Vinson Institute of Government, an achievement that has been long in the making.

"I just want to say congratulations," said Mayor Gibby. "It took three years, a lot of classes, and she's done a great job."

Attorney Harkins updated the council and mayor on the status of the new city charter, which passed the 2018

Legislative Session of the Georgia General Assembly and is currently awaiting Gov. Nathan Deal's signature.

The city's fight against the months-long water leak at street level in front of the Dollar General on Main Street continues, as a special isolation valve was to be installed after press time on Monday, May 7.

Water Superintendent Gary Willer said fixing the leak will require at least two phases, including the installation of the isolation valve, which will allow the city to move ahead with its plans to hire folks to dig down and fix the actual leak along U.S. Route 76.

The city is hopeful that the whole leak fixing process will be completed within a month's time.

## Floyd...from Page 1A

and it has been a statewide tradition since 1964, where school systems throughout Georgia send elite students in specific academic disciplines for monthlong study internships on a college campus.

While in residence, students experience many aspects of simulated university life. They are assigned roommates, take classes in their subject area, attend social events with other top students and make connections with university professors, said Camp.

Eventually, students are paired with an expert mentor who guides them in the completion of a research project in their field of study.

"This is what the very elite competition looks like once you're outside of your hometown," said Camp of GHP. "When you're away at university, these are your star players that you're up against potentially four years from now for grad school acceptances, for the best jobs."

"I think it just gives you a different view and an experience where you expand



Photo by Shawn Jarrard

**Trevor Bradley's aquaponics project for his nomination in agricultural science.**

your horizon outside of a little sphere. He'll probably make friendships that last (a lifetime) out of this."

Floyd said he plans to double major in history and journalism at the University of Georgia after he graduates high school next year, and there's no doubt his upcoming experience in the Governor's Honors Program will assist him

in his endeavors.

"We're extremely proud of his mother and I are," said Floyd's father, Shannon, who teaches social studies at the high school. "We're just thankful that the nomination came, and we thank Mr. Camp and all the other teachers at the school for helping prepare him for this. He's worked hard, and it's a great honor for him."

## Firewise...from Page 1A



Photo by Mark Novak

**The Georgia Forestry Commission helped the Towns County Firewise Citizens Coalition celebrate Wildfire Preparedness Day in Hiawassee on Saturday, May 5.**

and we are very fortunate that (Hiawassee) Mayor Liz Ordiales let us use the square to hold this event to teach residents how to protect themselves from wildfire," said local Coalition President Marsha Elliot. "We're teaching people how to make their homes less burnable."

Throughout the United States in 2017, there were more than 56,000 wildfires that affected more than nine million acres of land, according to the National Fire Protection Association.

Wildfires can start in numerous ways, including when a resident ignites a controlled burn to remove leaves and fallen branches on their property.

To assist residents in transitioning to the Firewise way, representatives of the Towns County Firewise Citizens Coalition will respond to people's homes and do a brief survey to offer tips on what needs to be done to give people a better shot at preventing total loss in the event of a fire.

Common safety measures include cleaning gutters and roofs, keeping combustible

liquids in a safe place away from the home, keep firewood a safe distance from the home, and cleaning leaves and debris from around the home and under decks, per NFPA.org.

Members of local communities can join forces to become Firewise communities and be part of the 21 other communities in Towns County that participate in the program.

"We have 21 communities in our local program, and there are eight more that are interested in signing up," said Elliott.

Georgia Forestry Commission Ranger Justin Davenport brought a GFC bulldozer, regularly used in the fight against wildfires, to the event on the square.

"We had this one all cleaned up and ready to display for today," said Davenport. "Then we had a call for a small fire in Union County on Thursday, and we had to use it to help put the fire out."

Added Davenport: "We work hand in hand with the U.S. Forest service - they come help us fight fires and we help them. We're here to serve the

community and show them what we do."

State Farm sponsors Wildfire Community Preparedness Day, and local State Farm Agent Susan DeVries came out to support the event.

"State Farm does a lot of preventative measures and nationally sponsors Firewise," said DeVries. "Out West, we see a lot more incidents of massive fires, and that's how we got involved. They do a lot of programs like Arson Dogs and things like that."

"One of the most devastating claims to cover is when someone's home is burned. You see people that have lost everything standing there in their pajamas smelling like smoke. And being able to help them is the fabulous part about it."

Anyone interested in getting their subdivision involved with Firewise can attend the local meetings on the third Tuesday of each month at 1 p.m. inside Towns County Fire Station No. 6 off Sunnyside Road.