

## Fire...from Page 1A

and Copeland orchestrated the first ever countywide fire department with five stations, though six exist now.

And while Sellers does miss helping people – 37 years is a long time – since he retired in January, he's been able to fully concentrate on his longtime Young Harris business, Appalachian Gallery and Video Production.

An artist by trade, Sellers did what he didn't have to nearly forty years ago, embracing a time-consuming leadership role out of communal necessity.

His decision to step up with likeminded individuals to solve a problem that affected many – no fire protection – has saved countless lives.

A state-certified instructor, Sellers has trained firefighters in Towns County since the mid-1980s, and even helped train some Union County firefighters in those early days.

On top of being a firefighter and instructor, Sellers also spent the last 27 years as a county EMT.

Of course, having been a first responder for so long, Sellers knows what it takes to do a tough job at a moment's notice, which is why he expressed appreciation in turn for the Towns County Fire Department.

In the June 5 Fire Board meeting, Sellers donated \$1,000 to go toward providing a shirt or hoodie for all county firefighters.

He also brought a folder with news clippings and documents chronicling the Towns County Fire



Towns County Fire Chief Harold Copeland, left, with Capt. David Sellers, who is holding up a newspaper clipping from the 1987 church bus crash off Hogpen Gap. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

Department's early years, and he turned that record over to Chief Copeland for safekeeping.

"It follows all of the things that happened in those first couple years of getting the Fire Department organized, and coming up with the five-mile radius, getting all the firefighters trained," said Sellers.

Sellers added that, though there was a core group behind the organization, getting the countywide department up and running was a real community effort that included numerous volunteers, church groups and other civic involvement.

"What you see now as the Towns County Fire Department is in recognition of all of these people that came out to help," said Sellers.

The retired captain made sure to tip his helmet, too, to

Hiwassee history, thanking those who started the county's first fire department in the city in the mid-1950s, even though it didn't last.

Also in the meeting, the Fire Board went over the latest information concerning the future site of Young Harris Fire Station No. 2 up Highway 66.

The station's current, temporary lodgings are in the old Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Headquarters.

Right now, the board is getting quotes for a three-bay building, with an eye toward having one end of the station expandable should the need arise on down the road.

And though he could not be in the meeting, Fire Board Member Hugh Howell would like to have been able to join his fellow board members in thanking Sellers for his years of service.

## SPLOST...from Page 1A



Young Harris City Councilmember Dr. John Kelley and Deputy City Clerk Nicolette Wade. Photo/Lily Avery

box for residents to leave water payments. All of this would cost an estimated \$5,000 to \$10,000, depending on how much can be accomplished.

Another update to Mayor's Park the council discussed was additional playground equipment for children, since the park receives heavy use in the summer months. This would account for \$15,000 to \$20,000.

Several roads within the city are also in need of various maintenance and upkeep and the city decided to allocate funds from the SPLOST budget to tend to these repairs.

Maple Street requires new sidewalks and possibly the removal of several trees, which will cost an estimated \$15,000 to \$20,000.

Bryson Road needs paving as well as proper drainage, such as culverts and ditches. The city estimates this will cost around \$17,000 and School Street also needs an estimated \$5,000 to \$15,000

worth of maintenance.

Aside from necessary improvements to city roads and Mayor's Park, the council and Mayor Gibby focused on continued upgrades to Cupid Falls, such as installing bathrooms and completing the wooden walk throughout the park. If the council were to move forward with this project, it would cost roughly \$20,000 to \$40,000.

Several councilmembers, and Mayor Gibby, suggested other updates to the park, like a walk down to the falls to play in the water, but this project would come secondary to any general city maintenance.

All of these projects can be approved, added, removed or tweaked from now until December, depending on the urgency of the project and how quickly the council can move forward with the project planning.

Also during the meeting, the Provident Group withdrew the variance request for the

overlay district, since the council recently remapped the overlay district to allow Young Harris College to build new student housing.

This was merely a formality, as YHC can now move forward with construction without the need for a variance.

"As you recall, there was a change to the language of the Young Harris overlay district that was approved last month," said Marvin Harkins, city attorney. "The reason for that change was this application for a variance that was made for the height requirement. Well, once the overlay district change was made, the Provident Group no longer needed the variance, but the variance was still before the council."

"This is simply the request to withdraw that variance."

The Provident Group has until December to bring back the variance request, if they so choose.

## Home Show...from Page 1A

their home."

The show, held for the first time at the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center, also featured seminars from Jim Parks, the host of HGTV's remodeling show "New Spaces." Parks hosted three seminars on both days, covering an assortment of how-to topics and current trends in housing, from a seminar on curb appeal to a seminar on optimizing space within the home, and everything in between.

"Jim Parks lives in Chicago and is with HGTV, and we use him for a lot of our shows," said Anderson. "He flies down and spends the weekend giving seminars, such as 'Update My Kitchen, Bathroom and Closet,' which is the most popular one."

According to Anderson, the majority of the vendors at the show are from the Western North Carolina market of Murphy, Hayesville and Andrews, then Blue Ridge, Blairsville and Hiwassee in Georgia.

"We have 82 vendors this year, which is bigger than before, and most of them are local," said Anderson. "That's part of the beauty of it. These are local people who have products for the houses. And people who see something they like, they won't have to travel far to find these businesses."

"If people want to make their house better, more livable, more comfortable, then they should definitely make it out to the home and garden show."

"Also, most of the vendors and businesses that are here also have show specials, so there are discounts that people can get here that they might not get just by going to the store."

One of the booths, Cindy Cohen and Donald Caraway with Complete Home Services in Blairsville, had multiple displays around the venue, showcasing the various services they offer, such as residential lawn design.



It was looking outdoors indoors during the show at the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center. Photo/Lowell Nicholson



The 2017 Home & Garden Show. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

"We're Complete Home Services, which has a division of VistaScapes Landscaping," said Cohen. "We're one of those companies that does housekeeping, gutter cleaning, summer home cleaning. Then we have our VistaScapes Landscaping division where we do anything from designing of residential lawns to just basic lawn care."

The two have been coming to the Home and Garden Show for as long as it has been running as a way to

attract more customers and let people in the area know where they are and what they do. So far, both Cohen and Caraway said that it has definitely proven to be a good decision each year.

"This is our third year here," said Caraway "We've been coming to the Home and Garden Show ever since it started. We always are trying to get our name and face out there and that's basically why we come to this show, to try and do that."

"It has generated some business so far this year and definitely brought in some business in previous years. And we love the new venue this year. The recreation center is bigger and nicer and we have a lot of space to set up and people seem to like it."

Countless other vendors lined the recreation center, from cookware to house insurance to home furniture, offering deals and tips on how to make the home a more cozy, comfortable environment.

Overall, this year's home and garden show was one for the books, with more vendors, more attendees and more opportunities for home improvement.

"The house is the greatest asset that most of us have and we spend more money and more time on making our house nice and livable than anything else we have," said Anderson. "This is why home and garden shows are so popular and so important."

## Grant...from Page 1A

"The city will work with ARC and the Georgia Office of Planning and Environmental Management to develop an RFP (request for proposal) to address the following concerns regarding growth and redevelopment in the city:

"Infill and redevelopment concepts, intersection improvements and streetscapes, vacancy reduction strategies, plans for open spaces and mini parks, facade improvements, plans for landscaping and lighting, and public parking concerns.

"The plan will also identify priority projects for implementation and engage the community in developing goals and strategies."

Already, the city has reached out to three Georgia Municipal Association-recommended economic development professionals known for their work in nearby tourist destinations, and the project will move forward once a plan developer has been selected.

"I think that whoever ends up doing the strategic plan will probably come in and determine what the true downtown area should be for our city," said Ordiales. "It's a two-mile strip – maybe a mile of it is the true, defined downtown, for example."

"And then, they'll tell us how to proceed with that, as well as how to proceed with what's outside of that one-mile.

Or they might determine that the downtown should be half a mile from the square. They'll tell us how to develop that and how to go ahead and develop the rest of the area that's within the city limits."

Hiwassee City Hall and residents have been working with the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission to update the city's state-mandated Comprehensive Plan, which has been adopted by the city.

That work will play a key role in the design and implementation of the upcoming ARC grant-enabled strategic plan.

"We got a lot of input, a lot of surveys from our citizens that are telling us, this is what we want," said Ordiales. "So, we'll take that and kind of marry it with this plan, and hopefully we can come up with a good working document."

Continued Ordiales: "The Comprehensive Plan is very high level. We want pretty buildings, we want buildings that look like the mountain area. This will take it and say, buildings that look like the mountain area should have rocks, should have wood, should have this kind of pitch – they'll take the details from the Comprehensive Plan."

The strategic plan, once completed, could potentially call for the creation of a downtown development authority, which in practice would be able to acquire

property inside city limits to fix up and/or beautify, so to woo businesses to Hiwassee.

But all that remains to be seen – first, the city needs to hire an economic development professional to design the strategic plan.

"We have a bunch of vacant buildings that need to be filled with the right types of businesses," said Ordiales. "Determining the right types of businesses is what I'm hoping the developer will help us with."

"If we're going to drive tourism, which is where we're headed... then, what do tourists like to do? They like to eat and shop. In our little area, which is the hub of Towns County where people come to play on the lake, then we need to fill that void and get places where people want to shop and eat."

Once the strategic plan is developed, the city will begin to figure out how to go about its implementation.

"You take that elephant one bite at a time," said Ordiales. "Doing the budgets, certainly there will be more funding that we might be able to apply for, and more grants, more ARC funding – whatever we can get to get this thing going."

For their assistance in applying for and acquiring this grant, Ordiales would like to thank Patrick Larson of the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission, as well as Georgia's ARC Program Manager Annaka Woodruff.

## McBride...from Page 1A

"Hopefully everyone can leave the concert feeling more positive and happier"

Last year, McBride began touring under what she called the "Love Unleashed Tour." The tour was spearheaded in conjunction with her latest album, "Reckless," as a way to promote positivity and unity throughout the country.

According to McBride, with the political and social climate around the world, it is often easy to get caught up in the turmoil and tragedy and McBride's mission with Love Unleashed is to create an oasis away from that madness and bring people back to a place of happiness, which is often music.

After the original extension of the tour in the beginning of 2017, McBride decided to continue with the Love Unleashed Tour mission, regardless of what she was calling this next leg of touring. And that's where the Hiwassee show fits in.

"We're continuing that theme," said McBride. "I feel like it's such an important thing right now, to spread some positivity to all of these towns and cities that we're visiting. It's so important."

As far as the new album "Reckless," fans can definitely expect the typical strong, resonating vocals that are McBride's trademark, but just a touch less country. Inspired

by her personal journey and growth, McBride hit the ground running with this new album and no one would suspect this is her first album in 10 years.

"It's my first country record in a long time," said McBride. "I was inspired to get back into the studio and find some good songs. The songs are about real life that people can relate to."

"It has a little bit of a throwback sound to the late 90s and early 2000s, when I was first starting out. I'm really proud of it. I think it's one of the best albums I've ever done."

After touring, McBride

has a couple more projects up her sleeve and fans can expect to see much more of the country music icon in the coming years.

"I'm finishing up a Christmas album that will come out in November or October," said McBride. "I'm working on a couple of other projects right now, but I can't really say what just yet, but I'm excited about what the future holds. It's going to be good."

Tickets for the show are still available, and can be purchased at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds website for \$55 plus \$2 handling for Level I seating, and for \$45 plus \$2 handling for Level II seating.

## Gurtler to hold Town Hall June 16

Friday, June 16 at 8 AM there will be only one place to be in Towns County. The Sundance Grill welcomes the Mountain Movers and Shakers to their brand new home as they welcome State Representative Matt Gurtler to address Towns County at a classic Town Hall Meeting.

Too many dignitaries to list here are expected to attend but be sure to come and see a who's who of elected officials and VIPs, and be sure to bring that most important VIP, you.

The one and only Adam Penland will MC the day's festivities and Student Speaker Makayla Fairless will share her views.

Mountain Movers and Shakers move to their new home, The Sundance Grill. The Towns County Chamber of Commerce will also sponsor twin ribbon cuttings, as they welcome the Sundance Grill and The Mountain Movers and Shakers to the ranks of Chamber Members.

And don't forget a delicious breakfast too! Proprietor Rob Romero uses only the finest ingredients in all his offerings. The fresh blueberry pancakes are a real treat.

The Sundance Grill is located in the Always Christmas Mall, 715 N. Main St., Hiwassee. With plenty of parking, we look forward to seeing everyone at our new home.