

Hamilton...from Page 1A

said. "I know that I received the award, but it's because of the great team of administrators, coaches, school bus mechanics and the students that allowed for this to happen," he said. "I couldn't do this myself, and I'm very thankful for everyone that is involved."

"It's a big responsibility, and it means a lot that the parents and students trust us to make sure they are transported safely to school, home, and other school-related activities." Hamilton has been the transportation director at Towns County Schools for many years. He takes pride in his job,

knowing that he has a tough task and much responsibility to ensure a safe and pleasant bus ride for the students and parents of the community.

Winning schools are selected from a panel of judges that reviews the various transportation departments around the state to determine the winners based on several factors that impact bus safety.

Water Rates...from Page 1A

somewhere down the road, and we've got no reserves for that whatsoever."

Clark sits on the city's Water/Sewer Committee, which has spent many hours revising and calculating potential water rates to capture a fairer rate distribution for city water customers.

For example, the institutional water rate is currently the lowest rate in the city, lower even than in-city residential rates, Clark said.

Institutional water rates are rates paid by educational institutions, which in this case encompasses Young Harris College alone, though other institutions might fall under this category should they move into the city in the future.

"The minimum bill for the institutional as it's been proposed here would mean that it would be at the same rate as residential in the city," Clark said. "So, institutional would still be the lowest in the city, it would just share that designation with in-city residential."

This wouldn't be the first time the city has examined the need to increase water rates in recent years. In 2012, City Engineer Chris Poje recommended a rate schedule that is largely in line with the one that's currently on the table.

At the time, council members decided to postpone any water rate increases, though the city is now ready to move forward using the current proposal.

The specific incremental rates and increases will once again be discussed in detail during a public hearing at City Hall on Tuesday, July 30, at 6:30 p.m., to be immediately followed by a called meeting for public input and questions at 6:45 p.m.

Following the public hearing and any input, the council plans to hold a first reading of the Master Fee Schedule Ordinance, with a second reading and enactment expected in the August regular meeting.

City water customers can swing by Young Harris City Hall during business hours to pick up a copy of the proposed water rate schedule.

Also during the meeting, the council agreed to increase the water and sewer leak insurance coverage provided by ServLine for city water customers from \$1,000 to \$2,500, with a small added expense to customer bills.

Currently, the price for \$1,000 of water leak protection is \$1.80 a month, and the new cost for \$2,500 in water leak protection will be \$1.95. The sewer cost will increase from \$2.70 to \$2.75.

"These increases go to people's sewer and water bill, but they still have the option to opt out and say that they don't want to do it," Mayor Andrea Gibby said.

The mayor is looking into the possibility of adding water and sewer leak insurance to commercial accounts, and she

will report back to the council once she has the information.

Joint Economic Development Director Denise McKay attended the July 2 meeting to present the city's "Blueprint for Community and Economic Development 2019-2024."

McKay and the city came up with the blueprint through a series of public input Town Halls held in recent months to better gauge the direction in which people want to see their city grow moving forward.

Mayor Gibby likened the blueprint to a business plan, as it can be used to seek out money – grant money, in this case – to help the city realize its plans in the years to come, and the council voted unanimously to adopt the plan.

Importantly, it was pointed out that the plan was not set in stone, and could be altered at any point in time should the perceived needs of the city change down the road.

SPLOST projects are still at work in the city, with the Cupid Falls bathrooms ordered and estimated to arrive sometime in late August at a cost of \$22,000 for each of the two units.

And pavilions are still forthcoming at Mayors Park and Cupid Falls, though the city is in the process of shopping around for the right price.

Also in the July 2 council meeting, the mayor and council members welcomed accountant Marvin Chance of RL Jennings & Associates, who presented the city's 2018 audit.

Chance delivered an "unmodified opinion," giving the city a clean bill of financial health.

Results of the audit are available at City Hall.

Young Harris City Council meetings are held on the first Tuesday of every month beginning at 7 p.m. They are always open to the public, and residents are encouraged to attend.

July 12th Writers' Night features new authors

Local poet, actor, and student Ryvers Stewart joins Atlanta author Victoria Barkan for Writers' Night Out. Following the featured writers, an open microphone allows audience members to share their own poetry or prose. The reading takes place at 7 p.m. on July 12 at the Union County Community Center in Blairsville, GA. The free event is open to the public.

Stewart hails from Murphy, NC. She has written poetry since middle school, but in high school truly fell in love with it, as well as with acting. She is working on her Associates in Fine Arts degree at Tri-County Community College with graduation on track for 2020. Stewart is also an actress who performs locally. On the weekends she can be found participating in the roleplaying games, D&D and Pathfinder. She is currently working on her first poetry book.

Barkan will read from her new memoir, *The Monkey's Rule*, which begins, "I know I was a male Chauvinist pig in a past life, and they made me come back as a woman in corporate America." The book covers her successes as well as the discrimination she faced in her 20-year career in the bur-



Ryvers Stewart

geoning, then booming, cable TV industry. Her story continues with her spiritual journey that helped her recover from the ordeal.

Barkan's long career included 11 years at Cox Communications where she became Director of Marketing Operations. She also travelled the globe extensively as Cox's consultant to Southwestern Bell in the UK. She is now writing her second book and also focusing on her art, with paintings in an upcoming art show in Alpharetta, GA. She has a BS in art education from Bowling Green University and painted the artwork on her current book's cover.

Writers' Night Out is sponsored by North Carolina

Victoria Barkan

Writers' Network-West on the second Friday of every month through November. Anyone wishing to participate in the open mic can sign up at the door to read three minutes of poetry or prose.

The Union County Community Center is located at Butternut Creek Golf Course at 129 Union County Recreation Rd., Blairsville, GA, off Highway 129 near the intersection of US 76, phone (706) 439-6092. Food and drinks are available for purchase in The View Grill, but please arrive by 5:30 p.m. to get served.

For more information on Writers' Night Out, contact Karen Paul Holmes at (404) 316-8466 or kpaulholmes@gmail.com. NTJ0710.H2/CA

Songwriter's Showcase returns July 13th to Peacock Performing Arts Center in Hayesville, NC



Alex Guthrie

The Songwriter's Showcase returns to the Peacock Performing Arts Center in Hayesville, NC, featuring an evening of regional artists performing original work. Rob Tiger hosts the engaging one-night only event on Saturday, July 13th, at 7 p.m.

Performers include award-winning artists Jeff Black, Alex Guthrie and Hanna Aldridge.

Jeff Black's songs have earned GRAMMY recognition, radio chart-topping stats and numerous BMI awards. Although flying below the radar as a performer himself, he has been recognized by NPR as a musical pioneer in the digital age and his catalogue of critically acclaimed albums continues to grow. Composing music for film and television, his credits include numerous indie-film soundtracks and a



Hanna Aldridge

repertoire of songs cut by artists as diverse as Alison Krauss & Union Station, Waylon Jennings, Black Hawk, Dierks Bentley, Jon Randall, John Oates, Jerry Douglas and Sam Bush. Black has forged a reputation as a true folk troubadour entertaining globally for over three decades.

Alex Guthrie is a singer-songwriter based in Atlanta. With the infusion of different genres such as soul, folk and rock. Guthrie has been noted as "the guy from the Jennifer Hudson commercial." The now-infamous American Family Insurance commercial that features him playing in Atlanta's Woodruff Park when the Grammy Award-Winning singer Jennifer Hudson surprises Guthrie and sings along to Bill Withers' beloved "Lovely Day." The commercial has played on national television



Jeff Black

and radio, resulting in new opportunities and heightened awareness for Alex Guthrie, his band and his music.

Hannah Aldridge is an Americana/ Folk artist originally from Muscle Shoals, AL. She is the daughter of the #1 hit songwriter and Alabama Music Hall of Fame inductee, Walt Aldridge. At 19 she was chosen for "Hot on the Row" in Nashville 3 times and also had the honor of playing Bluebird showcase with writers like Pat Alger, Brett James and her father Walt Aldridge and with the release of her progressive folk EP, "Wanderer" in April 2011, Hannah's career picked up at lightning speed. Hannah gets her inspiration from progressive folk bands like Travis and Mumford and Sons but also with soulful songwriters like Ray Lamontagne or Jackson Browne. NTJ0710.Z15/gg



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Dispatch System...from Page 1A

"They have been a great company to deal with," Roberts said. "They have worked well with us when we have had problems, and we have been with them for 12 years now."

"We purchased the current system 12 years ago, but it did not go live until 10 years ago. We're on CAD 5 now, and this is CAD 10."

Roberts explained how the newly upgraded system will work more efficiently but will have to be updated every five to seven years.

The \$212,726 CAD System will include all the hardware required to operate the new system, such as the servers, the links and a computer terminal for each CAD dispatch, Roberts said.

It also includes mobile CAD, which is something the county has never had before.

Mobile CAD will be installed in each ambulance for the first time in county history.

The mobile systems will allow paramedics to view precise locations of medical emergencies on maps while exchanging critical information with the call center.

"We're hoping for January, but it may actually be March or April before we start getting the system installed," Roberts said. "We build this and update this specifically for Towns County – it's not an off-the-shelf box that you buy. So, that way, it knows all of our roads where we send ambulances and where we send fire trucks."

After the updated CAD System is installed and the training is completed, the actual kickoff date for the system to go live will be sometime in late

2020, Roberts said.

Also in the meeting, Bradshaw discussed his plans to replace the phone systems as well in the near future, because everything down there is about 12 years old, he said.

"There are so many options in the phone system, like leasing one, buying one, and to be honest with you, we have to see what's best for us," Bradshaw said. "We can afford to buy one, because Marty has worked so hard on this CAD and checking with all kinds of companies, getting different prices and negotiating with these people. He's got the price down lower than what we thought it would be, so it left us room for a new phone system."

"It may be better to lease a new phone system because they will maintain it, and if we buy it outright, then you have to pay so much a month for the maintenance. That's the next step we're going to do."