

# Fair Committee...from Page 1A

"With the way that things are you have to make sure that things are safe, and we can't have everything that people may want," Thomason said. "If we have that many people show up, then the simpler we make this, the better off everything will be."

Committee members will meet again Aug. 3 to finalize plans for the event and get ready for the opening of the 2020 Georgia Mountain Fair.

"(The Aug. 13 celebration) is a free event that

we would like to invite the public to," Thomason said. "We want everyone to come out and be safe and enjoy the band."

"We want to celebrate and have a good time. It is a big deal, the 70th year; this is exciting, and I am glad we are getting the plans together."

As always, Thomason and the fairgrounds are searching for community volunteers to help with the nine days of the Fair.

"We need volunteers to help run the concession stand

in the Music Hall, ice cream booth, gates, hamburger booth and many other positions," Thomason said.

Potential volunteers can call 706-896-4191. For more information about the Fair, including details about this year's educational grizzly bear show and exhibit, as well as info on the 2020 Georgia Mountain Moonshine Cruiz-In slated for July 30-Aug. 1, visit [GeorgiaMountainFairgrounds.com](http://GeorgiaMountainFairgrounds.com).

# COVID-19...from Page 1A

My biggest concern about all of this.

"I think that if the states have to close again, then a lot of these small towns and businesses will not make it. I know that COVID is bad, but between that and closing, it is hard to say which does the most long-term damage."

Carmen Hall of Florida offered her thoughts on the current situation while shopping at Hiwassee Hardware Saturday.

"We left early May to come up to the home we have over the mountain," Hall said. "We wanted to come here because we thought we would be safer and (my husband) could avoid some threats because of this health issues, and so far, we

have been wonderful.

"I wear my mask, and I think that people around this area usually do that, too. Not everybody will wear one, but people here are social distancing for the most part. Hearing about all the cases back home makes me worry, though, because I'm not sure when or if we will be able to go back."

"Florida could be shutting down soon. It's crazy."

Other people in the area feel that individuals could be doing more to slow the spread of COVID-19, which is on the rise again. Towns County local Brett Noland, for instance, said "now is the time for action."

"I think this could have been avoided," Noland said

while frequenting the Ridges Resort Saturday. "If people would have just listened to what the experts were saying and those young people didn't gather so much, we would be better off."

"I know those protests were meaningful, and I agree with the right to protest, but it is just common sense at this point. If you are going to protest, you could at least be smart and safe about it. We are seeing an increase in numbers of the virus, and I bet that it is because of all these movements."

"I understand the cause, but I also think that the timing was just wrong. We took a bad situation and made it a little worse. I'm hopeful that it won't last as long as they say."

# Schools...from Page 1A

visitors or parent volunteers, no open house, no field trips and no large group gatherings as defined by state guidelines.

Facial coverings will be provided to all staff and students, and staff will be required to wear them when coming within 6 feet of students or other individuals.

"Students are expected to wear masks during class changes when large numbers of students will be transitioning," the plan says.

Exceptions will be made for individuals with health conditions "that would prevent them from wearing a mask."

In terms of social distancing, students will alternate between cafeteria and classroom lunches. Furthermore, the schools will work to "limit the number of students transitioning in the same area to the extent possible," establish "a one direction traffic flow pattern" where possible in hallways, and more.

"Signs will be posted in appropriate locations throughout the building reminding students and staff to practice social distancing, frequently wash hands, and other disease prevention measures," the plan continues. "Signs will also be posted to help individuals gauge spacing for social distancing."

Built into the plan is a protocol for closing schools in the event of active cases being identified within the system, at which time all students will participate in online learning.

One identified active case would mean two closed days; two to four cases would cause the schools to shut down for three days; and five or

more cases would necessitate a closure of at least 14 calendar days.

"During this uncertain time, extra effort will be made to make up assignments missed due to absences to avoid negative impacts to students," the plan says.

Parents opting to have their children learn online for whatever reason – be it concern over increased virus risk either to family members or their children – should know that students participating in online learning must remain in the online learning program for at least nine weeks once committed.

"Parents may choose for students to return to the traditional school setting after the nine-week period by contacting the school," the plan says. "Expectations for online learning will be very similar to traditional school."

"Assignments must be completed. Grades will reflect work completed and can be negatively impacted if work is not completed. Work should be turned in online when appropriate. Physical work should be turned in by Friday of the assigned week unless otherwise specified in order to receive full credit."

K-10 students will be responsible for completing MAP Growth assessments in September, January and May, with online learning students "scheduled to take the assessment on campus on a day when the regular student population is not in attendance."

MAP Growth is an assessment program Towns County first utilized over 2019-2020, and it is meant to

monitor student achievement and growth throughout the school year.

The schools were still waiting at press time to hear if the state's request for a standardized testing waiver from the U.S. Department of Education would be granted, which would suspend "Georgia Milestones assessment and CCRPI school and district rating" for 2020-2021.

Towns County Board of Education members held their monthly meeting on Monday, July 6, on campus, where they discussed reopening prior to announcing the particulars.

"There are a lot of things like attendance that we are really going to have to be lenient on throughout the year," Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong said. "Now, any kid that has a 100-degree temperature, we are going to be asking them to stay home until they don't."

"We are not going to be asking them to go to the hospital every single time and get a doctor's note every single time. There are a lot of those things, and we will probably be lenient on those types of policies."

Berrong discussed results from a recent survey wherein locals offered feedback and thoughts on how to start school in August.

"The comments were pretty much as I expected," Berrong said. "You are going to have a lot of people feel this way, a lot of people feel that way and a few that are in the middle."

Close to 400 people responded to the survey, with about 60 percent wanting kids back in regular school, 23 percent wanting children to continue distance learning, and 17 percent being unsure.

Berrong said that the online learning method would not be as lenient as it was when the pandemic first interrupted school in March, and that students will be expected to submit their assignments on time this fall and moving forward.

Board Member Stephanie McConnell insisted that student and staff safety remain the top priority in all considerations moving forward.

"The masks, the hand washing, the distancing, all of that has to be addressed," McConnell said. "I think everything we talk about as far as changing the schedule and everything else, the goal has to be not only teaching the kids but keeping them safe while we are teaching them."

"I'd rather talk about spreading out in classrooms, decluttering the classrooms so they have more space to sit. I would rather talk about some of those sorts of things – that is what is going to make a difference."

To view the entire reopening plan, visit <http://towns.k12.ga.us> and click the plan link at top of the homepage.

Also in the July 6 meeting, due to delayed state budget allocations from COVID-19, the board passed a spending resolution to allow the use of one-twelfth of the system's budget from last year to continue funding operations for August. The resolution is temporary until a 2021 budget can be passed.

# Crosswalk...from Page 1A

ample room for the left-hand turning lane.

"It's a little tight at the Going Postal entrance, but other than that, it should be okay," she said. "We should give it a minute, let it get (finished), and then we'll see how it goes."

The project cost, which has been an issue for some residents, is approximately \$80,000, Ordiales said, though GDOT is covering \$60,000, and the city and hospital are evenly splitting the remaining \$20,000.

"I believe the city should invest \$10,000 to keep its citizens safe," Ordiales said.

Additionally, should any issues arise, GDOT informed the council it would quickly remedy the situation. The crosswalk was completely finished on Wednesday, July 8.

"(Everyone) is always so quick to blame the city, when we were blindsided, too," Councilwoman Patsy Owens said, who attended via teleconference. "I (tell) everyone to listen to our meetings and you'll hear what's going on in the city."

Councilwoman Nancy Noblet said that the City Council was there to help, not to hurt.

"Yes, there are times we disagree, but we always agree on what is best for the city," Noblet said. "Just know we are here for our citizens."

"Someone made a

comment that, 'I don't see no one in line to take (your) positions.' There (were) three slots open back in November, and nobody but Junior (Chastain) came forth and ran. And if you have an issue, please come to us and don't go on social media; all that does is get the out-of-towners (involved)."

Added Councilwoman Anne Mitchell, "Anyone that thinks they can do a better job than us are quite welcome to run for office."

Ordiales concluded discussion on the topic by saying that all residents of Towns County, not just those inside the city limits, are encouraged to watch and comment on the council's Facebook-streamed meetings and work sessions.

In other announcements, Ordiales said Lloyd's Landing on US 76 was opened to the public last week following construction to expand the entrance.

"It is complete, the in-and-out is done, and the signs are up," she said. "We might need to do a little more dressing up, and they may need to remove some equipment that's still there, but for the most part, it's pretty much complete."

The mayor provided a COVID-19 update, commenting on Towns County's substantial uptick in new cases in recent days, being sure to add that the state had an adequate supply of personal protective equipment and hospital beds.

"Let's be vigilant and wear masks," Ordiales said. "I know that's a controversial issue, but if I wear a mask to protect you, and you wear a mask to protect me, then we shouldn't have a problem. So please, just wear the mask and do what you can."

In other business, the council approved six motions, beginning with the adoption of the fluoride referendum results certification and the appointment of Steven Harper to the Downtown Development Authority following the resignation of Herb Bruce.

The council approved the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority loan deferral documents. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, GEFA will allow the city to defer its loan for six months, adding the payments to the end of the contract.

Deferring the payments results in no additional interest and does not affect the city's credit rating.

The city approved the purchase of a new truck for the Water Department at the cost of \$35,595, and a contract for Lloyd's Landing Kayak Ramp to Technology International for \$25,893 from the SPLOST fund.

One final order of business was the approval for Hiwassee Police Chief Paul Smith to open an account at South State Bank for drug seizure cash.

# Early Voting...from Page 1A

the Aug. 11 runoff winner also set to appear unchallenged by party opposition in November.

For the 9th Congressional District race, on the Republican side are Matt Gurtler and Andrew Clyde, while the Democratic ticket features Devin Pandy and Brooke Siskin. Whoever wins their respective party nomination on Aug. 11 will face the other party nominee on Nov. 3.

Since this is a primary runoff, voters who participated in the June 9 election must vote with the same political party. People who selected nonpartisan ballots during the primary, as well as individuals who did not vote in the primary, will be able to choose a party when voting.

Election Day will be Tuesday, Aug. 11, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., and that day, voters should report to one of the three pre-assigned Towns County voting precincts: Hiwassee at the Civic Center; Young Harris at the Lodge Hall Building, aka Stephens Lodge; and Macedonia at Macedonia Baptist Church.

The Elections Board voted in May to move all precincts to Hiwassee for the June 9 election, as the private buildings hosting the Young Harris and Macedonia polling places had been closed due to COVID-19, and the Board Office was struggling to recruit poll workers amid coronavirus concerns.

However, following the recent lifting of statewide restrictions, the Elections Board has decided to reopen all polling places for Election Day voting, as both private buildings are now open to the public, and recruitment efforts have proven successful in providing enough poll workers to staff the precincts.

Allowing Election Day voting at all three precincts should improve line conditions and voting wait times that impacted the June 9 election at the Hiwassee Precinct, which resulted in many complaints and requests for reopening of the other precincts.

And as positive COVID-19 case rates continue to increase around the county, state and nation, Elections

Board members have retained the option of falling back on the emergency plan of hosting all voting at the Hiwassee Precinct should former statewide restrictions be implemented once again.

Poll workers will be following COVID-19 best practices, including social distancing enforcement, regular equipment sanitation and wearing of masks. Voters are encouraged but not required to wear facial coverings, which will be made available alongside hand sanitizer.

Additionally, voters are not required to bring their mailed precinct cards, but they must show a valid photo ID to vote.

As a recap, registered voters who will be at least 18 years of age by Election Day are eligible to vote during early voting, though July 13 was the registration deadline for voters looking to participate in the Aug. 11 election.

Registered voters may request mail-in absentee ballots or inquire about their absentee status by visiting the Secretary of State's Office website at [sos.ga.gov](http://sos.ga.gov), calling the Board Office at 706-896-4353 or swinging by in person.

For the rest of the year, absentee ballots will be automatically mailed to voters who informed the Board Office they were elderly or disabled on a previous application, though all others will need to apply for mail-in absentee ballots on a per-election basis.

People wanting to fill out their absentee ballots/applications and drop them off in person can do so using a specially marked box outside the Board Office, and this can be done up to 7 p.m. on Aug. 11.

An absentee ballot/application must be submitted by the voter requesting one, except for a disabled person, who may have a relative by blood or marriage return his or her absentee ballot/application.

Those who receive an absentee ballot by mail but decide to vote in person will need to have their absentee ballot canceled at time of voting.

Voters can access [mvp.sos.ga.gov](http://mvp.sos.ga.gov) ahead of the election for information on voter registration status, mail-in application and ballot status, poll location, registration information on file with the county office, sample ballots and more.

It should be noted that voters are not allowed to display campaign-related materials at polling places where promoted candidates appear on ballots. For example, for the Nov. 3 election, voters will not be allowed to enter polling places wearing clothing promoting Donald Trump or Joe Biden for president.

The Elections Board is still looking for residents who would like to serve as poll workers, with training to take place from 4-8 p.m. at the Towns County Civic Center next to the Board Office on Friday, July 17.

In other news, Elections Board Chair Janet Oliva discussed in a June 25 called meeting an alleged security breach that occurred at the Board Office on Memorial Day during the early in-person voting period for the June 9 election.

Oliva said a poll worker, unaware that the office was closed for the holiday, had entered the building and triggered a door alarm. She went on to say that the Hiwassee Police Department had investigated the incident and found that no crime had been committed.

She then informed the board that a rumor had been circulating regarding a certain number of absentee ballots disappearing in connection with the Memorial Day event, which she dismissed as unfounded, referencing office surveillance footage and multiple layers of security for the absentee ballots in question.

The rumor even made its way to the Secretary of State's Office, which contacted the Towns County Board of Elections June 10 to inquire about the incident, though Oliva said state officials were satisfied that the stolen ballots allegation was unfounded after speaking with her.

# The Humane Society's Mountain Shelter receives donation



Lisa Collins, Executive Director and Barry Kives

The Humane Society's Mountain Shelter would like to thank one of our best friends and continuous supporter, Mr. Barry Kives of a local business, Southern Polyurethanes, Inc. Barry has always jumped right in anytime we were in need. Barry has a heart of gold and a huge passion for all animals and those less fortunate.

He has generously donated \$17,000 to help complete our latest Roof Repair fundraiser. Part of this donation will also be used to help find homes for our community's orphaned animals and help the underprivileged give those animals a forever home.

Thank you Barry from all of us at HSMS! NTJ0115.ZB/CIA

# Pet Celebration benefits local animal organizations

(CPR) has been a non-profit organization since 2006. We are a no-kill organization dedicated to reducing overpopulation, abuse and neglect of domestic animals. CPR is run entirely by compassionate like-minded professionals who volunteer their time and resources to help save the lives and then care for these animals. We have placed over 5,600 animals in loving homes since 2006.

We have outgrown our facility and have an overabundance of unwanted animals. The Castoff Thrift Store is our catalyst to the community to build a state of the art facility for our community. Castoff Thrift Store is located at 19 Colbalt Street, Suite C in Blairsville, GA. All proceeds from Castoff Thrift Store go directly to our building fund for the new facility. A special

thanks to all of our volunteer's that made this happen.

We have started three new programs for the community for a better life for our furry friends. Castoff Thrift Store has an identification Tag program. For only \$3 you can have a customized name tag along with your information on it in case you lose your cat or dog.

The second program which has been a great success is a microchip program. For \$30 you can have your pet microchipped. Our third program is a food pantry for cats and dogs. We do realize that certain circumstances may have pet owners needing additional food to help them out in these tough times.

Do attend the Pet Celebration and enjoy all the many activities that day. See you there. TJ0115.F2/SH

The Pet Celebration is on September 12, 2020 on Hayesville Square from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The Celebration is to bring together the Human-Pet Bond. The proceeds to this wonderful celebration are to earn money for so many animals in need through many organizations. Castoff Pet Rescue is one of them.

Castoff Pet Rescue

