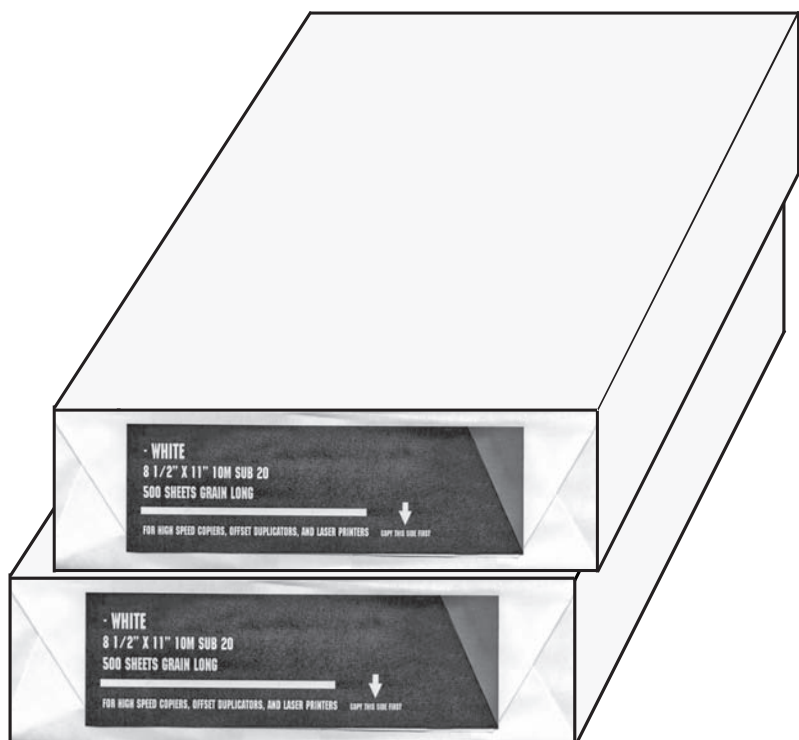


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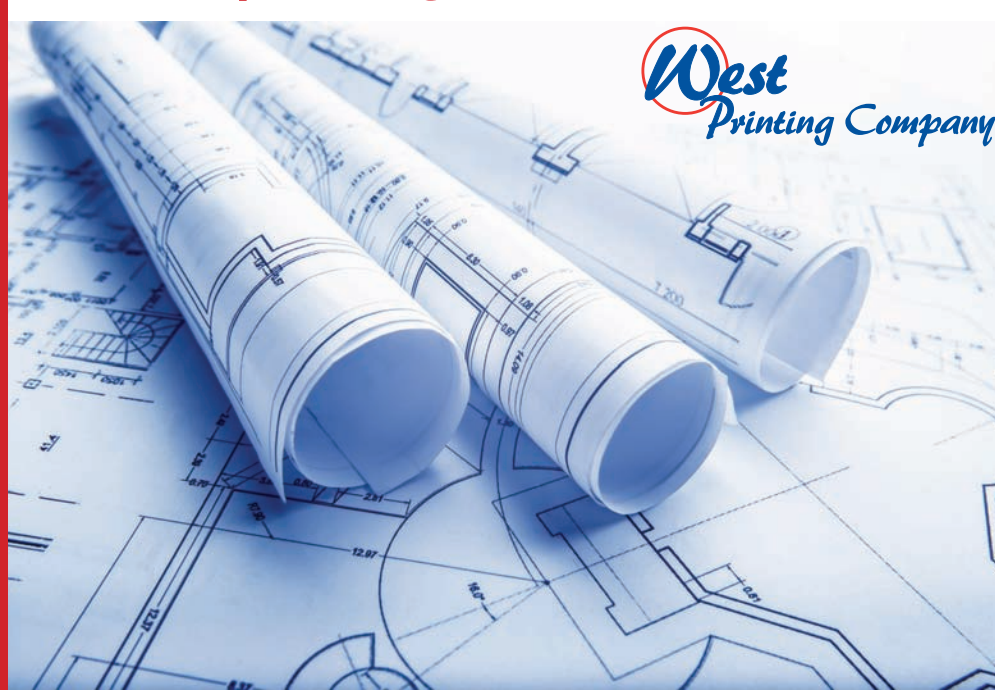
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Early Voting...from Page 1A

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, must choose a party to vote in the runoff.

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: Hiawassee at the Civic Center; Young Harris at the Lodge Hall Building, aka Stephens Lodge; and Macedonia at Macedonia Baptist Church.

As previously reported, the Elections Board voted in May to move all precincts to Hiawassee for the June 9 election, as the private buildings hosting the Young Harris and Macedonia precincts had closed for COVID-19. The Board Office was also struggling to recruit poll workers amid coronavirus concerns.

However, following the recent lifting of statewide restrictions, the Elections Board 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 Hiawassee 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 Hiawassee Precinct should former statewide restrictions be implemented once again.

Poll workers are 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 are being 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.

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.

People 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,

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 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 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.

Cruiz-In...from Page 1A

about a 70-mile cruise through the mountain roads, 35 miles there and back. We will be doing that both Thursday and Friday."

At the fairgrounds, safety precautions will be taken to ensure that attendees and participants have less of a risk of spreading COVID-19.

"We will be practicing our social distancing and we will have handwashing stations," Parrish said. "We ask people to have masks; it is not required, but we do ask them to have it. We will have some to furnish, and we will have hand sanitizer everywhere. Granddaddy Mimm's is actually giving us some moonshine sanitizer."

The Cruiz-In will feature a live performance from T. Graham Brown on Friday, July

31. Graham Brown is a local favorite and a welcome addition, as Parrish said it has been tough to find musical acts during this difficult time.

"We were racking our brains trying to find somebody, and he said that he would do it," Parrish said. "He was only available on Friday, so that's when we will have the concert."

"We have Steven Phillips & Midnight Express starting at 6 p.m., then T. Graham Brown will play for a while after that. We are hoping that this helps bring a few more people into town, and we are trying to make this the best we can."

People who participate in the Cruiz-In every year are car fans who like the classic muscle cars as well as custom designs and other unique vehicles, and Parrish hopes that this Cruiz-in

will bring new people into car culture and help them appreciate the older generation of cars before they are gone.

"We are afraid that we might lose a lot of this, because if you look at our clientele, they are more of an older-based group," Parrish said. "A lot of younger people don't have the muscle cars out. We are seeing several people passing on, and we don't know if that culture will continue, so we need to enjoy them while they are here."

"As far as the cars, it is neat, too, because we are having the original moonshine-running cars, and we will have awards for that. We will play moonshine-based games, and we will have some rat rods that are creative and custom."

For more information on the Cruiz-In, visit GeorgiaMountainFairgrounds.com.

One-way...from Page 1A

help the development of our downtown and revitalize it if we could change the driving patterns of the street.

"We met with (the Department of Transportation), and they approved it. Then I met with the owners of the hardware store, and they approved it. And I met with the management team at the hardware store."

"They were happy that we were doing that, because they sometimes have a clog of people that stop in to buy plants and then go to the hardware store to buy stuff, and cars sit there for 20 or 30 minutes."

Previously, the thoroughfare was an unnamed city street, and while it remains unnamed, sprucing it up and making it a one-way has enabled the city to add a handicap spot and five parking spaces, with GDOT providing the signage for the street.

The street project was

completed on July 11 and cost the city \$400, which was worth it according to Ordiales, who says projects like this one help the city grow and assist businesses in the downtown area.

"These are small little efforts, but it is part of our plan to develop and revitalize the downtown," Ordiales said. "That has a big effect on all our economic development, not only in the city but in the county as well. This is an easy fix to help some of those customers park and be able to walk over."

"It brings businesses, and I have seen cars parked in there, which is great. Traifful is doing good business, and that is what we want. We are very happy with it. It is one of our goals from the city to support and help any kind of business we can if they want to move into the downtown area."

Moving forward, the city

will be working on other projects adhering to its comprehensive plan by creating even more areas where visitors can shop and spend their day.

"Our next big focus is the Paris Plaza," Ordiales said. "We received a grant from the USDA Rural Development Group, and we will be able to do the stabilizing and the roofs."

"We are in the process of applying for a \$500,000 (Appalachian Regional Commission) Grant, and that will help us with gutting it and getting it ready for rentals in that area. That is the big focus there."

"We are always trying to improve the square, and we are working on Lloyd's Landing and putting a kayak ramp in there. Before we started there, we wanted to get traffic control taken care of, so we made a one-way into the park and one-way out."

Mask Debate...from Page 1A

trying to keep us inside and scare us from being out and working. I'm not denying that the virus exists, I am just saying that it seems a little too spread and lingering. I'm not sure we have the story yet."

Jamie Kraig of Cobb County feels the opposite about masks, and he said as much during a shopping trip to the Hiawassee Antique Mall July 16.

"I don't see what the big deal is - I keep some masks in my car, and I put one on when I go in a store," Kraig said. "I'm wearing it for 30 minutes at most, just long enough for me to get in the store and back out. I can breathe in them just fine, and I have no trouble going about my business."

"At most, it is hot and makes me sweaty, but that isn't going to kill me. I hate to sound preachy, but I just don't understand people, and nobody will agree on a solution or anything. The reason we are having so much trouble here in America is because we are so divided. We need to pull together."

Gov. Brian Kemp recently banned local governments from mandating masks, which has generated both support and opposition as the virus continues to spread throughout the state and elsewhere.

"The governor is making the wrong move," James Pruitt of Towns County said July 18 while shopping at Traifful. "Cities should have their own

options with how they run. There is no cookie-cutter solution to each city. Every town is different, and they have different populations; Atlanta is not like Hiawassee."

"While I disagree with him, I do understand his point of view. He wants a rule that is applied to the entire state, because that is his job, managing the state. If each city had a different policy, it would mess up the entire state."

"If Gainesville required a mask and I went there for a day without knowing, that would cause problems. So, while I don't support his decision, I also don't want to say that he is ignorant or not considerate of the state."

FBLA...from Page 1A

and competitors tested and submitted their performances over the internet.

"We are especially proud of our students' efforts, as these competitors continued to work during challenging times," FBLA Adviser Ruth Taylor said. "These young people have represented our school and community well.

Congratulations to all!"

FBLA's mission is "to inspire and prepare students to become community-minded business leaders in a global society through relevant career preparation and leadership experiences," according to <https://fbla-nlc.org/covid-19>.

"This mission is truer than ever given recent events,"

the website continues. "At the core of our mission is teaching aspiring business leaders to be 'community-minded.'

"We are grateful to have a community of state advisers, trusted board members, and enthusiastic students working together to ensure an accessible, appropriate and healthy NLC experience for all."