

# For Election Results See Flyer Inside This Paper

# Towns County Herald

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## Sheriff Clinton welcomes Sons of American Revolution for award

By Jarrett Whitener  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS – The Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter Sons of the American Revolution presented Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton and his office with an appreciation award on Wednesday, Aug. 5. Local to the area, the Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter SAR has been presenting a series of awards to area law enforcement as a way of showing support for officers who, on top of their already difficult jobs, regularly face new challenges with COVID-19.

Chapter President Jared Ogden feels it is important for the community to show support and let officers know that people stand behind them, especially when there's been so much negative national and state

media attention surrounding law enforcement.

"We do this as a way to thank them for what they do in our area, and we want to support them during these times where they have been getting a lot of bad press," Ogden said.

Sheriff Clinton expressed his appreciation for local Sons of the American Revolution, speaking to the country's founding and how the sheriff's office is responsible for protecting American rights.

"The basic premise behind our country was individual liberty," Clinton said. "We as individuals have rights given to us by God, and the purpose of government is to protect those liberties. The office of the sheriff is such that it is the oldest office in the history of the English language, and it is the only office that has

the specific duty of keeping people safe.

"That is certainly what we are about, preserving that way of life, which I don't think there is any question that it is under attack now. To have a group that recognizes those sorts of things and those efforts, we appreciate that."

Having the support of the community helps the sheriff and his deputies build healthy relationships between themselves and the people, which in turn establishes trust and keeps the area safer.

"Community involvement is everything," said Clinton, who oversaw the creation of the volunteer Citizens Law Enforcement Academy in Towns County six years ago. "One of the things that we want is community

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The Towns County Sheriff's Office welcomed the Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter SAR last week for some all-around expressions of appreciation. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

## Council continues talks on enterprise zone, COVID-19 precautions

By Jarrett Whitener  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

In the Aug. 4 regular meeting of the Young Harris City Council at City Hall, Joint Economic Development Director Denise McKay addressed council members about creating a Rural Enterprise Zone to help the city attract development opportunities.

"This is another good tool to add to our box because of what is coming once the (SR 515) bypass (of Downtown Young Harris) is done and you start working in the downtown area," McKay said. "It gives incentive to try to attract people into town to do the redevelopment that you are looking for."

"(Rural Enterprise Zones) are usually areas that are stressed, under poverty and a lack of development, and you have general blight. They are used as a tool to help you attract investors to redevelop."

McKay said the criteria to take advantage of such a future enterprise zone "is job-related," so businesses would have to create the equivalent of five full-time jobs to qualify for zone tax breaks.



Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby in the Aug. 4 regular meeting at City Hall. Next month's meeting will be conducted over Zoom. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

Councilman Steve Clark expressed concerns about the proposed ordinance and resolution creating a too-large zone, potentially allowing developers to find loopholes for undue tax breaks.

"There is a lot of loopholes in here that I am concerned we are going to lose a lot of our tax base," Clark said. "With words that say 'may,' and some words that say 'shall,' some of those bother me."

Clark went on to say that he would like time "to modify the map" as well.

"I think the map includes properties that we don't necessarily need to include – I don't consider them blighted," he said. "There is some wording in here that I would like to talk to (City Attorney Marvin Harkins) about. There are some thin slots in here that I can see air through, and I would like to

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## Berrong pledges to keep students, teachers 'safe within our walls'

By Shawn Jarrard  
Towns County Herald  
Editor

When students return for instruction on Monday, Aug. 17, Towns County Schools Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong said the system will be ready, both for on-campus and completely virtual learners.

"We do have a little over 20 percent of the student body that's going to be online," Berrong said. "In the elementary through the middle school, we're going to be able to schedule three classes for the teachers (to instruct) in-building students. Then, their fourth period will be for online students."

"Our hope is that those classes that are in the building will still be small enough to where we can actually assign them seats and still have them spaced apart in the classrooms."

Berrong said that, while the schools are not mandating mask wearing by students in the classroom, "we are going to be asking students to wear masks when they're in the hallways during class changes, especially at the high school level."

"The middle and



Towns County Schools Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong discussing COVID measures in a July 28 called meeting. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

elementary can change classes as grade levels, and they're not intermingling between classes," Berrong said. "The high school – there's no way to do that because different grade levels are in different classes, so they will all change at the same time."

"So, we will be highly suggesting that those students wear face coverings while they're in the hallways. Teachers have been directed that anytime they are within 6 feet of a student, they are

to have a face covering on as well.

"Many of our teachers will probably be wearing them all the time, because we have some older population in many of our staff. They have concerns as well, so they're going to want to protect themselves."

Janitorially, Berrong said members of the cleaning staff will transition from working mostly after lunchtime to providing a greater presence during the daytime "to try to

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## Ordiales urges COVID caution; council members approve intake repair



Hiawassee Mayor Liz Ordiales showing off the new City of Hiawassee face masks in the Aug. 4 regular meeting streamed via Facebook Live. Photo/Screenshot

Hiawassee Mayor Liz Ordiales started off the August regular city meeting with a COVID-19 update from Coronavirus Response Coordinator Dr. Deborah Birx of the White House Coronavirus Task Force.

The update came by way of information Ordiales obtained during an Aug. 4 conference call via the Georgia

Municipal Association, for which the mayor currently serves as District 2 president. Ordiales is a regular attendee of these weekly conference calls, which last week featured Dr. Birx.

"She says that things started getting really bad after Memorial Day," Ordiales shared. "She feels that the folks in America just decided, 'Hey, it's summer, it's Memorial Day,' and then cases got much higher from that point on.

"(Dr. Birx) says Georgia is at a high plateau state, which means they've had no improvements since they've reached their peak, and over 10 percent positivity rate. So, the cases are coming in all over 10 percent – that puts us at a high plateau."

Georgia has 159 counties, and Ordiales said that Towns County was one of 110 in "the red zone" for COVID-19 "because of the increase per capita."

"People don't realize that this stuff is real," Councilman Jay Chastain Jr. said, to which Ordiales added, "and it's spreading like crazy."

"(Dr. Birx) has a big concern about colleges reopening again due to, more of the frat parties and to bars, so she's kind of warned against large gatherings," Ordiales said. "She said originally the rural areas they thought were going to be spared. That is not the case."

"We're in the same situation as they were, but she just basically suggests continuing with small gatherings of 10 or less, wear the mask, wash your hands, and walk away (for physical distancing). They are expecting

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## Hiawassee hosts first Night Market to bring festivities downtown



The Hiawassee Night Market was a success on Friday, and Mayor Liz Ordiales looks forward to putting more on in the coming months. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

By Jarrett Whitener  
Towns County Herald  
Staff Writer

Hiawassee held its first ever Night Market on the Town Square Friday, Aug. 7, and by all accounts, it was a ton of fun.

For everyone who missed it, don't worry – the new happening will be a monthly event moving forward, with its arts, live music, games, food and more.

The event was planned

by Mayor Liz Ordiales and Economic Development Director Denise McKay to promote Hiawassee and to give the community and vendors something to enjoy together outdoors.

"This is our very first Friday Night Market," Ordiales said. "One of the things that the strategic plan called for was more events on the square. And since Denise has been here, we have been trying very hard to implement those goals as much

as possible. This is one that we really wanted to do, because it is a great night tonight."

Of course, having the event downtown automatically ensures pretty good participation, especially during a time when people have not been as active during the summer due to COVID-19 and fears of spreading the virus.

"Downtown is the life of a community," McKay said.

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