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School board hears millage recommendation, tobacco-free policy revision

By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

In the Aug. 5 Towns County Board of Education work session, Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong recommended that the board approve the rollback millage rate of 7.477.

Basically, it's tax time again, and the school district is needing to set its annual millage rate so it can raise property tax revenues to pay for school operations in the coming year.

The millage rate for the 2018-2019 school year was 7.671 mills, which generated \$5,793,266 in total tax revenues.

And even though the 2019 millage rate is lower than last year, it will still generate a total of \$5,825,640 at 100%

collections, which is \$32,693 in additional tax revenues compared to 2018 expected collections.

This is because the total value of property in the county has slightly increased over the last year, thanks largely to modest growth.

The board is expected to set the rate in a Sept. 9 meeting at the board office.

"I told the public I would do everything in my power to keep from increasing property taxes over the rollback rate as long as I was in this position," Berrong said. "In these five years, we have built our general fund to \$3.7 million, all the while renovating our facilities and giving our students and this community the best facilities possible without raising the millage rate over those five years."

"The board and I are confident that we can operate the system this year without an increase in the millage rate, and hopefully for several years to come."

Also in the Aug. 5 work session, School Curriculum Director Stephanie Moss presented a revision to the state-mandated Tobacco-Free Schools Policy.

The current policy bans staff, students and anyone on campus property from using any tobacco products, with the revision adding all cannabinoids to the list.

Moss attended three meetings this year, where she learned that several schools in the state have shown an increased problem with students bringing CBD and vaping products, so they decided

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Towns County Schools Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong and Finance Director Myra Underwood go over with new Board Member Stephanie McConnell in the Aug. 5 board work session.

Photo by Chad Stack

Young Harris City Council talks millage rate, enacts water rate increases

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

Young Harris City Council members voted in their Aug. 6 regular city meeting to advertise the rollback millage rate of 2.479 mills in 2019.

The millage rate is used to determine the amount the city hopes to raise in property taxes each year that go toward conducting the business of the city.

Last year, the rate was 2.890 mills, resulting in total property taxes levied of \$28,710. Accepting the lowered rollback rate will result in a total property tax collection of \$26,159 – at 100% collections – in 2019.

Due partly to re-evaluations and partly to growth, the total value of property in Young Harris has gone up over the last year, so keeping the millage rate the



Andrea Gibby in the July 30 public hearing on the proposed water rate increases.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

same as 2018 would result in a higher total of expected tax collections this year.

Because of this, should the council have chosen to pursue the 2018 millage rate

in 2019, it would have needed to spend money to advertise a series of public hearings, which council members decided would not be worth the cost.

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New sign announces LongHorn Steakhouse is coming to Blairsville



A sign announcing LongHorn appeared at the future site of the restaurant along Brackett's Way in Blairsville last week.

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

BLAIRSVILLE – LongHorn Steakhouse is coming to Union County, as announced by a sign erected last week on the empty lot next to KFC/Taco Bell.

The steakhouse restaurant has been the talk of the town lately, with many people wondering if what they'd heard about the famous chain was true or not – was LongHorn actually coming?

Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris shed some light on the situation in his Commissioner's Questions column from this week's edition of the North Georgia News.

"We knew there was a contract on the property and then we heard that the property had closed," Paris wrote. "I have continued to tell people as late as yesterday that until construction has started and you see an announcement sign, nothing is for sure with a large corporation."

"Well, today (Thursday, Aug. 8, 2019), I just saw the sign installed that says, 'Coming Soon, LongHorn Steakhouse.' The site is completely cleared and there is a double row of silt fence completely surrounding the site."

"So, I would say the odds are about 98%. But the only other thing that is the final positive is when they actually level the site, dig the footers and pour the floor. Then you can put it at 100%."

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Hiawassee, Young Harris to hold city council qualifying next week

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

Both Hiawassee and Young Harris will hold elections on Nov. 5 to fill council posts, and qualifying for each city's upcoming elections begins next week.

In Hiawassee, council member posts 3, 4 and 5 are up for election for terms starting in 2020, with a qualifying fee of

\$45 for each post.

Hiawassee city residents can pick up qualifying packets starting next week at Hiawassee City Hall, which must be turned in during the Hiawassee qualifying period of Wednesday, Aug. 21, through Friday, Aug. 23, from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day.

Over in Young Harris, council member posts 1, 2 and 3 are up for election for

terms starting in 2020, with a qualifying fee of \$36 for each post.

Young Harris city residents can pick up qualifying packets starting next week at Young Harris City Hall, which must be turned in during the Young Harris qualifying period of Monday, Aug. 19, through Wednesday, Aug. 21, from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day.

Egglee remembered as man of faith, family man, and friend to many

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

The Georgia State Patrol has identified Matthew Sean Egglee, 41, of Haytesville, North Carolina, as the man who died in the Aug. 3 crash on US 76/SR 2 in Towns County.

According to GSP, shortly before 7 a.m. that Saturday, Egglee was driving a Frito-Lay delivery truck eastbound on Georgia 2 when he failed to maintain his lane while approaching a curve in the road.

The vehicle crossed over two broken lanes and left the road across from Papa's Pizza. It then headed into a ditch before crashing through a "guy wire" and into a "large concrete utility pole," causing Egglee's fatal injury, GSP said.

No braking skid marks were immediately apparent at the scene, though GSP did note that Egglee was wearing a shoulder belt at the time of the accident.

The GSP crash report did not contain a reason for the



Matt Egglee

accident.

Services for Egglee were held on Saturday, Aug. 10, at Kingdom Hall of Jehovah Witnesses in Murphy, North Carolina.

"He was the most amazing husband, father, friend,

and he loved his God, Jehovah," according to his obituary. "Matt never met a stranger and always saw the good in people."

"Matt loved people so much that he dedicated his life to Jehovah God on July 14, 1978."

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Federal judge hears motions in upcoming Gowder/Heaton trial

By Linda Erbele
Towns County Herald

GAINESVILLE – Former Union General Hospital CEO Mike Gowder appeared in federal court in Gainesville on Thursday, Aug. 8, for a pre-trial conference in his federal prescription drug case.

U.S. District Judge Richard W. Story, presiding over the case, heard arguments on pending motions filed by the defense teams of both Gowder and his co-defendant, Dr. James Heaton.

Judge Story did not issue a ruling Thursday. He will consider additional briefs to be filed by the U.S. Attorney's Office by

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The entrance to the courthouse in downtown Gainesville.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

TCSO arrests two fugitives from out of state, assists US Marshals

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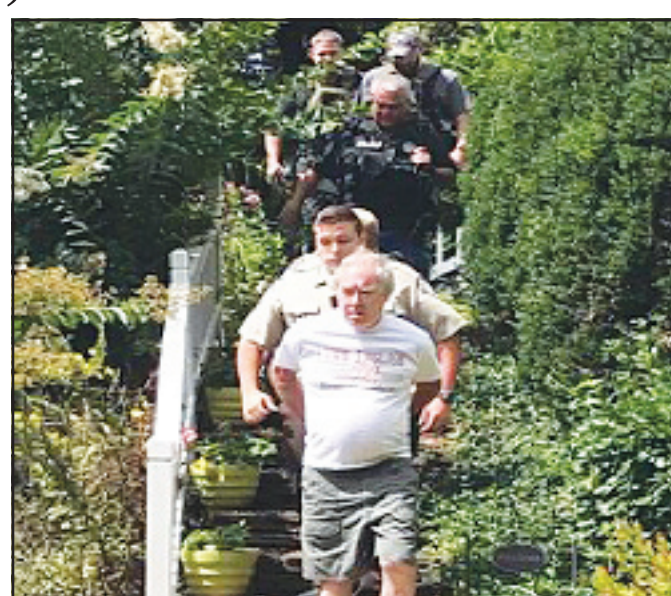
Deputy Sheriff with the Towns County Sheriff's Office arrested two fugitives last week who were wanted on separate incidents and charges, one out of Oregon and the other out of Massachusetts.

On Monday, Aug. 5, deputies located Orville Benjamin Jordy, 50, camping on TVA property in the Bell Creek area of Towns County.

Jordy was a registered sex offender from the state of Oregon, where he left without notifying authorities.

The White County Sheriff's Office had tipped off deputies in Towns County to be on the lookout for Jordy, who had been in the Towns/White

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The Towns County Sheriff's Office assisting U.S. Marshals with the arrest of Peter Spinney last week.

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