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all of those need to plug into power outlets somewhere.

"And we just don't have the voltage pushing to those currently, and breakers flip all the time when we're trying to do multiple science labs at one time. So, just trying to bring it up to date to the 21st century."

Added Berrong: "There's a possibility of renovating the middle/high school library, and possibly renovating the middle/high school office area as well (next summer)."

Fortunately, a large portion of renovation costs, likely between 50 percent and 80 percent, will be coming back to the schools in the form of reimbursement through a state modernization grant.

"What was happening in most of the schools," said Dr. Berrong, "especially in the South, a building was getting 40 years old, they had not taken care of them, so they were demolishing these school buildings and building brand new schools."

"The state realized that it's cheaper for them to keep a school up to date as opposed to building brand new schools. So, they passed this modernization grant proposal and said, if your building is 40 years old, we will give you 80 percent, 70 percent of the projects."



The new roof on the middle/high school building of Towns County Schools has been completed in time for school to start, including all new HVAC units. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

"In essence, what they're saying is, we will help you rebuild your building, and when you're done with that building, it's supposed to be as if you had just built the building. But it's cheaper for everybody to do it that way as opposed to just starting over from scratch."

Fortunately, the school system has been able to afford the projects, which require completion prior to reimbursement, thanks to the voter-approved ESPLOST.

"The total cost of the project is going to be about \$6.3

million, and that should come out to be maybe only around \$1.5 million to \$2 million out of our pocket," said Dr. Berrong.

Other than the summer renovations, including a new drainage system at the baseball field, the school system remains largely the same this year, with little faculty turnover.

One new addition this year is School Resource Officer Sally Tanner, who will be joining SRO Donnie Jarrard at the schools as an added safety measure to start the 2018-2019 school year.

Hiawassee...from Page 1A

that kind of stuff."

The two biggest sewer upgrades will be a complete overhaul of the lift station near the Hiawassee Beach and a new force main going under the bridge leading into the City of Hiawassee.

"The force main on the side of the bridge has been there well over 35 years," said Ordiales. "So, we're going to leave that there as a backup should we have some problem with the new one going underneath the bridge."

Also on Aug. 7, the

council set a called meeting for 6 p.m. on Aug. 16 at Hiawassee City Hall in the upstairs training room, to go over the city's millage rate and budget.

A minor subject of discussion in the Aug. 7 meeting was the Resolution for Climate Change as presented by Dr. Vernon Dixon.

Dr. Dixon led a presentation on the resolution in the July 30 council work session, though the council and city have since signaled that they don't anticipate adopting the resolution moving

forward. Ordiales said in the August regular meeting that all Hiawassee residents are welcome to share their ideas for consideration by the city during council work sessions.

"Just like Dr. Dixon came, it's the same if the council has an issue that they want to bring up, like plastic bags, it's certainly my responsibility to allow them to speak and present their projects," said Ordiales after the meeting. "It doesn't mean that we endorse it, support it or stand behind it. But it means that everybody has a voice and everybody should be listened to."

TCSO...from Page 1A

News Special Towns County Herald

On Tuesday, Aug. 7, Towns County Sheriff's Deputies and a Hiawassee Police Officer responded to the Lakeview Store on U.S. 76 East in reference to a subject who was loitering on the property.

Upon arriving on the scene, the officers located the subject still on the store property.

After further investigation, the subject, identified as Carey Edward Kendall, 37, of Hiawassee, was arrested and charged with one count obstruction of a law enforcement officer and one count Violation of Georgia Controlled Substances Act, possession of methamphetamine.

In a separate incident on

Wednesday, Aug. 8, Towns County Sheriff's Deputies arrested Aaron Dale Patterson, 29, of Blairsville. He was arrested on the following warrants: two counts of theft by taking (motor vehicle); two counts of entering auto; and one count of second degree criminal damage to property.

Towns County Investigators had secured warrants for Patterson for incidents that were reported to authorities during the early morning hours of Feb. 18 at separate residents located on Bug Scuffle Road and Konahetah Road in Hiawassee.

The vehicles were recovered at that time, but one of the vehicles had sustained damage.

This case is still active. In another separate incident,

this one occurring during the early morning hours of Thursday, Aug. 9, Towns County Deputies and Investigators responded to a physical altercation which was reported to have occurred at a residence on Georgia 180 in Hiawassee.

Upon completing an investigation as to the circumstances surrounding the altercation, authorities arrested Jeff Arrowood, 52, of Hiawassee, charging him with the following offenses: two counts of aggravated assault and two counts of battery.

This case is still active and on-going at this time, and all of the above cases will be forwarded to the Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney's Office for prosecution.

All suspects are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

TVA...from Page 1A

our membership is that our electric rates are too high, and that we continue to add annual rate increases to these already 'inflated' rates," said Cummings. "The fact is, however, that BRMEMC has not had an increase in retail rates for its benefit since 2013, which piggybacked TVA's rate increase that same year."

Cummings went on to pose several questions to Johnson about TVA's plans, two of which dealt directly with divestiture.

TVA is a federally-owned agency of the USA, and the Trump Administration has pitched the selling of TVA's assets, known as divestiture, at least twice this year.

One of the reasons this is a concern is because divestiture of TVA transmission lines would mean an investment of billions of dollars by new private owners, which would likely translate to increased power rates to recover that investment.

"TVA has made a number of financial decisions that at least appear to be focused on 'correcting' some of the ills of the past, most notably with regard to pension liabilities and debt service," said Cummings. "While TVA has made significant efforts to reduce O&M and 'tighten its belt,' there have been several years of steady increases in wholesale rates passed down from TVA to local power companies, while at the same time TVA is posting record profits and increasing equity."

"This has created a situation for LPCs like BRMEMC wherein TVA's wholesale rates are 25 percent to 30 percent higher than surrounding investor-owned utilities."

Cummings encouraged everyone present to attend the annual meeting to hear Johnson's answers to the board's questions and to pose their own "about these rate increases."

Also in the town hall, the members in attendance were invited to comment on the upcoming bylaw amendments

on the ballot for this year's board of directors voting.

The two amendments are: to set the definition of "member in good standing" for the purposes of becoming or remaining an EMC director; and whether or not to establish district voting for director candidates.

If approved, "the phrase 'member in good standing' shall mean that such a person has not lost his right to receive electric service from the cooperative," said Cummings that evening.

As for district voting in director elections, the board signaled during the town hall that it was not in favor of the amendment.

"The Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Board of Directors does not support the district voting bylaw change," said Cummings. "The board feels this change would prevent members in each county from being represented equally."

Currently, EMC board directors are elected at large, where every member in each county can vote for the directors in every other county.

The board makeup is based on county population and includes three directors from Union County, two directors each from Towns County and Clay County, North Carolina, and one director each from Fannin County and Cherokee County, North Carolina.

Should members vote to approve district voting, moving forward, they will only be able to vote for candidates running in their county.

Much of the discussion that evening centered on the fact that directors represent the entire EMC, not just their home counties, and several people argued that it would be unfair on those grounds to limit voting.

Former EMC board attorney Larry Sorgen attended the meeting, and he spoke in favor of the amendment, which he made from the floor of the 2017 annual meeting in concert with the wishes of other members.

Sorgen likened representation on the EMC

board to governmental bodies such as U.S. Congress and the Georgia General Assembly.

"You have representation in those bodies," said Sorgen. "You can vote for your state representative that's the representative of your district to speak for your interests on state issues that affect everybody. It doesn't mean you're not represented at the state level, but you don't get to vote for the state representative from Oglethorpe County."

"You don't get to vote for the state representative from Savannah, who's also on that same body, who are all working together, all those different representatives of the people, for the good of the whole state. But every part of the state has some different interests, and they all have to have some representation in that body."

Another hot topic that evening was fiber optic internet and broadband services, with several members asking about the EMC's plans for expanded services.

Nelms said that, yes, the EMC had finally earmarked some money in its budget to expand, but that it would take time to build out broadband to everyone.

"When they started building (power) lines up here in 1938, 80 years ago, it took a long time for us to build the 6,000 miles of line that we have today. It's going to take some time on the broadband," said Nelms.

Up for election this year are three director seats, one each in Union County, Towns County and Fannin County.

Election packets complete with election notices, paper ballots and voting instructions were mailed to members the week of Aug. 6, and mail-in ballots must be received back by Sept. 6.

Online voting opened the week of Aug. 6 via DirectVote.net/BRMEMC, and online voting will close on Sept. 6 ahead of the annual meeting.

Members will also be able to vote in person at the annual meeting, which will be held at the Union County Schools Fine Arts Center on Saturday, Sept. 8, beginning at 8 a.m.



BRMEMC General Manager Jeremy Nelms, Board Director Cory Payne and Board Attorney Charles Autry in the Aug. 7 Town Hall Meeting. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Rosser...from Page 1A

helping kids succeed in school, because if a child doesn't have a comfortable home life where he or she can "recharge," how can they succeed?

The local Family Connection Mentor Program came about through working with a child whose room was the family living room couch. The child had no personal space of her own, and she said she felt her safe place was her school, not her home, said Rosser.

As a result of working with that child and others in similar situations, Family Connection began looking for programs and activities that would complement children and their families.

"Our mentor program began in the fall of 2000," said Rosser. "We started with Young Harris College and began a partnership with them."

Rosser said the mentor program also works with older folks and retirees in the area, adding that it's a common misconception that the older demographic can't connect with the kids.

"The mentor program has been proven," said Rosser. "Research shows that disciplinary records improve, attendance improves, grades improve, when a child has someone in their life that is there weekly and working with them."

Rosser said she has about 35 mentors at this time and that there is a waiting list, but they are always looking.

Family Connection serves kids at the elementary school, middle school and high school of Towns County Schools. One mentor has been with her charge since elementary school, and that child is now in high school.



Timothy Jennings Inside: Timothy Jennings of Union County 4-H talked about the benefits of 4-H in the schools at the Aug. 10 meeting of the Mountain Movers and Shakers.

Photo by Mark Smith

"Over the years, when you're with someone that long, their conversations are quite different from when it started," she said.

Family Connection participates in another program, this one in conjunction with the

office of Enotah Judicial Circuit Juvenile Court Judge Jeremy Clough.

Through a grant, juveniles in the four counties of the circuit who are facing felony charges can opt to go through an in-home therapeutic program that includes their families.

If the juvenile and his or her family complete the program successfully, Judge Clough can waive or dismiss the juvenile's charges.

The things that Family Connection does, said Rosser, are meant to support families and children so that they're successful and can reach their highest potential.

Also in the Aug. 10 meeting of the Mountain Movers and Shakers, Timothy Jennings of Union County 4-H paid a visit and delivered an update on the Towns County 4-H Program.

Former Towns County 4-H Coordinator Andrew Smith, much beloved in the area, left his position over the summer to pursue other opportunities, and Jennings said they have at least two excellent applicants at this time to fill the position, one of whom is a former classmate of Smith's.

August lecture at Hamilton Gardens

On Friday, August 17, Sharon Griffith, Fannin County Master Gardeners, will be speaking on Japanese Maples.

These free gardening lectures take place at the Paris Pavilion at Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge beginning at 11 a.m., lasting 45 minutes to an hour and they are open to the public.

The Gardens are in the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds on Hwy. 76, just outside of



Hiawassee. Once inside the Fairgrounds you just follow the signs to the top pavilion at the Gardens. NT(Aug15.1A)SH