

# Perren, Berrong talk school safety with Movers and Shakers

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Roy Perren spoke with the Mountain Movers and Shakers for the second time this month, returning to the Sundance Grill on Friday, Aug. 24, to finish his presentation on school safety.

Perren is both the Facilities Director and the Federal Programs Director at Towns County Schools, and he also serves as the Union Site Administrator for Mountain Education Charter High School.

The Aug. 6 table-top active shooter drill he mentioned during his earlier visit with the Movers and Shakers went very well, and there will be a full-dress active shooter drill conducted in the near future at a time when the school is unoccupied.

"We've also trained our teachers ... in a program called A.L.I.C.E.," said Perren. "That stands for Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter and Evacuate. It went really well. The teachers, I feel, felt empowered by it on how they would act in case there was an emergency."

Towns County Schools Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong also attended the meeting last Friday, and he said the school board "is looking closely at passing one of these policies where faculty members could have access to firearms on campus."

A lot of schools have passed this policy and have been left trying to figure out how best to implement it. Berrong said he and the school board are going to figure out the logistics first before the policy is adopted.

"How many people on campus are we comfortable with having access to a firearm?" said Dr. Berrong. "Are we comfortable with a kindergarten teacher having a firearm on themselves in a classroom? So, there are a lot of conversations that we're having, conversations we're having with the police



Local educator Roy Perren spoke with the Mountain Movers and Shakers on Friday, Aug. 24. Photo by Mark Smith

force.

"What do we do if there's a situation and we have a faculty member who does have access to a firearm and can stop the situation? How do we make sure that they're recognizable to the police?"

"There are a lot of details involved besides just saying we've got this policy and everybody can run around with a firearm. We're not going to do that. We want to make sure our students are as safe as humanly possible."

"But I also don't want to put our staff in a position where they can make a mistake and ruin their lives as well. Unfortunately, it's not a black and white situation."

Berrong said he was totally against firearms on campus until he spoke with another school superintendent who said if he could have a police officer at every door, he would.

That sentiment gave him pause to think it through and made him consider that maybe some firearms on campus might be a good thing in the hands of the right people if it was planned correctly.

"The answer is not to get under a table and hide," said Dr. Berrong. "The answer is to do something to protect yourself,



Towns County Schools Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong in the Aug. 24 meeting of the Mountain Movers and Shakers. Photo by Mark Smith

and that's what we're trying to change, the mentality."

Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton also attended the meeting, and he spoke up and applauded Berrong and Perren on their school safety initiatives and work with faculty.

"We are so blessed in this county to have the relationship that we have with the folks that we have at our school system," said Clinton to a round of applause.

Services Agreement, which is an agreement with the Enotah Judicial Circuit for a public defender.

Bradshaw also signed the "Georgia Department of Transportation Transit Asset Management Group Plan Participant Accountable Executive Approval" form, which, in the nutshell, makes the commissioner responsible for the two county transit vans.

Barbara Hale and Holly Tiger were re-appointed as Towns County representatives to the Towns County Library Board.

Bradshaw presented a plaque honoring John Noel "Mousy" Nicholson, who has worked for Towns County for the last 12 years at the landfill and has retired.

each in Union County, Towns County and Fannin County.

The bylaw amendments include setting 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" will be defined as any member who has not lost his or her right to receive electric service from the cooperative.

Concerning district voting, 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 nine total directors: 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, starting next year, they will only be able to vote for candidates running in their home 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.

# Manhunt...from Page 1A

A CodeRED alert was activated by the 911 Center, which put out calls to all residents in the area to be on the lookout for the suspect who was still on the run. The CodeRED included a physical description and the type of clothing of the suspect.

The suspect was seen shortly after by residents of Upper Bell Creek Road. Deputies and Officers responded and continued searching and surveying the area throughout the evening and into the following morning.

On Friday, Aug. 24, a tip was received that the male suspect was at a location off of Georgia 75 North. The Towns County Deputies and Hiwassee Officers arrived on the scene, and the suspect was apprehended and taken into custody without incident.

Following the arrest, another CodeRED alert was activated to notify residents that the suspect was in custody.

The suspects have also been linked to an ongoing investigation by the Sheriff's

Office regarding a burglary that was reported on Aug. 15 at a residence off of Fodder Creek Road, where the victim reported that several firearms and other items were stolen.

Towns County Investigators from the Sheriff's Office teamed up with officers from the Hiwassee Police Department to execute a search warrant at a residence located on Konahetah Way in Hiwassee.

Deputies arrested James Robert Gregory and seized items that had been reported stolen from the burglary along with a quantity of methamphetamine.

Also on Friday, Aug. 24, Sheriff's Investigators recovered firearms and other items from a location off of Swallow Creek Road that were reported stolen from the residence off of Fodder Creek Road.

The Hiwassee Police Department arrested and charged Bobbie LeAnn Saxon, 37, of Hiwassee with the following offenses: Violation of Georgia Controlled Substance Act, possession of methamphetamine; fleeing and

attempting to elude; failure to maintain lane; no seatbelt; Violation of Georgia Controlled Substance Act, possession of drug-related objects.

Towns County Sheriff's Deputies arrested the following suspects: Sandi Pate, 29, of Hiwassee, on a probation violation warrant; Shaun Keith Ewing, 36, of Hiwassee, on a probation warrant; and James Robert Gregory, 38, of Hiwassee, for Violation of Georgia Controlled Substance Act, possession of methamphetamine.

The investigation into the burglary report is active and ongoing, and additional charges will be forthcoming.

The Towns County Sheriff's Office would like to extend appreciation to the following agencies for their assistance in the search and apprehension of the suspects: the Hiwassee Police Department, Georgia DNR Wildlife Resources Division, Georgia State Patrol, Towns Fire & Rescue, Towns 911, and the U.S. Forest Service, along with residents in the area of Upper Bell Creek.

# Bomb Dogs...from Page 1A

our strike teams, so we're particularly paying attention to that."

The Georgia EOD K-9 Program has trained in the area for many years, and Keys said they keep returning to the mountains because of the level of support the program enjoys in these communities.

Dogs in the program include Belgian Malinois, German Shepherds, Labradors and German Shorthaired Pointers, and the canines work both special events and respond to developing incidents in law enforcement.

"These K-9s are part of the handler's family," said Keys. "They live with them. This is a commitment that you're going to have for eight to 10 years."

Meggie is a black Lab who served with a U.S. Marine Corps unit during active combat in Afghanistan. She and her handler, Sgt. Shane Head of the Fayette County Sheriff's Office, have been a team for about six years now, and they participated in the recent training up here.

Head is a husband and father of two, and he echoed Key's sentiment, stating that Meggie has become a part of his family.

"She knows when I'm ready to go to work, she's at the door waiting," said Head. "She knows when I'm not going to work, because she won't budge, she'll be sitting there looking at me like, okay, you're just leaving."

"She has good days and bad days, just like humans. She has emotions, just like humans. It's literally like having another child. I rely a



A bomb-sniffing dog and his handler inside Anderson Music Hall at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds. Photo by Lowell Nicholson



Looks like this EOD K-9 found what it was looking for at the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

lot on her, especially at work. Whatever we search, whatever venue we search, we rely on her and her nose."

For his part, Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton enjoyed welcoming the teams

to his home county.

"We're always honored to be able to host these kinds of events," said Sheriff Clinton. "It's good for the networking, certainly, but it's also good for the community."

# Bradshaw...from Page 1A

because the hospital decided to make annual instead of quarterly payments.

In his Commissioner's Report, regarding the moratorium on off-premises signs, Bradshaw described how several sign companies had come into his office within days of each other earlier in the year wanting permits to erect a large number of billboard signs.

Bradshaw said they came in suddenly, en masse and without precedent, so he called the county attorney for advice.

Towns County Attorney Robb Kiker advised Bradshaw to enact a moratorium and begin a review of the county sign ordinance.

"So, that's what we're

in the process of doing," said Bradshaw. "I don't have any information to give you on how we're strengthening it yet. We're going to meet again (soon). The planning commission is working on this with our county attorney and myself."

Bradshaw said the 2017 audit was on track "to be on budget like we're supposed to be."

The audit report is at the Georgia Department of Audits at this time, and the auditor said there should be no findings.

"At the next county meeting, we'll bring an update on that (audit)," said Bradshaw.

In other news, the commissioner signed the Georgia Indigent Defense

# TVA...from Page 1A

TVA Chief Financial Officer John Thomas. "The plan also calls for lower operating and maintenance costs, which have been achieved through the work of our employees."

"The advantage to this approach becomes apparent when looking at our results. Rates today remain among the lowest 25 percent in the U.S., and TVA's wholesale rates are essentially the same as they were in 2013. During that same period, we've been able to reliably generate cleaner energy with lower fuel costs while beginning to reduce our debt."

As previously reported, TVA President and CEO Bill

Johnson will be attending the BRMEMC Annual Meeting on Sept. 8 to make prepared remarks.

Unfortunately, Johnson will not be available to answer public comments during the Q&A portion of the meeting, but he has committed to speaking with EMC Board Members about their concerns with TVA's long-range financial plan.

The EMC board will meet next in the annual meeting, which will see the election of three director candidates and the potential adoption of two bylaw changes.

Up for election this year are three director seats, one

# Market...from Page 1A

powders can be added to water to instantly make a flavored tea that comes with several advertised health benefits, depending on the mix used.

"We mix all of our products by hand," said Brown. "These mixes cannot be bought anywhere else, or at least it won't have the same flavor."

The family mixes their spices together, too, and they offer a variety of combinations that may just be one-of-a-kind rubs.

Yet another vendor, Sandy Strickland, runs a stand she calls "Sandy's Kitchen," offering plenty of pound cakes, jellies and pickled products.

Strickland spends up to two days making six flavors of pound cakes, and at her stand, everything from pound cakes to jams costs only \$5.

Not all vendors at the market are there to sell produce, however.

Pam Stanfield runs a booth called "Pam's Back to Nature," which makes available natural essential oils to attendees of the market for purchase.

At her stand, buyers can get oils for use on the skin that provide different advertised benefits, such as stress relief, headache relief, sinus relief, and many others.

One of the special oils she offers is a bug-away rub that works to keep insects at bay without adding anything that may be harmful to the body.

"The special thing about this rub is that it can keep insects away without having unnatural chemicals," said Stanfield. "When chemicals are put into things like this, they get into people's pores and bloodstream, which can be unhealthy for us."

Each of these vendors frequents the market and makes it his or her goal to be there every Saturday possible, and all vendors would love to see a successful conclusion to their market season, which runs through September.



Folks are always welcome at the Towns County Farmers Market, open Saturdays from 9 a.m. to noon. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

