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Commissioner welcomes guests, conducts plenty of business

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw led another agenda-packed county meeting on Tuesday, Sept. 19.

Starting with an invocation by Eli Phillips and the Pledge of Allegiance by Zoe Phillips, the commissioner gave his customary Commissioner's Report.

The youth football fieldhouse at Foster Park is close to completion, said Commissioner Bradshaw, adding that detainees constructed the building.

To save money, Commissioner Bradshaw said that he's considering having detainees help build the new

Young Harris Fire Station, though the Towns County Fire Board is still in the process of getting building plans together.

The plans will be drawn up in-house by County Building Inspector John Paul Peebles, all in the name of saving taxpayer dollars.

"I feel like we can get a much nicer firehouse, a much larger firehouse for a lot less money by doing it ourselves," said Commissioner Bradshaw. "Sometime this fall, the Road Department will go over and grade that lot, and then we'll start laying it out."

"But right now, while we've got good weather, we're definitely keeping the Road Department on the roads, working, patching potholes, cleaning, mowing, cutting trees.

We've cut a lot of trees lately." The commissioner addressed Hurricane Irma and the fantastic response by county first responders and public safety workers, and said that the county really dodged a bullet as far as damage went.

County employees will be happy to get direct deposit of paychecks for the first time ever, hopefully by Oct. 6, said Commissioner Bradshaw, noting it was something that most employees expressed interest in after he was elected.

As for the Aug. 21 total solar eclipse, Bradshaw said that, though traffic was much lighter than expected, there were more visitors in the county than many people may have realized.

The commissioner commended Towns County



Young Eli Phillips opening the Sept. 19 county commission meeting with a prayer. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

Chamber of Commerce President Candace Lee for the eclipse event organized at the Georgia Mountain

Fairgrounds, and stated that it was his goal to bring as many tourism dollars as possible into the county to help local

taxpayers.

"We're constantly pushing to grow our county through tourism," said Commissioner Bradshaw. "We had the Hank Williams Jr. show come in - it was full, 3,500 people. That's a lot of folks right there. It kept our motels full and restaurants. That was a great weekend."

"This past weekend we had the Dailey & Vincent show. It was a Bluegrass, Country Music festival that went for three days. I called Hilda earlier, and she said, without a doubt, at least 4,500 people over those three days."

Continued the commissioner: "We're going to keep pursuing and growing, and keep bringing more people into our county. I can't wait until next year to see what this year

Board of Education gets a visit from the guidance counselor

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County High School Guidance Counselor Lana Parker made a special appearance to discuss the dual enrollment program with the Towns County Board of Education during the monthly meeting on Monday, Sept. 18.

Formerly known as the Move On When Ready program, dual enrollment is a program that Georgia high school students, from ninth grade up until 12th grade, can participate in to take college courses and receive credit while still in high school.

While all BOE members are aware of what the program is, Parker wanted to share exactly what goes into undertaking and how it can both positively



Towns County Board of Education members Laura Banister and Dr. Kiley Smith on Monday, Sept. 18. Photo/Lily Avery

and negatively effect students. "The one thing that I really want to talk to you all about is the Move On When

Ready program," said Parker. "The dual enrollment program is where high school students can

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Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition talks hydrilla in meeting

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

A hydrilla invasion might sound like something out of a 1950s science fiction movie, but it's a reality for the pond next to the Towns County Chamber of Commerce.

Fortunately, the non-native aquatic weed is thus far contained in the pond, and has not been discovered anywhere in Lake Chatuge.

Callie Moore visited the Towns County Commission Meeting on Tuesday, Sept. 19 to let residents know that hydrilla was discovered not long ago in the pond across from the lake.

Moore is the executive director of the Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition,



Callie Moore, Executive Director of the Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition

and she told those present for the meeting about how Chamber President Candace Lee contacted the coalition

late last year with reports of thick, mat-forming weeds in the pond.

HRWC Restoration Coordinator Tony Ward made a trip out to the pond and determined the weed was indeed the dreaded hydrilla, and his initial diagnosis was backed up by TVA's aquatic weed specialist.

Hydrilla is a particularly nasty species because it's such a hearty plant that is hard to control and propagates with extreme ease.

If left untreated, the federally listed noxious weed forms thick mats that interfere with recreation and destroy native fish and wildlife habitats, according to Moore.

"We looked at all kinds of option for eradicating the

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BRMEMC Attorney Ford resigns; search for new lawyer begins

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
Editor

Blue Ridge Mountain EMC's Board of Directors are looking for a new attorney.

EMC Attorney Larry Ford has resigned effective immediately, Board President Mickey Cummings said.

"We received an email from him tendering his resignation, effective immediately," Cummings said. "He offered to help us find someone else. We're already looking for another attorney."

At the Board's Sept. 18 monthly meeting, the Board appointed a three-member search committee to find a new attorney, Cummings said.

"That committee consists of Roy Perren, Gene Mason and Danny Herren," Cummings said. "That group will work with our General Manager Jeremy Nelms to bring some names before the board to determine who our next attorney will be."

"We'll determine the prerequisites for that person and go from there," Cummings said. "In the interim, we've got



Larry Ford, former attorney for the Board of Directors of the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

some people that, if we need to, we can call."

Cummings said that Ford did not specify the reasons why he resigned.

Ford replaced Larry Sorgen as EMC attorney in 2015.

In other business, the

North Georgia News and Towns County Herald newspapers have learned that the EMC board voted 6-2 to do away with subcontracting a right of way crew.

Prior to the annual meeting, the board voted 4-3 to hire Georgia Right of Way Cooperative to replace its in-house right of way crew. That decision was a main sticking point in the 2017 election of directors.

Nelms had said that the decision to subcontract work on its right of ways was a cost saving decision.

In other business, Cummings said that the board has already begun work with its policy committee regarding the two proposed amendments to present to the membership in 2018.

At the annual meeting, former BRMEMC legal counsel Larry Sorgen proposed an amendment that would allow voters in each of the five counties in the cooperative's service area to elect their respective representative during the

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Towns County CLEA welcomes GSP Aviation Division



The seventh class of the Towns County Citizens Law Enforcement Academy with the Sheriff Chris Clinton and a helicopter from the Georgia State Patrol. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton and the seventh class of the Citizen Law Enforcement Academy gave a warm welcome to two state troopers on Tuesday, Sept. 19.

The troopers, members of the Georgia State Patrol Aviation Division, landed with their specially equipped Bell 407 helicopter at McConell Memorial Baptist Church in Hiawassee that Tuesday, much to the delight of everyone present.

For their part, GSP Cpl.

Paul Wofford and Tactical Flight Officer Jamon Jones were happy to pay a visit, and they made themselves available to the CLEA class to discuss their jobs in the Aviation Division.

Wofford grew up in neighboring Rabun County,

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Historical Society learns all about singing shape notes

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The sound of singing scales could be heard throughout the county last Monday as the Towns County Historical Society enjoyed an evening of shape note singing and learning during the monthly meeting on Sept. 18.

Mike Nichols, an adjunct music instructor for Western Carolina College and retired school teacher from Sylva, North Carolina, schooled the group on the art of shape note singing, sharing all that he knows of the old timey singing style.

Shape note singing is a musical practice and tradition of social singing from music books and hymnals, where the music



Mike Nichols teaching shape note singing to the Towns County Historical Society on Monday, Sept. 18. Photo/Lily Avery

Towns County Food Pantry Director dies in one-vehicle crash

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
Editor

The leader of the Towns County Food Pantry succumbed to injuries sustained in a one-vehicle crash on Upper Bell Creek Road, authorities have confirmed.

Richard Botting, 71, of Hiawassee, was killed when his vehicle left the roadway on Wednesday, Sept. 20, Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton said.

Towns County deputies responded to the mid-morning accident. However, the Georgia State Patrol was the lead investigating agency, the sheriff said.

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Richard Botting inside the Towns County Food Pantry. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

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