

Towns County Herald

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City calls hearing to talk water/sewer fee changes

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

The City of Young Harris is making three changes to its Master Fee Schedule to better cover the costs of providing water and/or sewer services to city customers.

In their Sept. 14 regular meeting, City Council members held a first reading of an ordinance to revise the Master Fee Schedule to reflect these changes, and they also voted to hold a public hearing to discuss the ordinance with residents on Oct. 5 at 6:45 p.m. inside City Hall.

Specifically, the city will

be adjusting water tap fees to more accurately reflect materials and labor costs for installing new meters; adding a \$26 monthly surcharge for households located in a city booster pump; and creating a \$500 boring fee for new construction accounts.

The council periodically reviews fees and rates for city services in order to cover the cost of providing said services, as well as to ensure that fees and rates are "limited to the extent possible" so as not to unduly burden water and sewer customers, per the proposed ordinance.

Reviews of fees and rates are conducted by the

city's Water/Sewer Committee, which met in August and came up with the suggestions currently on the table.

Young Harris currently has 86 customers in seven neighborhoods who live above a city booster pump. These neighborhoods are Timberline, Fortenberry Road, Josie Lane, Laurel Hill, Raleigh Ridge, Stephens Road and West Laurel.

Under the revised fee schedule, only customers living above a booster pump in these neighborhoods will be responsible for paying the surcharge, which will take effect after adoption of the ordinance.

Booster pumps are subject to additional operation and repair costs, per City Hall, and members of the City Council have said they do not want to charge all city customers to maintain booster pumps that benefit only certain households.

For instance, in the Sept. 14 meeting, the council had to approve a \$3,610 emergency repair for the Stephens Road booster pump. The Timberline booster pump undergoes regular maintenance as well, as do other boosters serviced by the city, and the \$26 fee will help to offset those costs.

As for the boring fee, the

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Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby discussing city business during the September council meeting. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Pfizer boosters roll out this week for eligible vaccinees

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor



Good news, Towns County residents – booster doses for eligible recipients of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine have been approved for specific groups of fully vaccinated individuals.

Georgia Department of Public Health District 2 made the announcement Friday after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued official recommendations for who may get their third shot.

Booster vaccine doses

are approved for people aged 65 and older; residents of long-term care facilities; people 18 and over with pre-existing medical conditions; and residents 18 and older who have an occupational or institutional exposure risk.

To be eligible to receive a booster, people must have received their second Pfizer vaccine at least 6 months ago.

Currently, there is no booster available for Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccinees, "as right now there is not enough data to support a booster dose recommendation," according to District 2 Public Information Officer Natasha Young.

"Both Moderna and J&J are expected to submit data to the FDA in support of booster doses in the coming weeks," Young said last week.

District 2 will be re-

opening mass vaccination sites in most of its 13 counties as of Sept. 27, including in Towns County. All doses of the Pfizer vaccine will be available. First and second doses of Moderna as well as the single-shot J&J vaccine will be available upon request.

The Towns County Recreation Department at 150 Foster Park Road in Young Harris will be providing vaccination clinics Mondays and Wednesdays from 1-4:15 p.m., and on Tuesdays between 1 p.m. and 5 p.m.

Union County will continue offering COVID vaccines at the Health Department until demand requires a transition over to the Union County Sports Center.

All health departments will be vaccinating every other Saturday. Appointments are

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Bradshaw, Oliva announce poll worker shortage for '22

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

In his Sept. 21 regular meeting, Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw announced that the Board of Elections is presently experiencing a shortage of poll workers that will possibly affect the 2022 elections for certain voters.

Towns County Board of Elections Chair Dr. Janet Oliva was present at the meeting and confirmed the anticipated shortage.

"We need poll workers; we need experienced poll workers, especially," said Bradshaw, adding that some poll managers have been lost due to sickness, in addition to COVID, and will not be returning.

"So, I'm reaching out to

you to help us find poll workers. All a person needs to do is go to the Elections Board office (next to the Towns County Civic Center) and see Office Supervisor Rachel Edwards, and she will take it from there.

"Our hope is that if they don't have enough poll workers, what are (they) going to do?" Bradshaw added, saying that the fix at that time would be to consolidate the Macedonia and Hiwassee polling precincts at the Civic Center while retaining the Young Harris Precinct.

Consolidation would not be unprecedented, as the county combined the Tate City Precinct with Macedonia in 2019. However, there would be an option to re-open Macedonia down the road if the Hiwassee precinct were to become



Cliff Bradshaw
Sole Commissioner
unmanageable or if the county population grew.
Bradshaw said, and Oliva
See Poll Workers, Page 8A

Drive-thru Annual Meeting a success for EMC, members



(L-R) Roy Perren, Ray Cook, Bert Rogers, Jeff Ledford, Gene Mason, Allan Glidewell, Danny Henson, Jack Lance Jr., Gayland Trull and Cory Payne at the 2021 Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Annual Meeting Sept. 23.

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

YOUNGHARRIS—Blue Ridge Mountain EMC held its 83rd annual meeting at company headquarters on Thursday, Sept. 23. Like 2020, the meeting occurred outside in a drive-thru format due to concerns over COVID and the health and wellbeing of employees and members.

One hundred and ten people registered to attend the meeting, including employees who were onsite and/or working, and the event was quite

well planned and executed by the EMC. The High Country Harmonizers provided the entertainment in the leadup to official business.

The entertainment and the meeting were broadcast via radio at 90.3 FM so members could listen inside their vehicles.

Three EMC directors' terms expired as of the day of the annual meeting, so an election was held and concluded at the meeting.

Members who had not voted by mail or online could cast their ballots as they entered the premises from 4-6 p.m., with final results being

the uncontented re-election of incumbents Roy Perren of Towns County, Jack Lance Jr. of Union County, and Gayland Trull of Fannin County.

Board of Directors President Ray Cook opened the business portion of the meeting at 6 p.m. with an invocation and special recognition of guest Brad Malcolmy, of the Tennessee Valley Authority, with whom Cook said the EMC works in close coordination.

EMC Director Manager Allan Glidewell then took the floor to deliver his first General Manager's Report before the membership.

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Georgia SB 202 changes in effect for Hiwassee election

Voter registration deadline Oct. 4

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

Due to recent updates in Georgia election law, voters will be seeing a few changes during early voting and on Election Day for the Nov. 2 Hiwassee Municipal Election.

As all incumbents for the 2021 Hiwassee Municipal Election qualified unopposed, the sole item that will appear on the ballot is a referendum asking voters to consider allowing packaged liquor sales inside city limits. Only Hiwassee residents will be eligible to vote in this election.

The Towns County Board of Elections and Registration administers elections for the City of Hiwassee, and advanced in-person voting will take place there, running weekdays Oct. 11-29 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., even during lunchtime.

Early voting hours differ from past years due to Senate Bill 202, but Election Day voting remains 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., to take place Nov. 2 also at the Elections Board Office.

New this year is the addition of a second day of weekend voting, giving people too



The Towns County Board of Elections will host the City of Hiwassee's Nov. 2 Municipal Election to decide the fate of packaged liquor inside city limits.
Photo by Shawn Jarrard

busy to vote during the week chances to cast ballots in person on Saturday, Oct. 16, and Saturday, Oct. 23, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

People will want to pay attention to the new absentee ballot request process, which will require voters to fill out an "Application for Georgia Official Absentee Ballot" form as opposed to simply requesting one from the Elections Office.

Now, voters must provide a Georgia driver's license number or a Georgia ID card number on the new official form. If a voter has neither, there are other forms of acceptable identification listed on the form that may be submitted, e.g. U.S. passport, military ID, etc.

This form can be picked up from the Elections Office located at 67 Lakeview Cir.
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Patriotic motorcycle ride turns heads in the mountains

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

On the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, 19 Islamic terrorists hijacked four Boeing airliners, crashed two of them into the World Trade Center Twin Towers in New York City, one into the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., and one into a wooded area in Pennsylvania, missing its unknown mark.

A total of 2,996 people died in the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, including nearly 400 first responders, police officers and firefighters, and the 19 Islamic terrorists.

On Sept. 11, 2012, just

11 years later, Ansar al-Sharia, an Islamic terrorist organization, attacked the diplomatic compound at Benghazi, Libya, torturing and killing U.S. Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens and murdering U.S. Diplomatic Officer Sean Smith.

CIA contractors Tyrone S. Claid and Glen Doherty were both killed defending the Benghazi compound.

At the time, the Obama administration tried to blame the tragic events on an Islam-bashing video that allegedly incited the attack. That story was wholly disproved. The Benghazi attack was, like the Sept. 11, 2001, attack, blatant,

out-and-out murder of innocents and non-combatants.

To honor the memory of the fallen in these two attacks, the Towns County Veterans Park hosted the annual Benghazi – Twin Towers Motorcycle Ride and Patriotic Ceremony on Saturday, Sept. 25.

According to local event coordinator Dr. Dan Eichenbaum, the ride began nationally in 2013, the year following the Benghazi atrocity and 12 years on from the Sept. 11 attack.

The Sons of Liberty Riders, a national Tea Party motorcycle group that boasted about 5,000 members hailing from almost every state, were respon-

sible for starting the patriotic remembrance.

Eichenbaum, a veteran, said the North Carolina ride took place in Brevard for the first three years until 2016, when he, as president of the N.C. Chapter of the Sons of Liberty, took over the ride, and moved it to this area, and changed the concept to visiting courthouses and planting memorial signs.

The Sons of Liberty are no longer in existence, and Eichenbaum said the American Legion Riders of Georgia Post 23 in Hiwassee, where he serves as Road Captain and Activities Director, have assumed

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Dr. Dan Eichenbaum at the Ninth Annual Benghazi – Twin Towers Motorcycle Ride and Patriotic Ceremony on Saturday, Sept. 25.
Photo by Mark Smith

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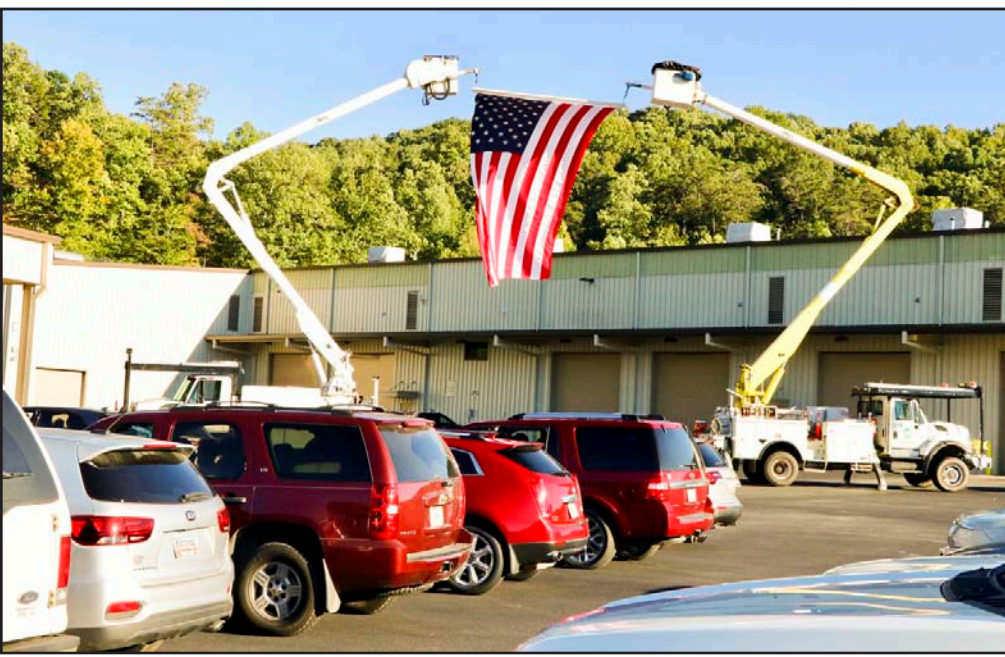
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EMC Meeting...from Page 1A



As a precaution against the spread of COVID-19, the 2021 annual meeting moved from an indoor gathering at the Towns County Recreation Center to an outdoor venue at Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Headquarters.

Photo by Mark Smith

"I've only been with you just a few months, but in that time, I've been impressed with the heart and the stamina of the employees, the vision of the Board of Directors, and their joint dedication to serving you, our members," Glidewell said.

"We've all been amazed at the challenges this past year has brought. Storms, COVID-19, the pandemic, gas shortages, materials shortages, price increases – the list goes on," continued Glidewell.

"But I'm proud to report this evening that each of these challenges has been met with success thanks to the ingenuity, the cooperation and the dogged determination of the employees of this cooperative. Indeed, many of these challenges have resulted in improvements that will continue to provide better service to our members for years to come.

"Still, we've not lost focus on the basics: providing safe and reliable electric power economically and providing reliable and technically superior broadband service."

Added Glidewell, "We do not anticipate thus far any increases in Blue Ridge Mountain's portion of the rates due to these efforts."

Glidewell said the latest annual report had been published in the Georgia Magazine and the Carolina Country Magazine, providing an update

to members on the co-op's operations along with financial metrics for the 2020 calendar year.

Briefly, he described how the EMC had constructed nearly 40 miles of new power lines while maintaining 6,228 miles of distribution lines and 40 miles of transmission lines.

"We've added approximately \$12 million in new plant," he said, "\$8 million of it on the electric side and \$4 million of it in broadband, resulting in a total plant value that exceeded \$280 million at the end of 2020.

"We've also been busy strategically planning the best way to expand and improve our broadband offerings and value-added services.

"Broadband continues to expand by over a hundred new customers each month, and we're now serving more than 11,300 customers in Georgia and North Carolina through some 1,100 miles of fiber-optic lines.

"We continue to look for additional grant funding to assist in building out the fiber optics to underserved or unserved areas in our service territory with the goal of reaching every (BRMEMC) member who wants fiber within 10 years.

"We intend to be the best friend this community has. We have only one purpose for existence, and that is to serve."

In conclusion, Glidewell

said that the one consistent resource since 1938 for BRMEMC electricity – and now broadband – has been the people of the membership "and their belief in our mission of service driven by friendship: members serving members."

The business session continued with the Determination of Quorum, approval of the Notice of Meeting and the Minutes presented by Board Secretary Roy Perren, and the Report of Nominating Committee and Nominations by Petition by EMC Attorney Charles Autry.

Perren said that total membership was 48,761 and that 4,482 members had registered for the annual meeting for the year 2021.

There was no unfinished business and no new business to report. Autry announced the election results, with all three incumbents retaining their seats on the Board of Directors for additional three-year terms.

Finally, Cook adjourned the meeting, and the fun returned with the awarding of the door prizes, of which there were at least 15. Members had to be present to win. Additional door prizes, which will be available to all members who voted, will be drawn on Sept. 29.

The winners will be contacted by phone and told when to pick up their prizes. For more information on the co-op, visit brmemc.com.

Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter Sons of the American Revolution celebrate 20th Anniversary

The Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) celebrated its twentieth anniversary. Initially, the celebration was scheduled for May 2020, but it was delayed because of Covid.

A lively group of members and guests enjoyed a PowerPoint presentation of the chapter's history and viewing posters representing past years during the social hour preceding the meeting. Attending the meeting as guests were a who's who of state and national SAR leaders.

Prime rib was served instead of the regular dinner fare to celebrate the occasion. President Jared Ogden presented Chapter Registrar Jack Dugger with a special award for recruiting membership and inducted Bart Hoibraten into the chapter during the meeting.

The guest speaker was Larry Guzy. Compatriot Guzy served as the President of the Georgia State Society, SAR, when the chapter held its initial meeting in May 2020. Guzy later served as President General of the National Society of SAR.

Guzy reviewed the chapter's 20-year history, stating that while the membership has always been small, the chapter has received national recognition yearly. This year for example, the National Society SAR awarded the chapter with the Ohanesian History Presentation Award for making presentations to school children about the Revolutionary War. Also, the National Society presented "Honorable Mention" for the Liberty Bell Award. The Liberty Bell Award is given to the SAR chapter that is deemed best in the nation. The "Honorable Mention" is only awarded because rules forbid a chapter from receiving the award two years in a row.

Guzy reminisced how the original charter members established the benchmark for succeeding members to follow. As a surprise, Guzy presented the chapter with an aluminum minuteman statue. The minuteman statue was originally hand-casted by a deceased chapter compatriot, John Preston. Guzy indicated the statue had been given to him years ago, and he was returning it home.

Residents interested in



Blue Ridge Chapter SAR Vice President Sid Turner thanking Past President General of National Society SAR Larry Guzy for speaking.



Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter SAR president, Jared Ogden inducting Bart Hoibraten as a new member in the SAR.



President Ogden presenting Jack Dugger with the nationally awarded Liberty Medal, Oak Leaf Cluster for his outstanding efforts in recruiting new members.

our republic's founding, please attend chapter meetings. The Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter, SAR meets five times per year; the next meeting is 6 p.m. on November 9 at Brothers Restaurant in Young Harris. The meetings are open to the public. However, membership in the SAR is only available to male descendants of the patriots who served in the American Revolutionary War or who contributed to establishing the independence of

the United States. The Society seeks to make the dreams of patriot ancestors a reality by preserving the knowledge of our constitutional foundations, celebrating, and rewarding acts of patriotism, and educating citizens and youth on the civic responsibilities required to live in and maintain a free society.

For additional information, please phone or email Jared Ogden at 770-855-0007 or jaredogden007@gmail.com.

Motorcycle Ride...from Page 1A



The American Legion Riders of Georgia Post 23 in Hiawassee have taken on the patriotic duty of carrying out the annual Benghazi - Twin Towns Motorcycle Ride, pictured here outside the Towns County Veterans Park. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

responsibility for the ride. Between 80 and 90 riders participated in this ninth annual event on Saturday, according to Eichenbaum. "The ride was fantastic," Eichenbaum said. "We went from Hiawassee/Towns County Veterans Memorial Park to the Veterans Memorial in Clay County on the Square (in Hayesville), to the courthouse

in Murphy (North Carolina), to the courthouse in Union County (in Blairsville), and now we're back here (in Hiawassee). "We had some incredible spirit and incredible prayer and incredible speeches at each stop: Sheriff Bobby Deese in Clay County, Sheriff Derek Palmer in Cherokee County, Bobby Brookshire and Sheriff Mack Mason in Union County.

"So, we had a full slate of outstanding speeches, prayer, pledges of allegiance that you could hear all the way in Afghanistan, and (we) planted some memorial signs which I hope will stay up for a long time." When asked about the importance of young people today witnessing the ride, he said it was "critically important - if

you can get them to listen." "One of the problems is that they do not have a knowledge of history," Eichenbaum said. "History teaches us what happens when you do bad stuff. What's going on right now is bad stuff. And unless they listen and learn, the same thing that happened in Germany is going to happen right here." Veteran and rider Dennis Bragg said it was a great ride with excellent weather, and that "everybody was very attentive." "The police did an excellent job and got us through all this, so it was a good ride," Bragg said. Veteran rider Marks Culver and his wife "Joey" moved to this area from Florida and have participated in many rides there and here, and he said one thing they are still getting used to is the level of respect paid to the local riders and their cause. "It's absolutely astonishing," said Joey, with Marks adding, "People pull off to the side of the road and wait for you and they wave. Where I'm from, you'd be lucky if they didn't run right over the top of you." That's a great testament to the people of North Georgia and Western North Carolina.

SB 202 Changes...from Page 1A

le, Suite A, in Hiawassee or printed at https://sos.ga.gov/admin/uploads/2021_Absentee_App.9721_2.pdf. "Georgia law allows for absentee-by-mail ballots to be requested no earlier than 78 days and no later than 11 days prior to an election," per sos.ga.gov. "Absentee ballot applications can be returned by mail, fax, email (as an attachment), or in-person to the local County Board of Registrar's Office." People are encouraged to request and return their absentee ballots early to give their ballot "enough time to travel through the mail and resolve any issues that may arise when voting by absentee ballot," per sos.ga.gov. For the November elec-

tion, the deadline to return absentee-by-mail ballot applications is Oct. 22, whereas before the change, voters could turn applications in as late as the Friday before Election Day. This year, absentee ballots will be mailed to voters beginning the week of early voting, which is a change from the previous start of ballot mailing 45 days prior to Election Day. In the past, if voters listed their name and birthdate along with a signature matching what was on file, they did not have to submit any proof of identification to request a ballot. Under the new law, driver's license and state ID numbers will be used instead of signatures to

match mail-in ballot requests to voters. When absentee ballots are received by the Elections Office, they must also contain a voter's name, birthdate, signature and driver's license number or state ID number. However, for returning ballots, voters may also supply the last four digits of their Social Security number. Wildly divergent signatures might spur the Elections Office to look into a particular ballot or application, but signature matching is no longer a requirement for requesting or casting an absentee ballot. As for drop boxes, last year, voters could drop their ballots into a designated box outside the Elections Office. SB 202, however, requires drop boxes to be placed inside early voting venues - inside the Elections Office in this

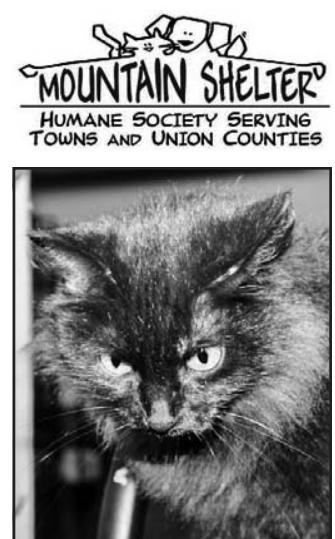
case - to be accessible only during early voting hours. Voters can also drop completed absentee ballots off at the Elections Office through Election Day. There are many more behind-the-scenes changes in SB 202, but those outlined above are the biggest ones that will directly affect voters during this election. A key deadline for would-be electors is Oct. 4, the last day that people may register to vote in Hiawassee. This is the same deadline as always, with a registration cutoff 30 days before Election Day. As far as tracking the number of votes, the Elections Office is now required to post daily updates online showing the number of people casting absentee/in-person early ballots to prevent surprise ballot dumps on Election Day.

Office of Attorney General Chris Carr

Carr warns Georgians to look out for Imposter Scams

ATLANTA, GA - Attorney General Chris Carr is cautioning Georgians about several imposter scams that are making the rounds. "Scammers may try to gain your confidence by posing as a legitimate company or government agency," warns Attorney General Carr. "Consumers should be very wary of unsolicited text messages, emails and phone calls and avoid providing sensitive information, clicking on links, or downloading file attachments unless they know for a fact that the sender or caller is who they claim to be." Below are descriptions of several imposter scams to look out for: **Order Confirmation Scams:** One imposter scam making the rounds takes the form of an automated phone message from a major company (such as Walmart, Amazon, Costco or Target) confirming a recent purchase you supposedly made for a big-ticket item totaling several thousand dollars. You are told that a shipment confirmation will follow shortly at which time your credit card on file will be automatically charged. The message asks you to call a phone number if you did not make the transaction in question or to report an unauthorized transaction. If you dial the number, you will likely be asked to provide your account credentials or payment information so that your account can be "credited." The scammers will then use that information to steal your money or commit identity theft. This scam can also occur via email or text message. To avoid this scam, do not call the number provided or click on any links. Instead, log-in to your online account with the retailer, or contact the company through a verified telephone number or website to see if, in fact, there was an unauthorized charge made to your account.

tative from a government agency or indicate that the sweepstakes has been "approved" by a federal law enforcement agency, such as the Office of the Attorney General. The consumers are informed that in order to collect their prize, they must first pay various fees—usually via wire transfer, gift cards or prepaid cards—to cover taxes or handling fees. First and foremost, consumers should know that if you are asked to pay money to collect a prize, no matter what the reason, it is a scam. Being asked to wire money or pay via gift cards or prepaid cards is another red flag of a scam. Furthermore, the Attorney General's Office does not endorse sweepstakes. **Amazon AirPods Raffle Scam:** The Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division has also received complaints about text messages that purport to be from Amazon and claim that you have won a pair of AirPods in an Amazon Raffle. The text contains a link to click for more information. Do not click on the link. Doing so could load malware onto your device or lead you to a phishing website that prompts you for personal information, such as your Amazon login and password.



Hello, my name is Lakerlynn! I'm a gorgeous two year old longhaired kitty here at the shelter, and I'm a staff favorite! I'm currently the Lobby Cat, which means I get to hang out in the front office and greet everyone, and our front office girls can attest that I am a fantastic cat! I am very quiet and calm, I'm very gentle, and I barely even have a meow! You won't even know I'm there unless we're snuggling or spending time together. I like to sleep on the bench in the lobby and on the front desk, so that I can keep our employees company while they work. If you think I could be a good match for you, I'm 50% off this week! Just give the shelter a call at (706) 781-3843! All of the animals adopted from the Mountain Shelter are spayed/neutered, microchipped, have received preventative deworming and flea treatments, and all vaccinations (including rabies) appropriate for their age, as well as any other medical care required



to make happy, healthy, pets. Please be sure to check out our website, www.pawsga.org. Hii! I'm Ace! I'm a year-and-a-half old Rottweiler/hound mix who was surrendered by my old family when they decided to move away without me. I'm very people friendly and dog friendly, and I'm smart too! I know how to sit and shake on command, and I bet you could teach me even more! I'm a very sweet boy, I love to cuddle, and I have plenty of energy to keep up with an active family! If you're interested in adopting me, it's your lucky day! This week I'm 50% off, and all you have to do is call (706) 781-3843 to make an appointment! **Free GED classes** Are you ready to earn your high school equivalency diploma? North Georgia Technical College's Adult Education program is offering free day and evening courses. Classes are held in Blairsville at the Shirley Miller Building (behind the public library). Call 706-439-6342 to schedule your registration appointment. Our next enrollment dates are October 4th and October 18th. NT(Sep29,K1)SH

Sweepstakes Scam: Scammers call or mail a letter to consumers saying they have won a cash prize in a sweepstakes. The scammer may claim to be a represen-

Poll Workers...from Page 1A

confirmed, that they must have new poll workers registered with the Georgia Secretary of State by the end of October 2021 for the 2022 election year.

And therein lies the rub, as new poll workers must be registered within the next month or the proposed precinct change would have to go into effect for 2022.

Moving along, the commissioner presided over the first readings of two resolutions to amend the Towns County Subdivision Regulations.

"We've had an issue with RVs and campers," Bradshaw said. "In order to have a campground in Towns County, you've got to have 5 acres or more. That's in the ordinance. We discovered that sometimes, (some of the acreage was underwater in Lake Chatuge)."

Once adopted, the amended ordinance will read, "No landline below the 33-contour within the required 20-foot setback shall be included in the 5-acre minimum."

And upon recommendation by the Towns County Planning Commission, Bradshaw is also amending the ordinance to restrict the number of inhabited RVs/campers to two per lot.

"We're doing it to keep from getting so much clutter on some of the properties," he said.

The second readings and subsequent adoptions of these resolutions will be held in the Oct. 19 regular meeting.

Bradshaw commended both Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby and Hiawassee Mayor Liz Ordiales on the smooth transition to a new 10-year Service Delivery Strategy Agreement between the cities and county.

The agreement delineates services, like animal con-

trol and law enforcement, that a county provides to a town or city that doesn't have such services.

For example, the City of Young Harris has no police force, so the Towns County Sheriff's Office provides that service there, the particulars of which are specified in the Service Delivery Strategy.

In his Commissioner's Report, Bradshaw announced that the county audit, though not yet finalized, was complete, and he was delighted to say that he had no findings to report. That audit should be finalized and presented in the October meeting.

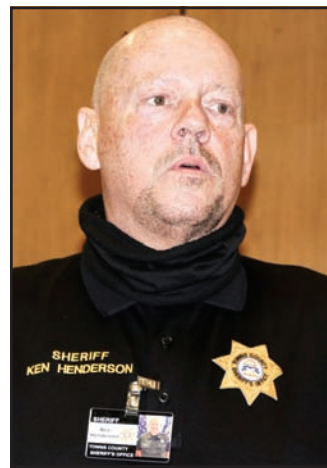
Bradshaw also said that county finances were in great shape and tax collections were coming in as projected, as is the project to physically separate commercial garbage from residential garbage at the Transfer Station.

The commissioner gave a big shout-out to Sheriff Ken Henderson and the Sheriff's Office for being named, respectively, Sheriff of the Year and Law Enforcement Agency of the Year during the 2021 Governor's Office of Highway Safety Quad Network Banquet on Sept. 9.

"We've got a long way to go, a lot of things we want to do, but we're so happy as to where we are eight months in, and I'm very honored for my department to receive these awards," Sheriff Henderson said.

Blue Ridge Mountain Electric Membership Corporation Broadband Director Alex King gave a presentation on the EMC initiative to make fiber-optic service available throughout Towns County.

King said there is a \$7 million grant currently available to Towns County through the Broadband Technology Opportunity Program, which



Sheriff Ken Henderson

is funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce.

The grant, which Bradshaw said is in the works, specifies that Towns must recognize a broadband carrier that can install and service fiber-optic lines, which is BRMEMC. King said the EMC is experienced in grant processes and is assisting Bradshaw with the grant.

Towns County is the most covered county of the five counties serviced by the EMC, according to King, with 24% of broadband customers residing in Towns County and 39% of the county being built out for 197 miles out of a possible 500-plus.

The \$7 million grant would enable BRMEMC to build out 103 additional miles of fiber-optic lines, raising the build-out rate to 60%.

Additionally, King spoke on the "Neighborhood Networking Program," saying it has been an incredibly successful program for the EMC because it allows customers to tell the co-op what areas are interested in fiber-optic service. For more information, contact BRMEMC.

Pfizer Boosters...from Page 1A

not required to attend any day of vaccination, but people may schedule an appointment via <http://phdistrict2.org/>.

"Although the booster dose is not required, it will help fully vaccinated people maintain protection over the coming months," Young said.

Continuing, Young noted that COVID-19 vaccines "are working well to prevent severe illness, hospitalization and death, but with the introduction of the delta variant, public health experts noticed a reduction of protections against mild and moderate disease."

This certainly seems to be holding true locally, as hospitalizations among Union and Towns residents have consistently been occurring primarily among the unvaccinated.

Local COVID hospitalizations are down from recent weeks, with room for sicker patients expanding in other area hospitals as well. Last week, COVID inpatients at Union General Hospital dipped into the 20s before ticking back up above 30 at the end of the week.

And while emergency room visits for COVID have slowed dramatically of late, people in the community are

still getting sick and dying from COVID-19. Sadly, deaths have continued to increase, with 14 September deaths in Union County through Friday, and six in Towns.

Union General Chief Nursing Officer Julia Barnett said Friday that she has been seeing younger patients becoming incredibly ill with the disease, including those in their 30s, 40s and 50s "without previous significant health issues."

On a positive note, COVID positivity continues to decline in the area, hitting 16.7% in Union over the last two weeks dating from Sept. 24, down from 32% on Sept. 1.

The same trend applies in Towns County, which on Sept. 1 saw 26.8% positivity over the previous two weeks decline to 14.7% by Sept. 24.

Importantly, this is still considered a high rate and is indicative of ongoing community spread, though it's a welcome trend, nonetheless.

Union County School District has experienced a massive drop in positivity, going from more than 200 positive cases at the end of August to just 12 districtwide as of Sept. 23. And Towns County Schools hit a remarkably low

number of three positives systemwide as of Friday.

People are being advised to continue following COVID best practices, as the dynamics and exact mechanisms of viral transmission continue to prove elusive.

COVID vaccines are available for free and without appointment at local health departments, and people may also find them at any number of area pharmacies.

With 46% of eligible residents being fully vaccinated and 51% having received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, Union County has fallen slightly behind the state rates of 47% fully and 54% partially vaccinated.

Towns County is faring better than the state average with 49% of its residents being fully vaccinated.

District 2 Public Health continues to offer free drive-thru PCR testing at Union General Hospital for anyone wanting or needing one.

Testing is available Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at 35 Hospital Road in Blairsville. No appointment is required to receive a test, but registration via <https://honumg.info/LTSGA015> is encouraged to decrease wait times at the testing site.

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new \$500 charge would act as a deposit that is fully refundable should boring under the roadway not be required to establish a new water/sewer connection. If boring costs exceed \$500, the overage would be charged to the customer to recoup that expenditure.

According to City Hall, the reason for the new fee is that the city does not possess expensive boring equipment so must hire outside contractors to conduct such work.

Following the upcoming public hearing, the city plans to hold a second reading and adoption of the ordinance revising the Master Fee Schedule in the Oct. 5 regular meeting that will begin at 7 p.m.

Importantly, water/sewer rates are not going up in the city; the only adjustments being made are the ones outlined above, which, again, the city says will better enable it to recover the costs of providing services.

In other news, City Council members voted to go ahead and advertise the city's 2021 millage rate as required by state law. The city will be adopting the rollback rate of 2.346, down from the 2020 rate of 2.479, which will re-

sult in a net loss of \$466 in tax revenue.

The city is set to adopt the 2021 rollback millage rate in the Oct. 5 City Council meeting.

Also Sept. 14, the council gave approval for the mayor to sign the updated Service Delivery Strategy that extensively spells out the various services local governments are responsible for providing to city and county residents, e.g. fire protection, law enforcement, animal control, etc.

The strategy is renegotiated every 10 years, and that process went smoothly recently, though one change in particular will require the city to hire its own building inspector, as the county will no longer be performing building inspections for Young Harris.

In the coming weeks, the city will be working to establish qualifications for the job, after which it will begin searching for qualified applicants to fill the position.

During her Mayor's Report, Andrea Gibby said that she, Joint Economic Development Director Denise McKay, and Councilmen Matt Miller and Steve Clark had met with representatives



Young Harris City Councilman Matt Miller in the Sept. 14 regular city meeting.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

from the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing to discuss bringing affordable housing to town.

The council agreed that, in order for Young Harris to grow, it is vital that the city work to establish affordable housing to support a labor force for local businesses.

Mayor Gibby also touched on the need to begin finalizing the 2022 budget for the city. A draft budget is currently in the works, and council members will be holding budget meetings and public hearings starting in October.