

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Thankful

From the Editor's Desk

Shaun Jarrard



The word "democracy" is thrown around a lot these days, usually in the service of hyperbolic political speech. Despite its overuse in partisan point-scoring, it actually is important to contemplate the democratic process, enshrined in this great nation as a constitutional republic.

American democracy thrives when power is concentrated in individual communities across the country, where representative governments in the form of locally elected officials – and not some miles-away bureaucracy – act on behalf of constituents to take care of local needs.

That's all well and good, but it takes an actively engaged public to make sure local government decisions remain in the best interests of the citizenry. Enter the Towns County Herald.

Times are tough right now. There's plenty to worry about besides high-minded ideals like the "importance of democracy." Still, we can never take for granted the hard-won freedoms we enjoy today.

This is why we here at the Towns County Herald – your hometown newspaper – take our jobs so seriously. We see it as our duty to keep you informed with credible, relevant and compelling news coverage about all manner of local happenings.

How are tax dollars being spent? What laws are being enacted? Why should you care about any number of events taking place around town? These are just a few of the questions we try our best to answer as clearly as possible to keep our readers in the know as to who is making what decisions in the community.

People can tune into cable news and Atlanta-based TV stations to find out all the latest on the dysfunction in Washington, and how bad crime is in the metro area. But what about the news that's happening here, in Towns County?

And sure, folks can learn about local events from Facebook. The problem with social media is that, usually, basic information is omitted in "news" shared online, which can create confusion and half-formed notions about what is really going on.

Really, it takes your hometown newspaper digging into details, asking tough questions, and working hard to get to the bottom of matters that matter most to residents.

As Dink NeSmith of Community Newspapers Inc. put it recently during National Newspaper Week, "There's only one newspaper in the world that is 100% devoted to this community, and you are reading it." And he's right.

All that to say we are incredibly grateful for the opportunity to perform such an important function for the community. Of course, the Towns County Herald has much to be thankful for this holiday season.

First, we are thankful to you, our readers, who trust us to provide you with news you care about.

We are also grateful for local law enforcement and first responders who keep us safe, 24/7, no matter the weather.

Then there's the veteran community and the actively serving men and women who call the North Georgia Mountains home, without whom we would undoubtedly be speaking the language of a foreign conqueror.

Local elected officials also make the list for serving our community and, yes, making life better for all. And we are thankful to the citizens who help us hold elected officials to account and keep up the pressure to lower costs and taxes for the public.

There's so much to be grateful for here in God's Country, like the school system that provides opportunities galore for local children, the health care providers who work tirelessly to care for the county, the churches that attend to the souls and the unmet needs of residents, the nonprofits that look out for the little guy, and the many businesses that support not just our efforts to bring you the news but contribute greatly to our thriving community.

Speaking for myself, our staff, and Owner/Publisher Kenneth West, I want you to know that the Towns County Herald could not be successful without the people and organizations mentioned above, and the many more that are going unnamed for lack of space.

Truly, no words are sufficient to describe the gratitude we feel for this community. **Happy Thanksgiving!**

Letters To The Editor

Mayor Beyond Reproach

To the Hiawassee City Council,

My name is Simon Canasi and I have been a part-time resident since 2005. I was in attendance at your Council meeting dated November 7, 2023, and would like to give you my perspective on matters that were discussed in reference to Mayor Liz Ordiales and the upcoming investigation.

Frankly, what I witnessed was tantamount to the Salem Witch Trials. It was embarrassing and you all should be embarrassed. What I witnessed is two individuals who clearly have a personal issue with the Mayor – Mr. Chastain and Ms. Noblet. Whether it is based on her ethnicity or her private life or both is a question they can ask of themselves and their God. I find Ms. Barrett to be a passive aggressive individual who wants to be Mayor no matter who she steps on. She did not even have the courtesy of allowing the Mayor to speak with her continuous interruptions and attempts to talk over her. This kangaroo court of an investigation is a total waste of taxpayer money – especially when the results will clearly show that everything was done above board. Will you then reimburse the city for the cost? I know the answer to that question.

What should be investigated is the obvious violation of the sunshine law – emails between three Council members and decisions made previous to your meeting.

The exchange between Ms. Barrett and Mayor Ordiales regarding the paving of Bradshaw Lane was an absolute parody. Ms. Barrett claims that when her husband presents business to the city she recuses herself. Well, she should; she and her family have a direct financial benefit from the business done between her husband and the city. Why is Mayor Ordiales supposed to recuse herself from paving Bradshaw Lane? She is only one of over a dozen residents on that road. Should they all be punished and continue to drive on a dangerous road simply because the Mayor lives there? I think not. The comparison Ms. Barrett made was ridiculous.

The possibility of Mr. Chastain asking for a forensic audit is both appalling and insulting. Does he even know what this entails and the cost? I do because I've actually done it. It is VERY expensive and VERY unnecessary. Our Mayor is beyond reproach and one of the most honest people I have ever had the pleasure of knowing. What a low blow insult Mr. Chastain – even for you. Whereas the Mayor has taken ownership of a possible procedural error on the DDA project, this does not warrant the waste of monies on any investigation.

This Mayor has made Hiawassee DEBT-FREE. This Mayor spearheaded the expansion of the water and sewer plants. This Mayor found many homes that for years were not paying water bills – now they are. This Mayor found many businesses that were not paying their business tax – now they are. This Mayor brought us Mayor's Park and Lloyd's Landing. This Mayor has expanded community events, including First Friday on the Square. This Mayor has never backed down from the venomous mouth of radio jockeys or the venomous pen of a journalist. The list could go on.

I love this community and its Christian way of life. But need I remind you all that Christianity is not only practiced on Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights – it is a way of life, and you should live it 24/7. Gossip, judging people, malicious accusations, persecution, and prejudice are not very Christian.

Thank you,
Simon M. Canasi



Justifiable Comparison?

By Rabbi Yonatan Hamburger and Tzali Reicher

Anyone who knows their Bible and the history of the Jewish people is familiar with an ancient tribe living near the land of Canaan, known as the Amalekites, who earned the title of the number one arch enemy of the Jewish people. They were the first and, throughout history, the most consistent nation to attack the Children of Israel. In the Torah, G-d commands the Jewish people to never forget the evil Amalek sought to unleash on them (Deuteronomy 25:17-19) and to completely eradicate them for they would never cease from their attempts to wipe out the Jews.

Please note that while it remains a commandment to never forget the evil of the Amalekites, they assimilated long ago, and G-d's commandment to eradicate them no longer applies since they no longer exist as a distinct people.

While reeling from fresh reports and images of the atrocious mayhem perpetrated by Hamas against innocent Israeli civilians and foreign nationals, the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, invoked the Amalekites vis a vis Hamas. This was not a rallying cry to eradicate innocent Palestinians, rather that the evil known as Hamas must be eliminated.

The relevance of the Amalekite/Hamas analogy is best summed up in a portion of the Torah known as the Midrash, which compares the Amalekites to a boiling tub of water that is too hot to enter. One evil person jumped in, and although he was burned, he cooled it for the others. So too, after G-d performed epic miracles for the Children of Israel, culminating in the splitting of the Reed Sea, no other nation wanted to start up with them, for they seemed invincible. But then came the Amalekites to challenge the Jews. Although they were badly beaten, they cooled off the awe of the other nations of the world for them.

What's fascinating is that the Amalekites had no beef with the Jews, and they also knew they would be badly beaten, yet that didn't stop them. And herein lie the parallels with Hamas.

Gaza is a territory governed exclusively by Hamas. It is not under Israeli occupation, and it receives billions of dollars a year from various Western and Arab governments. The fact that it doesn't use the foreign aid to improve the lives of its citizens and rather uses it to stuff their Swiss bank accounts and build elaborate underground cities loaded to the teeth with sophisticated armaments, is on Hamas, not on Israel. Hamas' real beef is that it will not tolerate any Jews anywhere in the Middle East.

It's also interesting to note that Hamas knew well of the overwhelming military might that would be unleashed on it as a result of its terror attack and nevertheless willingly jumped into the boiling hot bath, anyway, just to demystify the invincibility of Israel and the United States.

On October 7th, having been caught by surprise by the unprecedented atrocities unleashed by Hamas, it looked like Israel had lost its ability to maintain deterrence, which is vital in a hostile region of the world where they are surrounded by enemy states. Similarly, when the U.S. evacuated Afghanistan it was also viewed as a loss of U.S. prestige and power which are vital at a time when China, Russia, and Iran are asserting their expansionist intentions.

Is it really a wonder that immediately following Hamas' aggression, Hezbollah, and the Yemenite Houthis began firing missiles at Israel, while other Iranian proxies started firing missiles at U.S. forces in Iraq, inflicting many injuries and some fatalities?

To recover the edge Israel must be allowed to fully carry out its mission of eradicating Hamas with full force, without any concern about optics or moral equivocation. By the United States continuing to stand with and to encourage Israel, our U.S. national interests are best served. This sends a strong and clear signal to our emboldened adversaries in China, Russia, and Iran.

The United States must demonstrate that it will not sit idly by, and that it stands shoulder to shoulder with its allies. We will not let terror and evil fester and spread; we will uproot it completely.

Hamas proved it cannot be allowed to exist by moral and righteous people after what it did on October 7th, and armed with the painful memory of horrors committed by past Amalekites and with proud American support, Israel will make sure it won't.

I would love to hear your thoughts on this week's column. Please email me at yonatan@chabadruralgeorgia.com.
Wishing you G-d's abundant blessings,
Rabbi Yonatan Hamburger

Letters To The Editor

One Inevitable Conclusion

Dear Editor,

Mayor Liz has claimed over and over that the DDA authorized her to sign the \$2.4 million contract with Storm Construction earlier this year.

That is not true.

According to the official minutes from the April 2023 DDA regular meeting, which are publicly available at downtownhiawassee.com, the DDA only voted to approve the contract subject to the City Council's approval of committing an additional \$2,000 of SPLOST funds per month to the DDA over the next five years to assist with paying the loan. That would raise the City's obligation to the DDA from \$20,000 to \$44,000 per year over the next five years.

There do not seem to be any City Council meeting minutes between April 2023, when the DDA made their conditional approval, and June 2023, when Mayor Liz signed the contract with Storm Construction, where Mayor Liz ever requested this \$2,000 monthly raise, as she was required to do in order for the DDA's approval to become effective. As a result, when Mayor Liz says she thought she could sign the contract because she had DDA approval, the fact of the matter is, she did not have DDA approval at all. She would only have had DDA approval if the City increased the DDA's annual budget, which they clearly did not do.

For whatever reason, Mayor Liz has indicated that she wants this costly and divisive investigation into her actions to continue. All of the facts point to a clear violation on her part, not only of the City Charter, but also of the DDA's conditional approval, which approval she only would have had if she had successfully negotiated a \$24,000 annual increase in the DDA's budget over the next five years.

Mayor Liz should resign and save the unnecessary expense of this investigation, because there can be only one inevitable conclusion: Mayor Liz acted outside the scope of her authority, and as a result, the City was damaged in the amount of however much the Council agrees to pay in order to finish off this unauthorized contract.

Faithfully,
Steve Harper
Former DDA Manager

Improvise, Adapt, Overcome

We begin today with yellow jackets, those pesky and dubiously beneficial wasps, the bane of hikers, picnickers, and grass mowers. There are two nests still troubling me now, this late in the season. I've never seen them this active in November, but they have adapted to the warmer weather and managed to overcome the frosts and nights in the 20s here on the mountain.

With a working philosophy that all of God's creatures have some part to play in the grand design, I don't seek far and wide for nests to destroy. But with a sneaking suspicion that yellow jackets may not actually be creatures of the Almighty, any nest within ankle range of the farm is on borrowed time here. I dispatch them with a bottle of concentrated rubbing alcohol poured into the hole at night and ignited after a few minutes for evaporation. This method does not poison the ground and produces a very satisfying "blowtorch" effect with flaming wasps ejected to add to the light show.

Alas, the yellow jackets have improvised an effective response to my efforts by building in places not easily accessible or able to be torched, and the ongoing drought has rendered them effectively immune to the flames. If the next frost doesn't kill them, a can of aerosol poison will. I, too, must adapt.

I first heard the title phrase in the movie "Heartbreak Ridge." It has been attributed to the Marine Corps, though it wasn't commonly used when I served. It does reflect the values of the Corps, and I think you will find that it is an element of all successful entities, whether a group or an individual.

Over an extended timeline, "successful" means something very different from the shallow materialism that dangles like a carrot on the stick which guides the intents and purposes of modern life. Not everyone follows that carrot, of course. Success for many is still focused on simple survival, or the desire to be left alone in peace or, at best, in the pursuit of happiness.

Arguably, the majority of human history has been the story of our attempts to improvise and adapt to survive and, in the balance, to overcome those who refused to leave us alone in peace. It is the definitive American story, and the story of the pioneers who came to these mountains and valleys where we now seek sanctuary from a troubled world.

For those of us with roots here in the mountains, our ancestors arrived in a land that could be as brutal as it was beautiful. They came here to be left alone in peace and to pursue happiness as they saw fit, just like the original colonists who displaced tribes of people who wanted the same.

Unfortunately for the first peoples, they had not improvised or innovated the technologies necessary to successfully resist colonization by European settlers. They were unable to overcome the challenge of alien diseases that decimated their numbers, followed by the overwhelming numbers of European migrants who came after.

Our mountain ancestors lived in what they considered splendid isolation, despite the fact that they did not share equally in the technological and cultural advances of the more populated places. Lacking access to many of the goods and services more common in the cities, they had to improvise, and they adapted beautifully to their world built by hand.

They endured hunger, hardship, and privation. My grandparents and their neighbors were the children of those who overcame all of this, as well as influenza, cholera, and typhoid. They were tough as nails. They were people of faith, patient, enduring, whose minds required engagement rather than distraction, which is the opiate of consciousness today. Many of this generation of mountaineer descendants, my grandparents included, lived well into their 80s and 90s and enjoyed good health for most of those years.

Hard times make strong people who create easy times, which make soft people who create hard times. The successes of our ancestors have made our generations successively weaker, though it began innocently enough. Parents always want better for their children and tend to view being able to indulge them as a sign of success.

What troubles me most about these troubled times is the level of weakness, distraction, and self-indulgence that is actively promoted by almost all of the institutions that form the pillars of our society. It threatens our ability to overcome the troubles gathering at our doorstep. It renders us unable to meet the obligations of our collective stack of unpaid bills. Rather than promoting a culture that can improvise, adapt, and overcome, we are conditioned to fret, rebel, and ultimately to surrender.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR SHOULD BE E-MAILED OR MAILED TO:

Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor
PO Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546.

Our email address: tcherald@windstream.net.

Letters should be limited to 200 words or less, signed, dated and include a phone number for verification purposes. This paper reserves the right to edit letters to conform with Editorial page policy or refuse to print letters deemed pointless, potentially defamatory or in poor taste. Letters should address issues of general interest, such as politics, the community, environment, school issues, etc. Letters opposing the views of previous comments are welcomed; however, letters cannot be directed at, nor name or ridicule previous writers. Letters that recognize good deeds of others will be considered for publication.*

Note: All letters must be signed, and contain the first and last name and phone number for verification.

Outside The Box
By: Don Perry
worldoutsidethebox.com

Echos from Sinai

"Torah for Everyone"
Rabbi Yonatan Hamburger



Publication No: 635540
Advertising, News deadlines: Friday at 5 p.m.
Towns County (1 Year) \$30. Out of County (1 Year) \$40. Entered as second-class matter on November 8, 1928, at the post office at Hiawassee, Georgia under Act of March 3, 1879. With additional mailing points. The Towns County Herald is not responsible for errors in advertising beyond the cost of the actual space involved. All advertisements are accepted subject to the Publisher's approval of the copy and to the space being available, and the Publisher reserves the right to refuse any advertisement. **Postmaster:** Send change of address to: Towns County Herald, P.O. Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546.
Office located at: 518 N. Main St. Suite 3 "The Mall", Hiawassee
Phone: (706) 896-4454 **Fax:** (706) 896-1745 **Email:** tcherald@windstream.net
Or mail to: PO Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546

Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

Kenneth West Owner/Publisher
Shawn Jarrard General Manager/Editor

Derek Richards Advertising Director
Jordan Hyatt Office Manager

Todd Forrest Staff Writer

Lowell Nicholson Photographer

Classifieds SELL!
706-896-4454