

Young Harris holds off another month on variance issue



Young Harris City Clerk Shirley Jarrard and Mayor Andrea Gibby.



Young Harris City Councilmen Jared Champion and Stuart Miller



Councilpersons John Kelley and Angi Smith

By Lily Avery
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YOUNG HARRIS — At the regular monthly Young Harris City Council meeting on Tuesday, Dec. 6, the city dealt with new ordinances while tabling an issue concerning an ordinance variance regarding building height restrictions.

A few months ago, the city attempted to receive an exemption from the county that would pertain to a new structure aimed toward expanding YHC housing facilities for on-campus students.

The proposed site for this facility is off campus and in Young Harris proper.

In October, Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall wrote to the council explaining that he would not be granting an exemption to the height variance due to future complications that it may cause to the peaceful state of the county, such as possibly raising the county's ISO rating and therefore insurance premiums countywide, and potentially effecting the topography of Towns County with other tall buildings.

During the November council meeting, the council tabled the reading of the variance order to provide adequate time to speak with Young Harris College and Commissioner-Elect Cliff Bradshaw concerning the issue.

Following the reception of the letter from Commissioner Kendall, Councilman John Kelley recently spoke with Young Harris College President

Cathy Cox regarding a possible reworking of the college's Overlay District, to which she expressed interest in doing.

"I asked President Cox if there were any options to modify the design and she said no," said Kelley. "I was hoping that we could drop a story [of the proposed building] and reach a compromise with the new commissioner, but apparently the college has invested so much money in the new design that it's either going to be a go or they're going to cut their losses."

"I think our only option would be to have a beneficial conversation with the new commissioner and see if he would be willing to make a politically difficult choice or we could change the overlay map."

According to Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby, if the city were to address changing the Overlay District, the entire Zoning Ordinance would need to be reworked, a process which would take at least two months due to readings needed to adopt an ordinance amendment.

Since the college needs to have the new facility completed by 2018, and the time frame for construction is a year minimum, the push for a decision on the city's behalf is urgent.

All things considered, due to conversations still withstanding, the council decided to table the issue once again, wishing to revisit it in the January meeting.

"If this is something that we're really wanting to have here, then I think we need to roll our sleeves up and exhaust every option,"

said Kelley. "All of us need to work hard for it."

Also during the meeting, the council held the second reading of the new Ethics Ordinance, officially adopting the ordinance.

This newly revised ordinance eliminates any ethics violation the council may have faced regarding councilmembers who are Young Harris College employees voting on matters concerning the college that come before the council from this point forward.

"An ordinance to amend the code of ordinance, city of Young Harris, Georgia, to provide a new code of ethics," read Mayor Gibby. "To provide for penalties, to provide for codification, to provide for severability, to repeal conflicting ordinances, to provide for an effective date and for other purposes."

While the new ordinance has been thoroughly advised and adopted, Mayor Gibby still strongly urged the council to re-establish an ethics committee in the near future.

The city of Young Harris is still considered a City of Ethics under the Georgia Municipal Association program.

Finally, at the end of the meeting, Mayor Gibby shared a re-cap of the year, wishing all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year as the city looks forward to the coming year.

"We've had a really good year," said Mayor Gibby. "We've had a lot go on. We've had a lot of discussion. We've got a lot of done. I want to say thank you to everybody for a good year."

Wilkinson...from Page 1A

group on Friday morning, he was most excited to share his interaction with President-Elect Donald Trump during his campaign for the presidency.

"It's good to be here with all of you," said Sen. Wilkinson. "I'm excited about the new opportunity we have in January with the new administration. During the campaign, President-Elect Trump did reach out to me."

"I serve as chairman for the Agriculture and Consumer Affairs committee, and he selected people from around the country to serve on his Agriculture Advisory committee. He selected three people from Georgia."

"He asked me, former Gov. Sonny Perdue and Commissioner of Agriculture Gary Black, so we had the opportunity to serve in that capacity."

Former Gov. Perdue is currently in the running to serve on President-Elect Trump's cabinet as the Secretary of Agriculture. However, President-Elect Trump has not yet revealed a final decision concerning who will receive the position.

Sen. Wilkinson continued by sharing his enthusiasm with the recent election's voter turnout, stating that he hopes to proceed forward with his yearly goal of being accessible to constituents and to speak soundly on their behalf.

"I thought it would be important to be accessible," said Sen. Wilkinson. "So, during the past five years, I've passed out business cards and all my business cards have my personal cellphone number on it that I carry around in my pocket."

"If I'm not in a meeting, I'll take the call, and if I miss your call, then I'll call you back. I hope no one can say that they tried to get in touch with me and couldn't."

"I think it's important to be able to work with people and get things done."

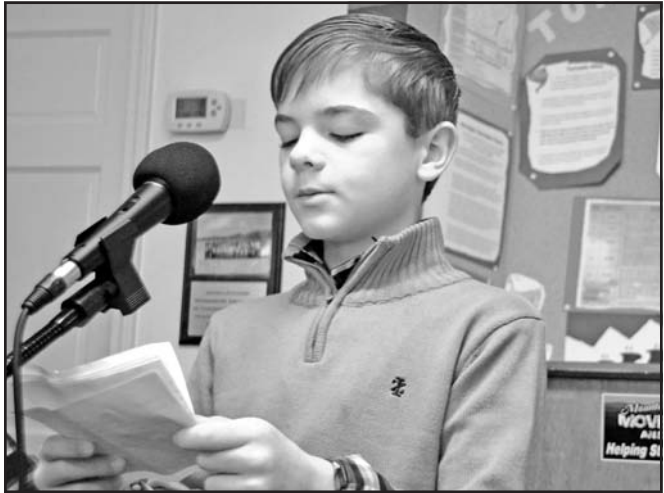
Every two years, at the beginning of the General Assembly session, state legislators are given the opportunity to list the committees they wish to serve on during the following term.

According to Sen. Wilkinson, he continuously tries to serve on committees that will most benefit the wellbeing of those within his eight-county district.

Currently, he serves on the Agriculture and Consumer Affairs committee, Appropriations committee,



Sam Fullerton



Seth Rutan is a fifth-grader at Towns County Elementary School. He spoke to the Mountain Movers and Shakers about tornadoes.

Assignments committee, Education and Youth committee, and Natural Resources and the Environment committee.

"I don't say all this to brag on myself," said Sen. Wilkinson. "I say all that to say that I try to use those appointments to help my district. I think that I have been able to do that."

"For example, there are 56 senators in the state senate, and every year we have a caucus retreat. We don't spend state money, but we spend our money."

"We stay overnight, a couple of nights, and we purchase meals and then I write a check for that as secretary of the caucus."

"This year, we had that meeting in Towns County, and I wrote over \$50,000 in checks for hotel rooms, meals and those kinds of things. That probably wouldn't have happened if I wasn't secretary of the caucus."

During his time serving as Towns County's senator, Sen. Wilkinson has been able to assist the county in the renovation of not one but two public libraries, one of which

recently re-opened in Young Harris, rounding out at a little over \$2 million collectively. Both projects were carried out by local businesses, aiding in boosting the economy of the area as well.

"I think those are some things that we've been able to do that have been positive," said Sen. Wilkinson. "We want to continue to work and do some more positive things for this community."

The General Assembly will convene the second Monday in January, which will be Jan. 9, and consist of 40 days that typically stretch across several months. During that time, Sen. Wilkinson extended an invitation to all in attendance to visit his office at the capitol and share any concerns or queries for the upcoming term.

"I encourage you to call my office if you're going to be in Atlanta," said Sen. Wilkinson. "Give me a little advance notice, but I really look forward to seeing all of you and working with all the county officials in the coming years."

Morgan, Greenwood Christmas concert Friday, December 16th

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

H I A - WASSEE

Lorrie Morgan and Lee Greenwood are headed to the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds this Friday, Dec. 16, to put on a "Patriotic Country Christmas" show in Anderson Music Hall.

The show is set to begin at 7 p.m., with tickets currently on sale for \$43 at Level 1 seating and \$33 at Level 2 seating.

Morgan is widely known for her No. 1 Hits "Five Minutes," "What Part of No" and "I Didn't Know My Own Strength."

The Nashville native's first three albums went platinum, and with over 25 hit singles, she is a beloved institution of Country Music.

Right now, Morgan is on her annual "Enchanted Christmas" tour, and she will be visiting a total of eight states in December.

"The show is beautiful, and will feature all my songs on the 'Merry Christmas from London (1993)' album, and it's just all about Christmas this year, it's all about Christmas," said Morgan.

"We'll be doing a couple of my songs, but mostly Christmas songs."

And when she comes to town to perform her Christmas show, she'll be embracing her favorite Christmas music right in Hiawassee.

"This is my favorite time of year, from Thanksgiving on," said Morgan. "I've just been really blessed



Lorrie Morgan - Photo/Ontourage Management

that people still want to see this Christmas show wherever we go."

Morgan, never shy when it comes to discussing her faith, spoke a little bit recently on the relationship of Gospel and Country Music.

"They've always been connected," said Morgan. "People in Country Music are very well rooted in their Christianity and in their religion, and it's just always gone hand in hand."

"I mean, Tom T. Hall's 'Me and Jesus,' and all this great Bluegrass Gospel - it just always has been together. It just always goes hand in hand."

Of course, Lee Greenwood is known far and wide for his iconic patriotic song, "God Bless the USA," as well as his seven No. 1 hits: "Somebody's Gonna Love You," "Going, Going, Gone," "Dixie Road," "I Don't Mind the Thorns (If You're the Rose)," "Don't Underestimate My Love For You," "Hearts Aren't Made to Break (They're Made to Love)," and "Mornin' Ride."

"I love Lee Greenwood, he's one of my best friends," said Morgan. "He's a wonderful, wonderful human being."

Morgan is excited to be headed for Hiawassee this Friday, where she has performed in years past, and she is equally excited to be sharing a billing with Greenwood. She hopes that the communities in the North Georgia Mountains get a chance to see their Christmas event.

"I want everybody to come out," said Morgan. "To come out and see us, have a good time and have a Merry Christmas, and get in the Christmas spirit with us. That would be awesome."

Just prior to Friday's concert, guests should check out the "Mountain Country Christmas in Lights!"

The walking light show is new to the fairgrounds this year, and features all kinds of Christmas lights and displays, as well as arts and crafts vendors, churches with nativity scenes, carolers, and more.