

Business Group beautifies Downtown Hiawasse

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Hiawasse Business Group will soon be rolling out its biggest project to date – a number of city banners that will hang downtown, celebrating the local majesty of Hiawasse.

Earlier in the summer, members of the business group conducted a survey to determine a theme for the city. The winning slogan, “Georgia’s Lake and Mountain Paradise,” was to be turned into banners that would rotate throughout the year, depending on the season.

The group encouraged community stakeholders, including local businesses, to donate toward the cost of the banners, where each business or entity investing would purchase a banner to then have their name displayed below the theme.

So far, 37 banners have sold to local businesses and entities, and the popularity of the banners as both a point of local pride and a marketing strategy has necessitated the creation of a waiting list following the initial 37.

The business group originally planned to have the banners installed throughout central downtown by late summer, though the group has encountered a few obstacles along the way that have prolonged the project.

“We started the project in March,” said Hiawasse City Councilwoman Liz Ordiales. “Originally, we wanted to put flowers on the poles, so went to (Blue Ridge Mountain) EMC and they said that it probably wouldn’t be a good idea because there wouldn’t be a good way to water them. So, we decided on the banners.”

“We created the banners and contacted our businesses. It cost \$200 to purchase the



Residents gather on the Hiawasse Square in support of the concert sponsored by the Hiawasse Downtown Business Group on Thursday, July 28.

banner. You buy your banner and we put your name on the bottom of the banner. However, according to (the Georgia Department of Transportation), the display of the businesses that sponsored the banners is not allowed because there is to be no advertisement on state highways, and Highway 76 is a state highway.”

After much deliberation with BRMEMC, the business group has decided to use poles that are not located directly on Highway 76.

For now, some of the banners will likely be placed around the square, as Ordiales is waiting to hear back from the DOT to confirm that the banners can be installed in other areas downtown.

On July 28, the group held an event on the Hiawasse Square to raise money for other upcoming projects.

The event, known as “Affair on the Square,” featured local band The Missing Notes, which performed covers of Classic Rock hits. The Missing Notes is made up of local couple Dave Seldon and Bonnie Kendrick.

“Dave Seldon approached us and said he wanted to have a little concert on the square,” said Ordiales. “He wanted all proceeds to go towards helping the business group beautify the town.”

The Missing Notes had scheduled a four-hour show for that Thursday, from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. – but it started raining heavily at 7 p.m.

“So, they played from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. and we raised \$500. That’s not so bad for selling hot dogs, chips and a drink for \$5 a pop for two hours. It was a good time.”

“The band played Classic Rock, there were people dancing in front of the gazebo, and it was just a good time for everyone. There must have been over a hundred people there.”

The Hiawasse Business Group hopes to host another “Affair on the Square” in the near future to continue their efforts toward making Downtown Hiawasse the most beautiful downtown area in all the North Georgia Mountains.

Young Harris continues wastewater renovations

By Lily Avery
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Water was the talk of the town at the Young Harris City Council meeting on Tuesday, Aug. 2.

City Engineer Chris Poje of G. Ben Turnipseed Engineers informed the council of the completion of the sewer line extension.

The estimated cost of the project was not as high as expected, rendering a \$37,950 change order back to the city once approved by state engineers.

Poje is also working on a Watershed Protection Plan for the city to adopt in the near future.

The plan will include water testing to determine the current state of the water before the plan will be put into action. Poje hopes to have the testing complete by the end of August in order to bring the fully ready Watershed Protection Plan to the city by the September or October meeting at the latest.

All current work on the Wastewater Plant should be fully completed by the end of September, with remaining financial affairs reaching completion by the end of October.

After the renovations of the plant and the addition of the driveway, the city expects to save an astounding \$13,000 in chemical costs once a chemical tank is selected and installed at the plant. A chemical tank will cost the city roughly \$24,000, but that cost will include installation.

According to Wayne Barrett from the Wastewater Plant, the renovations and new equipment will end up saving the city more money than expected, due to the new solids press recently brought to the plant.

The solids press is used to remove liquid from the



Young Harris Councilmen Jared Champion and Stuart Miller go over business in the August meeting of Mayor Andrea Gibby and city council

sludge solids that are extracted from the wastewater, creating a sort of solid waste block that is then transported to the landfill.

The goal is to remove as much liquid as possible to reduce the weight of the sludge as well as minimize waste. With the new press, the amount of solids increased from 8 percent to 21 percent.

“We were able to start up the press the other day,” said Barrett. “At the end of the day, we’re going to see a huge difference from what we were pulling through the old press.”

“Before, we could typically put three or four tons in the dumpster when it should have held 10 tons because it was so wet. Now, we should be able to put around 10 tons.”

“The real cost-saving you’re going to see is, it takes \$270 just to pick that dumpster up and take it back. So, you take 270 and divide it by three, and that’s \$90 a ton plus the \$40 dump fee, which is going to stay the same.”

“Now that we can put 10 tons in the dumpster, it’s going to be \$27 a ton rather than \$90 a ton. “Since they have a \$270 flat fee to come get the dumpster, it’ll save money

to divide it out over a large amount.”

The topic of a revised Ethics Ordinance also made an appearance at this month’s meeting. Councilwoman Angela Smith recently contacted attorney David Syfan in regards to rewriting the city’s current ethics ordinance.

Discussion concerning the ethics ordinance itself was not had, but the council did approve to have Syfan bring the ordinance into current case law.

The council did not say when the ordinance would be officially rewritten.

At the end of the meeting, City Attorney Cary Cox submitted his letter of resignation to the council, stating that he would work until Dec. 6 of this year. Due to his recent election as Magistrate Judge of Union County, Cox does not feel like he has the time to manage both demanding positions.

He did say, however, that he intends to finish up any projects he is currently working on before resigning.

“It has been both a pleasure and a privilege to be the attorney for this wonderful city,” said Cox. “I thank you for the opportunity.”

Mattee...from Page 1A

Mountains is typically Fescue, which allows for survival during the cold weather months. September is the prime time to seed for a Fescue lawn due to its bump in growth after the heat and humidity of summer has lessened.

Fescue grasses have a three season growing period – fall, winter and spring. While most people assume that grass becomes dormant during the winter months, Fescue grass actually continues to grow during this time, gathering nutrients and moisture from the soil.

“If you do have a mature Fescue lawn, September is also important to aerate,” said Mattee. “A lot of your weed problems come from compacted soil, but aerating, whether it’s core aeration or just running a spike over it, will help.”

“It moves things around a bit to get air flow and helps the roots spread out so your lawn isn’t as stressed.”

Mattee went on to explain black knot fungus, a disease typically found in fruit-bearing and ornamental trees. Apple and pear trees are especially susceptible to this disease, both of which are common to this region.

Black knot fungus will infect in the spring and is best identified by hard, black galls that will callus the tree.

It is essentially a cosmetic disease and will stay contained within the gall. If the galls move towards the trunk of the tree, Mattee recommends calling in an arborist to assess the tree and prevent further damage.

Another tree bacteria to look out for is fire blight. According to Mattee, this disease is a bacterial growth that can attack the exterior and interior structure of a tree.

The bacteria get into the tree through the flowers and can be identified by random brown patches in a tree, at the tip of the branch.

“If you look at an apple tree or pear tree, they’re going to have random patches throughout the tree,” said Mattee. “It’ll be at the tip of the branch. There’s a characteristic that we call shepherd’s crook. The leaves will actually stay



Mountain Movers and Shakers members enjoyed listening to Mattee speak in the Aug. 5 meeting in Young Harris.



Andrew Smith, the new UGA 4-H extension associate for Towns County, also spoke to the Mountain Movers and Shakers on Friday, Aug. 5

on the tree and won’t die and fall off like with most diseases. Instead, they’re going to form a hook as everything wilts. It’s going to look like it’s been burned.”

The best management of this disease is to wait to prune until the winter months after the leaves have fallen, to cut off anything that looks scorched or dead. Then, in the spring before the flowers begin to bloom, protect the tree with a fungicide.

Mattee’s last order of business was the discussion of mummy berry. The name may have a disarming effect, but the actual effects of mummy berry are quite harmful.

Mummy berry is a disease that targets blueberry bushes. The fungus that causes the disease creates discoloration and shriveled

berries that are reminiscent of mummification.

“These fruits have been infected by a fungus,” said Mattee. “They have mutated and cannot mature properly. Some of the symptoms are the leaves and flowers turning brown and falling off. Also, the secondary symptom is the berries turning a pale color and shriveling.”

The fungus lives inside the berries which, when they fall, will spread the disease around the bush itself. Mattee suggests complete re-landscaping of the area surrounding an infected blueberry bush, covering the area with fresh pine bark mulch afterward.

Before her time with the Movers and Shakers came to an end, Mattee invited all in attendance to a workshop at the Georgia Experiment Station in Union County on September 28.

The workshop, called Forestry Field Day, will feature specialists from the University of Georgia discussing wildlife, tree-specific diseases and much more. The workshop is open to the public with a \$5 admission charge that includes lunch.

For more information, call the Union County Extension Office at (706) 439-6030.

Roads...from Page 1A

And according to Sen. Wilkinson, whom the commissioner gives direct credit for saving Towns County’s application that turned out to be worth \$80,000 in state grant money, it all boils down to relationships.

“In politics and in everything you do, relationships are very important,” said Sen. Wilkinson. “I’ve tried real hard to cultivate a good relationship with the Department of Transportation.”

“I’m glad that we were able to work it out where the state would fund that project, because No. 1, it’s going to make the community a safer place with that striping, and No. 2, the county is going to be able to use their local tax money for other things if they don’t have to spend it on that project.”

Sen. Wilkinson won his race in the May 24 Republican Primary, and without an

opponent in the November General Election, he will be swearing in for another term in January, thanks in part to votes from Towns County residents.

“I got really great support in Towns County, and I carried Towns County by a decisive margin, and that’s just one more reason I’m going to try to work real hard,” said Sen. Wilkinson. “I spend a lot of time in Towns County, and I’ve enjoyed getting to know the people and working with them.”

Towns County awarded the bid project to Pro-Stripe and Seal Inc. of Blairsville, which entered the low bid of \$97,534, and the grant money with local match will cover the bid to provide striping for all county roads meeting the specific state requirement of 18-foot pavement width.

The roads were last striped nearly a decade ago.

Striping will begin on Aug. 15, to then be finished within 60 days. The following 41 roads, having met the state criteria, will be striped:

- Ashland Cove, Bearmeat Road, Bugscuffe Road, Byers Creek Road, Cedar Cliff Road, Chatuge Shores, Clarence Nichols Road, Crane Creek Road, Crooked Creek Connector, Cynth Creek Road, Dills Road, Duncan Road, Fodder Creek Road, Gander Gap, Gumlog Road, Hidden Valley Road, Hog Creek Road, Hy Top Road, Ivy Log Road, Jack Dayton Circle, Jim Watson Road, Kelly Road, King Cove Road, Lakeview Drive, Mill Creek Road, Mining Gap Trail, Mull Road, Owl Creek Road, Plottown Road, Ramey Mountain Road, Red Banks Circle, Scataway Road, Streak Hill, Swallows Creek Road, Thomas Town Road, Timberline Drive, Townsend Mill, Upper Bell Creek Road, Upper High Tower, West Union Church, and Will Shook Road.

Enchanted Music on the Square

Come to the Hiawasse Town Square this Saturday, August 13, for some high-energy music! Whiskey, Stills and Mash is a band performing a diverse set of traditional blues, blues-rock, classic rock, and a few things in between! This band is a culmination of four seasoned musicians who came together in the heart of the Appalachian Mountains to make music that “bleeds gut wrenching heart and soul.” Their sound is steeped in blues richness, but with a distinct edge. They love to play, and

always strive to give their best to every song at every show.

The band consists of Raul Martinez on vocals, Greg Whatley on drums, Jerry Badach on bass, and Darrell Whitt on guitars. The performance begins at 6:30 p.m. and goes til 8 p.m. Bring your lawn chair or blanket, your family and friends and the family pet too! The Enchanted Music concerts are in their sixteenth season. They were started all those years ago by the late Eugene Jakel and his friend, JoAnne Leone as a gift to resi-

dents of Towns County and surrounding areas. A small group of dedicated volunteers has kept the Series going and operates solely from audience donations to pay musicians and our sound tech, Ronnie Moffet.

We will be in need of help for the 2017 season, notably to assemble and disassemble our generously donated canopy each Saturday and Sunday morning. If you can help with either morning each week (takes 20 minutes to set up and take apart)! Please contact Mardi White at 706-781-9917. Looking forward to seeing you on the Square!

Sheriff Clinton re-elected to Georgia Sheriffs’ Association Board of Directors

During the Georgia sheriffs’ annual summer training conference held in Bibb County, Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton was unanimously re-elected to the position of Region III Vice President. In this capacity, Sheriff Clinton serves as a voting member of the Board of Directors of the Georgia Sheriffs’ Association and will represent the other 21 sheriffs of the region on matters related to crime control, public safety, and the Office of Sheriff.

Towns County is located in Region III, which contains 22 counties and reaches from the North Carolina line, east to South Carolina, south to Morgan and Green counties and west to Dawson and Hall counties. Sheriff Clinton has held this position since 2012 and serves as one of nine regional vice presidents on the Georgia Sheriffs’ Association Board of Directors. Prior to 2012, Sheriff Clinton served on the Georgia Sheriffs’ Association’s Training and Standards Committee.



Left to right: Putnam County Sheriff, Howard Sills; Georgia Supreme Court Chief Justice, Hugh P. Thompson; Sheriff Chris Clinton; and Terry Norris, Executive Director, Georgia Sheriffs’ Association.

During the Association’s meeting, Oconee County Sheriff Scott Berry spoke of Clinton’s dedication to the safety of the citizens of Towns County and his commitment to the Office of Sheriff. “I am humbled and honored by this vote of confidence by the sheriffs of Georgia, and am pleased to have this opportunity to serve,” stated Sheriff Clinton. “I am committed to furthering the continued cooperation among the sheriff’s offices of Region III, as well as statewide, as we share com-

mon concerns about the issues affecting the safety and well-being of our citizens.”

The Georgia Sheriffs’ Association was established in 1954 in order to enhance the safety of the citizens of Georgia and to professionalize the Office of Sheriff through training, participation in the legislative process and implementation of crime awareness and prevention initiatives. It is the professional organization of Georgia’s 159 elected sheriffs and is organized into nine regions throughout the state.