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Hiawassee millage rate to remain at 2.258 mills

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Hiawasse Mayor Liz Ordiales led a discussion of the city's Current 2018 Tax Digest and Five-Year History of Levy in the Aug. 16 called city meeting.

She pointed out a significant jump of \$4,394,477 in the real and personal property assessed valuation line between 2017 and 2018.

As previously reported, the reason for the increase in valuation is that the city discovered 52 properties earlier this year that were situated within the city limits but had been historically excluded from the city taxing district.

Ordiales said she felt a back charge of taxes on these properties would be inappropriate, but of these properties will be liable for

the yearly tax levy, including this year.

The question before the council was whether to use a rollback rate of 2.170 mills or keep the same millage rate of 2.258 mills by increasing the millage rate 0.88 mills over the rollback rate.

With the rollback rate, the city would realize \$174,605 in property taxes if all were paid.

Keeping the millage rate the same as in 2017, however, will mean a \$7,080 increase in property tax revenues over the rollback rate, for a total of \$181,685 if all taxes are paid.

The council seemed to agree that \$7,080, in the realm of city government, was not a large sum, and the real question became whether the council wanted to maintain the current millage rate with the idea that property values fluctuate and may be near their peak.

One Hiawasse resident



Councilwomen Nancy Noblet and Amy Barrett in the Aug. 16 called meeting of the Hiawasse City Council.

Photo by Mark Smith

in attendance commented that the real estate market historically fluctuates, and that, in the case of falling property values, the millage rate would likely need to be raised in coming years to allow the city

to maintain its base level of income from the tax digest.

Lowering the millage rate at a time when the real estate market appears to be closer to the top than the bottom, the resident speculated, could

be disastrous for the city and its residents a couple of years down the road.

Ordiales reiterated that the city will be realizing more money compared to last year due to the addition of the 52 properties, and that the city is basically looking to keep the millage rate the same in 2018 as it was in 2017.

The council agreed to leave the millage rate at 2.258 mills for 2018 tax purposes, and since keeping the millage rate the same will result in greater tax collections, the city will have to hold three public hearings before final adoption of the millage rate.

Those public hearings will occur inside Hiawasse City Hall on Tuesday, Sept. 4, one at 10 a.m. and another at 2 p.m., and a third on Tuesday, Sept. 11, at 6 p.m.

The council will set the millage rate in a called meeting on Tuesday, Sept. 11, at 6:30



Hiawasse Mayor Liz Ordiales on Aug. 16.

Photo by Mark Smith

p.m. inside Hiawasse City Hall.

For further perspective, the same 2.258 mills in 2017 will bring in \$9,204 less than it

Cass Larson of TVA talks rate increases with Blue Ridge EMC

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

YOUNG HARRIS – The Tennessee Valley Authority is moving forward with another annual base-rate power increase, despite pushback from the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC and other local power companies.

Members of the TVA Board of Directors were expected to approve another wholesale rate adjustment in their Aug. 22 board meeting, which occurred after press time.

The adjustment will take effect on Oct. 1, and EMC members can expect to see marginally higher annual power costs pass through to their customer bills.

TVA has implemented similar annual increases since 2013 as part of its 10-year plan to cut fuel costs and to help pay down the latest rate increase will



Cass Larson

amount to a 2.4-percent upward adjustment on TVA's portion of wholesale power costs.

In dollars, moderate power prices can expect to pay roughly \$27 more each year after the increase goes live, while larger households with greater electric needs are likely to see annual bills increase by

as much as \$40.

Cass Larson of TVA traveled to Young Harris to speak on this issue in the Aug. 14 regular meeting of the BRMEMC Board of Directors.

Larson is vice president of Pricing and Contracts with TVA, and he delivered a presentation aimed at easing the board's concerns over TVA rate practices moving forward.

Fortunately, TVA has overperformed in revenue gains thanks to its rate increases and cost-cutting measures over the last five years, and Larson told the EMC board that he was confident TVA would only need to approve one additional rate increase after this year's adjustment goes into effect.

This is one positive development for TVA power consumers, as the federal agency is signaling its abandonment of the last three years of planned

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Car fire offers intriguing start to new Towns County school year

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

By most accounts, the first day back for students at Towns County Schools went off without a hitch on Thursday, Aug. 16 – that is, until the car fire in the school parking lot.

Fortunately, no one was hurt, and the Towns County Fire Department was able to put the small fire out with only a little fanfare.

Prior to the car flaming up, it was reported that the vehicle turned itself on and off again, and afterward, investigators determined that a malfunctioning electrical system caused the fire.

Other than that, the first day of the 2018-2019 school year was basically smooth sailing, according to Schools Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong.

Earlier that week, on Tuesday, Aug. 14, students,



Towns County teachers greeting students on their first day back from summer break outside the elementary school on Thursday, Aug. 16.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson

parents, teachers and principals gathered for a time-honored tradition at Towns County Schools – the annual Open House.

Student-teacher reunions,

parent-teacher reunions, and student-student reunions all mixed in with exhibits, various club info tables, and vendors throughout the schools that

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Van Horn visits council; permit moratorium imposed

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

YOUNG HARRIS – Mayor Andrea Gibby and the Young Harris City Council welcomed Young Harris College President Dr. Drew Van Horn in their August regular meeting.

Van Horn has helmed the college since October 2017, and in that time, he's made multiple trips to city hall to discuss a variety of issues.

His attendance that Aug. 7 evening marked his first visit to a council meeting, however, and he took the time to offer a brief update on the college while also getting down to formal business.

"We're looking at probably 430 to 450 total new students, counting transfers



Young Harris College President Dr. Drew Van Horn in the August regular meeting of the Young Harris City Council.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

into the institution," said Van Horn. "We have just surpassed

500 seats in early college, with the majority of those students coming from Union County and Towns County.

"So, total enrollment will be around 1,400 counting early college and our traditional programs. The master's program starts off in January, and our first online program begins in October ... We appreciate all that the city has done and our community has done, and we hope we make you proud."

Joining Van Horn was Chadley Gray, director of Facilities Planning and Operations at the college. Together, they addressed the board concerning plans to construct a new band building.

The band program has outgrown the YHC Fine Arts

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Floyd and Swanson attend elite summer programs

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Boys State is a stellar youth program founded in 1935 by two members of the American Legion, aimed at countering the "socialism-inspired Young Pioneer Camps," according to Legion. org.

Girls State followed in 1939 for the same reason, and it is administered by the American Legion Auxiliary.

Only high school juniors with a grade point average of 3.5 or higher are considered for the program, and selection is further based on personal interviews and recommendations from high school counselors.

As many as five boys and



Towns County High School seniors Kendall Floyd and Summer Swanson attended the 2018 Boys and Girls State programs, respectively.

Photo by Mark Smith

five girls are selected every year from each post to participate in the weeklong exercise,

held this year at Gainesville's Riverside Military Academy

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Towns County Historical Society welcomes Nichols of Tate City

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Lovers of local history gathered at the Old Rec Center on Monday, Aug. 13, to hear all about the origins of Tate City in the monthly meeting of the Towns County Historical Society.

Every month, the historical society discusses a different topic of community interest, and the interest in the small mountain community of Tate City was great.

The meeting presented the largest number of attendees of any society meeting with 109 individuals gathering to learn about the town and its little-known history.

Many people might not



Ralph Nichols

be too familiar with Tate City, but the area has been around for generations, since the late 1800s.

The town of maybe a few dozen residents also serves as one of the smallest communities

in the state of Georgia, and it has the smallest number of registered voters in the state, with its own voting precinct.

In his presentation titled "My Roots in Tate City," guest Ralph Nichols told the history of the town, which he learned through his childhood experiences growing up there.

Nichols explained that the area used to act as a boundary between the Native American tribes and Georgia, with a special appeal to hunters because of the large population of wild animals that roamed the woods.

Unfortunately, Tate City could not be effectively used for regular hunting due to hunters having to carry their

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Board of Education, health department plan ahead for flu season

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

As soon as this year's flu vaccines arrive, the Towns County Board of Health will work to administer a shot to any student or employee of Towns County Schools who elects to take one.

In concert with the health department, the Towns County Board of Education approved a "Memorandum of Understanding" acknowledging as much in the Aug. 13 regular board meeting.

A memorandum of understanding is an agreement between two parties that, though not legally binding, outlines the responsibilities of each party in an agreement.



Dr. Darren Berrong

Schools Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong, who sits on the Towns County Board of Health, provided an estimated date of Oct. 15 for the school flu clinic, but he said that was likely to change.

The Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention in Atlanta has yet to release information on when the vaccines will be delivered, so local officials haven't been able to give the schools a set date for the clinic.

In his Superintendent's Comments, Berrong said that the summer building renovations had been completed.

The architects walked through the building the week prior and made a thorough report to the contractor of small, mostly cosmetic items to be fixed, and everything was ready by the first day of school on Aug. 16.

Since the alleviation of the drainage problem at the baseball field, sodding of the

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Blue Ridge 1,683.69
Chatuge 1,924.39
Nottely 1,773.73

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SOFTBALL
Tues. Aug 21 @ Commerce 5:55 PM
Mon. Aug 27 vs. Fannin Co. 5:55 PM

March for Jesus
Georgia Mountain
Fairgrounds
Aug. 25 @ 9 a.m.

Calling All
Hiawassee Elves
for 2nd Annual
Light up
Hiawassee
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Parents Night
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