

Towns County Herald

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50 Cents

Publication Number 635540 Volume 89 Number 43

Wednesday, August 29, 2018

Bradshaw accepts rollback millage rate of 5.197 mills

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw accepted the rollback of 5.197 mills at the monthly Towns County Commissioner's Meeting on Aug. 23.

The rollback rate is 0.178 mills lower than last year's rate, and the new rate will result in a levy of \$3,919,757, which is actually \$7,657 more than last year due to increases in the tax digest.

Bradshaw said he is able to accept the rollback without concern about maintaining the level of county services.

"Every day when I come to work, my goal is to save taxpayers money," said Bradshaw. "That is my goal every day, without jeopardizing any of the services we offer."

"If anything, we want

to increase the services, the quality of the services we offer, without increasing any taxes. If we thought that we needed more money (to maintain what we have), then we would not have accepted the rollback."

Bradshaw said that he has been able to save the taxpayers around \$45,000 since he took office, adding that the economy is getting better and sales tax collections are up about \$30,000 over last year.

"The fire tax will remain at 0.483, and we can do that without jeopardizing any of (those) services," said Bradshaw.

Bradshaw said that Towns County Schools, which also levies property taxes in the county, will be going with the rollback millage rate of 7.671 mills for maintenance and operations.

For 2018, the schools

will be levying \$5,793,266 in property taxes. Again, due to increased digest values, the schools will be levying \$40,026 more than last year, despite a lower millage rate.

Also in the meeting, Bradshaw approved a resolution to amend the county budget for "Sheriff's Insurance Reimbursement" in the amount of \$3,939, "Sheriff's Ballistic Vest Grant" in the amount of \$679, and "AirFlight Insurance" for the county in the amount of \$6,250.

Towns County Finance Director Andrea Anderson said the Sheriff's Insurance reimbursement had to do with a sheriff's vehicle that was hit by an uninsured driver.

The Sheriff's Ballistic Vest Grant paid half of the cost of the protective equipment, and the AirFlight expense was

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Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw thanking recent retiree John Noel "Mousy" Nicholson for his time with the county. Also pictured, Joyce Nicholson. Photo by Mark Smith

TVA Board approves rate increase to pay down debt

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

As expected, the Tennessee Valley Authority Board of Directors has approved the federal agency's sixth base-rate power increase since 2013.

The increase was part of a \$10.55 billion budget approved by board members in their quarterly meeting in Knoxville, Tennessee, on Aug. 22.

This latest rate increase will go into effect on Oct. 1 and will raise about \$200 million in additional revenues from all over the Valley.

TVA's rationale for implementing this and similar annual increases stems from a 10-year plan to get TVA in better financial shape moving forward.

Alongside new revenues generated by rate increases, the plan has also helped TVA to save money on fuel and cut operating costs, and now, the TVA Board has signaled that it is ready to start aggressively paying down debt to lower future interest payments.

Pitched as a "1.5 percent effective retail rate increase," the adjustment will actually result in a 2.4-percent increase



TVA President Bill Johnson

to TVA's portion of wholesale power costs.

Based on these numbers, the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC has estimated the increase will cost its moderate residential power users an additional \$27 a year, or \$2.25 more per month.

Fortunately, the federal agency has been doing more than just raising rates since initiating its long-range financial plan in 2013.

TVA says it has been able to keep its rates relatively flat over the last five years, thanks to a concerted effort to cut fuel costs by moving away from coal and toward nuclear and renewables.

Combining revenues with savings in fuel and O&M, along with weather extremes (higher power sales) and greater rainfall (hydroelectric power boost), TVA has realized record profits in recent years, which means it is actually ahead of schedule on its plan.

Cass Larson, TVA's vice president of Pricing and Contracts, told the BRMEMC Board of Directors in their Aug. 14 meeting that TVA will likely only seek one more annual rate increase, in 2019, and forgo the final three that are part of the plan.

Now, TVA is moving into the final stages of its financial plan to lower existing debt from about \$26 billion down to \$21.8 billion by 2023.

TVA Board Members believe that, taken together, the lowering of both fuel costs and overall debt service will allow TVA to keep rates low and competitive for years to come.

"In FY19, we enter the sixth year of our long-range financial plan that outlined capital investments in assets to diversify and maintain our fleet, fuel cost savings and a reduction in overall debt," said

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Manhunt ends with arrests and recovered stolen property

News Special
Towns County Herald

On Wednesday, Aug. 22, Towns County Sheriff's Deputies responded to assist a Hiwassee Police Department Officer on a traffic stop at the Chatuge Lodge, where two passengers in the vehicle ran from the stop on foot.

A perimeter was established in the area, and a

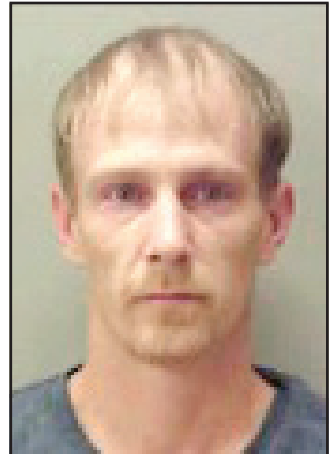
bloodhound from the Sheriff's Office was brought to the scene in an attempt to apprehend the fleeing suspects. The search failed to locate the suspects that night.

The following day, the Towns County 911 Center received a call about two subjects fitting the description of the suspects in the area of Pioneer Trail off Georgia 75 North.

One of the first deputies arriving on the scene spotted the two suspects, at which time they fled from him on foot.

When Hiwassee Police Department Officers and Sheriff's Deputies arrived on the scene to establish a perimeter, the female suspect was located hiding near a residence in the area and was taken into custody without incident.

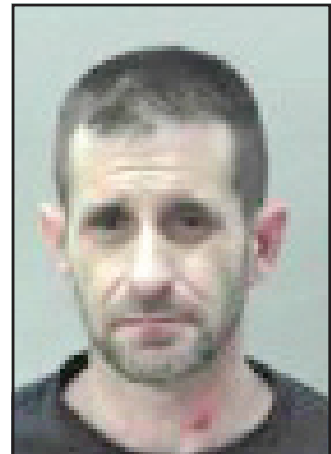
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Shaun Ewing



Sandi Pate



Robert Gregory



Bobbie LeAnn Saxon



These guns and other stolen property were recovered from a location off Swallows Creek Road in Hiwassee.

Bomb dogs train for Super Bowl LIII in Union, Towns

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

When Super Bowl LIII comes to Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta on Feb. 3, 2019, the Georgia Explosive Ordnance Detection Canine Program will be hard at work ensuring that football fans enjoy the game in a safe environment.

The elite K-9 program is headed by the Georgia Emergency Management Agency-Homeland Security, and dozens of participants traveled to Union and Towns counties the week of Aug. 13 for special training ahead of the big event.

This training included visits to a number of local facilities that are similar to the types of environments these highly-trained dogs are likely to come into contact with at the stadium.

Meeks Park, the Union County Schools Bus Barn and North Georgia Technical College of Union County, along with the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds and Towns County Recreation and Conference Center in Towns County, served as training grounds Aug. 14 through Aug. 16.

"Back in 2008, we took Homeland Security Grant money to develop our EOD K-9 response statewide," said EOD K-9 Program Manager Tod Keys. "We started off with 18 teams back in 2008



Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton, Fayette County Sheriff's Sgt. Shane Head with K-9 Meggie, and Georgia EOD K-9 Program Manager Tod Keys at Anderson Music Hall. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

that were already existing, augmented those teams with equipment to help them better respond statewide, and now, we're up to 55 teams."

Each team consists of a specialized bomb-sniffing dog and their law enforcement handler, and all told, 38 teams participated in the training that took place here in the North Georgia Mountains.

Together, these teams searched for a variety of explosive materials inside buildings and near building exteriors, parking lots, vehicles, packages and more.

And while the training was for the upcoming Super Bowl, it's the same kind of training the teams undergo on a regular basis, making sure the dogs are recognizing the explosive odors associated with bombs.

"With the Super Bowl, we're going to be doing a lot of sterility sweeps for buildings, for venues, for events, so we're ... mimicking those events, those buildings down at the Super Bowl area," said Keys. "Also, we will run a lot of unattended package calls with

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Towns County Farmers Market adds variety, vendors

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The summertime is perfect for fresh, homegrown fruits and vegetables, and the Towns County Farmers Market aims to bring the best local produce to the community.

The market opened for another year earlier this summer and runs every Saturday from 9 a.m. to noon.

And the market is busier than ever, since August seems to turn out the highest number of shoppers because it marks the end of summer, and people like to get fresh produce before the season ends.

"This year has been terrific for us," said Sheleila O'Neal, a grower and market mainstay. "August brought a lot of people out here, rain or shine, and we could not express how grateful we are for having the community support."

Vendors at the market dedicate a large portion of their time to bringing produce and products to the market and offering a variety of garden foods that have no additional chemicals



Daughter/mother duo Lily and Chasity Brown selling their spices, teas, rib rubs and seasonings at the Towns County Farmers Market on Saturday, Aug. 25. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

added to them.

While many of the vendors offer similar goods, each one of them has products that are completely unique to their stands.

O'Neal, for example, carries baked breads and special

homemade jams that she cans and bakes herself.

Another vendor, Chasity Brown, runs a stand with her family and specializes in meat rubs, seasonings and teas.

Most of her teas and drinks

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Lake Levels
Blue Ridge 1,682.57
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Nottely 1,772.03

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FOOTBALL
Fri. Aug 31 vs. Union Co. 7 PM
SOFTBALL
Aug 28 @ Prince Ave 4:45 PM
Aug 30 @ Hebron 4:45 PM

SAFE PET PROJECT
Saturday, September 1st, 2018
10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Calling All Hiwassee Elves for 2nd Annual Light up Hiwassee

Master Gardener Training Class