

Towns County Herald

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Commissioner extends sign permit moratorium by 30 days

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw held a called meeting on Friday, Sept. 28, to sign a resolution extending the county sign permit moratorium 30 additional days to Nov. 15.

The original 90-day moratorium went into effect in the July 17 regular county meeting, and it was set to end mid-October.

Effectively, the moratorium puts a freeze on "the taking of applications for off-site signs and/or billboard, and/or the issuance of permits for the same" for the unincorporated areas of Towns

County. The reason Bradshaw imposed the moratorium in the first place is because several out-of-town billboard sign companies had approached his office over a two-week period in July.

All of a sudden, permits were for a six, billboards, and the commissioner realized he needed to get a moratorium in place to better gauge his options and the will of the public concerning billboard/off-site signs lining the county roadways.

Since the original moratorium went into effect, the commissioner has taken a number of steps to inform his impending decision on how best

to amend the sign ordinance.

He has asked the county attorney to research and compare the county ordinance with sign ordinances from comparable municipalities; held two public Planning Commission meetings and accepted the commission's recommendations; and he is currently consulting the public directly with surveys.

In a Sept. 11 public meeting, the Planning Commission proposed that billboard signs along major routes, including Georgia 17, U.S. 76, and Georgia 75, have a maximum size of 300 square feet, a maximum height of 30 feet, and be single-side, monopole and of metal construction.

The commission also recommended the signs be landscaped at the base, not be digital, multi-message signs, and be spaced 2,500 feet apart and 500 feet from a school or park.

For secondary roads, the commission proposed that signs not exceed 75 square feet in size, and that they may use six-by-six wooden supports.

As previously reported, none of the recommendations are set in stone, and there is not yet a finalized list of amendments to the county sign ordinance.

Furthermore, Bradshaw said in his Sept. 28 called meeting that it's possible the
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Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw signing a resolution on Friday, Sept. 28, to extend the current sign permit moratorium. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

High voter turnout expected for the Nov. 6 General Election

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Nov. 6 General Election is just around the corner, and with many high-profile offices up for grabs at the state level, it's looking to be one of Georgia's biggest elections in years.

Tonya Nichols, office supervisor for the Towns County Board of Elections & Registration, said that she had already sent out 88 absentee ballots as of the end of September, and she feels confident she will be mailing out more, all the way up until a week before the Nov. 6 election.

Besides the many political races on the ballot this year, there are also several proposed amendments to the Georgia



Constitution, two Proposed Statewide Referenda, and the questions of alcohol sales in the county and the city.

Either one of two sample ballots – one for Towns County residents outside Hiawassee

City Limits and one for City of Hiawassee residents – can be obtained at the Towns County Board of Elections & Registration, Suite A, in Hiawassee Circle, Suite A, in Hiawassee.

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MECHS opens new Central Office building in Cleveland

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

CLEVELAND – Officials with the Mountain Education Charter High School celebrated the Grand Opening of the school's new Central Office at 1963 Tom Bell Road on Saturday, Sept. 29, in Cleveland.

With 16 sites throughout north Georgia, which includes the instruction of students from Towns and Union counties, the Mountain Education Charter High School provides students with access to a regular high school education outside of regular school hours.

As an evening, self-paced, public high school that grants regular diplomas, this form of secondary education



The new Central Office building for the Mountain Education Charter High School in Cleveland.

offers flexibility to students in need of accommodations.

But having locations in 15 Georgia counties can make it difficult for employees to communicate with one another, which made the idea of a creating a Central Office

especially appealing.

"If I wanted information, I would have to set up a meeting that may not happen for a few days," said MECHS Superintendent Wayne Lovell on Sept. 29.

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Barrett, Woods discuss parental involvement in PTSO

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Amy Barrett and Caroleen Woods of the Towns County Schools Parent Teacher Student Organization spoke with the Mountain Movers and Shakers at the Sundance Grill on Friday, Sept. 28.

Barrett is a member of the Hiawassee City Council and is also the current president of Towns County PTSO, while Woods is a veteran of the U.S. Air Force and serves as vice president of Towns County PTSO.

During a presentation that morning, Barrett said the organization, formerly known as the Parent Teacher Association, began about 141 years ago when two Virginia senators formed the National Congress of Mothers, which was responsible for the first kindergarten program.

They were also instrumental in enacting the first



Amy Barrett and Caroleen Woods of Towns County Schools PTSO spoke with the Mountain Movers and Shakers on Friday, Sept. 28. Photo by Mark Smith

child labor laws and forming the first curricular standards.

"Our mission statement at Towns County PTSO is that we provide a network of support and communication for the functions and activities

of the Towns County School System," said Barrett, adding that the PTSO is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Barrett described several of the means by which they
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Members of the Towns County High School Class of 2018 on Graduation Day in May.

TCHS graduation rate highest in RESA and fifth in state

News Special
Towns County Herald

Towns County High School has the highest 2018 graduation rate in the Pioneer RESA district, with 97.7 percent graduating.

Furthermore, this

percentage is the fifth highest graduation rate in the state of Georgia.

Towns County High School's graduation rate is 16.1 percent higher than the state average of 81.6 percent.

High School Principal

Dr. Connie Hobbs would like to congratulate the Graduating Class of 2018 and the dedicated teachers of Towns County High for this great accomplishment.

Go Indians!

Hiawassee earns PlanFirst designation from Georgia DCA

By Mark Smith
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Hiawassee Mayor Liz Ordiales was pleased to announce in the Sept. 24 City Council Work Session that the Georgia Department of Community Affairs has awarded the City of Hiawassee the PlanFirst designation.

This is huge for Hiawassee because of the recognition and incentives that come with the designation.

In order for a community to receive this designation, it must be a qualified local government, have an approved and adopted service delivery strategy, and be current on all required reports to DCA.

The community must also meet all the minimum performance standards for their region as set by their regional commission, which



Mayor Liz Ordiales and City Clerk Bonnie Kendrick in the Sept. 24 City Council Work Session. Photo by Mark Smith

in Georgia Mountains Regional Commission.

Incentives include statewide recognition as

an exemplary, PlanFirst community; the ability to apply for Community Development Block Grants annually; bonus

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Business Showcase brings community and businesses together

By Jarrett Whitener
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

For the fourth year in a row, area businesses gathered to display their services at the Towns County Business Showcase on Thursday, Sept. 27.

Sponsored by the Towns County Chamber of Commerce, the showcase took place at the Recreation and Conference Center at Foster Park.

With 90 businesses from the north Georgia area attending, guests had the opportunity to get to know local business owners.

"We wanted the community to be able to meet the area business owners and put a face with services that we can use," said Chamber President Candace Lee. "There are also many individual businesses that are run from



Hilda Thomason representing the Georgia Mountains Fairgrounds at the 2018 Towns County Business Showcase. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

the homes of the owners, and they can have a booth there that allows them to have people see their products.

"Some of them do not

have advertising, and the community may not know about their business, so we want them to come and expand

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FOOTBALL
Fri. Oct. 5
vs. Hebron Christian
7:30 PM

Ga. Mtn. Pickleball Fall Classic this weekend
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Boot Drive for Smoke Alarms
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American Red Cross Red Cross Giant Annual Yard Sale
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