

# Sales Tax...from Page 1A

tax is.”

The new Towns County tax rate posted to the Georgia Department of Revenue website around mid-September, and business owners and residents can go there for more information.

“Businesses are responsible for collecting that, and so the issue is, if a business doesn’t collect that, at the end of the month they’re going to be billed from the Department of Revenue at 8 cents, and they’ve only been charging 7 cents, and so it’s going to affect them as far as what their profit margin is,” said Dr. Berrong.

Based on the school board’s decision to put the ELOST to voter decision earlier this year, Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall decided not to

pursue a SPLOST referendum of his own, which would have needed to appear by the General Election ballot in November in order to avoid interruption next year.

As it stands, SPLOST referendums cannot be shared between the county and school system. Dr. Berrong has expressed his desire to pursue a joint SPLOST collection in the future, working with the next elected commissioner to accomplish that goal.

“Our game plan is to meet with our local legislators and try to get some kind of local legislation in place to where we can share one SPLOST tax so there’s not this going back and forth, and we can just share it and we don’t ever have to do an 8 cent sales tax in the county again,” said Dr. Berrong.

The school board announced before the referendum passed that it was their intent to drop collection of the ELOST after just four years of collection, at which point, barring a joint collection plan, the county could pick up the SPLOST where the school system left off.

ELOST collection will help the school with millions of dollars in much-needed building repairs, including the installment of a new roof to both the high and middle schools, projected to be greater than \$800,000, as well as a complete overhaul of the fire alarm systems, another \$500,000, crucial updates to outdated technology currently in use by students, \$600,000, and major HVAC improvements across the board, relighting, rewiring and more, not to mention close to \$500,000 for the school’s textbook inventory.

# Residency...from Page 1A



Hiawasse attorney Larry Sorgen and four others provided passionate defenses that allowed them to remain Hiawasse voters

five who showed for their residency hearings, and they demonstrated, oftentimes with great passion, that they deserved to stay on the Hiawasse voter registration.

The five appeared in response to letters from the board calling them to the hearings in order to defend against the board’s challenges to their residency.

Letters were mailed to eight individuals in total, though two decided to voluntarily remove themselves from the Hiawasse registration, and one did not respond or show to the hearings.

The residency issue stems from the board’s decision, made several weeks ago, to challenge eight individuals who were brought to their attention as having businesses within Hiawasse City Limits, but not necessarily residences.

John Holmes, a candidate for city council in the upcoming Nov. 8 Hiawasse Special Municipal Election, came to the board not long ago asking that, if certain individuals have been allowed to register their business as their place of residence, why not be fair and let other Hiawasse business owners register to vote within city limits.

Holmes wanted to bring in other business owners to the Hiawasse registration that were favorable to his campaign, and though he didn’t make any formal challenges, the board took it upon themselves, through guidance from the Secretary of State’s office, to be charged with the duty of

addressing the matter once it had become known to them.

Hiawasse attorney Larry Sorgen was the first to deliver a residency defense in the hearings. As background, Sorgen has been a registered Hiawasse voter since 1977, he said, and won a similar challenge to his residency back in the 1980s.

Citing multiple cases and delving into Georgia election code, Sorgen put forth two clear defenses.

One, he challenged the board’s right to even hold hearings dealing with Hiawasse registration, as in his view they did not meet the law’s required designation as a joint county and city board of registration.

Secondly, he argued that his and his wife’s status as residents of Hiawasse had everything to do with intent, an argument that helped to lay the groundwork for those remaining to be heard in the hearing.

According to Sorgen, Georgia case law backed up a resident’s right to intend for his domicile to be one particular place over another, especially given evidence proving such intent.

Each of the individuals called to the hearings shared one major thing in common. Though they all have more than one residence, each has full living accommodations within the place of business at which they have been basing their residency in Hiawasse.

The key here is that they all showed how they

regarded their business living quarters as their intended domiciles, producing piles of paperwork and supporting legal documents linking their everyday lives to their physical business addresses.

Such evidence included driver’s licenses, car titles, vehicle registrations, weapons carry licenses, utility bills, and in Pallone’s case, actual photos of a fully furnished domicile built onto the back of her business, Bacchus Wine Shoppe.

Timothy Barrett is also a Hiawasse attorney, and along with corroborating court cases establishing the precedent of intent, he and his wife produced an impressive array of documents, including tax returns and his son’s birth certificate, all leading back to his law offices on Big Sky Drive.

After a quick break to call the county attorney, the board returned and voted to establish that they did in fact have jurisdiction over city registration.

They then deliberated in the open, saying that they were particularly moved by both the legal precedent put before them, especially dealing with intent, and the amount of paperwork provided as evidence by those being heard, evidence leading back to businesses intended to double as domiciles.

A vote in each of the cases led to all five of the individuals successfully defending and maintaining their status as Hiawasse residents.

In the case of the Sorgens, the board voted unanimously to uphold their Hiawasse residency, while Board Member Scott Ledford abstained in the case of the Barretts due to a casual business relationship, and Board Member Barbara Shook abstained in the vote for Pallone.

Present from the board were Board Chair Janet Oliva, Rob Murray, Scott Ledford and Barbara Shook. Board Co-Chair Mark Dehler was not present for the hearings.

The board expressed its intent to address the issue on a larger scale following this year’s election cycle, saying it will look first at Hiawasse, then Young Harris, and finally countywide registration information to make sure that other business owners in similar situations meet the same burden of proof demonstrated by the Sorgens, the Barretts and Pallone.

asking for a “yes” or “no” vote each.

The amendments have the following stated effects:

One, “provides greater flexibility and state accountability to fix failing schools through increasing community involvement;”

Two, “authorizes penalties for sexual exploitation and assessments on adult entertainment to fund child victims’ services;”

Three, “reforms and re-establishes the Judicial Qualifications Commission and provides for its composition, governance, and powers;”

And four, “dedicates revenue from existing taxes on fireworks to trauma care, fire services, and public safety.”

Also on Nov. 8, Hiawasse City Hall will be holding a special municipal election to fill a vacant city council seat, the candidates for which are John Holmes and Rayette Ross.

Hiawasse City Hall will be holding three weeks of early voting on weekdays between Monday, Oct. 17, and Friday, Nov. 4.

Absentee ballots for the special municipal election will also be available at city hall.

Hiawasse voters will be deciding on several alcohol-related referendums as well, including: the selling of liquor by the drink, both during the week and on Sundays; and beer and wine Sunday sales in retail settings.

# Festival...from Page 1A

The sweet smell of homemade hominy filled the air, drawing in festivalgoers to sample the corn concoction. Nestled beside the vat full of freshly cooked goodness sat Sheryl Osborne, sharing with patrons the ins and out of lye soap making.

“This is old-timey lye soap, made out of lye, lard and water,” said Osborne. “It’s your everyday soap, used for laundry and cleaning. That’s what they would do.”

“They would wash their clothes, floors, everything in this soap. This will take pretty much all day, about five to six hours to make and for it to thicken up enough for me to pour it into my mold. The mold that I’m using makes about six pounds of soap.”

Osborne has been sharing her trade at the Fairgrounds since 2012, though she began her venture in soap making back in 2011.

“I’ve been making this type of soap about six years,” said Osborne. “Honestly, I started making soap when I lost my job in 2011. Soap making was one of those things that I always wanted to try but I never really had the time, so I finally had plenty of time.”

“So, I just started experimenting with different oils and started making old-timey lard soap, and started adding different fragrances and colors. Now, I sell my soaps at local farmers markets and at craft shows.”

Another crowd favorite was the vintage sawmill, with demonstrations scheduled every hour to half hour. The mill used during the demo is a classic, a 1946 Corley model, made in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Shylan Wood, one of the four men working the mill, explained that when the mill was new, it would have been operated using steam power rather than a motor. This would have especially been the case in a rural Georgia town where sawmilling was in high demand, but the terrain of the region prevented a major influx of fuel to power such motors.

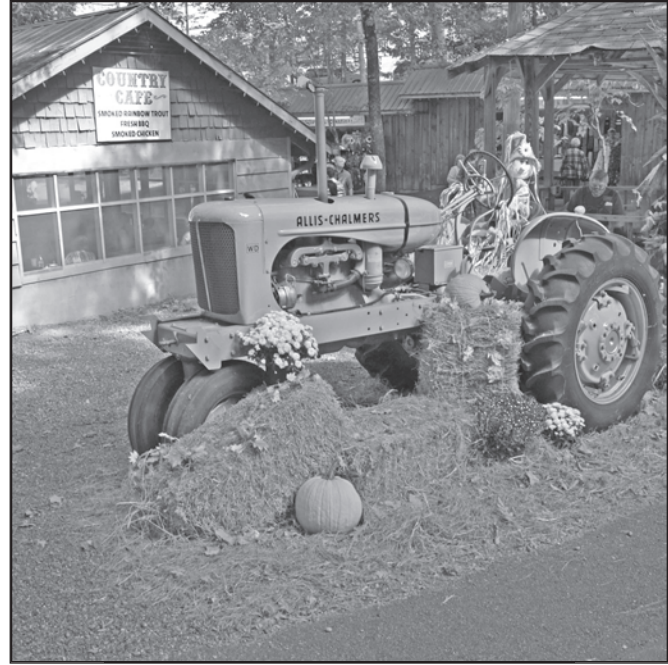
Along with the steam engine, the mill would have been a full-time job for up to 15 people, working in everything from cutting the timber to hauling the finished product.

“People would take a mill like this out in the woods and set it up, log a section of timber, saw it right there and then haul it out,” said Wood. “The mill itself is pretty simple. You have the power plant, the blade and the carriage. The carriage carries the logs back and forth.”

“Every trip, a board comes off of what was the log. You have to have the logs to saw and, back then, before tractors and all that came about, there would be a three-man crew logging the timber.”

“Then, there’d be a two-man crew with a pair of mules, pulling the logs to the sawmill. Then, there would be one man rolling logs, the sawyer, another man off to the side and an edger man working at the sawmill.”

“With that team, they’d probably put out between 2,000 and 5,000 feet of lumber a day. In good timber, they could probably put out 40,000 to 50,000 board feet a week. It was not uncommon to do that.”



Mickey Gilley played to a packed Anderson Music Hall during the opening day festivities of the 2016 Fall Festival



Kids just loved this bubble-making car at the Fall Festival

According to Wood, his favorite part of the sawmilling process is seeing the lumber finally come off of the mill. To Wood, it makes all the hard work and labor worth it.

Wood has been practicing the art of sawmilling since he was a child, following in the footsteps of his grandfather, Stanley Wood, who was a sawyer himself and sawed at the Fairgrounds for many years.

“He taught me everything I know and about all this stuff and how to keep it all going,” said Wood. “It’s a good thing to show these people cause people don’t get to see this all the time. It’s something important to preserve our heritage. It’s important to me.”

Along with the unique offerings of the Pioneer Village, helicopter rides are available on the weekends for only \$20. The rides show an exclusive perspective of the beautiful North Georgia Mountains and the Fairgrounds that can only be seen from high in the sky.

Don’t miss out on the Fall Festival’s main attraction this week, the Georgia Official State Fiddler’s Convention, which begins on Friday, Oct. 14, and runs through Saturday, Oct. 15.

The convention will feature statewide fiddle, banjo, mandolin and guitar pros, all competing to win the titles of official Georgia State Champions.

# Election...from Page 1A

Jail, which will remain open to voters even during lunchtime hours.

There is one weekend day set aside for voters at the board of elections office, which will be Saturday, Oct. 29, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., for those who find themselves too busy to vote during the scheduled weekdays of voting.

Voters looking for absentee ballots will need to contact the Towns County Board of Elections at (706) 896-4353.

Tuesday, Oct. 11, was the voter registration deadline leading into the General Election just a few short weeks away.

The following candidates will appear on the ballot:

For President of the United States, Donald J. Trump, with his vice presidential running mate Michael R. Pence, Republican; Hillary Clinton, with her vice presidential running mate Tim Kaine, Democrat; and Gary Johnson, with his vice presidential running mate Bill Weld, Libertarian.

For U.S. Senate, Incumbent Johnny Isakson, Republican; Jim Barksdale, Democrat; and Allen Buckley, Libertarian.

For Public Service Commissioner, Incumbent Tim Echols, Republican, and Eric

Hoskins, Libertarian.

For U.S. Representative in 115th Congress from the 9th Congressional District of Georgia, Incumbent Doug Collins, Republican.

For State Senator from 50th District, Incumbent John K. Wilkinson, Republican.

For State Representative in the General Assembly from 8th District, Matt Gurtler, Republican.

For Judge of the Probate Court, Incumbent David Rogers, Republican.

For Clerk of Superior Court, Incumbent Cecil Dye, Republican.

For Sheriff, Incumbent Christopher Clinton, Republican; Brandon Barrett, Independent; and Linda Curtis, Independent.

For Tax Commissioner, Incumbent Bruce Rogers, Democrat.

For Coroner, Harold Copeland, Republican.

For County Commissioner At Large, Cliff Bradshaw, Republican; Nathan Hughes, Democrat; and Henry Chambers, Independent.

Special Election for County Board of Education Post 2 (to fill the unexpired term of Cliff Bradshaw, resigned), Stan Chastain and Chad Houser.

The ballot will also feature a series of proposed state constitutional amendments

# Arrests...from Page 1A

Intent to Distribute, Possession of a Controlled Substance, Possession of Drug Related Object.

Lissa Ledford, 45, of Franklin, NC: Possession of Methamphetamine, Possession of Methamphetamine with Intent to Distribute, Possession of Drug Related Object.

Heather Cooper, 25, of Blairsville: Possession of Methamphetamine, Possession of Drug Related Object.

Dexter Adams, 52, of Hiawasse: Possession of Cocaine, Possession of Drug Related Object, Possession of Marijuana Less Than One Ounce.

Chad Garrett, 37, of Hayesville, NC: Possession of Methamphetamine, Possession of Methamphetamine with Intent to Distribute, Possession of Drug Related Object.

Jessica Cox, 30, of

Warne, NC: Possession of Methamphetamine, Possession of Methamphetamine with Intent to Distribute, Possession of Drug Related Object.

Potential drug seizures include a truck and some

cash.

All suspects are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

As for those who would bring drugs into the community, Lt. Paul Smith with Hiawasse PD has said that he and his fellow law enforcement officers will not stand for it.

“We are trying to fix this problem, and we’re going to be throwing more manpower at it,” said Lt. Smith. “We don’t want it here, so we’re going to do what we can to stop it.”

All recent drug arrests were made by Hiawasse PD’s night shift officers.