

Superintendent Berrong goes over modernization in BOE meeting

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

A visit from Georgia State Schools Superintendent Richard Woods and an update on a current modernization project were topics of discussion during the Towns County Board of Education monthly meeting on Thursday, Oct. 12.

Several weeks ago, Towns County Schools Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong shared modernization projects and plans for the school buildings and facilities during a Mountain Movers and Shakers meeting.

During the meeting, Dr. Berrong shared that the school system had recently installed much needed baseball locker rooms using SPLOST funds, along with making other improvements for students, both academic and extracurricular. These improvements included renovations to the tennis court, the purchase of a school system tractor, handicap parking spaces for football, baseball and soccer games, a sign for the middle school gym and auditorium, the purchase of Chrome books and textbook adoptions.



Towns County Schools Superintendent Dr. Darren Berrong and board member Stan Chastain. Photo/Lily Avery

While some of these projects may seem small in stature compared to others, such as the sign for the gym and the Chrome Books, each play a vital and important role in the overall education for the students, extracurricular activities included.

With that being said, one of the upcoming projects that Dr. Berrong shared with the Movers and Shakers during that meeting was to use SPLOST funds to purchase a softball locker room, similar to

the one that was recently purchased for the baseball team. Last week, Dr. Berrong made that purchase.

"I did put in a purchase order today for the softball locker room," said Dr. Berrong. "We did decide to go with a metal building. The final cost for the material, we'll have to put it together ourselves, is around \$13,000."

"We should have those materials within seven to eight weeks. Our plan is to have that up and in place by Christmas

break so that they will have the use of that facility over the summer."

Other smaller upcoming SPLOST projects that Dr. Berrong and the board wish to pursue is the purchase of a divider for the gymnasium, so as to have multiple games going on in the gym at the same time. Dr. Berrong hopes to have this project completed in the coming year.

As for the visit from Superintendent Woods, Dr. Berrong shared his impression of the superintendent, who took his first tour of the campus in three years last week. Overall, according to Dr. Berrong, the visit went well and he looks forward to the next visit from the superintendent in the future.

"We had a visit from our State Schools Superintendent Richard Woods. He came and visited Towns County this week," said Dr. Berrong. "I will say I was impressed with his visit. The thing that impressed me the most, every time I've seen him anywhere before, he usually has an entourage of some sort. But this time it was just him and I don't think I've seen that before,



Towns County Board of Education members Laura Banister and Kilee Smith. Photo/Lily Avery

where he's just come to visit the schools and didn't actually have a media person with him. It's nice to know that he's out

doing those things.

"But, overall, that visit went very well, I thought."

London honored as nursing home 'Volunteer of the Year' in meeting

News Special
Towns County Herald

The Union General Hospital Corporation had excellent representation at the 2017 Georgia Society of Nursing Home Activity Directors Annual Meeting held at Jekyll Island.

Ms. Doreen London of Hiawassee was the proud recipient of the "Volunteer of the Year" award presented to her at the annual meeting.

Doreen has been a volunteer at the Chatuge Regional Nursing Home in Hiawassee for 17-plus years.

As a matter of fact, Doreen retired from her volunteer position last year, but the passion for the residents that runs through her was just too strong and she returned to active duty at the nursing home.

Nominees for this prestigious award were submitted from the various homes, but there would be only one winner – Ms. Doreen London.

"Doreen is believed to be a staff member by many of the residents and family members," according to Activity Director Helen Winn. "She is an amazing woman with a desire to make the home a better place for the residents who reside there. She has a compassion, empathy and dedication like no other."

Doreen has worked an average of 30 hours per week for all of these years. She is there on holidays, in bad weather, and at the blink of an eye when called upon for assistance.

Chatuge Regional Nursing Home would like to congratulate and thank Doreen for her service.

Also in the annual meeting, Mrs. Pam Ouzts, activ-



Doreen London receiving Volunteer of the Year honors at the 2017 Georgia Society of Nursing Home Directors Annual Meeting on Jekyll Island.

ity director of Union General Nursing Home, was one of five nominees for the title of Activity Director of the Year.

The state of Georgia is home to 757 nursing homes, and from those facilities, activity directors must meet specific criteria to be considered

for this prestigious award.

Pam is recognized as one of those who excels at what she does. She is an organizer, excellent event planner, and goes well above and beyond in everything she does to ensure that the residents needs are met and exceeded at her

facility.

She is a mentor to other activity directors and is always ready to lend a helping hand to anyone who needs it. Congratulations Pam on receiving this nomination.



London celebrating the occasion with friends at Chatuge Regional Nursing Home.

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asked for discussion. Ray Cook, who represents Cherokee County, North Carolina, said as chairman of the policy committee, he asked the board for a straw vote on the matter during the summer. The board voted no in the straw poll to hold open meetings.

"I'm not saying that the folks in Cherokee County, North Carolina, don't want open meetings, I'm just saying that no one has ever asked me to ask the board to do that," Cook said. "I don't think anyone in Clay County, North Carolina, has asked for open meetings."

Board member Gene Mason said that the board had met with three separate attorneys, lawyers that have

represented EMCs, and those lawyers each told the board that they would not recommend opening the meetings to the public.

Board member Cory Payne told the board that he voted against open meetings in the straw poll.

"It's not an issue that came up in Clay County," he said. "In the last few weeks I've talked with several members of the board. I would welcome open meetings."

President Cummings called for a vote. Danny Henson, Gene Mason, Jeff Ledford and Bert Rogers voted to not open meetings to the public.

Larry Williams, Ray Cook, Cory Payne and

Roy Perren voted to open the meetings to the public. Cummings, as president, voted to break the tie, and allow for open meetings beginning in November.

Open meetings will require the board to follow the state Sunshine Laws regarding executive sessions.

Following state law would allow the board to go into to executive session for only three reasons – personnel, real estate decisions and litigation matters.

President Cummings said a meeting place for the November open meeting has yet to be determined.

Anderson Financial Services welcomes new staff

Bob Anderson, owner of Anderson Financial Services in Hiawassee is pleased to welcome Anita Fonseca to his team. She will serve as an Investment Representative providing investment advice and client services through Raymond James Financial Services.

Anita has more than 30 years of experience in the industry, most recently with Merrill Lynch in West Palm Beach, FL. "We are fortunate to have someone with Anita's experience and skill level join our practice," said Bob Anderson, branch manager. Anita now resides in Hiawassee,

GA. Anderson Financial Services is located at 10 West Bell Street, 'on the Square' in Hiawassee. Securities are offered through Raymond James Financial Services, Inc., member FINRA/SIPC.

Anderson, who joined Raymond James in 1995, has more than 24 years of experience in the financial services industry. He is a full service advisor specializing primarily on retirement planning and wealth management.

For more information, contact Bob Anderson at (706) 896-7283.



Anita Fonseca