

## Irma...from Page 1A

and farms from access to essential public services. All Georgia citizens need to make the necessary preparations to shelter in place while the storm passes through the state.”

Florida, Coastal Georgia and parts of Coastal South Carolina, North Carolina and Alabama were all declared in a state of emergency prior to Sunday as well, sending thousands of evacuees north toward higher ground.

Of the millions that were advised to leave their homes and move north, many have found refuge in Towns, Union and Fannin counties, as well as all across North Georgia, Southern Tennessee and Western North Carolina.

“Almost all of the hotels are booked up,” said Crystal Wagner with the Towns County Chamber of Commerce. “We have people here from Naples, Florida, from Jacksonville, Florida. We’ve had people come up here from South Georgia.”

“Some of the resorts still have rooms available, but that’s about it.”

LaRaine Montgomery, an architecture professor from the Savannah College of Art and Design, evacuated Savannah early Saturday morning with her daughter, along with thousands of other students and residents leaving the city in fear of the storm.

“I know several people that stayed behind,” said Montgomery. “I couldn’t take that risk, not with all the trees

in downtown Savannah and the possible devastation they could cause if the winds end up being as forceful as predicted.

“And when the colleges start pushes back class dates, that’s when I know things are much more serious than a little tropical storm. After seeing what happened to Houston, I couldn’t in all good conscience take that risk. I’d rather be safe than sorry.”

This is the third time that Montgomery has had to evacuate Savannah, the first being in 1997 for Hurricane Floyd, and then last year for Hurricane Matthew. All three times she found refuge in the North Georgia Mountains.

“As of right now, we’re just hoping for the best,” said Montgomery.

Dropping to a Category 4 classification as of Sunday morning, Hurricane Irma’s projected path zigzagged across the southern tip of Florida, with potential to hit western cities, such as St. Petersburg, rather than Miami.

According to the National Hurricane Center over the weekend, Hurricane Irma’s path was expected to

continue up along the Florida panhandle, into lower Alabama and western Georgia. This does not exclude the eastern coast of Florida and costal Georgia from hurricane force winds, tropical storms and potential storm surges that come along with it.

Compared to the likes of Category 4 Hurricane Opal that caused severe damage along the Gulf Coast and sent storms surges throughout the Southeastern region of the U.S. in 1995, Hurricane Irma is suspected to cause similar damage.

As of press time on Monday, the National Weather Service called for potential tropical storm conditions, with strong winds and flash flood warnings into Wednesday, Sept. 12. In the North Georgia Mountains, Towns and Union counties were under a flash flood watch.

Prior to the storm, many residents were advised to stock up on nonperishable items and make sure to fill their gas tanks, as supply and prices continue to spike from hurricane conditions throughout the Southeast.

On Friday, Sept. 8, the Towns County Sheriff’s Office released a statement assuring

residents that the sheriff’s office is bracing for any storms resulting from Hurricane Irma and urged residents to “obtain basic essentials—food, medicine and gasoline, along with any other needed items prior to the arrival of this storm.”

“The Sheriff’s Office’s Operational Plan includes additional manpower to be on hand to respond as needed to calls for service as the remnants of Hurricane Irma move over the Towns County area.”

According to Towns County EMA Deputy Director Brandon Walls, the primary concern is the possibility of power outages, wind damages and possible flooding.

“We’re keeping the closest tabs we can on weather,” said Walls. “There are several factors with weather that play in that we’re aware of, like water temperature. There’s definitely a potential for severe weather for our area.”

“People just need to prepare like you would for any storm. Stock up on groceries; make sure you have gas, that sort of thing. It’s going to be a lot of wind and a lot of rain. Just be prepared if the power does go out and be patient.”

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Previously, both residential and commercial were being charged the same fee, now it will be based on the property.

Along with the change in temporary meter fees, the City will now have the ability to receive notification when a bill is sent to the wrong address and will be given the correct address to then contact the customer, rather than not have access to a customer’s new mailing address, resulting in unpaid bills.

“For the Master Fee Ordinance, the idea was to pull all of the dollar figures out of the ordinance into a master ordinance,” said Harkins. “This makes it a little easier in terms of finding those rates at a later date.”

This goes hand-in-hand with the latest addition of the Servline service to all Young Harris residents’ water bills, effective last month. Servline will be taking the place of the city’s policy regarding leak coverage.

Prior to Servline, under the City ordinance, all City customers were granted one leak credit per year. With Servline, the service mimics the City ordinance and customers would still be granted one leak credit per year through set dollar amount coverage.

The Servline program is not an opt-in service, but an opt-out. Essentially, all Young



Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby and City Attorney Marvin Harkins. Photo/Lily Avery

Harris residents are signed up for the Servline service automatically. If a resident chooses not to participate, the resident will need to contact Servline to take them off the billing list. All residents received an informational packet regarding the Servline service in their August bill.

Along with the Water/Sewer Ordinance, the Council held the first reading for the City’s updated Franchise Ordinance. With the updated ordinance, franchises will be expected to pay 5 percent as opposed to a 3 percent fee to the city, permitting more revenue to the city for allowing franchises to work within the city limits.

“The cable franchise ordinance that we had was

from 1980,” said Harkins. “It was in desperate need of an update. So, after doing some research on state law and federal law in reference to this, we’re changing the rate structure of what we charge.”

“Now, you can get 5 percent of what the company’s gross revenue is in your service area. The only thing that this ordinance does is that it goes in and makes that change to increase the percentage.”

“We have to send a notice to the Secretary of State’s office and to the provider to notify them of this change, then it will be effective.”

The second reading and final adoption of the Franchise Ordinance will be held during the Tuesday, Oct. 3 meeting.

## Rollins Planetarium presents *Back to the Moon for Good*

Young Harris College’s O. Wayne Rollins Planetarium will kick off an exciting season with “Back to the Moon for Good” at 8 p.m. on the following Friday evenings: Sept. 15 and Sept. 22. Planetarium admission is \$5 for adults, \$3 for students and free with YHC ID. Tickets are available for advance purchase online at [yhc.edu/planetarium](http://yhc.edu/planetarium). Remaining tickets will be available at the door 30 minutes prior to each show.

Narrated by actor Tim Allen, this show follows teams around the world competing for

the Google Lunar XPRIZE. To win, a team must place a robot on the Moon’s surface that explores at least 500 meters and transmits high-definition video and images back to Earth. This global competition is designed to inspire a renewed commitment to space exploration, not by governments or countries—but by the citizens of the world. The show ends with an intriguing glimpse of plausible scenarios for our future on the Moon.

O. Wayne Rollins Planetarium features a state-of-the-art GOTO Chronos Space

Simulator star projector with a full-dome digital projection system, the Sky-Skan Definition, in a 40-foot dome theater with 5.1 surround sound. With comfortable seating for 104, Rollins Planetarium offers public shows and educational opportunities for school groups throughout the year. Rollins Planetarium is located in the Maxwell Center on the YHC campus.

For more information about planetarium, call (706) 379-5195 or visit [yhc.edu/planetarium](http://yhc.edu/planetarium). NT(Sep13.A1)SH

## CLARIFICATION

In the Sept. 6 edition of the Towns County Herald, the newspaper reported that Hiwassee City Hall would be returning the qualifying fees for two candidates who disqualified to run for

Hiwassee City Council in the Nov. 7 General/Special Elections.

Upon review by the legal counsel of the city, which occurred after publication of the Sept. 6 article, the city

determined that, based on the timeline that these individuals disqualified, which occurred after the qualifying period, per state law, they are not entitled to a return of their qualifying fees.