

Deer Season...from Page 1

reflected support of 63 percent, with only 18 percent of hunters in opposition of a single statewide season. And even those in the sample who hunted strictly deer answered 63 percent for, 18 percent against.

The following year, in 2014, the DNR conducted the survey once again.

"And the results stayed more or less the same," said Bowers. "Sixty-one percent, which would be within that margin of error, support."

Under the current regulations, deer hunting occurs in

two zones, or two seasons – the Northern and Southern Zones.

A statewide season would have all deer hunters begin and end the hunting season on the same day.

The main issue with a single statewide season is that "consensus is lacking on the closing date for when a statewide season should close."

In November of last year, DNR emailed an assessment to hunters to obtain a preference for when this closing date should be.

There were four potential

dates proposed: Jan. 1, the first Sunday in January, the second Sunday in January and Jan. 15.

Each date had its benefits and drawbacks, such as the first Sunday allowing everyone to end their hunting on a weekend, but the date would vary and take away an average of 11 days from what Southern Zone hunters were used to hunting.

The two preferences were the second Sunday in January, with 35 percent support, and Jan. 15, with 37

percent support.

"For those who don't know, we set our hunting regulations on two-year cycles," said Bowers. "So, we're getting this input, and then we'll develop our proposals."

Those proposals will be for the 2015-2016 season, and for the 2016-2017 season. So then, in January 2017, we'll be back with these meetings again."

The timeline for developing the regulations is, in January, the DNR gets public input from these statewide meetings,

and in February, DNR staff develop the proposals "first, upon science."

"In March, we take those proposals to the Board of Natural Resources and brief them," said Bowers. "Then at that point, they become official, and we also put out a public notice. We have three public hearings around the state. We also accept public comment on those proposals through email during that time period."

"And then in May, we provide that summary of the comments that we receive

through the public notice to the board, and then the board takes action on the proposed regulations."

In June, the DNR begins to develop its popular guide on the regulations before distributing the guide in July.

The DNR is currently accepting public comment through email, and will be incorporating all comments, including those from the public meetings, into the development of a proposed single statewide hunting season.

Georgia Trend...from Page 1

Under Tallent's leadership, United has grown from a small, one-branch banking operation in the rural Blairsville, to the third largest bank holding company headquartered in Georgia, with \$7.4 billion in assets and 102 banking offices covering four states in the Southeast.

Tallent is a member of the board of directors of Georgia Power, the largest subsidiary of Southern Company, and serves as a Trustee of Young Harris College. For more than a decade, *Georgia Trend* magazine has recognized Tallent as one of the 100 Most Influential Georgians.

Several YHC trustees and alumni, including Tallent, '70, were also honored by the magazine including Chancellor of the Board of Regents for the University System of Georgia Henry "Hank" Huckaby, '62, who was named Georgian of

the Year, and Georgia Speaker of the House David Ralston, '74, were also named to the 100 Most Influential Georgians list.

Also included on the list is Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed, State Attorney General Sam Oens, Secretary of State Brian Kemp, Georgia DOT Commissioner Keith Golden, Georgia Labor Commissioner Mark Butler, Commissioner of Agriculture Gary Black, and Atlanta Falcons' owner Arthur Blank.

The magazine suggests that some of the 100 wield their influence in the limelight; others work behind the scenes. But all of them impact the daily lives of Georgians.

District 51 State Sen. Steve Gooch made the magazine's list of Notable Georgians.

He joins a list of notables that include John Schuerholz, Tyler Perry, Dr. Bonita Jacobs, and Shirley Franklin.

BOE...from Page 1

this year.

"It's coming along," said Taylor. "There's a lot of stuff that's become available in the last six weeks, and there's still lots more I want, and I'll get it. But on the other hand, if I had everything I wanted right now, I'd be so overwhelmed I couldn't do anything. It's good that I've got enough that keeps me busy."

On why he chose to run for a second term on the board of education, Taylor said it has to do with seeing things through and continuity.

"Lots of good policies and good programs and things were in midstream that I was in on when it started, and I wanted to see them continue," said Taylor. "Especially in the midst of a changing superintendent."

And so far, Taylor has enjoyed working with new board members Bradshaw and

Williams.

"They're both very nice, very friendly, very interested in the welfare of the school, really and truly," said Taylor.

Williams' children graduated from Towns County High School, and he has grandchildren currently attending the school system.

"My children are very active at the school, and I have learned a lot about the school system from them," said Williams. "I wanted to run to support them, my grandchildren and to try to be a part of the system's continued success and improvements."

Williams just completed his first board of education work session as a full-fledged member of the board on Monday, Jan. 5.

"I can tell that there will be a lot of work involved but am looking forward to it," said Williams.

As far as expectations of what the job would be like, the newest board members actually had some experience going into their first terms.

"We started off helping with the superintendent search, which was not what we were expecting," said Williams. "But, it was a great experience for us, and it really sped up the learning curve. I found out many things about the system and the job that I probably would have not learned so early on."

Williams, for one, will try to maintain the balance of keeping the children front and center, while concentrating on all of the necessary administrative work that comes with the job.

"It is all about the children, but the children will only benefit from a well-administered school," said Williams. "And that's what we have to

realize – you can't do one without the other."

Support from the community is crucial to the success of the school system, and Williams hopes to retain continued support from the community.

"The school system employees are hard-working and have the best interest of the children in mind," said Williams. "And whether you have children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews or no one in the school, the community will always benefit from a well-run and positive school system."

And Williams is excited to be a part of the evolving, growing environment that is Towns County Schools.

"When the position first came up, I had several folks encourage me to run, but once I got more involved, I realized how much I enjoyed it and how glad I am that I listened to them," said Williams.

Wilkinson...from Page 1

tain our infrastructure so we can continue to be the leader in the Southeast," said Sen. Wilkinson.

Another issue that will likely be on the legislative agenda is the formula for funding education.

"It hasn't been updated in over 30 years, the QBE formula," said Sen. Wilkinson. "At the present time, I'm serving as vice chairman of the Education and Youth Committee, and one thing that – there's a lot of difference between the school system in Gwinnett County, which is bigger than the school system in about eight states, and the school system in Towns County."

Sen. Wilkinson sees one of his responsibilities as making sure that "rural school systems, the small school systems in my district, get treated fairly, and that the funding for education is adequate."

"Another issue that I think will come up early on is the medical cannabis bill, and making that available to treat children who have seizures and other challenges," said Sen. Wilkinson. "The way that bill has been written, it's a very narrow bill. The THC is not in the cannabis, there's no hallucinogenic. It's in liquid form, it's in capsule form. So, I plan to support that. I feel like it has a good opportunity to pass."

The state budget will also be on the radar this year.

"The revenues are increasing some, but the challenge we have, we just last year got back to where we were before the recession," said Sen. Wilkinson. "But the challenge with that is, Georgia is a state that continues to grow. Our population has increased – we've just passed 10 million people. So, we've got more students. We're the eighth largest state in the United States, now."

As the population grows, the number of people who need to be educated also grows, as well as those on Medicaid and the need to cover people under the Affordable Care Act.

"We're having to come up with more money for health care," said Sen. Wilkinson. "So, those are some of the challenges that I think we'll be looking at on the budget."

Adam Penland of Towns County High School, who led the opening prayer that Friday morning, will be attending the Future Farmers of America's Washington Leadership Conference this year, and Sen. Wilkinson has personally sponsored Penland in his quest for the capitol.

Also in the meeting, constitutional scholar and Towns County resident Tim Massey talked U.S. Constitution, and gave a "prospectus on what our constitution is and is not," discussing the changes in the law of the land since 1789.

Taco Bell...from Page 1

from Long View Drive.

And Taco Bell means new jobs for the area.

"We will begin operations in the neighborhood of 35 (employees), and that will level off to about an average, depending on the volume of business, around 25 to 30 – 25 being more the full-time, then five to 10 being part-time,"

said Cox.

Bringing Taco Bell to Hiawassee also means new property taxes, sales taxes and water and sewage utility revenues for the city and county, and by extension, to the residents through the services provided by the city and county.

"It's our understanding that the real estate property

and the improvements will represent an investment of approximately \$1 million," said Mayor Mathis in that city council meeting.

"At least, yes ma'am," said Cox in response.

Hiawassee has a lot to be gained from this venture, not only in additional jobs and revenues through the restaur-

ant's operation within the city and county, but also as something else the area has to offer to tourists and potential future residents.

"Thank you for being so generous in working with us," said Blosser. "I told Bob how much of a pleasure it's been as a builder and developer to work with your group here."

Hiawassee's audit shows city finances are solid

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Hiawassee Mayor Barbara Mathis and City Council met for the first regular city meeting of 2015 on Tuesday, Jan. 6, at City Hall.

Big-ticket items on the agenda were a presentation on the fiscal year ending June 30, 2014, audit to the City Council, and the 2015 Rules of Conduct for Hiawassee Council and Committees meetings.

"Total assets were up mainly because of increases in capital assets due to the capital projects in the water fund and the water treatment plant fund," according to the audit report. "Correspondingly, accounts payable and notes payable were also up for the same reason. Revenues were up mainly (due) to grants (55.8 percent of total increase) and water sales (35.7 percent of total increase)."

And expenses were down 1.06 percent.

The city was "able to cut general government expenses slightly (\$38,796) and also expenses in the business type funds were down (\$20,233)."

The auditor suggested that the city "consider getting into background checks as a source of revenue for the general government," and said, "the city needs to continue to be vigilant in raising water rates when needed and cutting expenses where possible."

Furthermore, the audit report noted that the city has failed to make timely adjustments to its financial statements for 2014 – a finding that has been found for the past



couple of years, albeit it is the only finding by the auditor for this report.

"Adjusting and reclassification entries should be made timely so that financial information can be current and used to make management decisions," according to the report. "This mainly deals with capitalization of fixed assets, recording revenues and expenditures for hotel/motel taxes, and other adjustments timely."

The auditor stated, "the finding above can be corrected next year. The city must work with the CPA firm doing the bookwork to make sure that there is a faster turnaround and that entries are made on a more timely basis."

City Manager Rick Stancil said that the city plans to meet with its CPAs at least quarterly to ensure that this finding is removed by the next audit report.

"We'll have to really work aggressively to get rid of that, because I'm kind of committed to the council and to the mayor that next year, that'll come off," said Stancil.

If he were to assign a letter grade to the audit, Stancil said "it's probably a B," although "it could be viewed as a C."

"But looking back, it's good," said Stancil. "It's also good because it sends a message that things are improving."

Stancil points out that tax revenue is up, especially sales taxes, which is dependent upon tourists and visitors spending money within the community.

"Hotel/motel is up, LOST is up, SPLOST is up – those are all signs, because in the past two to three years, that hasn't been the case," said Stancil. "The concern I have, which is also what some people

look at as a benefit, is a lot of that audit is based on us having received over a \$500,000 in that time period in free money from the TVA and from Georgia I."

"That's not going to be there next year, not in those amounts. So, we've got to think through that as we do our mid-year adjustment on our budgets, and see how that plays out."

Also in the meeting, the 2015 Rules of Conduct for Hiawassee Council and Committees meetings were addressed.

The revised rules are meant to clarify certain aspects of public comment, such as how long each person can speak during these meetings.

City council took it upon itself to revise these rules after confusion broke out in the Dec. 2, 2014, city council meeting concerning the proper procedure for speaking during the public comment portion of the meeting.

One particular revision, which had been included at the request of certain councilmembers, received a second look that Tuesday.

"No presentation on the same topic shall be made more than once every six months," read Joan Crothers from the proposed 2015 rules, and she made a motion to remove that sentence.

The council as a whole voted to amend the proposed rules to exclude that sentence, and then the council voted to adopt the amended rules thereafter.

Looking ahead, there may be some discussion at the next regular city meeting in February regarding Sunday beer and wine sales, according to Stancil.

Snakes...from Page 1

when bitten by, for example, a timber rattlesnake.

"The main thing to know, and this is what I try to impart because it's really not taught everywhere, and that is that this thing is going to drop your blood pressure out, so you don't want to transport a person in a car in a sitting position," said Harper.

"They need to be laying down, their feet elevated, turned to the side, because they're probably going to vomit."

"And a person that's unconscious, you don't want them inhaling their own vomit. It's a huge risk. The big thing is to make sure you're perfusing their brain."

Perfusing means to get blood into a certain area of the body – in this instance, the brain.

"You have to think of it in terms of, kind of like a gunshot, where you bleed out and you drop your blood pressure, so you lay that person down so they can get blood flowing to their brain," said Harper. "With a timber rattlesnake, it's a different mechanism, same effect. Your blood vessels dilate out, your pressure drops out, and you stop perfusing your brain. So, the best way to transport a person is what we call the recovery position."

The recovery position has a person lying on his or her side, mouth pointed downward so fluids can escape the airway, with the chin up to keep the throat open and arms and legs locked to help stabilize the position of the bite victim.

"That's the way to treat Timber rattlesnake bite patients," said Harper. "That's the way to keep them alive between the bite location and the hospital."

For EMS, they're going to start IVs, they're going to get you IV fluids, they're going to give you oxygen, and they're going to treat for shock."

The driving force behind Harper's eventual expertise was a curiosity that stemmed from childhood and branched out in his medical career.

"When I became a paramedic, I had been in the military, I had gone to college, and then I ended up in EMS," said Harper. "And I just happened to notice that not a lot of people really knew a lot about snakebites, so I just sort of pursued it on my own, just started teaching classes, because that vacuum was there. I read every book I could get my hands on, but I had been interested in snakes since I was a little boy. Not to the degree that I know about it now."

Towns County Fire and Rescue Division Chief Doug Mills said that Harper's class received "rave reviews" following its conclusion that Tuesday night.

"These can happen out in the wilderness," said Mills of snakebites. "Our responders have to know quickly what to do."

Towns County Fire and Rescue, EMS, Georgia DNR Game Warden Brandon Walls, representatives of the Boy Scouts of America and many citizens attended the class.

And Mills believes that the county is safer after the class.

"There were probably 56 people in attendance," said Mills. "So, there are 56 folks that have that knowledge of how to appropriately treat snakebite victims and people in profound shock, and use tourniquets in the right way that they use them now."

Union General welcomes New Year's first baby

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Welcome to the world, Katilyn Faith Bays.

Katilyn, born at 7:57 a.m. on Monday, Jan. 5, at Union General Hospital to proud parents David and Lisa Bays, was the first baby of 2015.

Delivered by Dr. Kevin Davis, Katilyn weighed in at a healthy 7 pounds, 8 ounces, and 9 inches long. Katilyn is just the latest edition to the Bays family.

David and Lisa's first child, Summer, was born exactly one year to the day before Katilyn's arrival.

Summer and Katilyn sharing a birthday seems most fateful, considering that Summer was born two months early, at 2 pounds, 13 ounces, due at the time to Lisa's condition of preeclampsia.

"It's a lot harder with two than just one, because she's jealous," said Lisa of Summer, although that's to be expected when a new child comes on the scene.



Katilyn Faith Bays

Katilyn's middle name, Faith, was chosen to match the family's strong beliefs. There was some concern prior to Katilyn's birth because of Lisa's difficulties with Summer.

"Just our faith in God," said David. "We give him all the glory for it, and it's kind of like to honor Him, because it's through faith that she didn't go early. It was full term, healthy. It was through prayer that that happened, so that's why I picked it."

Lisa's parents, Dewayne and Sandy Carringer, have lived in Union County for a couple of years now, and David and Lisa were married in Blairsville, so the couple has strong roots to the county.

The grandparents are thrilled about the arrival of their newest grandbaby, as is Shawn Carringer, Summer and Katilyn's uncle, who was also on hand to cheer the new baby into the world.

"It's exciting," said Lisa about having the New Year's first baby.

Of course, they were not aware that Katilyn would be holding this honor. They just showed up when the time was right.

"They didn't know that they were going to be the first one until they got here that morning," said Tina Hayes, who is the OB director at Union General Hospital.

Hayes, who has worked at Union General for four years, but has been doing labor and delivery for about 13 years, has seen quite a few firsts at the hospital.

"It kind of sets the tone for the year as to what's to come," said Hayes. "It's the whole New Year, new opportunity, a new beginning."

And each year, the labor and delivery staff look forward to the first birth in the county.

"It's always a race at the beginning of the year to see who's going to get the first baby," said Hayes. "Between the docs, too, it's like, okay, who's going to get the first baby to deliver?"

But the competition is always had in good fun, even if the parents, as in Lisa and David's case, have no idea that it might take many days into the New Year to finish that race.

"Who's going to go first?" said Hayes. "There was nobody else in labor when she came in, so she was the only one. And then, we got another labor patient later in the day. But most of the time, you'll have a couple that are in labor at the same time, and they're kind of joking, waiting to see who's going to do it first. It's fun. They enjoy it."