

Bradshaw...from Page 1A

meeting and led the Pledge of Allegiance at the beginning, shared with everyone that two city water employees picked up 12 bags of trash recently along Main Street, Bell Street and Bell Creek. She looks forward to making it a regular occurrence.

Also in attendance for the meeting was J.C. Berrong, who has spearheaded the Clean Sweep effort in years past.

Bradshaw was excited to welcome Candace Lee in the meeting. Lee is president of the Towns County Chamber of Commerce and had some great news to share about the 2018 Toyota Bassmaster Angler of the Year Championship that took over Lake Chatuge last September.

"They call it tournament week - when they come, they're here for a week, the planners, the organizers," said Lee. "And of course, the fishermen, and the pros, come in later in the week."

"When I first met with the commissioner about securing this event and putting in a proposal, his first question to me, and it was rightly so, was, 'what's the return on investment?' What are we going to get back out of this?"

"If we support this, if we give it hotel/motel (tax) dollars, what are we going to get back out of this? And the information Bassmaster had provided to us said we should expect \$1.5 million to \$2 million return on investment."

In fact, that number ended up being closer to \$2.1 million thanks to an influx of more than 10,000 visitors taking advantage of local businesses for transportation, lodging, food and beverage, recreation, retail and more, dwarfing the \$60,000 investment of local hotel/motel tax dollars required to bring the tournament here.

The event proved an invaluable advertising tool as well, as the tournament on Lake Chatuge garnered nearly 800,000 unique page visits at the Bassmaster website.

Also in the meeting, Bradshaw read a resolution to adopt the Towns County Multijurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan Update as approved by the state and federal Emergency Management Agencies.

He welcomed Towns County EMA Director Rickey Mathis to say a few words about the adopted plan update.

"This plan is not a template or cookie cut plan by no means, this plan is specifically designed for Towns County," said Mathis. "What it does, it identifies our hazards and our risks in our county, whether



Chamber President Candace Lee delivered some good economic news in the Jan. 15 commission meeting.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

they're manmade or whether they're natural.

"We went through and we prioritized which of those hazards that we felt like was most likely to happen in this area. And we had about 30 people on this from the community, both professionals and people from the public, that were able to give input on this plan."

"I'm very pleased with this plan. It's got a lot of good information in it. The plan has already been approved by FEMA, and as soon as we adopt the resolution tonight, it will be finalized."

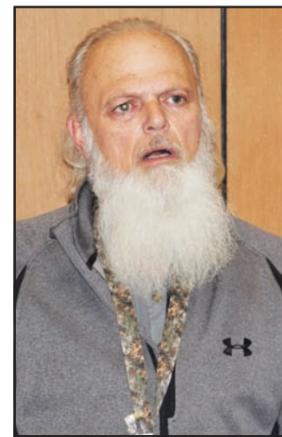
Next up, said Mathis, is the local Emergency Operation Plan.

"We've identified the hazards, now how are we going to respond to them?" said Mathis. "What are we going to have as our resources? What plans do we have now that can actually take care of those things that we need to improve on? What kinds of equipment do we need?"

"Those type of things are all coming so we'll be prepared for the winter storm, the hurricane, the tornado, the wildfire, the drought, the active shooter - it goes on and on and on. I never knew we could have so many disasters until here recently."

Mathis also advised people to prepare themselves and their families for potential disasters.

"Don't rely on your county's public safety, your law enforcement, your fire departments, your ambulance services to provide services for you because, in the event of these disasters that we're talking about, our resources are going to be exhausted very quickly," said Mathis. "And it's not only Towns County, it's any



EMA Director Rickey Mathis spoke in the Jan. 15 commission meeting on the extensive work his office has done on hazard mitigation planning for the county.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

county in the state of Georgia or any county in the United States."

Bradshaw pointed out that adopting the plan update opens the county up for potential hazard mitigation funds down the road that may not have been available otherwise.

In his Commissioner's Report, Bradshaw informed everyone that the county finances are still in great shape.

"We still have our money in savings, \$3.1 million," said Bradshaw. "It's early in the year, but everything's going as it's supposed to, everything's going good."

Moving on, he discussed the upcoming alcohol ordinance that will accommodate liquor by the drink sales in county restaurants.

The ordinance stems from a ballot initiative that passed with plenty of support during the Nov. 6, 2018, General Election.

Bradshaw said that a rough draft of the ordinance had been drawn up, but that he still needed to go over it with the county attorney.

He is expected to schedule a special called meeting soon to hold a first reading of the ordinance in hopes of having the second reading and subsequent adoption of the ordinance in the February meeting.

"I also wanted to mention ... we started two months ago working very closely with the road department, and so far, we have been very fortunate not to have ice or snow to amount to anything," said Bradshaw.

"But I am in contact with them, we are prepared, and we have everything ready to go just in case we have a snow event or ice event, which, knock on wood, we probably will before it's over."

EMC...from Page 1A

and the board approved the recommendation in its first regular meeting of the year on Jan. 14.

As previously reported, the budgeted amount for the 2018 Annual Meeting was \$114,100, though the actual cost of the meeting came in under budget at \$99,440.

The 2019 Annual Meeting will take place when workers are already there, and they will be available to help because the office will be closed for the second half of the workday, allowing the EMC to cut down on overtime hours typically accrued during Annual Meetings.

Coupled with other cost-cutting measures like in-house advertising and fewer door prizes, the venue and date changes are likely to result in a savings of about 20 percent, or \$20,000, to the membership this year.

The Annual Meeting serves as a vehicle for the election of new EMC board

members, and it also gives the membership a chance to hear directly from EMC leadership, though members are free to attend any of the regular monthly board meetings if they wish to speak with directors.

Also in the January board meeting, EMC General Manager Jeremy Nelms reported that the co-op's rate consultant had recently completed an updated cost of service study.

Currently, the fixed charge portion of each residential customer's bill, aka the customer charge, is right at \$21.37.

Based on the updated cost of service study, Nelms said that the fixed charge portion of each customer's bill should actually be in the \$38 to \$40 a month range.

Now, it's important to point out that adjusting the customer charge upward - most likely in small increments over time - would likely result in a corresponding rate decrease in the cost of electricity per

kilowatt-hour, according to Nelms.

Such revenue neutral rate adjustments would help the membership to better maintain the fixed costs associated with running a local power company by allowing the EMC to become less dependent on power sales, which have steadily declined in recent years due to energy efficient technologies, according to Nelms.

These fixed costs include things like power poles, powerlines, computers and software, company trucks and other equipment, etc., all of which ensure that the lights and gadgets stay on regardless of how much energy is used by those connected to the grid.

The board took no action on the updated cost of service study in the January meeting, though Nelms did say that, should directors choose not to implement any rate adjustments in the near future, the EMC could expect an erosion of net income "starting not this fiscal year, but certainly the next."

Moving forward, Nelms said he would be inviting the EMC's rate consultant to speak with the board prior to any staff recommendations on revenue-neutral rate adjustments.

In other news, Nelms said that he and other EMC staff members had recently visited with House Speaker David Ralston and State Sen. Steve Gooch in Atlanta to discuss a piece of broadband legislation pre-filed by Sen. Gooch for the 2019 Legislative Session.

The bill, known as Senate Bill 2, "would authorize Electric Membership Corporations to deploy broadband services throughout Georgia," according to a Senate press release.

As an industry leader in rural broadband, BRMEMC is ahead of the curve and currently working to grow its already established fiber optic offerings.

However, should Sen. Gooch's bill pass, it would provide the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC with expanded access to alternative funding mechanisms like grants and low interest loans to quicken the pace of that growth.

Taylor...from Page 1A

110. So, I'd say that's a pretty good increase in the last couple of years. I'm proud of that accomplishment."

Former Historical Society president Terri Lynne Marshall, who served in the society's top role from 2003 to 2012, passed out copies of her resume and spoke about her concern for the Oral History Project. Marshall had been nominated to run for president.

"I love history, I have my whole life," said Tyler Osborn, son of local historian Daren "Bear" Osborn. "I want to see this organization come together, and that's why I'm running for secretary."

While the votes were being counted, Jerry Taylor began his presentation with an anecdote about Hog Creek.

Long story short, Hog Creek is actually where hogs gathered back in the day.

In the old days, people had fences around their yards, their houses, around cemeteries, and so on. But unlike today,

those fences were to keep animals out.

"You fenced in your stuff," said Taylor. "The animals roamed around and foraged the best they could. Thus, it was on Hog Creek - that's where the hogs hung out."

"And there's not only Hog Creek over there where the hogs were, there's Sheep Rock where the sheep hung out. Then I discovered there was lots of Cherokee history connected with our present-day names."

"Every day, we unknowingly pay tribute to the Cherokee people who once resided in these beloved mountains, which were to be theirs as long as the grass grows and the water flows to the sea."

The name "Hiawasse" derives from the Cherokee word Ayuhwasi, which was the native Indian word for savannah or grassland.

The name "Hightower" derives from the Cherokee word Etowah, which was adopted

from the Muscogee (Creek) word Italwa, which means, roughly, town or tribe.

And the name "Brasstown" derived from confusion between the Cherokee words Itse'ye, meaning "place of fresh green," and Ontsayi, meaning brass.

The Cherokee referred to Brasstown Bald as Enotah, which means "bald place crowned in laurel."

Taylor artfully described the hidden beginnings of several other names throughout his presentation, interspersed with the backgrounds of people and families around the Towns County area.

When Taylor finished his presentation, the results of the election were revealed as follows:

Green was re-elected president; Jerry Taylor was elected Vice President; Frances Shook and Mary Ann Miller would remain Treasurer and Membership Secretary, respectively; and Tyler Osborn was elected Secretary.

BOE...from Page 1A

the schools are an education facility and do not engage in mental health treatment.

However, the schools can work with students who might have mental health issues and do provide resources for parents or guardians with children who may need mental health services.

Continuing, Woods commended the school administration for the recent School Climate ratings awarded to Towns County Schools.

"School climate refers to the quality and character of school life," according to schoolclimate.org. "School climate is based on patterns of students', parents' and school personnel's experience of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures."

Also in the meeting, the board approved the resignation of John Cornett as head coach of the Towns County Varsity Football Team as of Jan 11.

The coaching job has been posted to Teach Georgia, and Berrong said that more than 40 people outside the school system have already expressed interest in the position.

"We will do whatever we can do to get a football coach hired before the end of the school year," he said.

Elementary School Principal Dr. Sandy Page reported that there are now 421 students enrolled in the

elementary school, an increase of seven students since the school year began in August.

And Mr. Evan Lee, a storyteller from the Georgia Arts Council, will spend three days with kindergarten through fifth grades. This was made possible through a federal Title I Grant, said Page.

Middle School Principal Erica Chastain opened her report with a welcome to new School Board Member Tamie Bradley.

"Enrollment at this time is 235," said Chastain. Report cards for the first half of the school year went out on Jan. 4.

"I want to say congratulations to eighth-graders Lane Rouse for placing second and Dhriti Ratei for placing third in the middle level Future Business Leaders of America spelling competition.

"Also, our middle school FBLA Program is doing great and received an award for the largest chapter membership for our region, which is Region 15."

High School Principal Dr. Connie Hobbs reported that "high school enrollment is at 294 students," six more than at the start of the year.

She also welcomed Mrs. Bradley to the Board.

Hobbs congratulated Rachel Surles, ninth-grade literature teacher, who had 100 percent of her first semester students pass the End of Course testing.

Christa Hauser, an

American Literature teacher, had 95 percent of her class pass the EOC testing, and Ken Camp, a biology teacher, had 96 percent of his class pass EOC testing.

"Homecoming was this last week," said Hobbs. "We had Kenzee Denton crowned Homecoming Princess and Taylor Cornett crowned as Queen."

Exxon-Mobile once more donated \$1,000 to Towns County High School. Hobbs said they have never disclosed what their guidelines or criteria are for the donation, but she's not complaining.

Future Health Professionals, formerly the Health Occupations Students of America, will hold their blood drive on Jan. 30 on campus.

FBLA competed at the Region Leadership Conference and TCHS received the largest high school membership award for the region. Twenty-four of 25 students placed in the Top 10 and 14 will advance to the State Leadership Conference in Atlanta in March.

Hobbs said the second semester is getting busy with planning for the upcoming graduation, and she is encouraging all seniors to stay on top of their scholarship applications.

Berrong said the baseball field was in great shape for the upcoming season and will be getting a new backstop.

And the school is looking at replacing all the seating in the big gym and, if so, the old seating may be recycled to the football bleachers.

The Sock Hops are back at the Peacock Performing Arts Center

Get your tickets while you still can for the Sock Hops at the Peacock Performing Arts Center in Hayesville, NC. The band will kick off the 2019 Mainstage Concert Series on Saturday, February 2 at 7 p.m.

Make new memories with hits from the past, dancing to the classics from the '50s, '60s, and '70s. The performance features four-part harmonies and the group has toured across the region for over 20 years headlining concerts, festivals, and private events.

The Peacock Performing Arts Center offers reserved seating for all plays, concerts and special events. Tickets may be purchased at the theatre Monday-Friday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., by phone at 828-389-2787, or online at thepeacocknc.org. The theatre



Members: Scott Cruce, Courtney Oliver, Ward Hiss & Jim Mitchell is located at 301 Church Street in Hayesville, NC.

The concert will be performed for one night only and is a family friendly show for all ages. Adult tickets are \$25,

student tickets are \$20, and tickets for children are \$15.

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FBLA...from Page 1A

with the most "wins" at region competition, and it was accepted by Advisers Melissa McConnell and Ruth Taylor, along with Officers Chase Rogers, Emily Williams, Chase Crawford, Danny Reagan and Corrina Luckenbach.

Congratulations to all competitors who gave generously of their time and dedicated themselves to representing the local FBLA chapter with excellence, allowing for a true reflection of academic preparation and effort.

The FBLA State Leadership Conference and Competitions will be held March 22 through March 24 in Atlanta.

Five additional competitors from TCHS FBLA will be joining these regional winners to compete in "straight-to-state events" at state conference.



TCHS senior Kendall Floyd with his FBLA Chapter Award.