

Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

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Wednesday, June 23, 2010

Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thur: Storms	88 66
Fri: Storms	85 64
Sat: Storms	87 66
Sun: Clouds	90 66
Mon: Clouds	87 66
Tue: Storms	87 65
Wed: Storms	84 64



Upstream Elevation Predicted 6/23/10	
Lake Chatuge	1925.20
Lake Nottely	1776.30
Blue Ridge	1686.20

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Early Voting

Early voting continues this week for the July 20 Primary.

Almost 150 locals have cast ballots during the early voting process.

To cast early ballots, go to the Board of Elections and Registration at 91 Berrong St. in Hiawassee, better known as the Old Rock Jail.

Opportunities to cast ballots are plentiful – Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. On Tuesdays, ballots can be cast from 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Towns County voters also can cast ballots on Saturday, from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

The last opportunity to vote on Saturday prior to the Primary is July 17, from 9 a.m. to noon.

The voting office will close at noon on Friday, July 2, and remain closed on Saturday, July 3 and Monday, July 5, in celebration of the Fourth of July holiday.

Nursing Home needs help

Chatuge Regional Nursing Home would like to create a memory garden in front of the building for the residents and their families. This is a great opportunity to honor your loved one who is or may have been a resident of the nursing home. The nursing home needs perennial flowers for the project. Anyone who would like to donate a flower, please bring it to the nursing home.

Food Pantry

The Towns County Food Pantry will hold its free food distribution on Tuesday, June 22. The distribution will be held at the Towns County Food Pantry on Jack Dayton Circle from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. All that are in need of food assistance are encouraged to attend. If you are unable to pick up your food, please contact the Pantry at (706) 896-4783 prior to distribution day so that arrangements can be made to deliver your food. Clients' personal inquiries are kept confidential.

Comp Plan upgrade move forward

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
cduncan.tch@windstream.net

Towns County's Comprehensive Plan update took another leap forward following Thursday's community meeting at the Towns County Courthouse.

Adam Hazell, planning director for the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission, compiled the information from more than 100 surveys completed by Towns County residents in March.

"These surveys are important," Hazell said. "They help us to know what you want over the next 20 years in Towns County. They help us get from Point A to Point B."

The Georgia Planning Act of 1989 requires that cities and counties prepare a comprehensive plan. An

update to that plan is required every five years. The underlying concept of the local comprehensive planning requirements is the belief that communities can achieve their goals by addressing a comprehensive range of issues in a local plan, including demographics, economic development, natural and historic resources, housing, community facilities, and land use.

In Towns County, residents want to preserve the mountains, lakes and scenic beauty of the county. They believe developed areas of the county need "curb appeal." They also want the best community available to visit, live, work and raise a family.

A strategic and sustainable economic development that respects community values is essential, according to results from resi-



GMRC Planner Adam Hazell talks comprehensive plan at the courthouse. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

dents' surveys. At the same time, residents understand that there is a need for more affordable housing, infrastructure upgrades and a definite need to upgrade public safety to 21st century levels.

"This survey tells us that Towns County residents want to build on the tradition of hospitality and

fostering a climate of mutual respect among residents and visitors," Hazell said. "Tonight, we've taken another step forward toward developing the preliminary action plan for Towns County."

"Where do we go from here?" Hazell asked. "We weigh the pluses and minuses. Your Comprehensive Plan is a snapshot of the future. It's the roadmap to the

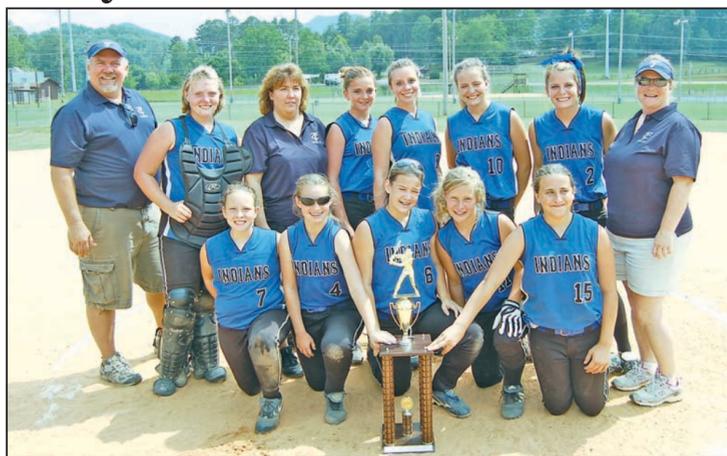
next 20 years.

"At the same time, it's a living and breathing document," Hazell said. "A document that can be amended as time passes; a plan that must be updated every five years."

Why is a Comprehensive Plan needed?

See Comp Plan, page 3A

Lady Indians claim District title



The Towns County Lady Indians 14 and Under Fast Pitch softball team earned a District Title on Saturday in Hiawassee. The Ladies now advance to the state tournament in Appling County July 8. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
cduncan.tch@windstream.net

The Towns County Lady Indians' 14-and-under Fast Pitch Softball team did the unexpected on Saturday, clinching a bid in the state tournament scheduled next

month in Appling County.

The Lady Indians defeated Banks County in a best of three series to earn the right to play in the state fast pitch tournament July 8-10. The Lady Indians lost Game One 10-8, but came back and won the next two

games by scores of 13-7 and 24-2 to earn their state playoff berth.

The advancement to the state tournament was not quite expected and the Lady Indians have a huge

See State Bound, page 3A

BOE cuts bottom line by more than \$1 million

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
cduncan.tch@windstream.net

The Towns County Board of Education has voted to slash more than \$1 million from the tentative 2010-11 Fiscal Budget for Towns County Schools.

The tentative budget being advertised for 2010-11 comes in at \$10.66 million or \$1.024 million less than last year. The Towns County Board of Education approved the tentative budget last week.

Details of the cuts include eliminating six teaching positions, which Towns County Schools Superintendent Dr. Richard Behrens said came via attrition.

"We had six open teaching positions that were not filled," Dr. Behrens said. "No one was let go, this is all through attrition."

Last year's budget for



Dr. Richard Behrens

the school system was \$11.68 million.

The school system also has included eight teacher furlough days mandated by the state. Those days include two student day offs, making the school year 178 days, rather than the traditional 180 school days.

Teacher contracts are a combination of 190 days,

See BOE, page 3A

DOT honors Towns heroes

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
cduncan.tch@windstream.net

Two Towns County men have been honored for their act of heroism during the snow and ice storms in March.

William Burrell and Jody Norton, both of Hiawassee, and both members of the Georgia Department of Transportation highway operations in Towns County, were honored during Georgia DOT's District 1 Employee Appreciation Day for their extraordinary efforts during one of this year's snow and ice storms.

Both men were recently recognized by GDOT Commissioner Vance C.

See Heroes, page 3A



District 1 Engineer Todd McDuffie, left, and GDOT Commissioner Vance C. far right honor Towns County's own William Burrell and Jody Norton for an act of heroism. The two men saved a Towns County lady from a harrowing situation during a winter storm in March. Both men say they were just doing their job. Photo/Department of Transportation

Kendall urged to put SPLOST on Nov. ballot

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
cduncan.tch@windstream.net

Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall is being urged to pursue a Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax.

During the June County Commission Meeting last week, Chris Swett of the Towns County Homeowners Association said that the association supported Commissioner Kendall pursuing a SPLOST referendum.

"The Towns County Homeowners Association is in support of (Kendall's) plan to fund a number of public works projects and capital equipment acquisitions through implementation of a Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax," Swett said. "We agree that there is an urgent need to upgrade our sewerage system to support new commercial businesses, to improve and expand recreation facilities, repair county roads, procure new emergency service vehicles, expand the libraries, replace the aging Senior Center and repair other county infrastructure."

"It is the opinion of the TCHA Board that a SPLOST is the fairest way to fund these very necessary projects, as it will spread the cost not only among local residents, but those visitors who also make use of this infrastructure and these services," Swett said. "We are



Commissioner Bill Kendall

unanimous in our support of this initiative and urge you to make it your top priority to put this plan before the voters in November this year."

Kendall said that his meeting early this year with local municipalities allows him to continue to move forward with a SPLOST objective, with a decision due no later than Aug. 10 to get the referendum on a November General Election ballot.

"I think we can get that done before August," he said. "It is still my motivation to let the people decide if this is what we want to do."

If placed on the ballot

See SPLOST Vote, page 5A

TOWNS COUNTY HERALD



City to hold July budget hearing

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
cduncan.tch@windstream.net

Mayor Barbara Mathis has announced a public hearing to discuss the city's 2009-10 amended budget and the proposed 2010-2011 Fiscal Budget for the city.

"On July 6, the public hearing on the end of year budget and the proposed budget for next year will be held at 1 p.m. at City Hall," Mayor Mathis said.

That's the date that City Manager Rick Stencil will make his budget presentation and persons wishing to comment on the proposed budget will have a chance to speak, Mayor Mathis said.

Persons wishing to speak



Mayor Barbara Mathis

about the budget should request to be placed on the city's July 6 agenda. Just contact City Manager Stencil prior to the meeting, Mayor Mathis said.

During the public hearing, Mayor Mathis and City Manager Stencil will make a report that will be presented to the City Council at the regular city meeting on July 6. That meeting is scheduled for 4 p.m. at City Hall, Mayor Mathis said.

Also, the proposed 2010-2011 Fiscal Budget for the city will be submitted to the Hiawassee City Council for consideration at the regular monthly meeting on July 6.

A copy of the proposed budgets is available for viewing by the public at City Hall or will be mailed upon request to interested persons by asking the City Manager in writing at 229 Chatuge Way, Hiawassee, GA 30546, or call (706) 896-2202.