

Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thur: Storms	87 57
Fri: Storms	86 55
Sat: Sunny	87 56
Sun: Sunny	87 55
Mon: Sunny	88 55
Tue: Cloudy	86 57
Wed: Sunny	83 55



Upstream Elevation Predicted 9/15/10	
Lake Chatuge	1921.40
Lake Nottely	1768.60
Blue Ridge	1639.20

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Chamber Chronicles

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Public Hearing

The Hiwassee City Council has scheduled a public hearing at Hiwassee City Hall for 4 p.m. on Oct. 5 to set the city's 2010 millage rate.

Mayor Barbara Mathis said that the City Council will set the city's millage rate at its meeting scheduled for 4 p.m. During the public hearing, City Manager Rick Stancil will present the 2010 Tax Digest and the City's Five Year History of Levy to Mayor Mathis and the Council.

Mayor Mathis has proposed that the 2010 Millage Rate for the City of Hiwassee remain the same as the 2009 Levy of 2.270.

The city's Tax Digest for real and personal property is down more than \$1 million from 2009, city tax records show. The Digest for motor vehicles in the city shows that number is off by more than \$270,000.

If approved, it would be the eighth consecutive year that the City of Hiwassee millage rate has remained

the same or has been decreased. The last time the city rolled back the millage rate was 2007, when the mayor and council shaved .043 mills off the rate.

"During these difficult economic times, now is not the time for the millage rate to increase," Mayor Mathis said.

The proposed amount of total taxes levied for 2010 is down \$4,875 from a year ago, and comes in at \$211,659, city records show.

Akins survives first meeting as GM

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
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Matthew Akins has known for quite some time that he had some big shoes to fill when General Manager Joe Satterfield retired. He winced when he realized that Blue Ridge Mountain Electric Membership Cooperation was faced with a "necessary" rate increase.

He stood tall in the saddle on Saturday at Anderson Music Hall as BRMEMC held its annual meeting before a quorum of the Co-op's 43,260 members.

"I thought the meeting went very well; I was pleased," Akins said.

Akins was hit with all kinds of questions, from how expensive it would be to move a power line to prevent bird droppings on a

family vehicle, to why the EMC raised its rates and increased its customer charge.

Some even asked what the customer charge consisted of and why it is necessary.

He answered all the questions. Some might not have been satisfied with the answers, but, Akins stuck to his guns with a composure that even Joe Satterfield would have been proud of on this day.

Jim Turner told Akins and BRMEMC board members that it was difficult to say good-bye to Satterfield.

"We sure do miss him," he said. "I'm proud of what y'all are doing. I'm happy to pay the additional costs."

Mary Jean Boyette of Hiwassee begged to

See BRMEMC, page 6



Blue Ridge Mountain Electric Membership Corp. General Manager Matthew Akins fields questions during Saturday's annual meeting at Anderson Music Hall. Nearing completion of his first year at the helm, Akins said he understands the cries of foul over the EMC's recent rate hike. Photo/James Reese

Willow tree state's largest

By James Reese
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Some call the weeping willow tree the ultimate shade tree.

In Towns County, it's called the largest tree of its kind in Georgia.

On Monday, Tony Harkins, chief ranger with the Georgia Forestry Commission, and Forester Bo Berry presented Truman Barrett with a certificate for having the largest tree of its specimen in the state of Georgia.

The Young Harris willow, proclaimed a state champion by the Forestry Commission, is believed to have been planted when the nearby home place was built in the 1850s, possibly 30 years before Young Harris College was established in 1886.

The tree is 161 inches in circumference, 52 feet tall, with a ground spread of 52 feet. Its championship score for record purposes is 226, Harkins said.

"This one is impressive to say the least," Harkins said.

Harkins remembers the tree well from his childhood years.

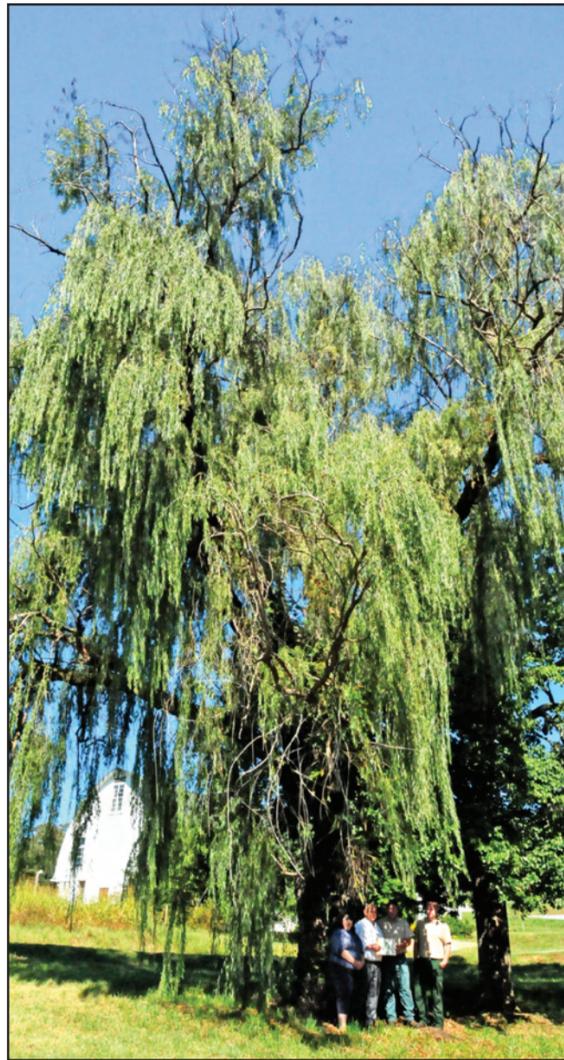
"I was a little kid and our house burned down," he said. "We actually rented this house; I went to first grade in Young Harris. I remember that tree from so many years ago."

"It's a landmark," Barrett said. "I'm 69 years old and ever since I was big enough to travel from here to Blairsville, I'd look at that tree to see if spring was here. It's one of the first trees to turn green in the spring."

"I've been watching that tree for a very long time," Barrett said.

The tree stood during some of the darkest days in American history as the Civil

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Truman Barrett and his daughter Amber accept a certification from the state of Georgia that the willow tree near the Barrett House is officially the largest of its kind in Georgia. Forester Bo Berry, left, and Georgia Forestry Commission Chief Ranger Tony Harkins did the official honors on Monday. Photos/James Reese

Cunningham steps down from Council

Special to Towns County Herald
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Long-time Councilman Howard Cunningham has stepped down from the Hiwassee City Council effective immediately.

"It was time for me to spend more time at home with my family," said the 82-year-old Cunningham, who resigned his Post 5 seat. "My health is still pretty good; I just felt it was time to bring somebody new into the city council."

City Manager Rick Stancil announced last week that the City will hold a special election Nov. 2 to fill Cunningham's unexpired term.

Qualifying begins Sept. 20, through noon, Sept. 22. Qualifying is scheduled during normal business hours 9 a.m. through 5 p.m. at the Board of Election Office, 91 Berrong Street, Hiwassee. The qualifying fee: \$72. The



Howard Cunningham

last day to register to vote in the special election is Oct. 5.

He said that during his eight years in office that he has had the best interests of Hiwassee residents on his mind during ever decision he has voted on.

Of the achievements reached during his tenure on the council, he said that he is particularly proud of the water extension and sewer accomplishments.

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Smith seeks Post 5 seat on Council

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
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A candidate has already tossed a hat in the ring to seek the unexpired term of retired Councilman Howard Cunningham.

Pat Smith, a former County Clerk for Towns County, has announced her candidacy for Cunningham's Post 5 seat on the Hiwassee City Council.

She and her husband Jimmy Smith, reside on 324 Sims Circle. The couple has a son, James Ralph Smith, a vice president executive with Humana Insurance.

She said she still feels the urge to be a public servant.

"I've got a lot of government experience and I like helping people," she said. "I started out as a county clerk in 1965 and then went to work for DFACS for the next 34 years."

Pat Smith learned about government early on after graduating from Towns County High School, becoming county clerk in the Commissioner's Office, under Ray Taylor, with duties of budget, finance and other facets of serving the public.

Later, Pat was employed with the state of Georgia in the Department of Family and Children's Services, where she worked for 34 years until retirement. Her duties included working in finance and various pub-



Pat Smith

lic services.

"I feel like I still have a lot to offer the residents in a public service role," she said.

Pat Smith said the city's greatest needs are infrastructure-related.

"Water and sewer solutions are in big demand," she said.

Another important issue to Pat Smith is encouraging residents to shop and do business in Towns County and Hiwassee during the difficult economic times.

"I really support that," she said.

Pat Smith has been active in church and civic organizations in the years since her retirement.

She is a member of McConnell Memorial Baptist Church, serving in vari-

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TOWNS COUNTY HERALD



New Senior Center for Towns

By Charles Duncan
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Towns County has received a \$500,000 federal grant to build a new senior center, Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall announced last week.

Commissioner Kendall was officially notified last week by Gov. Sonny Perdue that the county has received a commitment of money from the Community Development Block Grant program.

The new senior center will be constructed between the existing Towns County Recreation Gym and Annie Johnson's home off High-



Commissioner Bill Kendall

way 76, Commissioner Kendall said.

The \$500,000 in funds will be utilized to replace the 25-year-old current Senior Center, which is still heavily used by locals as a

Senior Center and Community Center.

"Many groups and organizations needing a meeting space find the facility already reserved and unavailable," Commissioner Kendall said.

A new facility for Senior Citizens also will free up space at the current Senior Center that could be used as another Courthouse Annex.

"The present Courthouse Annex, which was the previous county Health Department, serves the county well by housing the Tax

See Senior Center, page 6

Food Pantry

The Towns County Food Pantry will hold its free food distribution on Tuesday, Sept. 21. 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 assistance are encouraged to attend. If you are unable to pick up your food, please call (706) 896-4783 for more details prior to distribution day. This allows us to make arrangements to deliver food to you. All clients and inquiries are kept confidential.