

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Guarding Justice...

*Guarding Justice,
Guarding Humanity*

Every community, no matter its era or place, relies on trust and justice to hold it together. Societies flourish when people believe they will be treated fairly, that their lives and property are protected, and that wrongs can be righted through just means. Remove that foundation, and the results are plain – mistrust, fear, and sometimes chaos.

Jewish tradition has long understood the central role of justice. Centuries ago, a wise sage taught, “Pray for the welfare of the government, for were it not for the fear it inspires, every man would swallow his neighbor alive.” The message is straightforward. Laws and the institutions that uphold them are not bureaucratic inconveniences, but essential safeguards for peaceful life. They allow individuals and families to build, to trust, and to hope for the future.

Yet, justice is more than rules or enforcement. At its heart, it is about recognizing the inherent value and dignity of every human being. This principle is reflected in Jewish law. The Torah, in Deuteronomy, commands: “You shall appoint judges and officials... in all the settlements that the Lord your G-d is giving you, and they shall govern the people with due justice.” Justice is not a peripheral concern. It is woven into the fabric of communal life, a responsibility shared by all.

Jewish law makes a striking distinction in how different types of cases are handled. In matters involving property – such as a dispute over lost or stolen goods – a person’s confession can be accepted as sufficient evidence. The Talmud, the central text of Jewish law, teaches: “Admission by a litigant is equivalent to a hundred witnesses.” This respects the power of personal responsibility in civil matters.

Yet when it comes to matters of life and death, Jewish law sets an especially high standard. In cases where capital punishment is possible, a confession alone is never sufficient; instead, the Torah requires the testimony of two reliable witnesses before a court can impose the death penalty. This approach does not abolish capital punishment, but it surrounds the process with rigorous safeguards. The intent is not to weaken justice, but to affirm the unique value of every human life. By requiring clear and corroborated evidence, the law seeks to ensure that justice is served with the utmost care, reflecting the belief that life itself is a sacred trust from G-d.

What underlies this distinction? The Torah teaches that our lives are not simply our own possessions. In the opening chapter of Genesis, it is written: “And G-d created man in His image, in the image of G-d He created him.” To be made in the image of G-d is more than a theological statement; it is a call to see each human being as infinitely valuable, worthy of respect and protection. This idea is why the justice system must exercise the greatest caution and care when a life hangs in the balance. While property can be returned or replaced, a life, once taken, cannot.

Being created in the image of G-d carries profound implications. It means that each person possesses the ability to choose, to reflect, and to act with purpose. It also means that we are called to use those gifts wisely: to pursue justice, to show compassion, and to uphold the dignity of others in both public and private life. Even when we cannot control the circumstances we face – whether sickness, disappointment, or the challenges of an ever-changing world – we retain the freedom to choose our response. That freedom is itself a reflection of the Divine.

At a moment in history when the meaning of justice and the value of human life are often debated, these ancient teachings remain urgently relevant. A just society is not built by accident. It is created, day by day, by the choices of individuals who remember that every person is a bearer of the Divine image. When justice is pursued with humility and care, it strengthens the bonds of community and brings us closer to the world that G-d intends.

This calling – to honor the image of G-d in every person, and to let that awareness shape our pursuit of justice – is as vital today as it has ever been. It is a legacy worth upholding, and a responsibility that binds us all.

Yonatan Hambourger is a rabbi and writer dedicated to serving spiritual seekers of all backgrounds on behalf of Chabad of Rural Georgia. You can contact him at y@tasteoftorah.org.

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Towns County Community Calendar

First Monday of each month: School Board... HS/MS Media Center	6:45 pm
Every Tuesday: Storytime for Children... TC Library	10:30 am
First Tuesday of each month: Hiaw. City Council... City Hall YH City Council... YH City Hall	6 pm 6:30 pm
Second Wednesday of each month: Board of Elections... Elections Office	4 pm
Third Monday of each month: Planning Commission... Temporary Courthouse	6 pm
Third Tuesday of each month: Commissioner’s Mtg... Courthouse City of Young Harris Planning Commission... Meeting Room in City Hall TC Water Authority Board Meeting	5:30 pm 5 pm 6 pm

Towns County Herald

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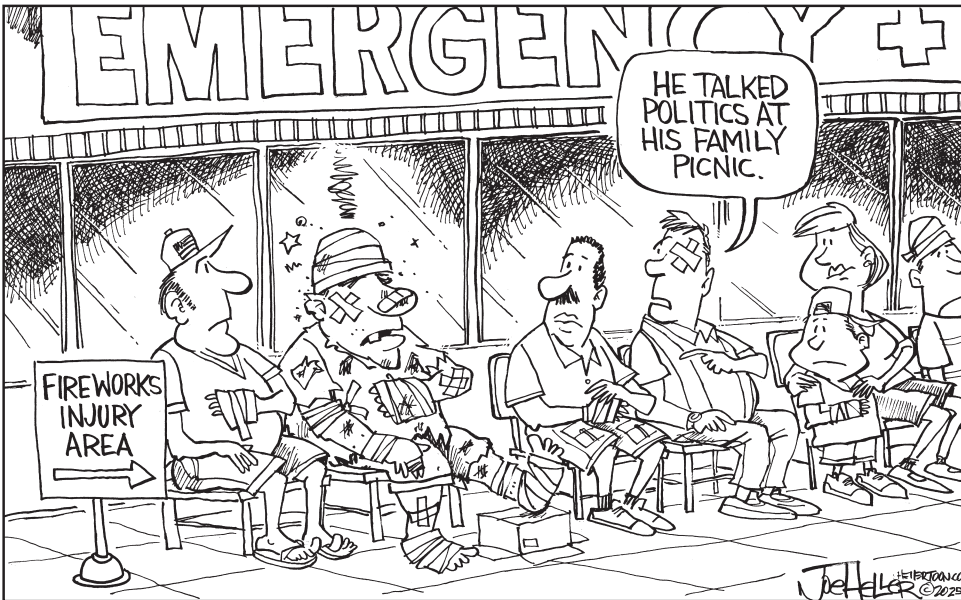
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Yellow Jackets

Yellow jackets will become the most active during the late summer and fall. I’ve received a few calls from people saying that they have encountered some around their homes. I have a few around my own house, so I know they’re out there! Yellow Jackets can look similar to wasps. Wasps are usually unaggressive unless threatened. Yellow jackets have a thicker waist, shorter legs, and wings that press more flatly against the body when resting than wasps.

Wasps’ nests are usually under eaves or beneath porch railings and have hexagonal cells. Yellow jacket nests are usually built in old rodent holes or cavities that have been left behind by a small critter. They can build nests in wall spaces, although this is less common. Yellow jacket nests will die out over the winter and start anew with a new reproducing female each year. This means that yellow jacket nests will be the easiest to eradicate in the spring while the nests are still small. The flipside is that the nests will be harder to find in the spring because they only have a few individuals in them at that time. Nests can grow up to 5000 yellow jackets, and will grow larger in years with a long dry spring.

Solitary yellow jackets can often be seen foraging for food for the colony. Yellow jackets feed on a variety of insects pests. They will also eat meat and like drinking coke. They will also attack bee hives. Yellow jackets are able to discern at a pheromone level which hives are weak. They’ll choose those hives to attack, making them more of opportunistic pests to bees than actual predators. If they are able to get inside past the guards, yellow jackets can take out the entire hive killing bees, eating larvae, eggs, pupae, and honey.

The longer before you start to control a nest the more difficult it becomes because the nests control in size. Pyrethroid insecticides that you can buy at the store will be effective at killing yellow jackets, but only when you make contact with them when you are actively spraying. If you can block the hole that they use as an entrance you may be able to eradicate them this way too. Yellow jackets aren’t diggers, they use holes other critters have made, so they can be trapped inside if there is only one entrance. There are yellow jacket traps that can be effective at controlling them too. Another method of control is to use hot water mixed with dish washing soap and pouring it down the hole. Whenever you are working with yellow jackets the safest time will be at night. They will be less active at nighttime, so your chances of being stung decrease. It is still a good idea to wear protective clothing. If you have a serious yellow jacket problem it is best to call a professional to control them.

If you have any questions about yellow jacket identification or control please call your local Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.



Letters to the Editor

We Deserve Better

Dear Editor,

The email below was sent to the City of Hiawassee Mayor and City Council. To date the only response received was from Amy Barrett but no answers were provided.

It is a shame that the leadership of this government is so inept and ignores the tax-paying citizens. We deserve better.

While I was unable to attend the City of Hiawassee work session on Monday, June 16, due to a prior commitment, I listened to it on Facebook and I have several concerns:

The streaming on Facebook has been a great help to residents that have difficulty attending due to health, transportation, etc. Since the comments on the feed are minimal, perhaps they should be ignored during the meeting but addressed after via direct messaging to the individuals requesting a response. Again, there are not that many comments that would require responses, on average three comments and not all of those require responses.

The request for council increases in pay, raises for the police department, relinquishing control of property tax collections will increase the deficit to the General fund. What is the plan to offset those expenses? There is already a deficit of over \$150,000 just to cover the prior expenses.

The painting of City Hall just shows the lack of communication between the mayor and the council. Why get three bids and propose this without consulting with the council? Thank goodness there are council members who are truly caring of tax-payer money.

The increase in water rates at COLA is a great way to slowly allow for income to be adjusted without hurting many of those in our community on fixed income. This plan is in an existing ordinance passed by the majority of this current council. This increase of less than \$1 to the base rate should not burden anyone. The Capital Projects should be looked at completely separate from the annual increase of COLA.

The proposal for a salary study by the GMRC at a price tag of nearly \$10,000 is absolutely not necessary at this time. The same organization provided a study less than three years ago and adjustments were made. These studies are expensive and are valid for 5-8 years. Since our entire staff has received a COLA increase every year for the last 8 years, the salaries should be well in line. Perhaps this study should be re-done in 5 years for better accuracy and deficiencies.

While an Economic Development director is absolutely

See Ordiales, continued next column

A Wall Of Pebbles

Outside The Box

By: Don Perry
worldoutsidethebox.com

“If the mass of citizens are to rule, it is absolutely necessary that they should have very strong principles of thought. ... if you want to build a wall of pebbles you must have very strong cement.” -G. K. Chesterton

During the long holiday weekend of the 4th, our thoughts turn to all the ways we might use the time away from the regular grind of the working week. For some of us, any holiday is an opportunity to gather with family and friends. For others, holidays create a new grind in the rush to plan and execute all the activities we want to condense into a limited time. Hurry up so we can pack and fight traffic on our way to a place where we can unpack and party down before we pack again, drive home, and unpack.

Some of us gathered our provisions long before the rush to the grocery stores so we can shut the gate and stay home with the barbecue grill, far from the maddening crowd.

A few of us will take a moment to remember the reasons why we celebrate the 4th of July and to consider with gratitude the struggles and sacrifices that allow us the freedoms we still cling to with a tenuous grasp.

Patriotism, it seems, has suffered a long decline in the wake of repeated attacks from certain political quarters, as well as the general ambivalence that accompanies the monetization of all aspects of life to the detriment of spiritual and moral values.

There is disagreement over the celebration of American history, traditions, and values; what those values are or should be, and whether that history and tradition should be framed as a record of exploitation and evil or as a struggle to transcend the flaws of human nature and human institutions.

The detractors of American cultural heritage present an alternative that sounds attractive on the surface. Diversity in nature is the mark of a healthy ecosystem. Equity and inclusion mimic the Christian values of loving your neighbor as yourself and a Creator who shows no impartiality. But where the progressive detractors of things American severely miss the mark is in the promotion of “multiculturalism,” which, combined with open borders, is a recipe for national suicide.

There is a vast difference between the “melting pot” of traditional American values and the “diversity” of the progressive. The American melting pot takes the best ideas from its variety of cultural contributions and forges them into something uniquely American. “Diversity” posits that all cultures are equal and assumes that the classical liberalism of western civilizations is no better than traditions which, for example, demand capital punishment for personal choices or deny women the right to drive or to make fundamental choices about their own lives.

A melting pot requires the heat of a forge, and the forge is in the values shared by the members of that society. For much of our history, Christianity was fundamental to those values, but in the divorce from Christianity suffered by many over the years, the moral code produced by the Judeo-Christian heritage of western civilization endured and remained embedded in our legal system. Now that legal system itself has been gamed and is frequently used in partisan attacks that supersede what is true and just.

Once there was also widespread agreement in our shared understanding of the self-evident truths of the Declaration of Independence and the codification of those values in the Constitution. That agreement is now eroded by moral relativism and a misunderstanding of the effects of weakly bound multiculturalism.

There is indeed a diversity of pebbles in the wall that separates American society from anarchy. While many, perhaps even a majority of us, can still find enough to agree upon to warrant a celebration of our uniquely American holiday, the legacy of years of open borders and an inferior cement binding the disparities of incompatible cultures has weakened that wall, further damaged by the illogic and emotionalism of partisan politics. From our own streets, we see foreign nationals hostile to America waving their countries’ flags in protest of our national holiday, and sadly, they are often encouraged from the armchairs of aging social justice warriors old enough to know better.

Still, I am hopeful. A resurgence of national pride seems to be underway, or perhaps it was always there but obscured by a powerful few who were successfully able to dominate the narrative for so long. Better than pride would be a national self-esteem tempered by humility, informed by a history of struggle in overcoming the inherent flaws of human nature. Perhaps one day it will occur to a protester at a “No Kings” rally that if we did have a king, there would be no protest allowed.

Ordiales ... continued

needed, Young Harris has opted out of the split contract and the county opted out a couple of years ago. What is the plan for paying that salary and expenses?

When Mr. Wilson asked why the sudden need to spend substantial money, the response by Mr. Chastain was that it was because “nothing was done.” That is a true sign of someone who was not engaged in prior city projects and did not represent the needs of the city while on the council. The improvements made over the last 8 years have been substantial and carefully thought out. There will always need to be improvements to a 30-year-old water treatment plant, the addition of the third filter was HUGE, and the updates to the existing filters were discussed but priority was assigned as needed. The Water Department building is over 30 years old. That was also looked at but prior to replacing that building, a new office and work building was needed. That was done 3 years ago. The response that nothing was done is just plain ignorant and ridiculous.

The city is fortunate to have employees like Clint Royce that are always looking to improve their plants and make for better service to our customers, there just needs to be conversations and plans to make better decisions from city leadership.

The City of Hiawassee residents deserve better leadership than what is present.

These are the facts and concerns for tax-payer money!

I look forward to hearing back from you, Mayor Chastain.

Liz Ordiales

Former Hiawassee Mayor

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Office located at: 518 N. Main St. Suite 3 “The Mail”, Hiawassee
Phone: (706) 896-4454 **Fax:** (706) 896-1745 **Email:** tcherald@windstream.net
Or mail to: PO Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546