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Also in the March 6 meeting, the council held the second reading and adoption of the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Franchise Fee Ordinance, which will allow the city to collect fees from the EMC for use of the city right-of-way.

Come summertime, EMC customers inside Hiwassee City Limits will see a new line item fee on their bills.

The fee will be 3 percent of gross electric sales based on kWh usage, and there will also be a 5 percent fee on gross sales of EMC cable and fiber services for Hiwassee customers.

"There are 535 cities in the state of Georgia, and 529 of them collect franchise fees,"

said the mayor.

The council also held the second reading and adoption of the city's new Motel-Hotel Ordinance.

Under the former arrangement, the Towns County Chamber of Commerce received all but \$5,000 of the city's motel-hotel tax revenues every year.

"In 2008, the state legislators passed eight or 10 procedures that allow for cities to maintain 60 percent of that revenue in the general account, to do whatever you want to do with it," said Ordiales. "We were not doing that.

"We were giving all the money to the chamber of commerce. The Department of Community Affairs came

up here and said we were using the wrong statutes and they need to be updated.

"The passing of that ordinance allows us to keep 60 percent in our general fund and continue to support the chamber with the other 40 percent."

Wrapping up official business in the March 6 meeting, the council approved a two-year landscaping contract with Mountain Living for \$9,225. The city received seven bids and ultimately was able to save \$6,000 on the city landscaping.

"Not only was it the lowest bid, it was a local company," said Ordiales of the contract. "If we can stay local, that's my goal."

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the coverage is that there is tangible proof of residency within the city limits.

Tony Garner, the AirMedCare representative for this area, answered questions about the service at Hiwassee City Hall on Thursday, March 8.

"We don't want someone to be financially burdened for them to have something done that can potentially save their life," said Garner when asked about the importance of the city utilizing the service that is being provided.

For those who wish to expand their membership beyond the Hiwassee City Limits, AirMedCare offers membership extension options on their website at AirMedCareNetwork.com.

The extension would provide all AirMedCare services to the membership holder, and allow them access to the emergency transportation no matter where they are located during the event of an accident.

For residents that wish to extend their memberships, it is important to note that the city will not cover any cost associated with the process, meaning that all extended membership purchases would be paid out of pocket.

Towns County residents living outside of Hiwassee City Limits do not have municipal membership coverage through AirMedCare, though the county does have a membership with Air Methods,

a competing service, which covers all county residents.

Hiwassee residents have the advantage of benefiting from both memberships.

"I think it's a very intelligent play, because you are covered by the two largest entities in America when it comes to air medicine and being able to fly a resident to where they need to be for their benefit," said Garner, discussing the benefit of Hiwassee residents being covered by both AirMedCare and Air Methods.

Hiwassee Mayor Liz Ordiales believes that the double coverage is beneficial for residents because they have the security of two services, which will give people less to worry about in the event of a major medical event.

BOE...from Page 1A

the topic is of ongoing concern to the entire community, and everyone in the meeting expressed their interest in continuing to examine security measures at the schools moving forward.

Dr. Berrong asked the board that evening to look at two programs that assist in school safety.

One of the programs is the Sandy Hook Promise, which teaches students and staff what to look for in troubled students, and the second one is the Watch Dog Program that centers around volunteering fathers coming into the school to walk the hallways and monitor the students.

The school board also agreed that something must be done about the water permeating the baseball and football fields.

"The sun shined all weekend, and I went out onto

left field of the baseball field and the water was just squishing up through my feet," said Dr. Berrong. "The engineers came out and dug three feet down before they hit dry land on the baseball field, and a foot deep on the football field.

"In between the bleachers and the football field they never hit dry land. The tool they used only reaches five feet down."

More research and cost estimates to install pipes and irrigation will have to be done before the board can move forward with repairs.

"This is a huge cost," said Dr. Berrong. "There's lots of rumors I'm hearing that the high school soccer team has no more home games, and that's not true. We'll play on the fields when we can."

Towns County Schools Finance Director Myra Underwood went over the system's upcoming fiscal year budget timeline with the board in their work session, noting that the board will be holding the first of two budget public

hearings on April 9 at 6:30 p.m.

The hearings on the budget are open to the public, and anyone can come and voice their opinion.

The budget must be completed by June 30, 2018.

The Towns County Board of Education holds work session meetings the first Monday of every month at 7 p.m. inside the Towns County Board of Education office.

Regular board meetings are held on the second Monday of every month at 7 p.m. inside the Anne Oliver Mitchell Auditorium at Towns County Comprehensive School.

The school board is composed of Stan Chastain, Dr. Kilee Smith, Laura Banister, Jerry Taylor and Robert Williams.

Taylor taught at Towns County Schools for 33 years and seven months, and he is in his eighth year on the school board. He will not be running for a third term and will come off the board at the end of 2018.