

# Budget...from Page 1A

council and city staff together to look over the many pages of the budget so far.

The budget ensures that the city can maintain operations year over year, and it is split into three major categories: the general fund, the water fund and the sewer fund.

“Fund accounting requires cities to keep separate records for each individual fund, which includes having a separate balance sheet and operating statement,” according to the Georgia Municipal Association.

The general fund is used as the chief operating fund of the city, and “all financial resources not required to be resourced in another fund are accounted for in the general fund. Departments like streets, parks and recreation, clerk and general government are normally here,” according to GMA.

So, with the council ready to discuss the priorities of the city, everyone in attendance got down to business that Tuesday.

“Overall, we want to prioritize the bills of the city,” said Mayor Gibby. “We want the city to keep running and people to keep enjoying their



**Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby going over the FY19 budget in the Sept. 18 budget hearing.**

Photo by Jarrett Whitener

lives here.”

Continued Gibby: “We are better off this year. It is very incremental and very tiny, but we are in better shape. And we are definitely in better shape than we were four years ago.

“The council has done a great job at helping us budget and helping us do what we need to do. We cut where we can and we are very conscientious of what we spend. We will still be tight on this year’s budget, but we are doing good.”

The mayor said she and

the city council definitely wish to put taxpayer dollars where they are needed most to benefit to the city and members of the community.

“I think that the community needs to know that this council is well aware of the fact that we are dealing with their money,” said Mayor Gibby. “We have a small staff so that we can monitor this money most effectively.

“We have the staff saying we need to replace and repair equipment, and it is the council’s job to figure out how to help them do what they need to. I think the community needs to know that we take this budget seriously, and we want to do a great job at providing for these needs.”

The Sept. 18 hearing covered the majority of the budget, but councilmembers will continue to adjust it during upcoming monthly meetings.

“We will tweak the budget and look at the changes until we finalize the budget,” said Mayor Gibby. “Until the end of the year, we will talk about additional changes in our budget, but nothing after tonight will be a major discussion like tonight was. By the end of December, we will have the budget finalized with the changes and be ready for 2019.”

“And still, all this time, there’s no town or city or anything,” said Taylor. “It’s just a post office. It’s just a rural area.”

Taylor showed several pictures throughout the presentation, including a ledger card, still in existence, from the old Bryson Store, a general store that sold the necessities of rural life in Brasstown Valley.

There were also vintage pictures of many of the people who lived in Young Harris and the Brasstown Valley in the 19th century into the 20th century, as well as several old pictures of Young Harris College.

Taylor’s presentation was lengthy but thorough, and he aptly held the attendee’s attention throughout.

For a complete overview of Taylor’s presentation or other history of the Brasstown Valley, Young Harris or Hiwassee, visit the website at [TownsCountyHistory.org](http://TownsCountyHistory.org).

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the children of the mountains,” according to Taylor.

One of the consequences of the Civil War, said Taylor, is that it robbed the children of an education and left that generation after the Civil War illiterate.

Reverend Marcus H. Edwards finally brought the children together, establishing the Brasstown High School (or Brasstown Institute) on Jan. 1, 1886, making Lester’s dream a reality.

“The first major contribution to the fledgling school came from a judge in Athens, Georgia, whose name was Young Harris,” said Taylor. “He never came to Young Harris. He never saw Young Harris. He was never on the campus.

“However, he and his wife had a heart for children and a heart for education. They didn’t have children of their own. It was like the school at

Young Harris was their adopted kids

“When (Harris’ wife) died in 1892, he had the chapel built – Susan B. Chapel. That’s the oldest building on the campus.”

The chapel is still used today for services and other functions, like concerts, literary events, assemblies and community events.

Taylor walked the attendees through all of the name changes of the Young Harris Post Office, which was called the Brasstown Post Office.

Then it changed to Greenwood, named for a postmaster; then Eolia, Mt. Eolia, McTyeire and, finally, back to Brasstown after the Civil War. The post office was discontinued in the 1870s, and people in Young Harris had to go to Trackrock to get their mail.

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by anyone who wished to see it, and that the auditors gave the county a clean financial bill of health.

Furthermore, the commissioner welcomed Towns County Chamber of Commerce President Candace Lee to the meeting, commending her on the chamber’s ability to mobilize big-time efforts like the 50-angler Toyota Bassmaster Angler of the Year Championship on Lake Chatuge.

The championship fishing tournament, which featured total prize money of \$1 million, came to town Sept. 20 through Sept. 23 and was nationally televised on ESPN3.

Hosting the tournament there was a big deal for Towns County, as many people came to town for the tournament, all of whom spent money in local stores and restaurants and stayed at local hotels and in cabins.

“We’re just very thankful for all that you do, Candace,” said Bradshaw. “Y’all work hard. And anybody that doesn’t realize that, they need to go follow your footsteps.”

Wrapping up his Commissioner’s Report, Bradshaw let everyone know that the county was looking to replace the gym flooring in the Old Rec Gym.

“We’ve got a couple bids in on that, and there’s many reasons why we’re doing it,” said Bradshaw. “The floor, I don’t know how long it’s been there – ever since I can remember. I don’t want to put a number on it, a long, long



**Towns County Chamber of Commerce President Candace Lee in the Sept. 18 county meeting.**

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

time.

“But by replacing the floor, it will help us. Matt Youngblood, our recreation director, is pushing to have tournaments here, like basketball tournaments. Last year, he had a girls state tournament here, and just at the gate, he brought in over \$9,000.

“That’s not to mention what was spent in restaurants and our hotels, families coming here to stay with their children and grandparents. So, we can utilize that gym for that as well. Usually, you need more than two gyms, so that would give us three. If we needed more, we could work with the school and try to use that, too.”

The new floor would allow the county to set up an indoor batting area for rec league baseball to use in case

of bad weather, and the floor could also be lined for indoor pickleball, which would be helpful in the winter time and during bad weather.

“We have gotten a couple prices on that, and we’re still working on the prices,” said Bradshaw. “We would use detainee labor to take out the existing floor to save every penny we can.”

Bradshaw reported that a fence was being installed at the rec football field at Foster Park, which is particularly beneficial to young soccer players who also use the field, as soccer balls often make their way into the lower parking lot, which can be hazardous for kids going after them.

As far as the updated county sign ordinance, which has featured heavily in recent reporting, Bradshaw said they were working very carefully to do the right thing for the county.

“This is not something we just sat down and said, ‘Oh, we need to strengthen our ordinance, here’s what we’re going to do,’” said Bradshaw. “I have talked to business owners, I have talked to the public in trying to get input from a lot of people, knowing in my heart we’re doing the right thing the whole time.

“And after doing the research I have done and hearing from different folks in the county, there’s no doubt in my mind. The last thing we want to do is have free rein for billboard companies to put billboards every 300 feet or so on our highways. I mean, that’s no good.”

Added Bradshaw: “We’re still working with our county attorney on trying to get everything as good as we can. I know we have the deadline coming up, and we hope to make the deadline. If we don’t, then we’ll extend the moratorium, because I want to get it right the first time.”

Also in the meeting, the commissioner adopted a couple of resolutions updating and authorizing 911 charges. These changes were mandated by the state.

On telephone services and wireless services, the landline fee is staying the same at \$1.50, but the wireless fee is increasing from \$1/line to \$1.50/line.

On prepaid wireless services, the prepaid wireless fee is increasing from 75 cents per prepaid transaction to \$1.50 per transaction.

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their favorite fishermen use to catch the big ones.

“I usually like bait with a flat bottom,” said Mike Iaconelli, another pro angler. “But if I want to catch big fish, there is nothing I trust more than the jig.

“I cannot tell you how many fish I have caught by using a good jig. I use other bait, but if I had to use one, that’s what I would use.”

The event brought many people to Towns County, which helped support local businesses as these travelers experienced the North Georgia Mountains for the first time.

Sunday marked the end of the tournament, where the overall winner was announced



**The fishing was good during the championship tournament, which spanned Sept. 20 through Sept. 23 on Lake Chatuge.**

Photo by Lowell Nicholson

after a final weigh in.

The Towns County Chamber of Commerce and

others helped to secure the tournament for Lake Chatuge.



**Some pros answering fan questions during a break from fishing at a stage set up at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds on Saturday, Sept. 22.**

Photo by Jarrett Whitener

# Helicopter...from Page 1A



**Air Life 14 Flight Team members Karen Rowlette, Derrick Moody and Lou Gregoire.**

Photo by Mark Smith

upgraded from a single-engine to a twin-engine helicopter, medical flight crews are able to fly missions they were not allowed to previously.

“By FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) requirements, we can’t fly over the top of a solid cloud layer with a single engine aircraft,” said Air Life Area Manager Joe Pardue. “You always have to be able to look down at the ground and see the ground.”

“We immediately started tracking data from the beginning of the base (in May 2016) about how many patients/patient flights that we would have to decline because of weather issues. After a year of tracking that data, it was a pretty significant number.

“We were able to correlate our misses for weather with what we could have done if we operated a twin-engine aircraft.”

The data made it abundantly clear to Pardue and his team that they needed a twin-engine aircraft to get the job done with the highest degree of safety and efficiency in the mountains, and after acquiring the new chopper, they started flying missions out of the Union General base the first week in August.

“It’s a highly advanced aircraft, and it is equipped to do Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) missions, like a commercial airliner,” said Pardue.

According to FAA regulations, when weather conditions are such that a pilot cannot operate according to Visual Flight Rules, or VFR, he or she must use instrument flight rules.

Basically, if a pilot doesn’t have enough visibility to safely operate their aircraft, they must switch over to flying “by reference to instruments in the flight deck, and navigation is accomplished by reference to electronic signals.”

Unlike the previous helicopter, the new twin-engine is IFR-capable. All Air Life 14 pilots are IFR Certified, and after a certain number of flight hours operating the new EC-135 aircraft, they will be conducting IFR missions.

At this time, however, Air Life 14 pilots are still flying VFR missions.

“We’re anticipating probably around the end of this year, first part of next year, having that (time requirement satisfied) and all of our pilots trained to do IFR missions in this aircraft,” said Pardue.

Regardless, now that they have a twin-engine aircraft, the pilots can fly a patient over a cloud layer under certain circumstances, so having the EC-135 is still an immediate improvement over the previous single-engine aircraft.

Each flight request is evaluated on its own merits, said Pardue, with pilots and their

medical crews consulting one another every step of the way – from starting point to patient pickup to final destination – to get the job done safely.

Additionally, each flight must receive prior approval before liftoff, as flight conditions may vary wildly along the flightpath.

“It’s hard for people to understand that we’re looking at radar maps and checking weather reporting minimums at airports all along the way, and if everything doesn’t line up, we’re generally not able to go,” said Pardue.

The EC-135 is manned by a crew of three: a highly-trained Pilot; a Critical Care Flight Nurse; and a Critical Care Flight Paramedic.

And there is nothing these professionals would rather do than get a very sick or injured patient where they need to go as quickly as possible. Safety is their highest priority.

It’s worth mentioning that Air Life 14 is a community-based operation in partnership with Union General Hospital. Air Life is located here to take patients to the most appropriate facility that can best serve the time sensitive critical care needs of patients throughout the region.

“This hospital recognizes the beauty of that,” said Pardue.



**R-L: Sandra Green, Frances Shook and Daren Osborn in the Sept. 18 meeting of Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw.**

Photo by Shawn Jarrard



**The new twin-engine helicopter has a bigger air ambulance compartment than its predecessor, a single-engine aircraft.**

Photo by Mark Smith