

Lights...from Page 1A



People come from far and wide each year to see the Buchanan Family Lights.

Photo by Jarrett Whitener

on schedule. But the weather only delays the process, and Buchanan goes out of his way to make sure the display is perfect.

"The weather has kept everything wet and made it take longer to finish," said Buchanan. "But I'm trying to finish it as quick as a can, when I can."

The community support helped influence Buchanan to continue growing his collection of decorations and showing them off every year for everyone to come out and enjoy.

"We have great traffic

through here, especially for a small county," said Buchanan. "Each year, I see these people stop in, and I appreciate them taking the time to come out and enjoy the lights."

Coming out to enjoy the lights is completely free of charge, but there is a donation box that helps Buchanan pay for his increased electric bill and any replacements for blown bulbs or worn out displays.

Buchanan invites people to bring family and friends to see the display and enjoy the work that he puts into making everything work together.

"We welcome anybody and everybody to bring their families and kids out to see the Christmas decorations," said Buchanan. "There's plenty here for everyone to enjoy, and I'm happy to see so many people supporting the work we do here."

The display will last through Christmas and end sometime after New Year's Day, according to Buchanan.

People are welcome to visit any day of the week, with the lights usually turning on around dark and lasting until just after 10 p.m.

Hiawassee...from Page 1A

appealing to the council that evening was because Hiawassee Mayor Liz Ordiales had already turned down Poteet's request for a permit back in February, as the city's sign ordinance did not allow for digital signs.

In other sign ordinance news, following Towns County Government's recent adoption of an amended sign ordinance prohibiting billboard signs, the Hiawassee City Council implemented a 45-day sign permit moratorium on Nov. 6 to give the city time to examine its own sign ordinance.

Furthermore, the council had planned to vote on a measure to extend the moratorium an additional 60 days in the Tuesday, Dec. 4, regular city meeting, which occurred after press time.

This would extend the moratorium to February 11, 2019.

No decision was made concerning Poteet's petition in the Nov. 26 work session, and the city is still working to determine what, if any, changes need to be made to its sign ordinance.

Also in the meeting, Fletcher Holiday with Engineering Management, Inc. addressed the council.

Holiday said the Georgia Environmental Protection Division mandated that Hiawassee, a city that has a direct discharge water treatment facility, must complete an assessment of its watershed and impounding area, and must complete a watershed protection plan.

"EMI worked with the city this year and completed that watershed protection plan," said Holiday.

There are four sites that must be monitored at least four times per year for 23 constituents for water quality, including three dry weather samples and one wet weather sample.

Additionally, those four sites must be monitored eight times per year for fecal coliform and E. coli.



Hiawassee City Councilmembers Kris Berrong and Anne Mitchell in their Nov. 26 council work session.

Photo by Mark Smith

Ordiales said the estimated cost to the city this year of EMI doing the lab work at their lab to get the results of the EPD required monitoring and to do the report would be about \$18,000. This is the first year these requirements have been in place.

However, that cost would be pared down to under \$10,000 if the lab work were completed in-house at the water treatment facility lab.

Time is of the essence, because two samplings need to be completed before the end of the year for this year's report, one dry weather and one wet weather, to satisfy the EPD requirements.

The matter of approving the EMI bid was on the agenda for the Dec. 4 regular meeting.

Local attorney Timothy Barrett addressed the council regarding the renewal of employee health, vision, dental and life insurance, as well as short and long-term disability insurance.

His recommendation to the council for employee health insurance was to switch plans within BlueCross BlueShield from the current plan to the Chamber Plan. With the cost savings in most other insurance areas, it would mean an annual savings of nearly \$80,000 for the city.

Barrett has been doing insurance for the City of Hiawassee for over 10 years. He is the husband of Councilwoman Amy Barrett, who always recuses herself from discussion and voting on matters related to city insurance.

Ordiales recommended the change, which appeared as a motion in the Dec. 4 regular meeting.

Hiawassee Police Chief Paul Smith said in his department head report that there is a new phone scam where the caller pretends to be from the Social Security Administration. If anyone calls and asks for any personal information over the phone, beware, said Smith.

Legitimate companies or government agencies never ask for personal or sensitive information over the phone.

The council voted unanimously to accept the first reading of the Amendment to the Alcohol Ordinance that incorporates the new hours passed by the Georgia Legislature in the "Brunch Bill."

Since the measure carried locally on the Nov. 6 General Election Ballot, Hiawassee brunch hours of alcohol sales will be changed from 12:30 p.m. to 11 a.m.

Tree Lighting...from Page 1A



A view from the 2012 Young Harris Tree Lighting, hosted by Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson

and had to be cut down, and so they used a different tree to count down the occasion in Mayor's Park.

In the future, the city plans to use the Mayor Dan Nichols Memorial Tree, which was planted several years ago and still needs time to grow into a big Christmas tree for the lighting.

The Enotah Garden Club, as usual, played a huge role in

decorating City Hall for the big event and Christmas season.

This year's Tree Lighting will be a bittersweet one for the city and club, as longtime Garden Club Member Marsha Elliott passed away earlier this year on Friday, Sept. 7.

Elliott had been a member of the Enotah Garden Club since moving to the area in 2003, and she was a prolific contributor who helped to

decorate City Hall every year, as well as to prepare and serve refreshments inside after the lighting.

"It's small town Christmas, and just a wonderful way to begin the holiday season," said Elliott during the 2016 Tree Lighting.

In case of rainy weather, the event will be held inside City Hall.



The old Tree Lighting tree in Mayor's Park that had to be cut down in 2017.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Village...from Page 1A

And Reed-Smith gets help from her likeminded friend, Linda Greene - the two go to church together.

"We both feel like, with imagination, you can create your own village with your own people, where you have churches, where family looks after your family's children," said Reed-Smith. "Back in the early days where, we'll say, it's a drug-free village. Everybody is happy."

"So, that's our imagination, how we imagine this as we build it. It's a family-oriented village where everybody loves everybody."

Reed-Smith and her husband, Richard, have the village set up in the basement of their home. They have a pot of coffee warmed up or can whip up a cup of hot chocolate for visitors who come to check out the massive display.

Reed-Smith said she had about 50 people this year from all over the county come and see her village, and one group



Linda Reed-Smith showcased her amazing Christmas Village filled with miniature people, houses, animals and trees on Saturday, Dec. 1.

Photo by Mark Smith

even came up from Helen.

It takes about four weeks to set the whole thing up, she said, and about two weeks to disassemble it.

The display was promoted by Reed-Smith's friends and by

the Towns County Chamber of Commerce, and is only open the last weekend in November and the first weekend in December due to other obligations at Christmastime.

Arrest...from Page 1A



Items confiscated following the arrest of Christopher Steven Ray on Nov. 25.

officer, along with several traffic offense warrants, and the Union County Sheriff's Office had an outstanding probation warrant on Ray.

All Towns County warrants and charges will be forwarded to the Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney's Office for prosecution.

The information in this article came from the Towns County Sheriff's Office.

Valley River Arts Guild classes

Take a class! Learn a New Skill! Find a Hidden Talent! Have Fun! Join us for classes in the arts, crafts, music, yoga and more.

Sign up now for these wonderful classes: Dec. 4 - Cats Night Out/Mixed Media with Bob Hernandez; Dec. 5 & 8 - Rubber Stamping - with Sharon Francis; Dec. 11 - Winter Nights/Mixed Media

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Class schedule varies

and are limited. Sign up at The MAC, Murphy Art Center, 33 Valley River Avenue, downtown Murphy, NC.

For more information go to <http://www.ValleyRiverArts.com>, ClassesAtTheMAC@gmail.com, Penny Johnson (828)494-7403.

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