

Henson...from Page 1

to be appointed to the board of directors.

"That process of due diligence had not been completed," Phillips said. "Myself and Mr. Chris Logan began to hear that Danny and Greg Owenby were business part-

ners after the appointment. We looked into the matter and they were indeed business partners. The by-laws prohibit that.

"We apologize to Danny Henson that this matter was not vetted out before the appointment," Phillips said. "This was

nothing personal, it was just the by-laws."

Henson said he harbored no ill will toward Phillips and Logan.

"The rules are the rules and I'm not a rule-breaker," he said.

Henson said that just because he was disqualified from the board of directors doesn't mean he won't be on the ballot for the September election.

"There is time for me to divest myself of the property in question and still get on the bal-

lot by petition," Henson said. "That process is underway and I'm ready to get that done and I'll make the July 26 deadline to get on the ballot for Union County. I've had time to think about it, and I wouldn't want to be on the board of directors

unless I'm elected. That's the avenue that I will pursue."

If successful, Henson will be on the ballot with petition candidates Mickey Cummings, Patrick Malone and Charles Rich for the Union County EMC seat.

Harrah's...from Page 1

to \$15 plus for non-tipped positions.

"We have some jobs that we're looking for a specific job set, but in all of our positions, we're looking for friendly, helpful attitudes, and people with a passion to serve, because that's what we do in our industry is serve our guests and take care of each other," said Valley River General Manager Lumpy Lambert.

"So, we're looking for those type of personalities. We can train and we will train our employees on any of our specific areas, but we're looking for individuals that are outgoing and willing to serve in a service environment."

The brand new casino and hotel, also owned by the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and managed by Caesars Entertainment Corporation, will be geared toward a different market than Harrah's Cherokee Casino Resort.

"This property (in Murphy) is going to be more of a drive-in market, catering to primarily the Atlanta, the Chat-

tanooga, East Tennessee, North Georgia market, and even as far down as Athens and somewhat into Alabama," said Lambert. "We anticipate we can probably stretch a little further into Nashville and get some exposure into that market, but it's going to be more of a drive-in atmosphere for that fun and excitement that the Harrah's brand offers."

"Whereas the resort in Cherokee is more of that, if you want to come for a full experience for the dining, the spas, the golf experiences, different things, different amenities that we offer at the resort - we won't have that in this initial opening at Valley River."

Virginia Burger of Murphy, who is retired from the hospitality industry with experience in international trade shows, waited in the lobby for her husband, who is also retired but looking for a part-time position with the casino.

"I've noticed a change in the area since the announcement of this," said Burger of Valley River. "I see people coming from out of town to apply

for positions. I see locals, but I also see a lot of people coming from other areas. I think it's good to see the tax base coming in here, because families come in. The Cherokee Nation is not taxable, but all of the ancillary services that everybody that's going to work up here and will use are."

Richard Ward came up from Florida to Murphy, where he has family and some land, to apply for a position in maintenance with an emphasis in HVAC and multiphase electrical.

"It feels good seeing that there's something that could be positive being brought into the community to offer additional jobs for people to feel important," said Ward. "I don't think there's enough work sometimes for the amount of people in the area, and if you don't have daily gratification of being part of some team or whatever it is that you do - everyone's got something different - I don't know how other people feel, but I know I feel like time's a-wasting."

Fourth...from Page 1

for putting on the 25 minute fireworks show, and folks can expect a grand finale toward the end.

"We've been doing a fireworks show probably for 25 years - a long time," said Fairgrounds General Manager Hilda Thomason. "And we have a lot of sponsors that help us with it, too, and I'd like to give a big thank you to all the sponsors."

Thomason spent last week getting ready for the annual Fourth of July event, purchasing supplies to stock the concession stands and bathrooms for use by the anticipated crowds.

Visitors are asked to provide a donation for entry by the carload into the festivities, and Lions Club members will be available to collect at the gate, but there is no suggested donation amount.

"Donations help offset

the cost of the fireworks," said Thomason. "It brings a lot of people to our county, and celebrating the Fourth, this is a wonderful place to be, in the mountains, so we just ask for a donation."

Guests are more than welcome to bring their own picnic items, though the fairgrounds will be selling hotdogs, chips and drinks to patrons who come empty handed and work up a patriotic appetite.

"We have a lot of return people that come, but we also have a lot of new ones, too, and they come from everywhere," said Thomason. "Lots of different states and different counties. It's a great fireworks show."

The fireworks will be shot from the ballfield area out over the lake, and year after year, the fairgrounds fills up

with patriots out to remember their heritage.

Many arrive in boats to watch the show, and people who live near the fairgrounds invite their friends over to watch the colorful explosions from decks and porches.

Safety is always a concern, and the fairgrounds have done its due diligence by acquiring the appropriate insurance and permits to conduct a safe, eventful evening for all in attendance.

For those accustomed to the annual boat parade put on by the Towns County Chamber of Commerce, the parade will not take place this year, but the chamber stated that next year's Fourth of July celebrations are under way, with plans to make the chamber's Independence Day offering bigger and better than ever.

Leadership...from Page 1

approached by the Fanning Institute from the University of Georgia about participating in a Georgia Chamber of Commerce, Fanning Institute project, not as a guinea pig, but as perhaps a test subject," said Chamber Chairman Mark Dehler to the room.

J.W. Fanning chose Towns County to be part of the GeorgiaLEADS pilot because it had been years since the institute had worked with the county, and those at the university saw a chance to start a local program from the ground up.

"We'll take all this data back to Athens, come up with the final report, meet back with the working group that is a part of the chamber's effort to develop new leadership programming, and we'll say, this is what we've heard and here are some recommendations," said Mary Beth Bass, public service and outreach faculty member for the institute.

Before any final recommendations are handed down, however, Bass said that the institute will need to evaluate whether or not more input is needed by an even greater sampling of current Towns leadership.

"We may say we think we need to do a couple of focus



groups, probably - that's sort of where my brain is going, do a little bit more input, and then we'll start designing out some leadership programming based on that," said Bass.

Chamber President Candace Lee jumped at the opportunity to participate in a leadership program to be developed by Fanning and implemented within the county.

"Last night was a big success," said Lee following the input session. "I think it showed a lot of people what we were working on, and that the

chamber was trying to make a difference with leadership in the community. But it also gave people the opportunity to speak up, and I think that's always a good thing."

Among those in attendance were BRMEMC Director Steven Phillips, Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall and past commissioner Truman Barrett, Amy Gibby Rosser of Family Connection, Eric Seifarth of Crane Creek Vineyards and sisters Lynn and Leslie McPeak of TATA on Main.

Relay...from Page 1

As far as the threatening rain, Lopez said she was willing to cancel the event if it became too severe.

"We don't want to put anybody's life in danger for a fundraiser," she said.

Fortunately, that was not necessary.

"This is going to be a really great day. We're not going to worry about those clouds; we're not going to worry about what the Internet says the forecast is. We're just going to have a good time, and we're going

to celebrate those of us that are here today," Lopez told those assembled.

"During the next several hours," she went on, "we'll be together to celebrate those who have battled cancer, remember those who we have lost, and renew our commitment to fight back against this disease and to help end it, once and for all."

Julie Payne, one of the event coordinators, added, "By walking this day, you are joining forces with millions of people worldwide who want to

save lives, who want to finish the fight. While each of us has a unique reason for being here, we all have something very much in common. We want to make a difference in the fight against cancer, and we are doing our part."

Generous donations have come in, and the Relay Committee is well on its way to reaching its goal of \$30,000. It has until Aug. 31 to raise money to meet its goal, so donations are still more than welcome.

Fling...from Page 1

The income from the show goes in to help support the store, and we do have a children's summer program," she explained.

The artists were as varied as the products they sell. On display was the usual eclectic mix of woodworking, jewelry, and edible goods. The Fling also boasted several rare products, like bonsai trees or alpaca-fleece garments.

Judy Sabo of Hayesville, NC, displaying a wide variety of tiny trees, has been trying her hand at the art of bonsai since a very young age, but never got serious about it until adulthood.

"A long time ago, my brother tried to teach me," she said. "And I learned a little bit, but then I quit, like all kids.

When I was a teenager, I started again. I did it for a year or two and I quit. And then I don't know how many years passed, and I started doing it again. As an adult, I started it as a hobby, and the hobby just grew."

For Sabo, bonsai has become more than just a hobby. "The best thing is getting therapy from the trees without paying anybody to get therapy," she said. "Whenever I feel like I'm really uptight, I just grab one of the ugliest junipers I can find, and I just go sit down. And within an hour I can feel all the anxiety and anger leaving. It is excellent therapy."

Another crafter with unusual product was Donna McCarthy, of Alpaca Tierra, selling alpaca fleece.

"I saw these animals one day, and I'm an animal person anyway, and I just had to have one," McCarthy said. "Then I found out, you have to have two, because they're herd animals. So about eight years ago I bought two pregnant girls. We sell them. We breed them," she said.

"So of course, I had piles of fleece everywhere, and it's so soft," she went on. "So from there I went to the John C. Campbell Folk School and learned how to make things and I've been doing it ever since."

Alpaca fleece is warm, durable, and light. McCarthy has been doing all the art shows in the area, and she said Saturday was very busy and brought good business.

City of Hiawassee irons out new budget

By Mason Mitcham
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

On Wednesday, June 24, the City of Hiawassee held its biannual budget meeting.

"We adjust the budgets every six months. The proposed budget for the following calendar year becomes effective July 1, and the council will approve it at their next council meeting," said City Manager Rick Stancil.

The city manager and Mayor Barbara Mathis addressed the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax budget.

"I want to start the SPLOST with a caveat," said Stancil. "We're basically setting the annual budget at \$150,000. That will go up in our adjusted budget to \$180,000 because a payment in arrears was made by the county last week, so that'll be rolled in when we do the adjusted budget, so our original prediction of \$180,000 is pretty much what it's going to be for the following year."

"The total income for this year is going to be projected at \$175,000," he said. "Next year's will be \$175,150. I do think that will go up and of course we've got to use that SPLOST money in accordance to ordinance fund referendum so those projects are identified and listed."

Next, the city addressed the Hotel/Motel Tax. The budget has been revised upwards from \$65,000 to \$70,000.

"The budget proposed for next year is \$70,000," said Stancil. "And generally that's for payments to the Towns County Chamber of Commerce and then payments for the tax collection. In years past, the city



has held \$5,000 that they don't automatically allocate to the chamber of commerce because we hold it in contingency. This year, the \$5,000 will be given to the chamber by check dated June 30."

The sewer budget will stay mostly the same except for a few small changes to increase income. The annual budget, the revised budget, and the proposed budget for the year's sewer charges all stay at \$675,000.

"On program fees, we've projected \$12,500. We've revised that, because we've received a little bit more, to \$18,000, and we've actually increased that by next year to \$19,000. Penalties you can never project or count on, so we've downgraded that. We originally said \$20,000. We've reduced it for this year to \$17,000, and for next year, we're taking it down to \$16,000, which means the sewer budget for next year will have an expected revenue of \$710,075," said Stancil.

The charges for the water treatment plant will also stay

the same, but total income will decrease.

"Now it's going to go down next year due to improvements that we'll make this year, there's not going to be as harsh a carry-over. So we're going to drop our budget. This year's budget for the treatment of the water treatment plant is right at \$1.1 million, which is substantial, and we're going to drop it down to \$943,500 projected for next year. Again, that could change. But that's based on what we have right now," said Stancil.

Finally, Stancil addressed the General Fund.

"We put the general fund budget worksheet together with the idea again that there will be no property tax increase this year in the city of Hiawassee. We don't have to actually make that decision until later in the year. But if we were going to anticipate, we would start off by giving notice by increasing some of these funds, which we're not doing by any kind of tax increase," said Stancil.

The General Fund is proposed at \$841,100.

Shakers...from Page 1

"Since the Movers and Shakers have helped me, and since I've gotten more used to it, I love public speaking today," he said.

Sponsored by Georgia Senator Wilkinson, Penland went on a FFA trip to the nation's capital, where he met several senators and learned a little about the business of being a leader.

In addition, the FFA members had leadership sessions, which involved discussions of how each person attending could help his or her respective communities. "All of our sessions were about giving back to our community," said Penland.

"We started our sessions on Tuesday night about leadership," he added. "Tuesday night was really just an ice-breaking session. Wednesday morning, we got up and we went to Arlington national cemetery."

There they saw the changing of the guard and a rare wreath-laying ceremony. "It truly was special. If you've never been, it's silent. The only thing you hear is the clicks of the soldiers' boots," Penland said.



group met up and we went into senator Isakson's office building. He was of course in the Capitol, but his staff gave us a tour of the Capitol and gave us some history. That was a really fun experience. We got to visit the old Senate chamber and the old House of Representatives chamber. That was really special."

Soon after, the Georgia group got to meet the Georgia senators on the steps of the new Senate chamber. "We took pictures with them, we got to meet them, but it was very busy so they didn't get to talk to us long so that was really special, getting to meet our senators and getting to know them," Penland said.

"On Friday," he went on, "we went to the Newseum." The Newseum in Washington D.C. is a nonprofit museum

dedicated to championing the first amendment through media exhibits.

"It covers every major news event in American history and several major news events in other countries' history," Penland said. "One thing that just kind of blew me away is that they had the daily headlines from each major paper in each state, which I thought was really cool."

Finally, the FFA students were able to give back to the less fortunate of the by packing food. "What we were packing for the Washington DC area was breakfast," he said. "We packed apple cinnamon raisin oatmeal. We packaged 63,288 meals in one hour. That just goes to show that when you have a lot of people focusing on a good cause, it gets done really fast."