

Plea...from Page 1A

The murder, according to arrest warrants, occurred on June 17, 2013 at 500 Hickory Hill. Adams-Donaldson's body was loaded in a wheelbarrow and rolled to a home that had not been occupied since 1973, according to testimony during an Aug. 4, 2013 bond hearing for the two women.

Adams-Donaldson's body was dumped in an abandoned well on the property, where it was recovered on July 11, 2013, by law enforcement, according to investigators with the Towns County Sheriff's Office.

Enotah Judicial Circuit Senior Superior Court Judge Murphy Miller denied bond for both Ledford and Stokes following the hearing on Aug. 4, 2013.

Adams-Donaldson, who spent a portion of her youth in Union County, was discovered in the old hand-dug well at the old Roper farm on Turner Turnpike in rural Towns County.

Adams-Donaldson's remains were recovered approximately at 7 p.m. on July 11, 2013. The well was in close

proximity to the residence where Adams-Donaldson lived and was murdered.

Adams-Donaldson was reported missing on June 24, 2013 by family members.

Ledford and Stokes confessed to the crime, following extensive interrogations by Towns County sheriff's investigators and GBI agents, according to the Towns County Sheriff's Office.

Ledford and Stokes were already inmates at the Towns County Detention Center at the time of their confessions, sheriff's reports show.

Investigators say Ledford shot Adams-Donaldson in the throat and back on June 17th at 500 Hickory Hill, in Hiawassee.

At the time of their confessions, Ledford was being held on charges that include first-degree forgery, eight counts of deposit account fraud, and criminal trespass, Towns County arrest warrants show.

Stokes was being held on an obstruction charge, Towns County arrest warrants show.

Hiawassee...from Page 1A

millage rate increase on Mayor Barbara Mathis' watch.

"Someday we may have to go up on them, we may be forced to," said Mayor Mathis. "But not right now. That is just one thing that I feel like I can do for people. You want to give back to the people that give to you, and that's one way that I can help."

Several years ago, the Georgia General Assembly created a policy to help clear up confusion over the matter of property taxes. The county and cities therein must publish a 5-year tax history and digest, which gives an idea of the values of different types of property within the county.

"What the General Assembly decided to do, whether it has helped or not, is you can play a game with taxes," said Hiawassee City Manager Rick Stancil. "Values can go up, property taxes - or millage - can go down, but individuals still, when they've paid their bill, can pay more taxes, in spite of the millage going down, if the value has gone up on their house."

The Towns County Tax Assessor is responsible for appraising and assessing property taxes for properties within the county.

"Now, if you're in Hiawassee, you've got a valuation on your property both

for Towns County property taxes and for City of Hiawassee taxes," said Stancil. "Everybody also has a valuation for the school board, because everybody pays property taxes towards support of the school system regardless."

And even though the system was designed to make understanding tax bills easier, the bottom line may read differently than the rhetoric involved.

"Many times you have to listen to politicians when they say no tax increase. That may be no millage increase, but then you hear these things and you get your tax bill, and all of a sudden your taxes go up, and it's confusing," said Stancil.

One way to keep actual tax figures from going up is to institute a rollback rate. When property values increase from year to year, keeping the millage rate the same can result in a higher tax bill, even though property tax rates were not raised. In order to counteract this increase, the City of Hiawassee has decided to propose a rollback rate to adjust the millage rate downward in order to keep property taxes roughly the same as the previous year amid rising property values.

"And that's what the General Assembly wants to encourage," said Stancil.

Fest...from Page 1A

family venture, showed up to showcase its 100% natural body butters. Mother and son team Angela Walker and Ahmad Anderson enjoyed their first year at the Fest, coming all the way from Atlanta to sell their goods.

"What we do is a team effort. Day one, he puts the labels on, because these are professional grade labels, so it takes a lot of time to make sure they're adhered," said Walker. "And then the next day we fill the jars."

One product, Fly Daddy, is billed as a "natural anti-aging body butter" rich in Vitamins A and E, specially blended "to defend against extra-dry flaky skin and psoriasis."

"We base it with shea butter," said 12-year-old Anderson with pride. "We infuse it with sweet almond oil, coconut oil, grapeseed oil, avocado oil. Basically, all of those are organic oils that go into the shea butter, which we hand whip ourselves and put in the packaging, and we seal it with love."

Doug Rondeau of Bedford Falls Alpacas was also new to the Fest, hailing from Warne, NC. On display were his handmade alpaca rugs, but Rondeau also makes alpaca scarves, gloves, hats, socks and more.

"This is the first summer-type thing I've done here," said Rondeau. "Alpaca is a cold weather thing, so this is why I don't have my other products there. The fall and before the holidays is the time to sell alpaca stuff."

Rondeau uses a loom to make his rugs, and he and his wife got into the business in 1997. He breeds grand cham-

pion show alpacas alongside the crafting of goods from their sheared fiber. He loves the animals and believes in the products he creates.

"Alpaca is one of the strongest, warmest fibers there is," said Rondeau.

Young Harris' own William Holland School of Lapidary Arts had one of its teachers exhibiting art in Paul Roberts of Moonrush Jewels. A lapidist is one who works with precious stones, cutting and polishing them for jewelry and/or art.

The school teaches a plethora of disciplines, including Earth science, beadworking, clayworking, glassworking, metalsmithing, wireworking and more.

"William Holland has been there for 30 years," said Roberts. "Best kept secret in Young Harris, Ga."

Roberts' table was covered in brilliantly colored stones polished to a mirror shine, with multiple gems having been carefully cut and placed together like puzzle pieces to form beautiful designs. Roberts and wife Florence moved to Dahlonega in 2000 from West Virginia and have been involved with the school ever since, which offers classes for all ages.

"We have a Junior Rockhound program for the young kids," said Roberts. "And then we have a middle school Rockhound program, where they actually make things in about six or eight different classes, different forms."

According to the website for the Fest, "all items offered must be hand made by the artist."

EMC...from Page 1A

(years ending 2012, 2011 and 2010) that are on GuideStar. The signature block states 'under penalties of perjury, I declare that I have examined this return, including accompanying schedules and statements, and to the best of my knowledge and belief, it is true, correct and complete.' Mr. Akins had full knowledge of the outstanding account at the Quarry, and thus signing the (IRS) Forms 990 as submitted, violated his oath to the IRS," Minor reported.

Minor suggested that the Board of Directors consult a Certified Public Accountant to correct the errors.

The EMC Board of Directors have taken some actions to address the incidents involving Taylor's debt.

They have accepted Taylor's resignation from the Board of Directors, reprimanded GM Akins, and entered into a repayment agreement with Taylor.

Starting in June, the Board of Directors' Finance Committee began following the terms of Board Policy and began reviewing a delinquent list of consumers, and the Finance Committee also is now including a review of "Aged Accounts Receivables" that shows all active residential accounts with a past due balance of \$1,000 and all active commercial industrial accounts with a past due balance that exceeds \$5,000, according to Minor's report.

Minor's report also recommends the Board revise the Whistleblower Policy to allow more flexibility in reporting and possibly to engage an independent, third party vendor of whistleblower reporting services to allow that an anonymous report can always be filed with an independent party who is in a position to address concerns.

The long overdue debt of Taylor and Taylor Construction was first reported to board member Greg Owenby by former EMC Director of Operations Chris Kelley.

Kelley's reward was a demotion, a significant pay cut and personnel reprimands that included being cited for insubordination, the newspapers have learned.

Kelley resigned his position at BRMEMC last week, the newspapers have learned.

Board Member Owenby recalls a vague reference about the debt in August 2013 from Kelley, according to Minor's report.

"Mr. Owenby didn't recall being informed of the specifics until a meeting with Mr. Kelley sometime subsequent to March 13, when Mr. Kelley presented Mr. Owenby with a document, which specifically showed the existence of the debt," Minor reported.

"This led Mr. Owenby to contact (Board Member) Mr. (Bill) Prather, who contacted Mr. Akins. Mr. Akins confirmed the existence of the debt and this ultimately resulted in the disclosure to the entire Board of Directors at the

next board meeting (April 8)," Minor reported.

Prather recalled a meeting with Kelley sometime in 2011 or 2012, where Kelley apparently made "some vague reference" to Akins not informing the board of certain "bookkeeping matters," Minor reported.

"Mr. Prather said that he didn't believe this was a reference to the incidents (Taylor's debt)," Minor reported.

Kelley told Minor he didn't remember speaking with Prather "in which he discussed, expressly or implicitly," Taylor's debt.

Also, Minor's report reveals that Taylor's commercial account was placed on a received a loan through BRMEMC to pay for a capacitor bank, designed by the Tennessee Valley Authority to reduce power factor surcharges occurring on the Quarry account.

The loan was for \$25,000 to be paid over 11 consecutive months. The equipment was designed to reduce the Quarry's power factor penalties, which are imposed by TVA on customers who show significant spikes in demand.

In July 2009, Minor reports Taylor's commercial account began to miss payments for electric service and chronically missed payments until July 2011.

During the same time frame, Minor reports that Taylor also routinely failed to make payments on his residential account.

Former BRMEMC General Manager Joe Satterfield said that he requested the Quarry be taken off the cut-off list in mid-2008 to make sure the capacitor bank was working properly following a complaint from Taylor that his power usage was not being reduced.

"That's not the first time we've done this with commercial accounts and it won't be the last," Satterfield told the newspapers.

Satterfield added that he was unaware that Taylor's residential account was delinquent.

Minor reports that while Taylor made a few large payments during Satterfield's tenure, none were sufficient to bring the account current until July 20, 2011.

That's when Taylor made a payment of \$52,652.90.

Satterfield retired in December 2009, at which time it was his belief that Taylor's debt was settled.

Minor reports that the debt continued to build until it was paid off in July 2011.

Minor reports the debt was at \$20,000 at the time of Satterfield's retirement.

Satterfield said that's possible, but it was for the remainder of the loan for the capacitor bank that was still on the books, not past due electric bills.

Minor reports that he believes the most significant contributing factor to the Taylor debt "is the conduct of the previous general manager."

"His decision to personally direct that the Quarry be

removed from the cut-off list and to allow Mr. Taylor to accumulate such a large debt, created a de-facto policy waiver that all employees appear to have respected (up until the disclosure of the debt by Chris Kelley)," Minor wrote to the board.

"When Mr. Satterfield retired at the end of 2009 (at which time the Quarry owed over \$19,000, and no payments had been made on Mr. Taylor's residential account since Sept. 1, it appears that everyone (employees) assumed the practice of permitting Mr. Taylor's accounts to accrue debt without terminating service would continue.

"Indeed, the continuation of this practice appears to have been automatic - as Mr. Akins does not appear to have pro-actively directed the employees to remove Mr. Taylor or the Quarry from the cut-off list," Minor reports.

However, Minor defends Akins' actions citing that he was new to the position, the debt was established under his long-serving predecessor, and were well ingrained in employee operations.

Satterfield responded, calling Minor's opinion just that, "an opinion."

"Mr. Minor has quite a few opinions," Satterfield said. "Opinions are not facts."

On the EMC website, the Board of Directors claim to have no previous knowledge of the events involving their former president prior to April 2014.

They apologize to the membership and to anyone adversely effected by these events involving Taylor.

"It is our goal to put policies and procedures in place to prevent intentional or unintentional violations of the trust of the membership of BRMEMC," the Board of Directors writes on the EMC website.

The Board announces actions taken regarding the incident include acceptance of Taylor's resignation from the board, reaching a judgment and forbearance agreement with Taylor and Taylor.

The Board also reprimanded its General Manager Matthew Akins, and now requires a monthly review of a list of aged accounts receivable for accounts with a past due balance in excess of \$1,000.

Actions being considered by the Board of Directors include additional board training, especially in fiduciary matters, a review of Board of Directors' term limits (Taylor had served as president since 1997), begin a culture that permits direct communication to the Board concerning noncompliance of BRMEMC policies. The list also includes organizational chart review of all employees, establish a new policy to require Board approval of any contracts between BRMEMC and directors, establish a position of Chief Financial Officer and begin the process of looking for a candidate, revise the auditor's

engagement letter, revise the Whistleblower Policy, revise the Conflict of Interest Policy, and revise its policy No. 236 to allow the auditor to report directly to the Board of Directors, and encourage disclosure from employees to the auditor.

The utility company has more than 43,000 customers with more than 49,000 electric meters serving a five-county area that includes Union, Towns, and Fannin counties in Georgia and Clay and Cherokee counties in North Carolina.

The EMC will hold its annual meeting Sept. 13 at Anderson Music Hall in Hiawassee.

Among the items to address, the election of three members to the EMC Board of Directors.

Online voting is available at www.brmemc.com until Sept. 10 at 4 p.m. Login information (identification number and verification code) is provided on the front side of each member's bill.

There are three members nominated by the Cooperative's Board of Directors. Brian Trout of Clay County, NC, Julie Payne of Towns County, and Lenny Parks of Suches are seeking reelection to the Board of Directors.

There are four persons nominated by petition of the Membership. They are Chris Logan of Brasstown, NC, Steven Phillips, of Towns County, Charles Jenkins of Blairsville, and Mike Patton of Blairsville.

Members from the five-county service area can vote for all three Board member seats.

Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Board of Directors appointed Trout as a Clay County, NC director in April 2014. He fills the unexpired term of the late Elois Anderson.

His opponent, Logan, currently is on the Board of Directors for the North Carolina Forestry Association, serving as Western Vice President of the North Carolina Forestry Association.

Payne was appointed by the EMC Board of Directors to fill the unexpired Towns County term of former Board of Directors' President Terry Taylor. Payne is a closing assistant for a local attorney's office.

Her opponent, Phillips, is the owner of Benny's Sanitation in Hiawassee, and also serves as a local radio personality in the Towns County area. He has served on the Board of Directors of Towns County FFA Alumni Board, and Towns County Food Pantry.

Parks has been an appointed Union County director for the past 11 years, and has been elected by his peers on the EMC Board of Directors to serve as Vice-President for the past five years.

His opponents include former State House District 8 State Rep. Charles Jenkins, of Blairsville, and Mike Patton, also of Blairsville, the owner of Patton Excavating, who has served on the Board of Directors for the Union County Board of Health, and Coosa Water Authority.

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itemized for ease of use, with which to address patient transport in the future, such as what information the nursing home should give to 911 dispatchers, and what EMS is to do after assessing the situation upon arrival.

"If at that time EMS personnel arrives at a different conclusion than the doctor's orders, then the EMS personnel will contact medical control (emergency room doctor) or the attending physician and advise the doctor of the situation," and they will decide

what to do at that point, according to the policy.

Finally, Commissioner Kendall discussed Towns County's adoption of the Association County Commissioners of Georgia 401(a) Defined Contribution Program. Commissioner Kendall introduced Ryan Reynolds of GEBCorp, which is the retirement arm of the ACCG, to speak on the change.

"We administer the 457 currently for Towns County in the 401(a) portion," said Reynolds. "The 401(a) portion was currently with a Nationwide

product, and basically what we're doing, we're combining the platform onto the Schwab platform that the 457 currently uses. The advantage of this is it's going to reduce the internal costs of the funds themselves."

GEBCorp has a governing body that meets quarterly in order to assess the viability of the funds in Towns County's plan, keeping or changing funds based on monetary performance.

"So, all in all, basically we're just combining the 401(a)

and 457 on the one platform," said Reynolds. "It'll be one statement instead of two, and it's going to be a much easier plan for the employees and administration to administer."

Commissioner Kendall stated that an overwhelming majority of county employees wanted to go ahead with this change to their retirement planning, and the resolution was adopted.

County meetings are held on the third Thursday of every month at 5:30 p.m.

Friends...from Page 1A

"It's such a wonderful community," said Roberts. "We're blessed to have the kind of people we have here. And of course, my first love here is the library."

And where do the books for the sale come from?

"People donate them all," said Roberts. "We have wonderful, wonderful, big-hearted people in this community who bring books, drop them off here."

Sandy Vaughn, resident head librarian at Mountain Regional Library, goes through the donated books and puts the ones not currently available to the library on the shelves. Duplicate books then go to the sale.

"They get a free book instead of having to pay \$17 or \$18, or \$20 for a book. So, that then adds to the library collection for free, which is very good," said Roberts.

Friends sell books year-round, but the annual sale helps to drum up awareness for the library.

"The big event is very important for us, because it's a very visible activity," said Roberts. "And it attracts attention in the community, and reminds people, 'Oh yeah, we have a library that can use our old books or our used books, and we'll donate them.' And they don't end up going into the landfill."

About 80% of the new books in the library are purchased using proceeds raised by the Friends. But the library does not live by books and baked goods alone.

"Commissioner Kendall has been great to us," said Roberts. "He's got a floating, matching grant that he gives us. He's matched \$5,000 three years in a row now. He's been our dear, dear friend for a long time - I don't know that we could ever have done better than Bill Kendall."

The sale continues Aug. 29 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Aug. 30 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Mountain Regional Library in Young Harris.

Volunteer Appreciation Cookout



Residents and volunteers enjoy celebration

Forty-seven residents from Branan Lodge and Wesley Mountain Village were recognized for their volunteer services which help make our Lodge a great place to call home.

Each volunteer was awarded a "Certificate of Appreciation" and a small gift. Words can't express how much we appreciate all the things that our resident volunteers do. Our volunteers donate their time in the Country Store, library, with hospitality, deliveries, activities, pack & prep, and many other areas in our community which is very much appreciated.

We held the get-together in our dining room, which was decorated in summer colors of yellow and green. Attendees numbered 107.

Full Throttle Ministries and Mr. & Mrs. Hatcher graciously sponsored our delicious meal of grilled hamburgers and hot dogs, cole slaw, baked beans, and drinks. Our residents each brought their favorite dessert to share. Thank you, Full Throttle Ministries, for your wonderful support.

A special thank you to our resident volunteers at Branan Lodge and Wesley Mountain Village!

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