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people are out of town," said Howell. "So, if we're going to be without a director for a month, December's the month to do it."

The board approved that plan, and is now deciding how to proceed in selecting the next candidate to fill Howell's shoes.

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to Towns County.

"I love the ease of it," said Lemus-Gomez. "In Miami, life is just a rush. You're constantly trying to get from point A to point B to point C, dealing with traffic, stress—it's awful. But here, it's just a lot more relaxed. Everyone is very calm, easygoing. Everyone's been extremely friendly to us. I mean, from day one, everyone's just been kind to us and very accepting, and that's been great."

When his name was announced as winner of Homecoming King at the pep rally during Homecoming Week, Lemus-Gomez was tackled in excitement by his friend Trace Moss, one of the "Three Musketeers" along with Gabe Gilliland, as all three had been nominated to Homecoming Court.

"Honestly, I'm still in shock," said Lemus-Gomez. "Just being nominated was surreal in and of itself. I honestly didn't think I was going to get nominated, much less become the King. If anything, the only thing I've been doing—being myself and just being kind to people. Life's too short to be mean, to just to care about what other people think about other people, or to have assumptions. It's just, being yourself and loving others."

This wise-beyond-his-years demeanor is likely the reason Lemus-Gomez made such a big splash at Towns County High School, and why he has so many friends.

"The kids love him—it's hard not to," said Principal Jonathan Gibson. "We'll take 340 of these. I probably wouldn't have a job, just let them do their thing. He's been a blessing."

Kayla Davis, who was this year's Homecoming Queen, is also a close friend of Lemus-Gomez.

"She was the first friend I had here, and also one of the best friends I have—I have a lot of best friends, I'm sorry to say," said Lemus-Gomez with a laugh. "All my best friends are just amazing people, and it's hard to have a favorite."

Lemus-Gomez described himself as an "unathletic kid" before coming to Towns County, but after a physical education class with Coach Jeannie Ledford, he decided to join the Cross Country team.

Coach Ledford has been "a tremendous help in just being able to finally realize the physical form that I want to achieve," said Lemus-Gomez.

He had some tough decisions to make for his senior year. He loved being in band, which he participated in during his junior year, but band con-

flicted with his other passions. "I wanted to do the Accel Program, Cross Country—I wanted to do chorus, because when I realized I could act in a play, I just fell in love with it," said Lemus-Gomez.

Aside from his packed schedule of extracurricular activities and college courses, and on top of his regular high school curriculum, Lemus-Gomez enjoys doing regular teen things, too, like hanging out with all of his friends outside of school when he gets the chance, even though he has yet to get his license.

"That is the one flaw in the whole plan, is the lack of a car," said Lemus-Gomez. "My friends, like everyone here, they're extremely friendly. And my friends are just the nicest people you could imagine, so they've made a sacrifice to drive me around whenever we're having plans. And I do give them gas money."

None of his classmates were surprised that he was voted Homecoming King, a coveted position for any high school senior, and the fact that his peers feel this way towards their son means much to Lemus-Gomez' parents.

"They said that their chests just swelled up with pride," said Lemus-Gomez. "You can't imagine how a Cuban mother would feel seeing her son in a school with predominantly people who aren't Cuban or of other Hispanic ethnicities, to actually vote me as the King."

"So, she's extremely happy—it made her realize how good of a decision it was to come here, because it really helped me, not just in developing my character, but it's been a general benefit in the whole aspect of everything."

Lemus-Gomez is currently taking English and psychology courses at Young Harris College, and tentatively plans to stay within the community and continue his education there after high school.

And the high school senior is thankful for the many opportunities he's received throughout the years. From Ms. Medina and Ms. Rosa, who instructed him down in Miami, to Principal Gibson and chorus teacher Chris Adams, who helped him develop a particularly funny persona on stage for the musical play Back to the 80s, Lemus-Gomez is greatly appreciative.

"I have to thank my parents first and foremost, because if it weren't for them, if I had any other parents, I wouldn't be the person I am today," said Lemus-Gomez.

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at 4:15 p.m. and the Lady Indians will compete at 4:55 p.m.

"They had strong competition today, and they wanted to do what had never been done," said Coach Ledford. "And I think that's what drives our kids every year."

Just prior to the race, the boys' team held a group huddle that would prove to be the words of the day, chanting "Towns County on three, Towns County on three—Towns County!"

And Coach Ledford ran nearly as much as her kids Thursday, heading to different parts of the course to encourage them as they made the two long laps toward victory.

A favorite saying of Coach Ledford is how a team is only as good as its last runner, and with competition so close, the slowest time, even out to the seventh place, can decide victory or defeat, and this day, it spelled victory.

"We like pulling off the impossible, we like embracing the challenge," said Coach Ledford. "And this one, I think every year that they blow my mind, but every year I realize it can be blown even more. Because these are new, these are raw—this just shows that sometimes you've just got to believe in these kids and make them believe in themselves. And today they did, and they both



got first." Historically, Towns County's toughest area rival has been Commerce.

"We're thankful to be in this area because this area

preps you the best for state," said Coach Ledford. "This will be the same battle that we'll have to turn around, and Commerce will be ready for us again next week with

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In the 6 and 7-year-old age group, Conor Fuller won first place as an elaborate fisherman with a huge haul, and Jathan Herendon flew into second place as a dragon.

Last but not least, the 8 to 10-year-olds were: Ethan Stewart for first place, dressed creatively as trailer trash; Trinity Riley took second with her fiendish witch costume; and third place featured a tie between Lindsey Giles as a porcelain doll and Liam King as the Joker from Batman.

Judges for the contest were Kris-Ann Poe and Stephany Zaic, who are local attorneys for the juvenile court, and Stephanie McConnell, a local real estate attorney, helped with the prize money.

"Every one of them are winners in my opinion, but we have to have a first, second and third place," said Mayor Mathis.

Hiawassee Chief of Police Jimmy Wright watched over the event and took dona-

tions for this year's Shop with a Cop program.

"Every little bit helps," said Chief Wright. "We used to do a dunk tank, but we don't do that anymore. If it was warmer weather, it wouldn't be bad, but being Halloween, it's unpredictable."

Ronnie Moffett emceed the event, making sure to play ghoulish classics to delight trick-or-treaters, such as Werewolves of London and Love Potion No. 9.

Many businesses and organizations were on hand to pass out candy to trick-or-treaters.

Towns County's Red Cross donated coffee and hot chocolate to freezing patrons of the event, and sold hot dogs, chips, sodas and water.

The county's Department of Family and Children Services was there to recruit for foster homes and give candy, and the Unicoy Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Hiawassee was out furthering their

message.

"I was raised to believe you should help anybody you can, and that's one of the things we do, is charity," said Kent Mooney, who has been with the Masons for two years.

Woodmen of the World, Verizon Wireless, GoIn' Postal, Zaxby's, Kris Berrong's Barber Shop and Carquest, to name a few, helped to make the event a success.

Gregg Bradley hosted a booth with his family, sponsoring his businesses Kwik Cash Title Pawn and MTN City Powersports, both out of Young Harris.

Koo Lim, owner of Asia-no restaurant, did Halloween a little differently this year, as in past years. He and his crew handed out fortune cookies instead of candy.

"The first time we did it, it was just like a gag, but it looks like everybody loves it," said Lim. "We give probably anywhere from 5,000 to 8,000 cookies a year. How

the girls division. We'll have to go to battle again.

"The boys will face a different competition next week, and so they both have goals," said Coach Ledford. "And again, they get their hearts right, they're getting their minds right, and this just shows if they want something and they've got enough courage to back it up—the will is half of running. The technique was my part, they brought me the rest."

Looking ahead, it would appear that the Towns County Cross Country teams are ready for anything, especially with the momentum of two area championships heading into the state competition.

"We're excited about state," said Coach Ledford. "The boys are very hungry for wanting their turn. We're just going to do like we did today, show up, leave it out there on the course, make sure their hearts and minds are right, and do the best job we can."

Coach Ledford and all of the boys and girls of Cross Country would like to give a special thank you to "all the people who supported us at our fundraiser at Ingles this past Saturday."

"We are grateful for their generosity and encouraging words. They raised enough money to cover all the expenses for each runner" going to state.

Parcel 52 Public Hearing provides input for TVA

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Tennessee Valley Authority held an informational meeting at Hiawassee City Hall on Tuesday, Oct. 28, to accept public comment on a proposed 30-year recreation easement of land to be used for a mayor's park.

A mayor's park would include "walking trails, picnic tables, restrooms, a children's playground, a fishing pier, and a boat-launching ramp with paved parking for vehicles and boat trailers," according to TVA, with the Department of Natural Resources providing funding for the boat ramp and parking.

Representatives from TVA were James Adams, senior manager for commercial and public recreation, Keri Chartrand, a recreational use specialist for the area, and Public Relations Manager Jim Hopson.

Adams discussed the easement and its potential use as a public park, along with some of the concerns TVA takes into consideration each time it grants an easement.

"We consider from two things," said Adams. "We consider from an environmental standpoint. Sometimes we go to do something and we don't realize there's a family cemetery there. Most times we do, but there are things like that that we may not recognize. We think about wetlands, we think about threatening endangered species. Most of these are laws



Hiawassee City Manager Rick Stancil provides details about a proposed Mayor's Park if Parcel 52 is approved by TVA. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

that are put in place, so we run a review through that.

"But we also are concerned about other things. Maybe a city park wants to build a pavilion or something. We say, well, have you thought about the 500, the 100-year flood level? So, we communicate about those things."

The major emphasis of the public meeting was open communication between TVA and residents of Hiawassee.

"We're here tonight to listen, to talk to you," said Adams. "Maybe there're things that we haven't considered that we need to consider as we go through to make a decision."

If Adams and Chartrand make the decision to go ahead with the easement, they turn in a recommendation to TVA's CEO

to make the final decision.

"Thank y'all for coming out tonight," said Hiawassee City Manager Rick Stancil. "I've said before, this in my mind will be the third major project for the city's benefit for the next 20 years. We have a water plant, we have a sewer plant—it's my prediction this will be our third most important resource that will be developed both for our children and grandchildren, and something that one day, everybody in this room will take pride in having been involved in. It's very important to us."

Open comments from residents included concerns over providing adequate parking to attract lucrative fishing tournaments.

"This would accommo-

date about 22 paved spaces right now," said City Engineer Don Baker on current plans. "We do have overflow for 10 more spaces, but it's in the grass area, and that's pretty much what it is right now."

The city is looking into options to increase parking capacity, including a "geogrid" to allow for parking in the park area without destroying the grass, and possibly attaining more land from TVA in the future for overflow parking behind the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC substation that is situated next door.

Another resident asked how the city planned to pay for maintenance after the park was built, and Stancil pointed out that SPLOST funds have been set aside to accommodate the expense, stating that the city would not have planned for a park if it could not afford regular maintenance without raising taxes.

Mayor Barbara Mathis read letters of support from state legislators District 50 State Sen. John Wilkinson and House District 8 State Rep. Stephen Allison.

"We think it's important, any time that we are granting an easement like this for a municipal recreation opportunity, to have these type of public meetings to allow the community to voice their support or their concerns about what is being proposed before a final decision on the easement is made," said Hopson.

TVA accepted public comments on comment cards from attending residents.

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slightly more than 34,000.

"I'm grateful for the tens of thousands of Northeast Georgians who made their voices heard tonight," Rep. Collins said. "Since you first hired me to work for you in Congress two years ago, I've listened to what you've had to say. Today, you spoke loudly and clearly that we work well together, and I thank you."

"Tonight, more Americans across the country have agreed with Northeast Georgia that conservative principles are what America needs," Collins said. "We have a moment before us, starting now, to put our modern ideas for smaller, more responsive government into action. With an even stronger majority in the House and leadership we have desperately needed in the Senate, we will break the lock of President Obama's bitter partisanship and get Washington working for you again."

"There's a lot we don't yet know about the way forward in the 114th Congress, but one thing is certain: we have more opportunities than ever before to show what real leadership looks like."

"Thank you for trusting me to be your voice in Washington. I hear you, not just on Election Day, but every day." For Gov. Deal, the convincing win over Democrat Jason Carter, provided a vote of confidence that Georgians believed his leadership was what was best for Georgia.

The Governor said that the message he had was one that the people of Georgia accepted and understood.

He added that Georgians believed that he did a good job bringing the state through very difficult times.

Gov. Deal, and Lt. Gov. Cagle, continued their political



U.S. Rep. Doug Collins

unbeaten streaks.

Lt. Gov. Cagle had no trouble at all out of Democrat Connie Stokes, who basically provided a name on the Democratic ticket for the General Election. She didn't put up a fight at all in her attempt to become Georgia's first female Lieutenant Governor.

Cagle took 60 percent of the statewide vote, and figures to be an unbeatable candidate for governor in four years.

The GOP didn't just take Towns County, it romped throughout Northeast Georgia, taking every county in its wake.

The Constitutional Amendments, first, asking if Georgians wanted an amendment to prevent the General Assembly from increasing the maximum state income tax rate won overwhelmingly, with 74 percent of Georgians voting 'Yes.'

Second, Georgians voted 'Yes' to allow for additional reckless driving penalties for the Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund.

Finally, Georgians voted to keep the University System of Georgia properties tax exempt.

Towns followed suit on all three questions.

BOE interviewing superintendent candidates

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The Towns County Board of Education spent last week interviewing seven applicants for the open Towns County Superintendent of Schools position in three called meetings.

Young Harris College hosted the meetings in the Pruitt-Barrett Administrative Office building, which



Dr. Richard Behrens

were held on Tuesday, Oct. 28, Wednesday, Oct. 29, and Thursday, Oct. 30.

In total, 46 applicants put in for the job before the Oct. 6 deadline.

Now, the board can choose to hire one of the seven initial interviewees or continue to interview more applicants.

The only official business acted upon was the approval of a paraprofessional position at the elementary school as requested by Interim Superinten-

dent Dr. Richard Behrens, and the board discussed fundraisers for middle school wrestling and the high school Future Farmers of America.

Dr. Sandy Addis, with King-Cooper & Associates, has assisted the Towns County Board of Education throughout the superintendent search process.

The new superintendent will replace Melissa Williams, who took the superintendent's post in Rabun County.