

BOE...continued from page 1

Increases in expenses coupled with a Tax Digest that has decreased from \$957,785 per mill in 2009 to \$768,990 per mill in 2012 for a total loss of \$903,195 have caused the board to rely on its limited fund balance each year to balance the budget.

Without additional tax revenue, there will not be enough income to handle expenses.

The board will hold

two public meetings on Nov. 14th.

The first will be at noon at the Towns County Board of Education headquarters and the second will be at 6 p.m. also at Board of Education headquarters.

A third meeting will be held at 8 a.m. on Nov. 21st at the Towns County Board of Education.

The public is invited to attend the hearings.

Percy...continued from page 1

for making it possible for me to be here with you," said a very humble Sledge.

After dancing and creating quite a sensation on stage with his version of what appeared to be Michael Jackson's "Moonwalk," Sledge asked for a stool to sit down and a towel to wipe the sweat from his brow.

"You might think I'm ashamed, but I'm not ashamed. I'm tired and need to take a break," said Sledge.

The Alabama born soul singer, Sledge had a relatively brief period of intense popularity in the late 1960's, fueled in large part by his rendition of the now classic ballad, *When a Man Loves a Woman*.

Sledge's career enjoyed a renaissance in the 1980s. In 2005, he was inducted into the Rock 'N' Roll Hall of Fame.



Legendary R&B performer Percy Sledge lights up the crowd at Anderson Music Hall in Hiawassee. Photo/Libby Shook

TCHS Leadership Day

By Libby Shook
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Towns County High School Senior Leadership Day 2012 was held recently at the Tom Phillips' Farm.

The 71 Seniors and their class sponsors spent the day participating in team building activities.

A delicious lunch was prepared by Robert and Brenda Brewer and each senior received a T-shirt courtesy of Citizen South Bank.

Family Connection Co-ordinator Amy Rosser said, "Senior Leadership Day is a highlight for our seniors, as well as the staff and administrators involved in its planning. Family Connections is honored to be a part of this ongoing tradition."

Rosser explained the role of Family Connections in the planning and implementation of Senior Leadership Day.

"Family Connection, in partnership with the 21st Century After School Program under the direction of Jenny Stowers, provides the training for the day," said Rosser.

Rosser explained that the training includes team

building activities, Senior Project instruction, guidance for the upcoming year, and basically oversees the day. This year's theme was "volunteerism." Each senior incorporates creative activities they have made at Senior Leadership Day into a community service project or their individual Senior Project.

There is a great deal of planning that goes into each of these projects and students work very hard on their project.

"The Senior Project is an optional Service Learning component that the seniors may choose to participate in for the remainder of the school year following Senior Leadership Day," said Rosser.

According to Rosser, the Service Learning component must be an "ongoing community-minded project."

TCHS Principal Roy Perren was very pleased with the work the students and staff had put into making this another successful Senior Leadership Day.

Perren also extends a special thank you on behalf of Towns County High School to all who played a role in making sure this day went off without a hitch.

Cross Country...continued from page 1

dynamite comes in small packages because she is explosive when she hits the course.

"There is a look that comes over Ansley when she gets ready to run and you know she is there to take care of business," proclaimed Ledford.

Even though she might be smaller in stature than many of her competitors, Ansley Vardeman was pushing and elbowing just like everybody else as the race got underway and the runners were all bunched up.

"She is a fighter and she will get in there and stand her ground and run the race the way she knows she can," praised Ledford as she describing Vardeman approach to Cross Country.

"She loves to run and she likes the competition and that combination makes her a good runner," Ledford said.

Vardeman found her place at the beginning and held it for the whole race.

It took a while for the field to get spread out but when it did, she got to the front and stayed there finishing nearly a minute of the second place runner.

"The course was fair today. It was hard in places and soft in others but I was comfortable with it," Ansley Vardeman said, when asked about the course and the early starting time.

"We've been here be-



The Indians' Bradley Smith was ready to run. Photo/Joe Collins

fore and they always run early so I was prepared for it this year," she said. "It wasn't a big deal."

Her first place finish marks the first time in the history of the school that a Lady Indian has won the Individual State Championship in Cross Country.

"I am just so proud of my Cross Country family. We've worked hard and been through some tough times like all families do, but we persevered and came out on top," Coach Ledford said. "I love every one of them and we believe in each other just like family and that is the secret to our success. I want to say thank you to each and everyone of my Cross Country

family for believing in me and working hard to get better," said a proud Ledford.

The tears were flowing and the team was rejoicing when Smith caught Ledford unaware and absolutely drenched her while her back was turned with the team's water cooler. The ice-cold water was a needed reality shock for Ledford as she was unable to speak for several minutes after she realized the ladies had won.

"Oh man that was cold but it was the kinda' cold I don't mind," declared Ledford as the celebrating continued.

It's the first state championship for Towns County since the Indians' baseball

team earned the 1988 state championship, Towns County High School Principal Roy Perren said.

Ansley Vardeman's individual championship is the first in school history, Perren said.

"The varsity baseball team won a state title in 1988 and to my knowledge, this is only the second state championship that a team has won at TCHS and I believe that Ansley is the only overall Cross Country champion we've ever had," Perren said. "I am proud for Coach Ledford. She is a great coach who has worked hard and the team has worked hard and I and TCHS would like to thank them for that."

The Indians' biggest Cross Country fan, Perren said he's numb, but he expected the Lady Indians to claim the title. That's because all the years the Lady Indians have competed in the state championships against private schools, they seemingly always came home the uncrowned public school champion.

"There has been a lot built into the fact that this is the first year that the state championships have been separated into public school and private school meets," he said. "The GHSA did a good thing when they separated public and private school athletics and this meet was a good example of how positive those actions were."

"Our girls' team has been strong over the last several years and they deserve this," he said.



Caitlin Sheffield



Bradley Smith stands on the podium with the Top 10 runners in the Class A Public Schools Cross Country Championships. Smith finished seventh. Photo/Joe Collins

Logging...continued from page 1

activity shall meet applicable requirements of the 'Erosion and Sediment Act of 1975 as amended,' and of any applicable local ordinances on soil erosion and sedimentation control.

John Colberg, Water Quality Program Director with the Georgia Forestry Commission's Gainesville Office, said Kiker was in error on his interpretation of the Mountain Protection Act.

"We work with the EPD," Colberg said. "They have us under contract to oversee the Mountain Protection Act. Silviculture (forestry) does not come under the Act."

Kiker responded, "Mr. Colberg, I am reading from the Mountain Protection Act. If you can find anywhere in this document where it says that, I will recant my statement."

Colberg was unable to find that particular section in the document.

On this night, there were at least 125 residents in attendance at a meeting that many felt was long overdue.

This was a very personal and emotional issue for residents of the Homeowners Association as they expressed many concerns regarding the logging trucks that would be traveling on their county-maintained road.

The discussions got heated at times as residents asked

questions of Scofield representatives, specifically Bear, who opened the meeting, regarding their role as a timber-harvesting company.

Major concerns of the residents included what the logging trucks, which were described by Bear as "five or six loads, three to five times daily, at 30 tons each (60,000 pounds)," would do to their road and the covered culvert "bridge."

Scofield Timber will be traveling from Jones Gap Road through Gander Gap Road with their logging trucks.

Residents expressed concerns regarding soil erosion, destruction of the aesthetic appearance of the mountains, animals that would be driven from the project area, and safety issues regarding traffic on this single lane road as well as the residents and school bus traffic that travel the road daily.

Residents asked Bear to find another way in and out to avoid disruption of Gander Gap Road.

"We'll use this road. It's a county road. We're not here to do anything but harvest timber. If we cause any damage, we will repair it," said Bear.

"It's our objective to harvest timber, not to clear cut. The owner has a right to sell her timber. It may not be something you want her to do, but she certainly has a right to sell the lumber," said Bear.

Kendall asked residents if they could take a break while he, Kiker and the Planning Commission met with Scofield Timber and the representatives of the Georgia Forestry Commission.

Following the brief meeting, the two sides reconvened and declared that they had reached an agreement.

Kiker, speaking on behalf of the county, told the residents that Scofield Timber would fill out an application for a permit to harvest timber from the 270-plus acres as well as submitting a copy of proof of their \$1 million dollar insurance policy.

They also agreed to put up a \$10,000 bond. Scofield Timber Co. also agreed to repairs regarding any damages done to the road.

Scofield also will be required to be in compliance with the Mountain Protection Act regarding the size of the trees removed. Scofield will not be allowed to do any "stumping" (the removal of stumps from the property) or any acts that will be in violation of Mountain Protection Act standards for land disturbance and soil erosion for the mountains.

Donehoo defended her position as the land owner.

"I am a widow with three children that I am raising by myself. I want to be able to send them to college and that's why I am selling the timber,"

she said.

Donehoo's husband was diagnosed with Stage Four lung cancer in Dec. 2010 and passed away five months later, in May 2011.

"Dealing with his death has been difficult for all of us and has put a significant financial strain on our household," said Donehoo. "My oldest son is a senior and will start college in the fall of 2013. Selectively harvesting the timber from the Towns County property will allow me to pay for college and still keep the land as well. This is my husband's legacy to his children and I am trying to honor his wishes."

Tom Barnhill, president of the Homeowners Association, said residents were trying to protect the mountains.

"Bald Mountain is our home and we felt it necessary to let our concerns regarding the timber cutting on Bald Mountain be heard," he said. "These concerns include, the degradation of the roads leading to our homes, the structural integrity of the culvert bridge which is used by our community as well as the campground, the possible runoff from the disturbed cutting site, and the overall aesthetics of the mountain. We feel that, at this time, those areas were addressed to our satisfaction and any future concerns will be addressed to the county agents and U.S. Forestry."

Groundbreaking for county park becomes a much anticipated reality

By Libby Shook
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Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall had a vision for his county and that vision was to build a recreational facility for all county residents to enjoy.

That vision is coming closer to fruition as a groundbreaking ceremony was held at the site of the new Foster Memorial Park on Saturday afternoon, Nov. 3rd.

Wes Hooper, Towns County director of recreation, stepped up to the plate and served as host to approximately 30 guests including Alan Rogers, assistant director of recreation, Anthony Turpin, Architect, Tommy Goodyear, Construction Manager and General Contractor for R.W. Allen & Associates, Mike Vanbriggles, Engineer, Marty Roberts, 911 Mapping, and Nancy Broshear, former owner of the current site.

The only one missing from this scene was Commissioner Kendall.

"Commissioner Kend-

all sends his regrets and we regret him being unable to attend due to a loss in the family. Our condolences go out to Mr. Kendall and his family," said Hooper.

"We all know, given any other circumstances, he would be here with us today. He is so excited about this park and the delivering of a top quality facility for the citizens of Towns County," said Hooper.

"We want to recognize and say a very special thank you to Nancy Broshear and the entire Foster family for their association in the acquisition and purchasing of this beautiful tract of property designated for public recreation and I want to to acknowledge and praise, as well, the family for their donation of the proceeds from the property sale to local charities in our area including scholarships to local students attending Young Harris College," said Hooper.

"It has taken a long time to acquire a suitable tract of property to develop these much needed facilities that Towns County citizens can truly call their own," said Hooper.



The Towns County Recreation Park off Mining Gap Trail is aimed at becoming a crown jewel for the county.

"So we are here today to celebrate as we break ground beginning the construction of a state-of-the-art multipurpose building designed as a recreational, community, and convention center."

The facility will consist of a double gymnasium, a large community room, kitchen, and offices. There will be ample parking facilities to allow the county to hold conferences, ball tourna-

ments, and concerts.

The recreation department is anticipated to bring in much needed revenue and help stimulate the economy of the Towns County.

The outside facilities will include a football field, soccer field, open multipurpose area, three baseball/softball fields, tennis courts, playgrounds, picnic shelter, and walking trails.

The most exciting part of

this endeavor, is that it is by a 1-cent Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax.

Broshear said, "My sister, Johnnie Foster and her husband Ralph, owned this property. Ralph bought it from his mother around 1936. They didn't have any children and Johnnie wanted to leave a legacy for future generations with the Foster name.

"She didn't want condos or high-rises built here. When Jean Kendall and I

talked about it over lunch one day, we thought that it would be a good location for the recreation park that Bill had envisioned for Towns County residents and folks from surrounding areas. It's centrally located and seemed like a good spot," said Broshear.

They were right. It is an excellent location with its beautiful mountain views and adequate space for the 27,000 square-foot facility that according to Goodyear should "have the roof on by Christmas."

Kendall was adamant that this facility would be completed by "locals" and several bid processes took place at the Towns County Courthouse to ensure that happening.

"Most local workers have already been hired for the project," Goodyear said. "We are still talking to three or four others."

"The only regret I have is that Johnnie didn't live to see it. She would have been thrilled to know that this was how the property was going to be used," said Broshear.