

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Legal Organ of Union County

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Commissioner Paris: 'Property taxes are going up'

By Shawn Jarrard
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Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris announced in his Thursday, Aug. 16, regular meeting that property taxes will be going up this year.

The 2018 millage rate is tentatively increasing to 6.626 mills, up 0.84 mills from the 2017 rate of 5.786 mills.

This will be the first time since 2014 that the county tax rate has gone up, when it increased by 0.482 mills from the year before.

The new millage rate is projected to bring in \$8,352,167 in countywide property taxes, which is \$1,193,810 more than last year, reflecting a 16.68 percent increase in 2018 projected tax collections over 2017.

Per state law, the commissioner's office is holding a series of public hearings on the tax increase

prior to its final adoption. The hearings will occur at the Union County Courthouse on Tuesday, Aug. 28, one at 10 a.m. and another at 6 p.m., and a third on Tuesday, Sept. 4, at 4:30 p.m.

Without the tentative tax increase, the 2018 millage rate would be no more than 5.767 mills, according to the commissioner's office, which is actually 0.019 mills less than the 2017 rate.

"The proposed tax increase for a year for a home with a fair market value of \$100,000 is the approximately \$13.95," per the commissioner's office. "And the proposed tax increase for a year for non-homestead property with a fair market value of \$200,000 is approximately \$37.92."

Ultimately, the 2018 millage rate will be set in a called meeting at the courthouse on Tuesday, Sept. 4, at 5 p.m.

"You might ask, why are our taxes going up when



Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris in his Aug. 16 regular county meeting.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

the economy is the best it's been in years?" said Paris on Aug. 16. "Well, our medical costs have escalated about \$750,000. Our housing of out-of-town jail prisoners will exceed \$100,000."

Furthermore, stated Paris, the costs associated with maintaining the salaries and benefits of county employees "are increasing daily," and he noted a special concern at the sheriff's office, which is struggling to remain competitive with neighboring

agencies.

"While it is said that everyone that wants a job has it, it is not quite that simple," said Paris. "For counties to maintain employees, we are now having to compete with higher wages in the public marketplace."

"We are facing the first inflation in years, and we are seeing the cost of gasoline, tar, asphalt, vehicles and other supporting supplies continue to go up ahead of our revenues."

"Our E-911 and public safety radios and equipment upgrades that we will have to do this year, that we've been putting off, will exceed \$650,000 in costs."

"We will have to purchase a ladder truck for the fire department, one that we've been avoiding for years. And we are starting the process of adding a fire training center to provide more intense training for the firemen that we have to maintain better abilities

to protect you and protect themselves."

And the list went on, with the commissioner describing a revolving door of need for equipment upgrades at the fire department, road department, county maintenance department, "and, really, every other department."

"We are all very sorry that this will be required, but our accounting director has been working diligently on our next year's budget, and we just have no choice," said Paris. "We hope everyone understands that Union County is a growing county."

"Our expenses have increased 6 percent this year, and our revenues have only gone up 2 percent. Property digest values, which is the value of the increases in new homes and new property, only went up 2 percent this year."

"Part of that issue is that, See Property Tax, Page 2A

Cass Larson of TVA talks rate increases with Blue Ridge EMC

By Shawn Jarrard
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YOUNG HARRIS—The Tennessee Valley Authority is moving forward with another annual base-rate power increase, despite pushback from the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC and other local power companies.

Members of the TVA Board of Directors were expected to approve another wholesale rate adjustment in their Aug. 22 board meeting, which occurred after press time.

The adjustment will take effect on Oct. 1, and EMC members can expect to see marginally higher annual power costs pass through to their customer bills.

TVA has implemented similar annual increases since 2013 as part of its 10-year plan to cut fuel costs and tackle debt, and the latest rate increase will amount to a 2.4-percent upward



Cass Larson

adjustment on TVA's portion of wholesale power costs.

In dollars, moderate power users can expect to pay roughly \$27 more each year, while larger households with greater electric needs are likely to see annual bills increase by as much as \$40.

Cass Larson of TVA

traveled to Young Harris to speak on this issue in the Aug. 14 regular meeting of the BRMEMC Board of Directors.

Larson is vice president of Pricing and Contracts with TVA, and he delivered a presentation aimed at easing the board's concerns over TVA rate practices moving forward.

Fortunately, TVA has overperformed in revenue gains thanks to its rate increases and cost-cutting measures over the last five years, and Larson told the EMC board that he was confident TVA would only need to approve one additional rate increase after this year's adjustment goes into effect.

This is a positive development for TVA power consumers, as the federal agency is signaling its abandonment of the last three years of planned cost adjustments, likely making 2019 the last year for the TVA Board to approve a rate increase

See Larson, Page 2A

Community icon D.L. Martin passes away at 96

News Special
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For most of his 96 years in life, D.L. Martin served as a pillar of his community here in Blairsville, and sadly, he passed away on Tuesday, Aug. 14, in the Union County Nursing Home.

A lifelong resident of Union County, Martin was always an active member of his beloved Blairsville community. He served in the U.S. Navy in his youth, and back home, he was a member of First Baptist Church of Blairsville, a Charter Member of the Blairsville Kiwanis Club, Allegheny Masonic Lodge #114 F&AM, and the Union County Quarterback Club.

Martin enjoyed supporting local sports programs in Union County in any way that he could, and he continued attending games up until recently.

He and other men in the community were instrumental in securing Union County a medical clinic that later became Union General Hospital.

Throughout the



D.L. Martin

community, Martin was a well-known local businessman who owned and operated Blairsville Cleaners for a number of years.

He had laundry mats before going into real estate, where he worked at Union Realty as a broker and agent for many years, and later, he worked mostly as a real estate appraiser.

Martin is the son of the late John and Alice (Jones) Martin, and he was preceded in death by his wife, Gladys

McGrail Martin, who passed away in 2010.

D.L. Martin leaves behind many friends and loving family members, including his two daughters and sons-in-law of Blairsville, Elizabeth "Libby" and husband Jack Stevens, and Carolyn and husband Donnie Hutson.

Arrangements were cared for by Cochran Funeral Home and Crematory of Blairsville, and memorial services were held for Martin on Friday, Aug. 17, at his home church of First Baptist, with Dr. Fred Lodge officiating.

Minister of Music Ed Lawrie presented the music for the service, and the North Georgia Honor Guard presented military honors.

Memorial contributions may be directed to any of the following organizations:

Union County Historical Society, P.O. Box 35, Blairsville, Georgia 30514; Union County Nursing Home Activities Department, 164 Nursing Home Circle, Blairsville, Georgia 30512; or First Baptist Church of Blairsville, P.O. Box 2058, Blairsville, Georgia 30514.

Tom Bruce remembered at Cruisers' Cruise-In on the Square

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Car enthusiasts gathered on Saturday, Aug. 18, for the Tom Bruce Memorial Car Show, which served as the finale of the Cruisers' Cruise-In on the Square series hosted by the Blairsville Cruisers.

With more than 40 individuals showing off their cars in the event, attendees had the opportunity to view classic muscle cars, modern sports cars, old-fashioned trucks, and many other show vehicles.

The Blairsville turned the event into a genuine car show, and there were classic cars parked on every corner of the downtown

See Cruisers, Page 3A



Phyllis Bruce presenting the Tom Bruce Memorial Trophy to Roy Phillips, left, for his classic 1974 Ford Bronco on Saturday, Aug. 18, with Wayne Tanner. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

UC Schools Chorus kids sing national anthem at Stripers game



The Union County High and Middle School Chorus Programs singing the national anthem at Coolray Field in Lawrenceville before the Aug. 18 Gwinnett Stripers baseball game. See Chorus, Page 2A

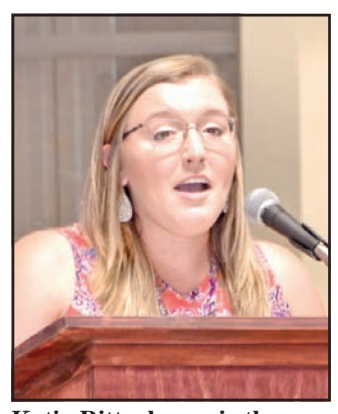
Future Farmers of America previews 2018-2019 goals in open house

By Jarrett Whitener
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The Union County Future Farmers of America marked the beginning of the 2018-2019 school year with an Agriscience Center Open House on Thursday, Aug. 16.

FFA members invited their families and the community to the center for a barbecue dinner, and the leaders of the organization explained the upcoming projects for the year.

"We want to get our members excited about events that are happening, and we want new members to be excited about joining the organization,"



Katie Rittenhouse is the new ag teacher and FFA advisor at Union County Middle School. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

Young Farmer Program.

For his part, Union County CTAE Coordinator Josh Davis recognized the hard work and importance of member families for supporting their children as they journey through the FFA experience.

"I am very proud of our agricultural program and the success I have seen in our students," said Davis. "The instructors of the agriculture classes at Union County Schools help drive the students to their potential and success."

Ag Teacher Katie Rittenhouse, a Union County graduate who is new to the middle school this year, See FFA, Page 6A

Blairsville woman killed in Murphy, NC, murder/suicide

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MURPHY, NC — A Blairsville woman was shot and killed in an apparent murder/suicide in Murphy, North Carolina, on Monday, Aug. 13, according to the Cherokee County (NC) Sheriff's Office.

In a press release concerning the incident, the sheriff's office confirmed that the victim was Tamma Lee, 57, of Union County, and the perpetrator was Nathan Mashburn, 27, of Fannin County.

The sheriff's office declined to elaborate on the exact nature of Lee and Mashburn's relationship, citing an investigation that was still active and ongoing as of press time Monday.

Cherokee County (NC) E-911 Communications received a call at about 8:20 p.m. on Aug. 13, indicating that a female had possibly been shot at a residence on Twin Pond Road, in the Hiwassee Dam Community of Cherokee County, North Carolina.

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Tamma Lee

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Fri. Aug 24 vs. East Hall 7:30 PM

CROSS COUNTRY

Thurs. Aug 23 Meeks Park 4:30 PM

SOFTBALL

Thurs. Aug 23 @ Monticello 5 PM

March for Jesus

Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds

Aug. 25 @ 9 a.m.

Union County Farmers Market

Totally Tomatos

Saturday August 25th

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9th Annual Tractor Show and Parade

Union County Farmers Market

Sat. September 1st

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