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But the Discovery Channel visitors also wanted a big picture overview of crime on the Trail within Union County.

"She wanted to talk to me about crime in general on the Appalachian Trail, and what in general we have to deal with on the Appalachian Trail as far as crime goes, which is basically nothing right now," said Lt. Osborn. "Meredith Emerson was the last known

crime that had been reported to us that I know of."

Aside from a few missing persons and medical response cases over the years – and the isolated killing of Emerson – the Trail has offered the county very little to worry about, according to Lt. Osborn.

"If the Discovery Channel accepts the segment of research that she did, they'll be back, and they'll be full-scale filming here for at least a

week to two weeks," said Lt. Osborn. "They'll be talking to the actual people that were involved in the search for Meredith, the GBI – whoever will be willing to talk to them about it."

The producer will contact Lt. Osborn should the Discovery Channel ultimately decide to include Union County in its show about crime on the Trail.

Lt. Osborn also spoke

with the producer about how well the community got along with hikers, and how to stay safe on the Trail.

"Don't travel alone, and always have some personal protection with you," said Lt. Osborn. "Know who you're with and your surroundings. The animals are probably more dangerous than the people that you'll confront on the Trail."

Council...from Page 1

three women on the council, with councilmembers Tony Dyer and Buddy Moore, voted unanimously to appoint Akins as the city attorney for Fiscal Year 2016, as well as Janice Gratton as the city clerk for Fiscal Year 2016.

The councilmembers then decided where they would serve as liaisons on behalf of the City of Blairsville.

Moore will serve as liaison to the Wastewater Treatment and Water Treatment plants.

Cone will be the new liaison for the Blairsville Airport, where she was previously liaison to the Union County Historical Society.

Easter switched from the airport to the Union County Historical Society, where she will become a board representative for the city.

Dyer remained liaison over city streets and sidewalks, and Mahan remained liaison to the Blairsville Police

Department.

Mahan will also continue to serve on the Blairsville Downtown Development Authority Board.

"Any problems that might arise that need to come before the council, that department head needs to go to their council liaison and have them to bring it to the council as an agenda item," said Mayor Jim Conley. "It gives the councilperson an opportunity to learn more about that department, which is the biggest reason."

Moore was also appointed, for another year running, as mayor pro tempore, where "pro tempore" is Latin for "for the time being."

The job of mayor pro tem is "to run the meetings in my absence," said Mayor Conley. "Or to be able to carry on the business of the city if for some reason I'm not able to come to work, or in case of sickness or what have you. And of course, if I'm disabled or sick and it comes meeting time, they run the meeting."

When it came time for the city's department heads to

report, Darren Harper, program manager of the Downtown Development Authority, started a conversation about whether or not the intersection of Bob Head Street, Young Harris Street and Pat Haralson Drive will be a four-way stop or a through street on Pat Haralson.

Discussion centered on the likelihood of a four-way stop backing up traffic around the Downtown Blairsville Square, or if Pat Haralson Drive would be practical for use by motorists trying to make left-hand turns out of both Bob Head Street and Young Harris Street without a four-way.

Harper made a case for a four-way stop, saying it was his job to bring in foot traffic to the area, and slowing down car traffic would promote a more pedestrian-friendly downtown.

Councilman Dyer said the most important thing to promoting foot traffic would be to get usable, permanent parking squared away as quickly as possible, and that he believed the best thing to do would be to start with a through-way for Pat Haralson Drive, and consider changing it later if that was a direction

they decided to take.

Several possibilities were discussed as to how to alleviate traffic concerns at the new entrance from Bob Head Street, which is the new off-ramp connecting Highway 515 to Pat Haralson Drive.

From making Young Harris Street a right-turn only to revisiting the idea of contacting the Georgia Department of Transportation about putting a left-hand turn lane in from Hwy 515 East to turn into the Union County Courthouse, the council went over several options before deciding to table the issue pending further consideration.

Mayor Conley said that he would contact GDOT to ask their opinion on the matter, which he did the day following the meeting, getting in touch with David Olson, the DOT traffic engineer for this area.

"They made a recommendation that Haralson Drive be a through street just like it is now," said Mayor Conley. "If you try to impede traffic on Haralson Drive, it's going to back traffic up on the old courthouse square."

UCSO...from Page 1

to help us a lot."

The addition will also house a squad room, which will allow the sheriff's office to conduct both in-house and interagency investigations away from the hustle and bustle of the office area.

James Bridges Construction was the low bidder for the project, coming in at \$22,000.

Money had been set aside in last year's budget to cover the cost of the project, with \$16,000 coming from the county and \$6,000 coming from the sheriff's drug seizure fund.

Construction began in the fall, and is expected to be finished in February, depending on the weather.

Once construction is complete, investigators will be able to conduct isolated, interruption-free interviews with both suspects and victims.

Prior to the addition, investigators have had to interview people in their offices, which were subject to phones ringing, people knocking, deputies coming and going. And being well-utilized workspaces, those being interviewed could be distracted further by notes and paperwork around the office.

"If a victim has had a traumatic experience with something, it gets them away from the day-to-day goings on of the office, and gives them a space of their own, basically," said Sheriff Mason. "A quieter area, where they're away from the public eye, people coming in and doing other things over there."

The same goes for individuals suspected of crimes – a sterile environment will allow investigators to better conduct interviews, as those being interviewed will have little to concentrate on other than the interview at hand.

Union County Chief Deputy John George is excited about the capabilities of the new squad room housed within the addition.

"This room here is going to serve multiple purposes," said Chief Deputy George. "It's going to be a squad room for our investigators, and if we have other agencies come in that want to look over cases. If we have a major case, sort of like a Meredith Emerson case, another agency can come in from the outside and set up house here."

"A lot of times when you have a major case, you have to have a room to share intelligence with other investigators, and here, we can put that on the walls without interfering with the normal operation of the office."

The added workspace is considered a much-needed addition to the sheriff's office, especially by investigators, and the sheriff is happy to have the new area.

"When I go to these other counties and see these big nice jails and sheriff's offices, it would be nice to have that, but at this time I'm not going to suggest burdening the taxpayer with building a multi-million

dollar facility when we're able to get by with the one that we have," said Sheriff Mason. "Thanks to the drug court, the staff here, and the District Attorney's Office, the judges and probation department, we're able to manage the jail inmate population by, when they come in, trying to funnel them into whatever avenue they need to go."

Lamar Paris featured speaker at January Democratic Party meeting

The first 2016 meeting of the Democratic Party of Union County will be held Thursday, January 14, at the Civic Center, 165 Wellborn Street in Blairsville. There will be an optional covered dish supper at 6 p.m. with the program beginning at 6:30. Please bring a dish to share if attending the supper.

Lamar Paris, Union County Sole Commissioner, will be our featured speaker.

"Be it probation, get them a bond, an ankle monitor – moved up, put on the court trial calendar. Judge Murphy Miller has been very good about that, in ensuring that these people don't stay in here a long time, hundreds of days, like they used to. Granted, some of them have to stay over a hundred, but we're trying to thin them out. And by the staff here making people aware of why this inmate is here, that's really moving things along."

Many new and exciting things have been happening in our county over the past year. Please plan to come to hear more, and bring your questions for Commissioner Paris.

We look forward to an interesting and informative meeting and hope you will be there!

For additional information, please contact Ruth Ann Miner at 706 747 5434.