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going instead with Coosa Water and an EPD-approved drainage system.

"They're actually in Coosa Water Authority's territory, but they wanted to be on city sewer," said Mayor Conley. "But the only way that they can be on city sewer is if we furnish water also. That's our ordinance. And of course, that was the whole deal to begin with, and that's what we all were working toward wanting to make happen.

"But, once they got into the project, they figured out it was going to be too costly for them to put in city water and sewer, and to do it by city specs and specifications. In other words, they were going to have to build their system to our requirements, and they finally figured out that that was going to be too expensive for them to do. So, they decided to go ahead and use the system that EPD had approved for them when they bought the property."

Also in the March 3 meeting, Mayor Conley and city council discussed providing the city with a new charter.

"Ours is antiquated," said Mayor Conley following the meeting. "It's outdated.

It hasn't been revised since the initiation of the charter in 1962. The city charter is, by means of legislation, as to how we're to operate."

The city charter will be getting a complete overhaul by Hulsey, Oliver, & Mahar, LLP, a law firm specializing in city charters.

"It will take over the course of the summer to get it done, and it will be presented to the legislative council whenever they meet next, which I think is in October," said Mayor Conley.

The law firm handling the charter has estimated that a complete revision of the charter will take approximately 60 hours.

At \$175 per hour, the work will cost the city \$10,500, plus expenses such as mileage and advertising costs.

Should the firm go over that approximation of 60 hours, the rate will continue to be \$175 per hour.

"Our charter's got so much in it that doesn't have to be in it, and we've got information that's not in it that needs to be in it," said Mayor Conley. "You've got to do all this by legislation. The legisla-



**Sgt. David Atkins**

ture has to approve of everything we put in our charter."

Department head Darren Harper, who is program manager for the Blairsville Downtown Development Authority, presented city council with an update to the Haralson project, which will expand the downtown area and make the area more accessible to traffic from Highway 515.

"We have received approval from the Army Corps of Engineers and have purchased the necessary mitigation credits as outlined by the Corps," said Harper. "As of today, we are still awaiting the wetland mitigation credits, and expect a price on those sometime this week or next."

The DDA anticipates to start the bidding process for



**Darren Harper**

the new off ramp construction around the first of May, with construction beginning after the contract is awarded, which should be mid-July.

City council voted on and approved an extended workweek of 30 hours for Harper, noting that his workload has been greater than the allotted 20 hours a week for the program manager position.

The decision was based in part by a recommendation from the DDA board.

Also in the meeting, city council honored Sgt. David Atkins with the Blairsville Police Department for completing a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice. Sgt. Atkins was awarded a raise of \$1 per hour in recognition of this achievement.

# Greenhouses ...from Page 1A



the not-to-distant future.

"We've been talking with Mickey Cummings about possibly working with the school system so we can produce vegetables for them," Mills said. "We do everything pesticide free and

all natural."

With production going all year, 7M Farms will be looking to add more employees on top of the family members that already work on the farm.

"We are looking to increase to about 20 employees," Mills said. "We hired an additional employee since last year and will soon be looking to hire four more. When the greenhouses are in production, there will be 20 jobs year-round on the farm."

Labor is another reason why Mills and family switched from outdoor farming to greenhouses.

"In Florida and Georgia there has been a trend of labor shortage in agriculture," Mills said. "We see it all the time here in Georgia where there is no help. One acre of greenhouses is equal to 10 acres of open field production and when we get to 11 acres that is equal to 110 acres of outdoor production that will allow us to hire local and not have to fill as many positions. It also let's us pay a little more."

Mills and family have also farmed in Tennessee and South Georgia but it was farming in Honduras and the Dominican Republic where he gained most of his experience.

"We had 30 greenhouses in the Dominican Republic and Honduras, working with several growers down there," Mills said. "That's where a lot of my greenhouse training comes from."

7M Farms also offers a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Program that helps small, local farmers. The farmer offers a certain number of "shares" to the public. Typically the share consists of a box of vegetables, but other farm products may be included. Interested consumers purchase a share (aka a "membership" or a "subscription") and in return receive a box (bag, basket) of seasonal produce each week throughout the farming season.

"For 23 weeks, the members come out to the farm on Saturday and they get between 20-25 pounds of fresh produce for about \$400, which is less than 90 cents a pound, and they get it every week," Mills said.

For more details regarding the CSA Program, you can visit [www.localharvest.org](http://www.localharvest.org).

7M Farms is located at 596 Crump Creek Rd or you may call (706) 835-1607 for additional details.

