

DDA...from Page 1A

letter to the Oostanula bank would act as a placeholder for the credits until Nov. 1 or Dec. 2, guaranteeing the availability of the credits with no actual commitment from the DDA to buy.

With the stream credits potentially out of the way, the DDA must evaluate what to do with other parts of the land designated as wetlands.

"We're still negotiating with the Corps for a total amount of wetlands, too," said Thompson. "There are two little areas in that map that are considered wetlands to deal with."

The Georgia Environmental Protection Division and Army Corps of Engineers have not been especially easy to work with.

"There's been a bit of confusion," said Board Member W. C. Nelson. "In the beginning, we thought that they were going to just abandon the

stream and call it wetlands, and get credits for wetlands. Then that came back – wasn't what we were doing after all.

"Then they came back and said no, it's going to be stream credit, it's going to be stream buffer. But no mention about the wetlands, they were just talking about the stream buffer. Now, we're hearing wetlands again," said Nelson.

As far as making forward progress on the project, the board recognized the necessity to take things one step at a time, and that right now, it had the opportunity to take an important step.

"This is probably still the cheapest way we're going to mitigate this thing and be done with it," said Thompson. "Then, we'll just have to do whatever we have to do as far as the wetlands are concerned."

Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley agreed with the Board

of Directors.

"We know we've got to do it," said Mayor Conley. "So, I say it's a no-brainer."

The Board passed a motion to approve the letter of commitment for up to \$40,000 to secure stream credits to satisfy the Corps of Engineers, then moved on to the only other item on the agenda.

Several months back, Chris Van Wadle of Van Wadle, Inc., owner of the old Kings 5 & 10 building, approached the DDA Board and Blairsville City Council with the intention of applying for Georgia Department of Community Affairs funds in order to offset the cost of improvements to the building. Van Wadle, Inc. required the blessing of both the Board and City Council in order to acquire these funds.

"The DCA offers low interest loans, they take second position behind the regu-

lar banks," said DDA Program Manager Darren Harper. "It's a way of helping him achieve the project at a very low cost."

The DDA would act as a means to deliver DCA funds to Van Wadle, Inc., which would then repay the loan directly to the DCA without having to go back through the DDA.

And the situation is a win-win for both sides – Kings gets restored, which benefits downtown Blairsville, and the DDA doesn't have to fund the project or take on any fiscal responsibility.

The DCA award letter of \$169,718 is a 15-year term loan at 2 percent interest. The DDA accepted a motion to approve the arrangement subject to review by an attorney, at which point the Board will sign the necessary paperwork.

Taxes...from Page 1A

stop there. Due to House Bill 60 and recent violence in courthouses, Union County Courthouse security had to be beefed up to include two security checkpoints at a cost of \$250,000 to deter the carrying of weapons in the building.

The cost of county liability and property insurance has increased among other things, and even the price of salt for roads during the winter time has experienced an uptick.

All of these increased costs have added up to about a \$500,000 greater operating budget for the county, which explains the need for an increased millage rate.

Paris also pointed to cost saving measures to keep the budget down, such as combining positions when an employee leaves the county in

order to keep from having to hire new staff.

"We're the third lowest millage rate in the state of Georgia," said Commissioner Paris. "When you put us at the new millage rate, if everybody else stays the same, we would drop down to the fifth lowest, which is still pretty good."

When sorted by total millage rate, including school taxes with county taxes, the new millage rate would put Union County as the third lowest in the state, assuming all other counties' millage rates remained the same.

"I don't necessarily disagree with anybody who wants to gripe about taxes – everybody's got that right," said Commissioner Paris. "But the thing that everybody doesn't know, our school system does a really good job of

keeping their property taxes low compared to other systems in the state."

This would be the first year since 2006 that millage rates have increased, and proposing an increase to the county property tax is a delicate balancing act, one with which the commissioner is all too familiar.

"We don't worry about what other people have, we worry about trying to do as much as we can with what we have of your money," said Commissioner Paris. "Our job is, my job is, and the employees' job is to provide the most service for the least amount of money that we can. And we have to determine what level of service that is."

"We try to do that based on what the demands from the public are, and I feel that

we have got to maintain those services to the level that the public has come to expect."

A third and final hearing before setting the new millage rate will be held at the Union County Courthouse Thursday, Aug. 28, at 6 p.m.

Plea...from Page 1A

Hickory Hill. Adams-Donaldson's body was loaded in a wheelbarrow and rolled to a home that had not been occupied since 1973, according to testimony during an Aug. 4, 2013 bond hearing for the two women.

Adams-Donaldson's body was dumped in an abandoned well on the property, where it was recovered on July 11, 2013, by law enforcement, according to investigators with the Towns County Sheriff's Office.

Enotah Judicial Circuit Senior Superior Court Judge Murphy Miller denied bond for both Ledford and Stokes following the hearing on Aug. 4, 2013.

Adams-Donaldson,

who spent a portion of her youth in Union County, was discovered in the old hand-dug well at the old Roper farm on Turner Turnpike in rural Towns County.

Adams-Donaldson's remains were recovered approximately at 7 p.m. on July 11, 2013. The well was in close proximity to the residence where Adams-Donaldson lived and was murdered.

Adams-Donaldson was reported missing on June 24, 2013 by family members.

Ledford and Stokes confessed to the crime, following extensive interrogations by Towns County sheriff's investigators and GBI agents, according to the Towns County Sheriff's Office.

Ledford and Stokes were already inmates at the Towns County Detention Center at the time of their confessions, sheriff's reports show.

Investigators say Ledford shot Adams-Donaldson in the throat and back on June 17th at 500 Hickory Hill, in Hiawasse.

At the time of their confessions, Ledford was being held on charges that include first-degree forgery, eight counts of deposit account fraud, and criminal trespass, Towns County arrest warrants show.

Stokes was being held on an obstruction charge, Towns County arrest warrants show.

Fugitive...from Page 1A

K-9 Officer Jeff McConnell and K-9 Bloodhound Lacey.

"We found the general area where she went through the woods, jumped off an embankment and left a footprint," Sgt. Dyer said. "Lacey got a whiff of the footprint and went on track immediately."

"We tracked her for probably a half-mile through a wooded area," he said. "Roughly 20 minutes later, Lacey got close to her and she came running out of a briar

thicket out in front of me and surrendered."

"She was scratched up, of course she was muddy and dirty, but otherwise she was okay," Sgt. Dyer said. "We transported her to the Fannin County Sheriff's Office."

Patricia Dixon, 29, was not charged with any crimes in Union County, Sgt. Dyer said.

"We didn't have any charges in Union on her," Sgt. Dyer said. "We didn't have

probable cause to issue any charges against her in Union related to the initial call."

Sheriff Mason praised Lacey and announced that his department received a \$5,000 anonymous donation to benefit the department's K-9 program.

"We're humbled to receive such a generous donation, and we'll make sure the money is well spent," Sheriff Mason said.

Ride...from Page 1A

Fortenberry said. "Anyone wishing to ride in this event, see the flyer in this edition of the *North Georgia News* for complete information and details of the complete ride."

The ride begins at Cycle World of Athens, at 4225 Atlanta Highway, in Bogart.

The event is scheduled to begin with registration at 9 a.m. at Cycle World of Athens. Kick Stands will be Up at

10 a.m.

The ride takes turns through along the scenic route of the North Georgia Mountains.

Fortenberry urges riders to come join in the remembrance of those heroes who lost their lives on and following Sept. 11, 2001.

The event also will honor the U.S. Military and Public Safety members who have lived on to serve the public and the United States of America.

All bikes are welcome to take part in the event. It's free to ride, free to eat and free to have fun, Lt. Fortenberry said.

"The one thing we ask folks to remember is that Freedom isn't free," Lt. Fortenberry said. "Please, never forget that because patriotic bikers will never forget."

Pre-School enrollment

Union County Pre-School still has openings for the 2014-15 school year. Child must be 4 by September 1, 2014. We are also serving 3-year-olds in Head Start (child must be 3 by September 1, 2014 and family must meet income guidelines). Call 706-745-4200 or come by 226 School Street to fill out an application. N(Aug27,214)CA