

City hall gears up for holiday season

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Holiday season is creeping up fast, and the Blairsville City Council and Mayor Jim Conley are preparing the city for the busy months ahead and the New Year that is just around the corner.

At the monthly meeting on Tuesday, Nov. 1, various ordinance updates and upcoming city events were highlights of the evening.

Blairsville Attorney David Barrett participated in his first council meeting as Blairsville's official city attorney, with the council approving his employment through December of this year. Barrett will officially be hired as city attorney after the New Year.

Mayor Conley held the first reading of an ordinance amending employer's benefits from the Georgia Municipal Employee Benefit System (GMEBS).

This amendment allows for elected officials to be included for retirement benefits where they currently are not.

Benefits given to the selected officials will be the same as those currently given to municipal employees throughout the GMEBS, and will vary depending on the employee.

Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center Superintendent Ray Covington made an appearance at the meeting, requesting that the council consider reissuing a previous agreement between the city and the GMREC on water meter rates.

"We've had a 34-year relationship with the City of Blairsville," said Covington. "There is a well on our property and a building that has been there ever since. I've been looking for the original agreement for that. It was created in 1982.

"Nobody can seem to find the original document, but I have found lots of references to it. In a nutshell, it states that for use of the property at the Experiment Station that the City of Blairsville can use the property and pull water from there as a resource.

"In exchange, the city will give the University of Georgia preferential water privilege. Over the years, this has been dropped from ordinances."

The agreement was reinstated in 2002, but when



David Barrett, left, was recently hired as the new attorney for the City of Blairsville. He is taking the place of longtime City of Blairsville attorney Janna Akins.



Councilwomen Rhonda Mahan and Betty Easter look over the city's financials in the Tuesday, Nov. 1, regular council meeting.

the ordinances were rewritten in 2012, the arrangement was not included. Covington wishes to reestablish this preferential rate on the property meters to 65 cents per 1,000 gallons.

As of right now, the meters are charged as an outside the city limit rate, but Covington wishes to have the meters reinstated as inside city limit rates.

"All of his [Covington] meters would be converted to inside city rates," said Mayor Conley. "As far as the 2,000 gallons, he [Covington] would have 65 cents on each of the 1,000 gallons, up to 2,000 gallons, then whatever the meter charge is would be on the usage thereafter."

City Attorney Barrett suggested that the council create an ordinance to include the restored agreement, which Mayor Conley and the council agreed upon. This new ordinance will be drafted and approved in the coming months.

Downtown Development Authority Program Manager Darren Harper shared upcoming city events with the council, explaining that the month of November is essential in preparing for

the countless events that will occur in December.

Of the many events, the Friday Night Concert Series will briefly return next month, featuring three holiday concerts: Dec. 2, Dec. 9 and Dec. 16.

Blairsville Holiday Stop and Shop will be held on Dec. 2 and 3 at the Haralson Memorial Civic Center, and an opportunity for pictures with Santa will be at the Historic Union County Courthouse on Dec. 3.

Downtown will also host a Christmas Parade and tree lighting on Dec. 3, and residents will have an opportunity to enjoy holiday caroling on the square on Dec. 20.

Harper expressed his enthusiasm for the holiday season, saying he cannot wait to share all these wonderful events with area locals and tourists.

"December is going to be a very busy, busy month," said Harper. "I'm looking forward to it."

More information on these events will be available throughout the month via the DDA Facebook page or www.UnionCountyHistory.org.

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from 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.

The 10 a.m. program will take place at the football field, with parking located behind the stadium at the elementary school. A bus will be shuttling veterans between the high school breakfast and the ceremony at the ballfield.

Both high school and middle school band and chorus students will perform during the program, and Union County educator and Vietnam veteran Jim Clark will be presented a Quilt of Valor for his past service in the U.S. Marines.

Veterans will be given places of honor at field level, and the community is invited to attend, where they will have seating in the bleachers.

The Georgia National Guard had previously offered to fly a helicopter into the ceremony, but that will no longer take place due to resources expended during Hurricane Matthew.

"It should be a great ceremony," said Command Sgt. Maj. (Ret.) Art McCann of the U.S. Army, who is an administrator at the high school. "We're just trying to get as many veterans as possible to come here.

"We really want them to come here and have breakfast with us, because it'll be a free full breakfast - eggs, meat, biscuits, potatoes, grits - all that stuff."

The inclement weather location will be the high school gym, though the schools expect the weather to remain clear on Nov. 10.

As for Veterans Day itself, which is this Friday, Nov. 11, the local veterans organizations have teamed up once again to host their annual 11/11/11 Luncheon.

The luncheon is made

possible by the local Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, American Legion, Vietnam Veterans of America and American Legion Auxiliary.

Organizers call the luncheon the 11/11/11 to describe when the luncheon will take place - in the 11th month on the 11th day at the 11th hour. So, the luncheon will be on Friday, Nov. 11, at 11 a.m.

The event will take place in the auditorium of the First United Methodist Church of Union County, and will feature lunch by Jim's Smokin' Que.

Barbara Honaker will be the keynote speaker for the event. Barbara is married to local veteran Chuck Honaker, and she will be speaking about the role of family and veterans organizations in the life of a veteran returning to civilian life.

"Chuck Honaker is still our emcee, because we feel he did an excellent job last year," said Caroline Ingersoll of Book Cellar Used Book Store. "We've added the Union County High School Chamber Choir. They're going to sing some patriotic songs, and that's under the direction of Alicia Covington."

Ingersoll is a member of the American Legion Auxiliary, and for several years now she has taken a huge behind-the-scenes role in organizing the Veterans Day event.

The Auxiliary will be selling raffle tickets for Rhonda Mason's Hummingbird Stained Glass, and while meal tickets will be available at the door the day of the luncheon, people looking to purchase tickets are encouraged to RSVP for the \$6 luncheon can be made by calling Ingersoll at (706)

835-9534. North Georgia Honor Guard members in uniform, POWs, and widows of veterans who are members of the American Legion Auxiliary will receive complimentary meals.

The commanders of each veteran organization look forward to awarding their annual Commanders Award to the "Veteran of the Year," who shall be a member of one of the local organizations.

Ingersoll and all commanders invite veterans of the community to attend, and to become involved in a veterans organization if not already in order to increase veteran involvement in the community.

The Woody Gap School Student Council will be honoring their community veterans on Nov. 11 with a Veterans Day Ceremony to begin at 1 p.m. in the Woody Gap School Auditorium.

Those interested in attending are asked to contact Robin Bagley at (706) 747-2401 ext. 1600, or Althea Cantrell at ext. 1619 or email acantrell@ucschools.org

The council is asking that veterans bring pictures of themselves in uniform, prior to the ceremony, to be placed on a "gratitude board." Veterans are also encouraged to bring a guest.

Also on Veterans Day, Harrah's Cherokee Valley River Casino & Hotel in Murphy, North Carolina, will be honoring active and retired members of the military with a complimentary meal at their Food Market.

Harrah's asks that members bring proof of military service to receive the meal, which can include a military ID, VA card and/or discharge papers.

Better Homes & Gardens Real Estate/Metro Brokers



Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce celebrates Better Homes & Gardens Real Estate/Metro Brokers

On Tuesday, November 1, the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce hosted a ribbon cutting for Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate/Metro Brokers. Those attending included Chamber representatives, ambassadors, and Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley.

"The Better Homes and Gardens brand has been a staple in American life since 1924," stated office manager, Telaka Thomas. "Better Homes and Gardens Real Es-

tate/Metro Brokers works with the highest level of integrity with our clients' best interests at heart. With 26 offices statewide, and 11 agents in Blairsville, we specialize in all aspects of the real estate industry. Our unique extreme marketing programs sells homes quicker and at a higher percentage of list price."

The agency offers a variety of services to include real estate, mortgage, insurance, and title/closing services. The BH&G team has a true pas-

sion and deep commitment to homeownership which builds a solid quality of life for individuals, families and communities.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, people can drop by the Better Homes & Gardens Real Estate/Metro Brokers office located at 63 Plott Street in Blairsville or give them a call at (706) 781-1884. Be sure to visit their website at <http://www.metrobrokers.com/home>.

Dr. Vernon Dixon to address Union County Democrats

The Union County Democratic Party will hold its monthly meeting on Thursday, November 10 at the Unity Church of Blairsville where the program will be a talk on Climate Change and the Citizens Climate Lobby's proposal to deal with it presented by Dr. Vernon Dixon. The plan places a price on the production of CO2 from fossil fuels and returns the money directly back to citizens.

Dr. Dixon was a practicing psychiatrist for nearly four decades in Albany and Blairsville before his retirement in 2014. His current interests include hiking, contemplative prayer and teaching people about the dangers of, and solutions to climate change. Dr. Dixon has been married for 47 years to Mary Joyce, his "greatest gift" and they have

three grown sons.

The schedule includes a meeting of the party executive committee at 5:30 p.m., followed by a pot-luck supper at six and the program at seven p.m.

The Unity Church of Blairsville is located at 298 School Circle (across from the Mountain Education Center) off the east side of the square in downtown Blairsville.

UNION COUNTY COMMUNITY CALENDAR

	Every Monday:	
Children's Story Time	Union County Library	11 am
Kiwanis Club	Steve's Steakhouse	Noon
Civil Air Patrol	Blairsville Airport	6 pm
Boy Scouts #101	United Methodist Ch	7 pm
	Every Tuesday:	
Tri State Bus. Women	Blairsville Restaurant	8 am
Get Fit	First UMC	5:15 pm
Smoky Mtn. Melodies	United Methodist Ch	6:30 pm
Hi Country Harmonizers	Branan Lodge	6:30 pm
	Every Wednesday:	
BINGO	Civic Center	7 pm
	Every Thursday:	
Masonic Luncheon	Cooks Restaurant	11:30 am
Rotary Club	So. Bank & Trust	Noon
Get Fit	First UMC	5:15 pm
	Third Monday of each month:	
Shape Note Music	Old Courthouse	6:30 pm
High Country Artisan	U.C.Bank Com Room	6:30 pm
Allegheny Lodge #114	Masonic Lodge	6:30 pm
Exp Aviation Assoc #1211	Blairsville Airport	7 pm
	Third Tuesday of each month:	
UC Homemakers	Dooley Chapter	Noon
Healthy Hearts Support	UGH 2nd Floor Class	2 pm
Am. Legion Post 121	Veteran's Center	6:30 pm
American Legion, Aux	Veteran's Center	6:30 pm
Chatuge Gun Club	Senior Center, Hia.	7 pm
Compassionate Friends	UCB Community Room	7 pm
	Third Wednesday of each month:	
Quilts of Valor	Coosa Methodist Ch	9:30 am
GA Mtn. Writers Club	Grinds & Glazes (G&G)	10 am
Blairsville Garden Club	Location not listed	1 pm
Friends of the Library	Library Com Room	2 pm
Beta Sigma Phi, Iota Iota	So. Bank & Trust	7 pm
	Third Thursday of each month:	
MMQG	Mtn. Presbyterian Ch	10 am-3 pm
Kinship Care	Civic Center	Noon
Commissioner's Meet.	County Courthouse	6 pm
Good N'bers Auto	Rib Country, Murphy	6:30 pm
UT Home Builders	Moschetto's	6:30 pm
Cub Scouts Trp. #101	United Methodist Ch.	6:30 pm
Tip-off Club	UC High School	7 pm
UC Saddle Club	Arena Clubhouse	7 pm
Jaycees	Fort Sorghum	7:30 pm
	Third Friday of each month:	
No activities listed		
	Third Saturday of each month:	
UC Republican Party	Civic Center	10 am

Lions Trash & Treasure Sale



Union County Lions Pre-Christmas Trash and Treasure Sale will be held on Saturday, November 26th, 8 a.m. until 3 p.m. Call 706-897-5467 to reserve a booth.

Hope House

Hope House is a faith-based, non-profit benevolence center to help Union County residents and homeless in times of critical need. Hours of operation: Monday 9 a.m.-12 p.m. & Thursday 1 p.m.-4 p.m., located at 178 Brackett's Way, Blairsville, (706)781-3090.