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“What we are looking at here is for the retirement program, allowing the use of military time to apply toward retirement,” said Atkins. “There were several questions about it that we all had, so I contacted the Georgia Municipal Association.”

Atkins said he spoke with Randy Logan, director of retirement with GMA.

“(Logan) said that it’s really just a piece of cake,” said Atkins, as far as the city getting on board with allowing the use of prior military service to count toward retirement with the city.

According to Atkins, Logan said the city would have several options, such as allowing all or partial military service to count toward employee retirement, and where that service might count when computing the amount of retirement benefits payable.

Walker said that another of their questions for Logan centered on whether or not they would have to revamp the entire retirement program for the city, which would make

the process more complex.

Fortunately, anything the council decides to do moving forward regarding allowing military service credits toward retirement could be done as a simple amendment to the city’s current retirement program, according to Walker.

“As I understand this vaguely, we’re talking about two or three different areas,” said Councilman Tony Dyer. “First of all, we’re talking about whether we approve it or not. Next, we’re talking about military time. Next, we’re talking about how much of that to let go toward retirement – those three things.”

Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley added that the council would also need to consider whether the city or the veteran employees would be paying to have those credits added toward their retirement with the city.

Next steps for Atkins and Walker include researching then presenting to the council how much it would cost to get credit for their respective past military service at 1.5 percent

of salary, at which point the council would determine how to proceed from there.

Also in the meeting, the council voted unanimously to modify the fiscal year 2015 budget, a standard operating procedure that is conducted each year. The amended budget reflected greater revenues of \$4,107,572 for FY 2015, which is \$280,987 more than the original 2015 budget of \$3,826,585.

Several factors made this \$280,000 difference: increased revenues to the General Fund of \$1,542,015 amended from the originally budgeted \$1,359,710; the city’s Hotel/Motel Fund was up to \$110,500 amended from the \$65,000 originally budgeted. Also up in revenues, the Water/Sewer Fund, amended to \$2,154,730 from the originally budgeted \$2,073,875. Operating at a slight loss, the Airport Fund was amended to \$300,327, down from the original budgeted amount of \$328,000.

The City of Blairsville operates under a balanced budget, so the operating expenditure budget for 2015 was

amended to reflect the same totals.

The Blairsville Police Department also showed net positive revenues in the Confiscated Assets Fund in the amount of \$10,200.

In his report to the mayor and city council, Blairsville Police Chief Johnny Carroll went over his department’s

statistics for the month of March: there were 103 total calls, 5,591 total patrol miles driven, and 307 calls year to date.

Blairsville Downtown Development Authority Program Manager Darren Harper was unable to attend the meeting due to an obligation with the Blairsville-Union County

Chamber of Commerce, but in a previously prepared report, he stated that the recently opened Bob Head Street was working as designed, and that the DDA continues “to reach out to developers and people within the community to find the right use for the land around the new road.”

Prom...continued from Page 1A

Purple and Gold Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Bedecked in their formal best, students posed at a photo booth themed with Disney movie props, and the corners of the main room were decorated in varying scenes of Disney, from *Frozen* to the *Jungle Book*, and even *Under the Sea*.

The highlight of the evening arrived promptly at 10 p.m., when a special prom couple turned not into pumpkins, but into Prom King and Queen.

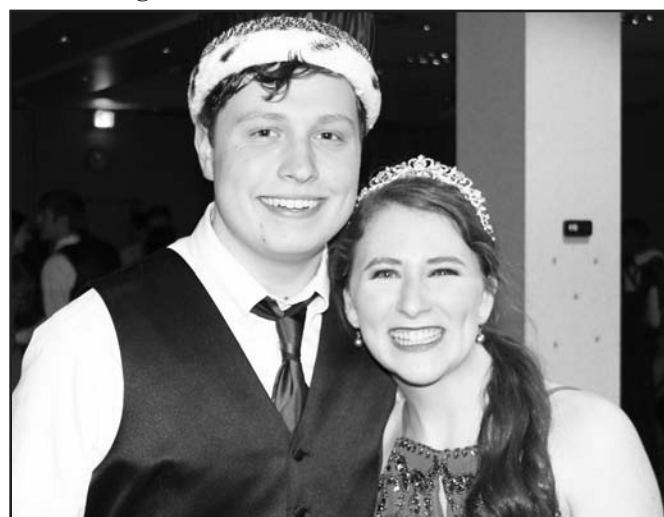
Earlier that evening, the more than 250 students in attendance cast votes to crown their favorite couple, and the winners of the voting process received hearty cheers upon their announcement and subsequent coronation.

2016 Prom King and Queen were none other than seniors Matt Peney and Raphaela Aleman, and the pair were equal parts ecstatic and surprised to hear their names announced.

“My friend Kat (Capstick) told some people to vote for us, but I thought it was just a joke,” said Aleman, with Peney agreeing at her side.

But it wasn’t a joke, and when the shock of winning cleared, the two expressed gratitude for the peers who chose them to be King and Queen.

Aleman said she had spent most of the day working on her hair before she and Peney dined at MTNS eatery in Blairsville. They hit up prom after that, and the rest is royal



Prom King Matt Peney with Prom Queen Raphaela Aleman

history. “I’m just really glad we all had a good time,” said Queen Aleman. “Everyone is dancing and having fun, and this has been great.”

Added King Peney: “And just thank you – it was really cool of (our friends) to vote for us.”

The music that evening was as eclectic and inspiring as the bold, shimmering dresses on display around the venue – students did the “Stanky Leg,” chanted along with Miley Cyrus for her “Party in the U.S.A.,” got down to an updated classic with the “Electric Slide,” and boogied along with Kenny Chesney and many, many more.

Freshman Mady Sips and junior Joey Dalessio embraced the Disney theme by dressing as the formal equivalents of Minnie and Mickey Mouse.

Sips and Dalessio enjoyed getting ready for the prom together, spending time with their friends that evening, and doing their fair share of dancing.

“You’re always going to remember it – we’re keeping the ticket and everything,” said Sips.

UCHS Principal John Hill looked on as his students had the night of their young lives, and he felt the evening was that much more special for the all-inclusive nature of Union County’s schoolchildren.

“Our students with special needs are all very accepted and in attendance, and all the other kids support them and encourage them to dance and have a good time – that’s probably the coolest thing about it to me,” said Principal Hill.

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