

Chief Baxter...from Page 1A

and how to handle yourself," arresting people, there's more said Baxter. "It's not all about to it.

"Changing a tire is as important as locking somebody up, and we have to look at that. Times have changed in this business. The image has changed.

"Yes, you still have to do your job, but treat people as fair as you can. Treat them fair and treat them with respect, but some folks you can't do that, and that's when you need to turn on the stern side."

Much has changed in the mountains since Baxter first got into law enforcement in '93. The population has grown significantly in that time, and with it, so has crime.

Drugs are of particular concern to Baxter, who has personally stopped two mobile meth labs within the city limits during his time with the Blairsville Police Department.

But he still believes that this is one of the best places around to live and work, and he loves his community, which is filled with people who, for example, make the annual Blairsville Shop with a Cop not only possible, but bigger and better each year.

Baxter also credits Blairsville City Hall and Union County Government for providing him with such a great area to protect, and he is thankful to City Hall in particular for trusting him to lead Blairsville PD.

He is also grateful for the terrific relationship between his department and the Union County Sheriff's Office—Sheriff Mack Mason has deputized all



Blairsville Police Chief Michael Baxter, Mayor Jim Conley and Assistant Police Chief Shawn Dyer the night Baxter and Dyer swore in to office on Jan. 8, 2019. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

of Baxter's officers, and each has employees working part-time for the other.

Further highlighting the spirit of collaboration among local law enforcement agencies, all members of the Union County Schools Police Department have been sworn

in as officers of the city.

"No.1, our biggest thing is to protect and serve our community, our businesses and our visitors," said Baxter. "We live in a great place, we do. We live in a safe place. And it's hard to believe that every day we cut the news on, and two

hours down the road everything is happening as bad as it is."

Continued Baxter, "It's hard to believe it's that close to us, and every day, we need to think what a good place we live in, because we're lucky."

City Hall...from Page 1A

Conley let in several relatives of Michelle Seay after they arrived at City Hall that morning requesting admittance.

Seay was one of the three Blairsville residents killed in the Dec. 19 plane crash off Kings Road, less than one-half nautical mile from the airport.

A number of local pilots and now members of the Seay family have shared their concerns with City Hall about the lack of a PAPI system at the airport.

As previously reported, the city of Blairsville used to have a PAPI system in place years ago, back when the runway was just 3,800 feet. However, the PAPI was taken out when the runway was extended to 5,004 feet and a new one was never installed.

The year the runway extension was completed and the reasons for not re-installing a PAPI system were not available at press time, as these events occurred perhaps 20 years or more ago, but a GDOT official said in the meeting that the upcoming PAPI survey may make those reasons clear once they learn what obstructions are in the way.

Built into the concerns of local pilots and Seay family members is whether or not the lack of a PAPI system at the airport had anything to do with the fatal Dec. 19 plane crash.

Government officials have said that it is too early to say what caused the crash and have cautioned individuals against jumping to conclusions, especially since the investigation by the National Transportation



Frank Meyer and Mike Giambrone with GDOT Aviation in the Jan. 18 meeting at City Hall. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Safety Board could take up to two years to complete.

Due to the federal shutdown, the investigation into the crash has been put on hold, and delivery of an NTSB preliminary crash report that should have been completed by now has been postponed until after the government reopens.

Another part of the Jan. 18 discussion at City Hall centered on the fact that PAPI systems are not federally required at airports.

Furthermore, it was clarified that the FAA had informed the city after the crash that it was not to allow instrument-only nighttime flights – aka IFR flights for "instrument flight rules" – at the airport.

However, pilots who are capable of landing on clear nights and under the right conditions using visual cues only, or "visual flight rules," are still allowed to do so at their discretion.

Still, the city is very much interested in getting a PAPI system installed as soon as possible, which will help pilots who fly both visually and with instruments.

Also in attendance for the meeting were Blairsville City Councilman Buddy Moore, Blairsville Municipal Airport Manager John Hamler, representatives from Croy Engineering, which is working with the city on the clearing of obstructions at the airport, and several others.

Naftzger

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after he missed a court appearance recently, and a judge subsequently issued a bench warrant for his arrest, said Mangifesta.

Anyone with information as to the whereabouts of Don Naftzger should call the Sheriff's Office at 706-439-6066.

Improvisation Classes at The Peacock

Something new is brewing at the Peacock in Hayesville! Resident Artistic Director Laurel Adams announces the beginning of adult (age 18 and up) Improvisation Classes. "Brittany Redding, an actress from Atlanta who has recently moved here, came to me with the idea—we discussed the details and we're doing it!

Brittany, Ryan Hunter (another Peacock veteran) and I will be offering for the first time, on-going improv classes at the Peacock." Classes will be held Sunday evenings, beginning Feb. 10, from 7:30 p.m.- 9 p.m. The classes will consist of physical and imagination exercises, improv games and the application of all skills to actual improv situations.

Advance registration is required, so please call 828-389-2787 and leave your name and a phone number. There is a \$10 per class fee. Everyone is welcome.

"We plan on having a public performance every other month like, "Whose Line is it Anyway?," and perhaps monthly during the summer months," says Brittany. The group hopes to expand the program to offer kids' improv classes in the near future. The Peacock is an equal opportunity provider.