

North Georgia News

4 Sections 24 Pages

Hometown Newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Wednesday, April 26, 2023

Windstream details \$20.5 million fiber expansion

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

Union County is set to benefit from a \$20.5 million public-private partnership that will bring high-speed fiber internet to an additional 8,250 customers throughout the rural mountain county. Construction is slated to begin this summer with a December 2024 completion estimate.

Kinetic, the broadband internet, entertainment and security services business unit of Windstream Holdings, joined county officials in debuting the project and answering residents' questions in a Town Hall-style meeting at the Union County Community Center on Thursday, April 20.

"I want to thank the Windstream Kinetic folks for making the effort to be here and

volunteering to come forward and face the community in talking about the projects that are going to be happening," Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris said.

According to Kinetic, the project will utilize about \$11.2 million in state grant money from the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds program, which is part of the federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 regarding COVID-19 stimulus funding.

In addition to the grant, Union County has committed \$500,000 in matching funds, and the privately held Windstream Holdings will be investing \$8.9 million of its own money toward the local project and has pledged to cover any cost overruns.

Augmenting the roughly

7,000 Union Countians already being served by Kinetic high-speed internet, the upcoming venture will result in about 550 miles of new fiber-optic cable that "lets users upload and download at up to 1 gigabit a second, or 1,000 megabits a second."

The partnership is designed to serve areas that have not previously had access to high-speed internet, namely, parts of the county designated by state and federal authorities as "unserved," with download speeds less than 25 megabits per second and upload speeds less than 3 megabits per second.

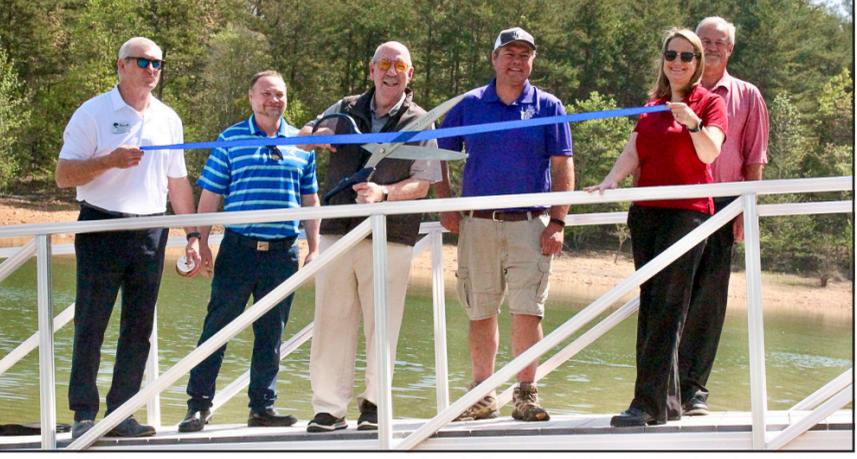
Geographically, the reach of the project is extensive, stretching into nearly all of the inhabited areas of Union County.

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Local Kinetic employees demonstrated fiber splicing and other broadband technology for residents in the April 19 Town Hall. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

County welcomes boat dock at Poteete Campground



County officials gathered at the new Poteete Creek Boat Dock last Thursday for a ribbon-cutting ceremony. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

By Brittany Holbrooks
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

To accommodate greater lake traffic and promote safety, the Poteete Boat Ramp now has a dock on Lake Nottely. Courtesy of the Union

County Commissioner's Office, the Union County Recreation Department, and the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce, a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Thursday, April 20, marked the beginning of the new dock's

career. Rec Director Scotty Thompson said the dock was constructed down in Gainesville with the "latest design and latest stretching materials," making the structure highly

See Poteete Boat Dock, Page 2A

Historic display raises awareness for Patriots' Day

By Brittany Holbrooks
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

On Wednesday, April 19, plenty of folks noticed the handful of people gathered on the lawn of the Union County Historic Courthouse garbed as historically accurate militiamen simulating period-style musket firings alongside women dressed in colonial attire.

The group was composed of local Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution, who met up to publicly recognize Patriots' Day, the official

annual observance of which took place last week.

Patriots' Day is a national holiday commemorating the first battles of the American Revolutionary War at Lexington, Concord and Menotomy, with the former two locations being the most well-known.

Sporting the blue and red jacket of the Continental Army, President Stephen Weaver of the Blue Ridge Mountain Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution spoke that day on the importance of remembering "our patriot ancestors and the founding of

this country."

Considering the substantial risk colonists experienced fighting for their freedom, the bloodshed and the loss of life, as well as the overcoming of seemingly insurmountable odds, the country's hard-won triumph in its War of Independence is certainly something to celebrate, Weaver said.

Weaver also showed his pride by engraving his revolutionary ancestor's name on his gun, Edmund Kitle, who was a 17-year-old Rhode

See Patriots' Day, Page 6A



Local members of the Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution turned out in their most "revolutionary" attire to celebrate Patriots' Day on April 19. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

School Board discusses new UCES, track and more



Union County Schools Athletic Director Mandy Hunter spoke with board members on April 18 about plans for the new track that will serve children of the High and Middle Schools. Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

By Brittany Holbrooks
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Union County Board of Education members held their regular meeting Tuesday, April 18, to discuss upcoming projects like the construction of the new Elementary School, a new track for Middle School and High School use and other topics.

Facilities Director Mike

Patton offered an update on the Elementary School, saying that the "site plans are probably 75% complete," meaning they are nearly ready to send out to the state for a permit that would give the go-ahead to break ground for construction.

For now, Patton said, timbering is taking place to clear the land to get ahead of the process without doing any grading.

"We are trying to accelerate," Patton said. "We're pushing every button we can to encourage our design team to provide us with a go-ahead permit as fast as possible. We've been in discussion with them weekly, nearly daily, to encourage those that are putting those permits out."

Patton told the board that, although everything is

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Family, community mourn loss of young Myles Godfrey

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

The tragedy of a young life cut short struck the greater mountain community this week after a family out of Hayesville, North Carolina, shared the sad news Monday evening that 4-year-old Myles Godfrey had passed away from injuries he sustained in an April 18 car wreck.

Myles' mother Kaci Jones made the announcement via a social media post in which she addressed her "beautiful Angel" following his passing, telling him the many things she will miss now that he is gone.

"You didn't deserve this my precious boy," Jones wrote. "You had a whole beautiful life ahead of you. There's so much



Kaci Jones and her three young boys, twins Myles and Kyler with their baby brother Ryder. Photo/Facebook

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SOCCER
ELITE 8
@ Putnum Co.
4/24 at 5:30 PM

Home & Garden Shows April 29-30

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Queen For A Day May 1

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SAFE Fashion Show Fundraiser April 29

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Poteete Boat Dock...from Page 1A

urable.

This installation of the dock came of course after Tennessee Valley Authority Recreation Specialist and Project Manager Deana Thompson ensured that the proper permits were gathered

up first.

Jim Marchman with the Commissioner's Office secured the contract to have the dock constructed, and after six months, it was brought to Blairsville and put together in its current location.

The \$40,000 needed to purchase the dock came from county funds gathered at the Poteete Creek Campground.

"People pay to park here, so we took some of the money we received from this and put it back into the campground," explained County Manager Larry Garrett.

The dock is big enough to harbor a boat on either side and a jet ski at the front, potentially providing a port for three water vehicles at a time. In fact, Thompson said the dock was already in use earlier that morning when he first arrived at the park.

Thanks to the dock, people can now put their boats in the water using the ramp there, tie up at the dock, and then park their trucks. And passengers and gear can be safely offloaded before pulling a boat out of the water.

The addition of post cleats also ensures people can tie up easier no matter what they may be doing on the lake. And according to Garrett, "More and more anglers are coming here to fish," making Blairsville an increasingly popular destination for tournaments and professional

fishermen.

"We're taking fishing and we're raising the bar on it," added Garrett. In fact, Union County High School students, in collaboration with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and TVA, have created 15 fish attractors to lay out across Lake Nottely.

Garrett also mentioned

that there's a possibility of developing the shores adjacent to the dock into additional campsites within the next two years.

"(The Rec Department is) working with TVA to secure us a long-term lease agreement on the campground here so that we can actually go after grants and things to help enhance

the campground," Garrett explained.

Right now, there are about 85 campsites at the Poteete Campgrounds, but Garrett said that further development of the area could bring about additions such as a new bath house, another boat ramp and over 20 new campsites yearly.

School Board...from Page 1A

progressing as planned for the projected timeline on the new school building, he'd like to condense things if possible.

One thing that's being considered to cut down costs is the possibility of the system using internal employees to construct the road to the new elementary.

Last year's equipment rental cost total was \$151,000, but according to Superintendent John Hill, "The option of building the roads outside of the contract and outside of the drawing is definitely the right call, because the preliminary estimates (are close to a) \$1 million savings to taxpayers."

In other words, the main site would need to go for bidding, but the road could be constructed by school employees, lowering the price significantly by paying rental fees for equipment on top of lower labor costs.

So far, it's estimated that those rental fees will only be applicable for one month, as according to Patton, "A lot can be done in a month with a big machine like that." And Patton anticipates working on a new ESPLOST-funded school track within that same month, to feature eight lanes for runners at a guaranteed maximum construction price of \$960,520.

Mostly, the track will be dedicated to the UCHS and UCMS Cross Country Team and other young athletes, and the interior will be properly outfitted with equipment for long and

triple jumps, shot put games, hammer throwing, a discus cage, vaulting poles and more.

The track will be situated between UCHS and the new Elementary School, and as of its current iteration, will not feature bleachers.

A possibility for seating is a slope for spectators to bring their own lawn chairs, cutting costs between that decision and the avoidance of a concession stand identical to the one in Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium.

Speaking of sports, Woody Gap's tennis court upgrade is also in the planning stages, with a guaranteed maximum price for construction of \$418,840. Rather than undergo an even costlier renovation that would involve tearing up the current courts and piping the nearby creek, the plan for the ESPLOST project is to repurpose the old baseball field as a secondary tennis court to be able to host home matches, saving about \$400,000 in the process.

As Woody Gap School has not had a baseball team for a long time and the field is not used much now, the system will not be replacing it.

In other news, Superintendent Hill revealed that the system had received a \$50,000 safety grant per school thanks to the Georgia Department of Education, and another grant for \$5,000 for computer science. Additionally, a FEMA Reimbursement Grant gave \$132,000.

The recent renovations to the Union County Primary School were revealed to have fallen below budget by about \$284,422.

Also, due to "a very substantial increase in Freedom of Information Act open records requests," which are taking a lot of administrative time to fill, "we have started charging for those because they cost money," Hill said.

"Time's money, our employees' salaries (are) money, so we are going to be charging for those moving forward to offset some of those (costs) because that's opportunity costs and we need to be doing other things," he continued.

Regarding financials, the board voted unanimously to make the \$2,000 yearly stipend for non-certified staff a permanent portion of their Fiscal Year 2024 compensation. Hill explained that the change would be "accomplished through an adjustment to the pay scale."

"We all value and appreciate the work that each of you do each day to serve the students in Union County," Hill said in an email to non-certified employees last week.

Board Office staff also spent considerable time that evening, including in the pre-meeting work session, discussing the ongoing FY24 budgeting process, the details of which will be reported in an upcoming article.

The School Board meets the third Tuesday of each month starting at 6 p.m. inside the Board Office at 124 Hughes Street.

YHC announces recipients of the Ledford Scholarships

Young Harris College is pleased to announce that Sophia Shook and Ashley Palmateer have been awarded Ledford Scholarships from the Appalachian College Association (ACA). The ACA's Ledford Scholars Program offers financial assistance for intensive research projects to undergraduate students enrolled at ACA member institutions. As YHC has only recently joined the ACA, 2023 is the first year that its students have been eligible to participate in the program and two of Young Harris College's most deserving scholars have been recognized this year.

Sophia Shook, class of 2024, is a Biology major and Psychology minor. Her research will focus on the effects of the selective estrogen receptor modulator, Bazedoxifene, and aryl hydrocarbon receptor ligands found in green tea extracts on CYP1A1 expression and activation. She has been awarded the Ledford Scholarship for this exploration of a potential approach to cancer prevention.

"It is an immense honor to be awarded the Ledford Scholarship," said Sophia. "This scholarship provides financial support to begin research that contributes to a potential role of a cancer preventative. Not only will this scholarship provide me with the materials needed to do this research, but this scholarship will provide an opportunity of experience that will assist me when continuing my education to become a physician. I would like to express great gratitude to the Ledford Scholarship committee for putting their confidence in my research proposal, and I would like to thank Dr. Schroeder and other faculty at YHC that have gone above their duties to help me."

Sophia will conduct her research under the guidance of Dr. Jennifer Schroeder, Associate Professor of Biology. "I am excited to mentor Sophia this fall on her research project," said Dr. Schroeder. "She has an innate curiosity that drives her to more fully understand how biological processes affect human health. While taking my Cancer Biology course last year, she was particularly interested in possible ways to treat or prevent breast cancer. After suggesting a specific aspect she wanted to explore, we were able to develop a set of ambitious research goals and submit a proposal for the Ledford Scholars program. We are both grateful to have been selected for this honor and look forward to representing Young Harris in this manner."

Sophia currently works as a medical assistant at North



Sophia Shook

Georgia Family Medicine, as well as mentors in Towns County Schools. With a deep passion for the community in which she grew up, Sophia plans to combat the shortage of physicians in rural areas by one day becoming a doctor.

Ashley Palmateer, class of 2024, is a Psychology major with a minor in Philosophy. While the validity of Ashley's project relies on potential participants remaining naïve to her hypotheses, her research focuses on psychological and behavioral avenues to pain management. Ashley has been awarded the Ledford Scholarship for her investigation of alternative coping skills for those who suffer from pain.

"I am deeply thankful for this opportunity," said Ashley. "Until now, I have never had the opportunity to do such extensive research. Not only will this project set me apart as I apply for graduate school, but it will allow me to better understand the effects of pain on individuals. Often, pain is catastrophized without an understanding of its root, and prescriptions are made immediately. My research aims to reduce the resulting opioid dependency through better coping skills and practices. I am thrilled to have the opportunity to conduct this research with the guidance of Dr. Van Dyke."

Dr. Benjamin Van Dyke, Assistant Professor of Psychology, congratulated Ashley for her research. "I am excited and proud to be working with Ashley Palmateer on her Ledford Scholar Research Project!" said Dr. Van Dyke.



Ashley Palmateer

"Ashley's project represents her hard work, curiosity, and passion for understanding and relieving the suffering of people in pain, who often also struggle with opioid dependence. The results of Ashley's project not only have the potential to address an important gap in the existing scientific literature on the psychology of pain, but they may provide insights that could help people develop new relationships to their pain and therefore reduce the need for medications with high addiction and overdose potential."

Ashley is currently a volunteer with the local 4-H Club and a member of the Delta Phi Epsilon sorority. After graduation, she plans to study neuropsychology at the graduate level, studying the cognitive and neurological processes that dictate human behavior.

Dr. Larry Hall, ACA Vice President for Academic Programs, commended Sophia and Ashley for their research. "The ACA is so proud to be able to provide these Ledford awards to support the exceptional work of our students across Appalachia," said Dr. Hall. "From my own experiences, I understand how impactful and sometimes even life-changing these intensive undergraduate research experiences can be for students. We thank Dr. Schroeder and Dr. Van Dyke for their commitment to their students as they serve as their faculty mentors for the projects, and we look forward to seeing Sophia's and Ashley's presentations upon completion of their research!"



Union County Middle School Virtual Transition Night

May 4, 2023 • 6:30 - 7:30 PM

Meeting ID: 81590067840

Passcode: 867822

This virtual event is for all upcoming 5th Grade students going to 6th.

<https://ucschools.zoom.us/j/81590067840pwd=WHZEMTdUWhXcCtEZFZJSmJCTEdodz09>

Cummings...continued from Page 4A

down and sashayed into the joint. There was the Watkins Man shooting pool and drinking a Nehi Belly-wash.

He grinned as she walked toward him and told him she wanted the \$1.80 he had borrowed. He laughed and said, "Why don't you go back to that Hillbilly family of yours?" Without saying a word she walked from the Pool Room and retrieved her shotgun. Laura walked back into the Poolroom and everyone scattered except the Watkins Man. He had his back to her and turned just in time to feel the barrel of the shotgun poke into his neck. She said, "It ain't right for a man to try and cheat a woman, and I am not going to tolerate being cheated. Do you understand?" The Watkins Man handed her the \$1.80. She promptly left and went back to Trapptown. But, afterwards every man in and around Trapptown and Phil Campbell knew not to cheat Laura Cummings.

Twenty years later my Granny also had to deal with another Watkins Man. Paul and Uncle Bud were only about 10 when a wagon pulled up in front of their home on Cummings Road. The boys ran to the front porch and watched as a great, round man got out of a car and walked toward their house. When he reached the steps he slipped and fell, injuring his left knee. Quickly, the boys and their mother rushed to his side to help him onto the porch. He sat there while he was tended to by the young family. Papa came up from the fields on his mule at lunchtime. Granny was in the house preparing a good meal, so, the boys quickly explained that the man had fallen and hurt his

knee. Both Papa and Granny were tender-hearted so, they invited the man to stay for lunch. This invitation quickly turned into a stay of five days. This was wearing on the family. The guest was given the boys' bedroom while they slept on the floor. Granny was waiting on him hand and foot. Papa was putting in 10-12 hours per day in the field planting his cotton. Finally, Papa invited the man to leave, which he did for a few months.

But, I guess he missed Granny's cooking. Because he showed up again in August during lay-by season. Papa was getting ready to go to meeting at Union Hill Church. The second week of August was always and still is revival at Union Hill Congregational Methodist Church. Once again Paul and Bud were on the front porch. The man appeared to roll an ankle as he tried to step across the ditch between the yard and road. To make a long story short, Papa missed Revival services that day and his parents, Lon and Laura, came calling to see if there was a problem.

They knew the story about the previous incident at their son's farm, and they also had their own experience with another salesman 20 years prior. But, even at 65 years old, Lon Cummings was an imposing man. He looked down at the man and said, "If you think you're gonna get a free meal and lodging out of this, you're mistaken. My grandkids ain't gonna sleep on the floor and my daughter-in-law ain't gonna cook for ye. Now get up and skedaddle."

The Watkins Man never came back to Cummings Road again.

Habitat... continued from Page 4A

platform. She stood there, and I offered her a chair. She sat in the chair for the last three hours of completion while volunteers finished the ramp.

You could feel her joy at being able to enjoy the spring weather. And this is why we keep on.

Receiving help and giving help are amazing God giving abilities we have.

We are a community, and we help each other through good times and hard times.

"The church community is where we learn to love God and others; where we are strengthened and transformed by truth from the Word; where we're taught to pray, to worship, and to serve; where we can be most certain that we're investing our time and abili-

ties for eternity; where we can grow in our roles as friends, sons and daughters, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers. The church is earth's single best place – God's specially designed place – to start over, to grow and to change for the glory of God." Joshua Harris, Stop Dating the Church, (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Publishers, 2005), 21. (G3min.org)

Discipleship is what strives our community. It doesn't matter what church you belong to, striving to help others is a gift that God has enclosed within our hearts. At times it is hidden, which is why it is important to continually be looking inward and reflecting on actions of yourself and others.

Tragic Loss...from Page 1A

we didn't get to teach you."

Jones and her three young children – twin boys Myles and Kyler and their baby brother Ryder – were involved in a car crash on Tuesday, April 18, when a truck barreled into the rear of the family van as Jones was waiting to turn left from US 64 near Hayesville.

The mother and her twins were hurt in the crash, with each requiring hospitalization, and thankfully, Kyler had been discharged from the hospital and was "doing great," she said Friday.

Jones and her family have expressed much gratitude for a community that has come together in prayer and support, and the grieving mother asked Monday that people "respect our privacy at this time."

"This is so hard for all of us," she wrote. "We just want time as a family to grieve and lay our baby to rest. I'll post the funeral arrangements when it's figured out. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for all of the love and prayers. He was just too perfect for this world."

Community support has been nothing short of amazing. By press time, the GoFundMe established to help the family had raised nearly \$14,000 and counting, viewable at <https://gofund.me/383eb00b>.

TriCounty Racetrack held an impromptu fundraiser at a race on Friday night, passing around a helmet in the pits and grandstands. Remarkably, the racetrack was able to raise over \$5,000 for the Jones family that evening.

Kaci's father Shannon Jones, a Blairsville native who has been a racer at TriCounty for years, is thankful for the support for his daughter and grandchildren.

McClure's Deer Processing is doing a benefit raffle for the family as well with a drawing on April 26 for free processing of two deer over the 2023-2024 Georgia deer season. Tickets are \$25 each or five for \$100, with all proceeds going to the Jones family.

"As many of you have heard, (Shannon's) daughter Kaci and her three sons was in a

Paris...

continued from Page 4A

Q. Would you say it would be worth a visit?

A. Absolutely! The Reece Farm is a unique, relaxing, and fun place to walk along the creek, look at historical signage, pet the donkey and just imagine how it was living on a farm in early 1900's rural Appalachia. Byron Herbert Reece was a talented farmer and poet that made Union County proud. His story is happy and sad, and if you haven't visited the farm, you and your family are missing out on a Union County jewel.

Williams...

continued from Page 4A

most likely soil temperatures will stay at or close to 65. Most years it takes longer for our soils to warm up, but this has been a very mild winter this year.

If you have questions about planting depth contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Dyer...

continued from Page 4A

people they serve. So, the next time you see someone who is in public safety, please thank them for their service and remember how difficult their job can be.

Union County Fire Department ~ Our Family Protecting Your Family ~

Fowler...

continued from Page 4A

The lives of people in Mississippi and ancient Rome offer the same message. Your life is more resilient when you share it with people of like mind, especially the community of faith. Find your place in a church that embraces the truth, peace, and hope found in the Lord Jesus Christ.

"If we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 Jn. 1:7).

Local Al-Anon meetings

Are you troubled by someone's drinking? Al-Anon Family Groups (for friends and family) meet every Tuesday at 12 noon at Sharp Memorial United Methodist Church, 1114 Main Street, Room 105, Young Harris, GA For details call 404-687-0467 or visit aa.org.

Chamber...

continued from Page 4A

see the installation of new electric vehicle chargers! It's expected to be a few more months until we'll have the full infrastructure ready, thanks to TVA and Blue Ridge Mountain EMC making this project become reality.

I want to take this opportunity to say congratulations to our high school seniors and wish them the best in their future endeavors.

Thank you for making Life Better in Blairsville.

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Saturday, April 29, 2023 at 2:00 pm

Doors will open at 1:15 to shop the silent auction items Civic Center, Blairsville

For more information, contact: safefundraising8@gmail.com
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Donations accepted through card, cash and check
All donations accepted go directly to safeservices.org
Crisis Line: 706-379-3000

City Council talks insurance premiums, upcoming projects

By Brittany Holbrooks
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

In their April regular meeting, the Blairsville City Council and Mayor Jim Conley discussed the city's 2023-24 property and liability insurance renewal with the Georgia Interlocal Risk Management Agency, only to table official action until next month's meeting on May 9.

Also known as GIRMA, the agency is administered by the Georgia Municipal Association to provide insurance services for more than 370 municipalities around the state.

"When Georgia cities faced hardships obtaining property and liability insurance in the 1980s, we stepped in," according to gacities.com. "The result? A high-quality property and liability insurance fund from the Georgia Interlocal Risk Management Agency (GIRMA)."

"With over 370 members, GIRMA pools your premiums into the risk-sharing fund that pays claim defense, claim losses, and more."

City Clerk Kaye McCann highlighted renewal details in the April 11 meeting, saying that "there's varied amounts for different categories, but it's \$1 million for elected official liability and \$1 million for law enforcement liability."

"The GIRMA representative ... said that they are seeing a rise in claims, specifically in the areas of law enforcement and elected officials and they had different increments to offer," she said, noting that GIRMA had offered to provide additional premium

quotes for alternate coverage amounts.

There is a possibility that Blairsville's rates will increase, but no final decision will be made until more information can be provided by GIRMA, Mayor Conley said.

In other business, the council approved an \$8,500 proposal by Carter Engineering for construction drawing details and specifications on Phase II of the Cleveland Street project from Veterans Memorial Drive to the square, which will include gutter and sidewalk fixes.

Also, council members approved the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority application process for a well project that is estimated to cost around \$700,000 total with up to \$350,000 in "principal forgiveness" from GEFA.

To keep up with water input to the treatment facility, the proposed well project will replace the one located across from the Post Office, which ran dry. A location for the proposed well will be determined later if the project goes forward.

Next up, the council voted to authorize the mayor to execute a contract with the Georgia Department of Transportation for the special allocation of \$2.5 million in state funds, to feature a local match of \$833,333 for capital projects at the Blairsville Municipal Airport.

Projects will include things like raising one of the runways by two feet to improve sight distance; obstruction removal; and restoring both ends of the runway to their full lengths after past displacements that were due to obstructions



Blairsville Airport Manager Aaron Mannheim offered his usual Department Head Report in the April city meeting.

Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

previously deemed hazardous. In terms of department head reports, Blairsville Police Chief Michael "Bear" Baxter said that March was "the busiest month we've had in a long time" for traffic violations and accidents, but there was otherwise "nothing exceptional to report."

Airport Manager Aaron Mannheim offered a small update, saying that Good Friday, ironically, was not a very good day for the airport.

"We had a gas leak spraying because the tank is old, but we were able to patch it ... by 8 o'clock Friday night," explained Mannheim, who added that, with the resignation of the airport's part-time maintenance worker, there's a need for new staff.

The Blairsville City Council holds regular meetings on the second Tuesday of every month at 6 p.m. inside City Hall at 62 Blue Ridge Street. The meetings are open to the public, and residents are encouraged to attend.

Patriots' Day ...from Page 1A

Island militiaman when the war broke out. It took Weaver searching for his adopted great-grandmother's original surname to find Kitle's records.

On the other hand, Weaver's wife has discovered about 18 patriot ancestors, and she gifted her with a Betsy Ross flag after finding out about the 13th.

Former Blue Ridge Mountain SAR President and current Treasurer Jared Ogden explained that the date is also important to Georgia specifically.

"We had a victory at sea around St. Simons," he said. "Three British ships sank on the same day several years later."

Meanwhile, Ogden's reasoning behind the importance of Patriots' Day lies in education.

"Several years ago, we were doing this and mentioned Lexington and Concord," Ogden recalled, shaking his head when remembering his own shock at someone asking, "What was that?"

As they do every year, the men gathered in a line multiple times to shoot off muskets for people motoring around the Blairsville Square. After loading the guns, the group stood at attention to aim, and upon the call to fire, loud cracks and plumes of smoke filled the air.

The event has become so popular that more than just Blairsville's local chapter of SAR and DAR participants



The firing of muskets is a traditional part of the annual Patriots' Day observance around Downtown Blairsville Square.

Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

were present this year. Ellijay Chapter DAR members and sisters Madelyn and Victoria Chandler attended in their 1770s best.

Between firing displays, both the Sons and Daughters waved at passing cars and pedestrians walking on foot, happy to hand out gingersnap cookies and flyers on their respective organizations to interested passersby.

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris signed a proclamation this month declaring April 19, 2023, as Patriots' Day in Blairsville, and the Sons brought the document with them to display.

Aptly named, the Sons and Daughters of the American

Revolution are made up solely of the descendants of confirmed American Revolution patriots – whether that means fighting in the battles directly or supporting soldiers with supplies and shelter.

In fact, those who are interested in joining the organization can check each group's website, where they're able to begin genealogical searches thanks to names of ancestors and descendants that have been logged into a database.

To find out if your family tree branches into the American Revolution or to simply learn more about the organizations, visit www.sar.org and www.dar.org.

Windstream Fiber ...from Page 1A

including Suches, with the costs to install the service at individual homes covered under the project.

For eligible residents, it will be a dramatic improvement in speed and reliability, which is increasingly important for the growing number of households connecting multiple devices to the internet at once, and individuals working from home.

People may find out their eligibility by contacting Kinetic at 706-865-1444. The company will be actively working to notify eligible residents via mailers, phone calls, text messages and other means.

Importantly, interested residents must respond and/or reach out to Kinetic to sign up for the service, and existing and potential customers are being advised to pre-register for the service now.

Coupled with the fiber offerings of Blue Ridge Mountain EMC, once the Kinetic broadband expansion project is completed, most county residents should have access to high-speed internet.

Although he could not attend the Town Hall due to needing to care for his wife after a surgery, Georgia Senate

Majority Leader Steve Gooch, who assisted in securing the funding, commented that "high-speed internet is a key part of our plan to build a better Georgia and a better Union County."

"It allows Georgians to stay connected with school, healthcare services and family, and is critical to the success of our state's economy and to future job creation," Gooch said.

Indeed, the new high-speed internet connections will add to the investments already being made to better establish the area as a regional employment hub thanks to efforts like the College and Career Academy by the Union County School System and its various industry partners.

In the Town Hall, local Kinetic employees showcased an exhibits table to demonstrate fiber splicing and highlight several of the devices that will enable broadband connectivity for residents and business owners.

Employees were also on hand to pre-register the few members of the public who decided to attend the meeting, and resident Dayton Miller, who for years has lived in an underserved community



Kinetic's President of Georgia Operations Michael Foor delivered well-received information in the Town Hall meeting last week.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

in Owtown, said he was encouraged by the project and looks forward to the service.

Union is one of 18 Georgia counties awarded to Kinetic in a bid process for the grant funds, and the local project is among the first to be started by the communications company, according to Michael Foor, who serves as the President of Georgia Operations for Kinetic.

For more information, visit gokinetic.com.