

City Council...from Page 1A

County, and ultimately, the Boy Scout walked away with many good suggestions and food for thought.

Also in the meeting, downtown business owner June McEldowney inquired about the safety and potential improvement of the sidewalks in the Merchants Walk area along Blue Ridge Street.

Conley acknowledged that the sidewalks there are in need of improvement and that there is a drainage issue, describing to McEldowney plans for a new sidewalk.

He said the drainage issue would be addressed and that work would begin "just as soon as we can get the contractor to go to work."

The council approved a contract in the amount of \$14,987 with Colwell Construction Company later in the meeting to go ahead with the sidewalk work McEldowney and the mayor had discussed.

Later in the meeting, Conley dismissed outright a rumor that the parking spaces on Blue Ridge Street were to be covered over with sidewalk.

Moving along, Rushton & Company Auditor Clay Pilgrim delivered the 2018 audit presentation. Pilgrim complimented the department heads for their cooperation and diligence in helping to get the audit done in a timely manner.

"We do follow government auditing standards during our auditing process, and I'm pleased to present that we have an unmodified or clean opinion on city financial statements for 2018," Pilgrim said.

Copies of the 2018 audit report can be found at City Hall.

In other businesses, the council unanimously approved the Georgia Department of Transportation Fiscal Year 2019 contract for airport capital projects and the GDOT FY2020 allocation for airport capital projects.

The mayor said the city would be responsible for \$11,580.10 out of a total cost of \$226,587 for the FY2019 projects, and \$11,722 out of a total estimated cost of \$214,444 for the FY2020 allocations for projects.

The FY2019 contract includes funds for an airport

layout plan update and obstruction removal.

The FY2020 tentative allocation of federal funds includes funds for aviation easement/obstruction removal and installation of a Precision Approach Path Indicator, or PAPI, system. The FY2020 allocation is a tentative one and could change based on how the 2019 project goes.

The council unanimously approved the purchase of 0.61 acres from W.T. and Gwen Adams in the amount of \$27,450 for the purpose of obstruction removal around Runway 8 at the Blairsville Municipal Airport.

The cost of the land will be partially reimbursed in a future GDOT contract.

Moving along, Verizon Wireless Engineer Eleanor Callaghan asked that the mayor and the council to consider allowing Verizon to install small wireless cells on existing infrastructure, like light poles or traffic signal poles, to augment the existing cell towers in Blairsville.

"Our traffic engineers have identified a need to improve capacity in your area," she said, adding that the required height of the cells needs to be between 26 and 50 feet.

Conley asked that Callaghan acquire a copy of an existing city ordinance from another jurisdiction so that he and the council could review it and try to incorporate a similar ordinance in Blairsville at a later date.

The council unanimously approved Blairsville Police Chief Michael "Bear" Baxter's request for a replacement license plate reader for a net cost to the city of about \$14,000. Also unanimously approved was Baxter's request to hire another part-time officer, Dustin Walker.

The council unanimously approved the purchase of a new chemical feeder for the water treatment plant at a cost of \$10,813 at the behest of Plant Manager Danny Dillard.

Dillard said the new feeder will pay for itself by allowing for a significant drop in the cost of production.

Downtown Development Authority Program Manager Darren Harper said Memorial Day weekend is going to be

very busy this year, with 75 vendors already signed up and more expected.

Harper also announced that this year's Green Bean Festival in July will be on the square instead of at the Union County Farmers Market.

Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce President Steve Rowe announced that the Meeks Park free Wi-Fi project would likely be completed before the 2019 Sorghum Festival.

The mayor proclaimed April 2019 as Safe Digging Month in Blairsville, urging people to remember to call 811 before digging.

Furthermore, he proclaimed the week of May 13 through May 21 as National Infrastructure Week in Blairsville, and he proclaimed the week of May 5 through May 11 as Municipal Clerks Week, reading the entire proclamation as a salute to City Clerk Kaye McCann.

Soccer... from Page 1A

State Championship at Berry College in Rome.

Sanchez, who also won the individual Cross Country state title in November, added a Second-Place finish in the 1,600-meter event at last week's state track meet.

Unfortunately, the Region 8-AA Champion Lady Panthers soccer team ran into a juggernaut named St. Vincent's Academy in the quarterfinals.

The top-ranked Savannah private school jumped out to a 2-0 halftime advantage before cruising to a 5-0 victory.

For additional information on Union County soccer's quarterfinal matches and complete results from the Track and Field State Championships, see the Sports Section in this week's edition of the North Georgia News.

Trial...from Page 1A

25, including details about salacious encounters with patients and other alleged past criminal activity.

Prosecutors have argued that the new evidence should be considered admissible because much of the evidence to be introduced "is intrinsically intertwined with the conduct charged in the instant indictment," such as the conspiracy to dispense and distribute controlled substances "outside the usual course of professional medical practice and for no legitimate medical purpose."

The legal teams for the accused, on the other hand, have argued that "virtually all of the evidence relates to crimes, or acts of professional misconduct, that are outside the scope of the charged offenses in the indictment," and should therefore be considered inadmissible.

At the time, both defense teams also took issue with the prosecution's attempt to introduce the new evidence two weeks before the then-trial date

of April 8.

"Alternatively, if the court permits the government to introduce any of this evidence, the case should be removed from the April 8, 2019, calendar and set down for trial in the fall of 2019 in order to provide the defense with a sufficient opportunity to prepare a defense to these new allegations," according to court documents.

And this is exactly what Judge Story has done, moving the trial to a specially set date of Oct. 8 in the fall.

It is unknown at this time if the evidence in question will be admitted, but Story did issue a verbal order on March 27 to seal the summary of the evidence the prosecution is hoping to admit, which was included as an exhibit in the defendants' joint motion to bar the introduction of the evidence.

As there are other motions to be decided in the case, the judge said in March that the court would schedule another pretrial conference as

soon as a trial date could be placed on the calendar, and that conference has been set for Aug. 8.

One motion still outstanding is Gowder's March 26 request to have 47 of the 150 charges against him dismissed due to improper venue.

His attorneys argue in the motion that the charges in question entail activity alleged to have occurred outside the Northern District of Georgia's jurisdiction, presumably in either Tennessee, North Carolina or elsewhere.

The judge has yet to decide also on Gowder's March 22 request for a nonjury trial, which would run simultaneously with Heaton's jury trial if granted and require Story to decide Gowder's innocence or guilt.

There's also the year-old motion to sever the defendants in the case that has yet to be decided upon, which, if granted, would result in separate trials for the defendants, though Gowder's attorney has indicated he's no longer pursuing severance.

Currently, Gowder and Heaton are set to be tried as co-defendants by a jury of their peers beginning on Oct. 8, notwithstanding the granting of an above-mentioned motion.

They are presumed innocent of the charges, according to the U.S. District Attorney's Office in Atlanta, "and it will be the government's burden to prove each defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt at trial."

Prior to their current legal troubles, Mike Gowder was the CEO of Union General Hospital and Dr. Heaton ran a family practice clinic in Blairsville.

Heaton also served as the director of the hospital's Nursing Home and as a member of the hospital's Board of Directors, per court documents.

UCHS Graduation Ceremony Inclement Weather notice



The Union County High School Graduation Ceremony for the Class of 2019 will take place on Friday, May 24, at 8 p.m. inside Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium.

In the event inclement weather is forecasted for that evening, the Graduation Ceremony will be held indoors at the Union County Schools Fine Arts Center at 8 p.m.

A decision regarding this change in location, if needed,

will be made at 6 p.m. on Friday, May 24, and announced via the UCHS REMIND app, on social media and at www.ucschools.org.

Graduating seniors will be given five tickets for guests who attend the ceremony at the Fine Arts Center, and each guest will be required to present a ticket upon entering the ceremony.

For all other guests, the ceremony will be streamed live at the UCHS gym.

You may also find a YouTube link at the Union County Schools website to watch the ceremony live. (NMay15.229)CA

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New Veterans Thrift Store 2641 Hwy. 66, Young Harris. We are a non-profit organization helping local veterans and our community such as S.A.F.E. and Shop With a Hero, we also do benefits and fundraisers for local people in need of help. We offer help like giving clothes and/or house-

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