

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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## Paris, LNIA disagree over leachate concerns

By Shawn Jarrard  
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In his July 16 regular meeting, Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris welcomed guest Doy Lively of the Lake Nottely Improvement Association, who voiced concerns over the presence of unregulated chemicals in landfill leachate processed by the Blairsville Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Nearly a dozen members of the association attended the meeting that night as Lively highlighted issues the volunteer organization wants local leaders to address about the leachate.

But what exactly is leachate?

Leachate is water from landfills that collects in special tanks, keeping materials in garbage that mix with

rainwater from seeping into the ground and contaminating the environment. All landfills are federally mandated to have these tanks to store leachate for ongoing treatment.

As background, the Blairsville City Council accepted a proposal by The Water Authority, LLC in June 2019 to process leachate wastewater out of a landfill in Forsyth County.

The Water Authority is a Dahlonega-based environmental services company co-owned by Steve Gooch, who also serves as state senator for Union and other nearby counties.

"We basically manage private and public wastewater and water systems," Gooch said when reached for comment. "We also travel all over the U.S. providing labor forces and technical assistance on

wastewater plants built by a company out of Austin, Texas."

Leachate processing by municipal utilities nationwide is pretty much the only way landfills classified as non-hazardous waste dispose of runoff, Gooch said, noting that one of the things his company does is transport leachate from such landfills to public wastewater plants like the one in Blairsville.

These facilities are uniquely positioned to treat such waste due to the microorganisms present in domestic wastewater that eat leachate for food.

And since the federal government mandates the collection and treatment of leachate – meaning it has to be processed somewhere – Gooch said municipal treatment plants are "the optimal solution for

disposal of leachate."

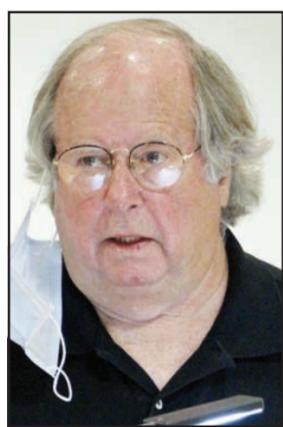
At the time of the proposal, Wastewater Plant Supervisor Jody Cook determined the Blairsville facility had plenty of capacity to safely process the leachate in accordance with Georgia Environmental Protection Division guidelines, and the city began treating the leachate in August 2019.

Gooch said that's why The Water Authority approached Blairsville last year, because the city "has a lot of unused capacity in their plant, but they are prepared for future growth of the city, which is smart planning on the mayor and council's behalf."

"Until the capacity is needed for the growth of the city wastewater flows, this is an opportunity to generate much-needed revenue to offset the cost to operate the plant at



Lamar Paris  
Union County  
Sole Commissioner



Doy Lively  
Lake Nottely  
Improvement Association

their current usage of about 30 percent," Gooch said. "Therefore, the plant is sitting underutilized for years waiting for growth to occur.

overhead of the city government operations and no risk to the environment at minimal extra cost. The city (of Blairsville) does an excellent job of treating

"This helps cover the See County Meeting, Page 2A

## Granddaddy Mimm's downtown bound; Humane Society Thrift Store cleans up

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Headlining the Blairsville City Council regular meeting earlier this month was the approval of an alcohol license to Granddaddy Mimm's LLC and owner Tommy Townsend.

The permit will allow the moonshine distillery to manufacture spirits at 112 Wellborn Street in Downtown Blairsville.

According to Mayor Jim Conley, Townsend has met the state guidelines, while the city has "changed its alcohol ordinance to accommodate" the distillery's relocation inside city limits.

Townsend expects Granddaddy Mimm's to finalize its relocation from Pappy's Plaza and be up and running soon.

"We're not 100 percent sure right now, we could open in early fall," Townsend said. "We're doing some renovations on the building, so it depends on when everything gets done."



The Humane Society Thrift Store in Blairsville has been working to straighten up its outdoor donation area at the request of Blairsville City Hall. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

He cited the centralized location as the primary motive behind moving his business downtown. And if all goes according to plan, Townsend expects to host a grand opening celebration for the new digs.

"We're excited to move into the city of Blairsville; that's where everything goes on and where all the action is," he said. "We are in the process of planning a grand opening in

the new location, but we want to keep the public as safe as possible due to the pandemic, so details will come at a later date."

In the council meeting, which occurred July 7 via teleconference, the mayor criticized the unkempt appearance of the Humane Society Mountain Shelter Thrift Store location in Blairsville. See Granddaddy Mimm's, Page 3A

## COVID-19 concerns continue as summer months wear on

By Jarrett Whitener  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

As the summer months carry on, many people in the area seem to be growing more concerned about COVID-19 and its continued impacts on the world.

Tammy Holmes of Barrow County finds the situation to be worrisome due to the increase in positive cases in surrounding states and the possibility of people coming to Georgia to get away from it all.

"The virus is spreading more and more every day," Holmes said while at the Dog Park July 15. "I think that we need to do something about it before it gets even more out of hand. I heard that hospitals in



Home Depot will require customers to wear masks at all its locations starting July 22. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

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## Georgia Mountain Fair postponed; Fall Festival to run October 9-17



The Georgia Mountain Fair Board of Directors met July 16 to postpone the 2020 fair due to COVID-19. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

By Jarrett Whitener  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

HIAWASSEE – Due to COVID-19, the Georgia Mountain Fair has been postponed for the first time in its 70-year history, as decided by the Georgia Mountain Fair Board of Directors in a meeting inside Anderson Music Hall on

Thursday, July 16.

Terry Taylor, who helped organize the big carnival that was to be put on by Amusements of America in 2020, explained that the carnival would not attend this year's fair, which was to occur over nine days between Aug. 14 and Aug. 22.

"Our carnival called this week and wanted to know what

we were planning on doing," Taylor said. "He said that all his other fairs except for one in October and one in November (had) canceled."

"He said that if we are proceeding with the fair, then he would help try to find another carnival. They were just not traveling because they didn't See GA Mtn. Fair, Page 3A

## Early in-person voting began Monday; masks required in courthouse



By Shawn Jarrard  
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Advanced in-person voting for the Aug. 11 Republican and Democratic Primary Runoff Elections began Monday and will continue through Friday, Aug. 7.

Early voting takes place weekdays between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. in the Jury Assembly Room on the bottom floor of the Union County Courthouse,

which is accessible via a clearly marked entrance around the corner from the lower main entrance to the courthouse.

Voters can cast ballots even during lunchtime, though importantly, there is no required Saturday scheduled for weekend early voting due to the runoff nature of the election.

Because of COVID-19, the courthouse is currently under a judicial order requiring guests to wear face masks, practice social distancing and submit to temperature checks before entering the building.

Voters would not usually be required to wear facial coverings to vote; however, since early in-person voting takes place in a courthouse under judicial order, masks are being required.

People who are uncomfortable voting in a mask may head to the polls

on Election Day, as currently, facial coverings are not being required to vote at precincts, though this is subject to change depending on the COVID-19 situation. There's also the option of mailing an absentee ballot.

Additionally, poll workers are following COVID-19 best practices by regularly sanitizing equipment, and the Union County Government is supplying masks at the courthouse for people who don't have them, as well as hand sanitizer.

The election features two runoff races that were undecided in the June 9 General Primary, one Republican and one Democratic, to decide the respective party nominees for the office of U.S. Representative in the 117th Congress from the 9th Congressional District.

On the Republican side is See Early Voting, Page 3A

## Blairsville man arrested for felony theft twice in under three weeks

By Shawn Jarrard  
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Earlier this month, the Union County Sheriff's Office arrested a Blairsville man on charges related to a trailer stolen out of Suches, marking his second arrest for felony theft in fewer than three weeks, UCISO Lt. Daren Osborn said.

Previously, Evan Reed Daves, 23, was arrested June 21 in connection with two felony shoplifting incidents at the Blairsville Walmart; and July 10, he was arrested once more in a separate felony theft of the

trailer in Suches, Osborn said.

The trailer theft occurred July 8 at a home on Suches' Fannin County side, prompting Fannin Sheriff's Capt. Justin Turner to reach out to the Sheriff's Office here with descriptions of the vehicle and individual in question, whose actions were caught on surveillance equipment, Osborn said.

Right away, Union County investigators recognized the vehicle for its distinctive red wheels and the suspect for his unique tattoos, details that helped them tie Daves to the shoplifting incidents at Walmart weeks

earlier, Osborn said.

The black, 16-foot Currahee utility trailer was valued at around \$1,600, and there were other items in the trailer earmarked for yard sale at the time it was stolen, including two sets of golf clubs, Osborn said.

Two days after the theft, on July 10, investigators traveled to Daves' Blairsville residence to speak with him, where they spotted a Currahee trailer that had been freshly painted green, as well as golf clubs like the ones stolen, giving them enough probable cause to secure a search warrant, Osborn said.

During execution of the stolen property search warrant, investigators observed marijuana in the home, after which they secured a second search warrant for drugs, leading to the discovery of heroin alongside the marijuana, Osborn said.

Daves has been charged with theft by receiving for retaining stolen property in Union County, and for felony possession of heroin, Osborn said.

He remained in the Union County Jail on a \$20,000 bond as of press time Monday. Once

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Evan Reed Daves



Corrina Mary Layton

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