

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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Transfer Station to close commercial side for 30-45 days

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
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Union County is getting back into the waste management business, as local government will take over running the commercial garbage side of the Transfer Station once it re-opens following much needed safety renovations.

To give the county time to renovate the facility, commercial hauling will be suspended for 30-45 days beginning Oct. 4. This makes Saturday, Oct. 2, the last day to cross the scales before the temporary shutdown.

Per Waste Management, the company that currently

runs the Transfer Station, major work is needed to make the big commercial dumping shed safe for continued use, and County Manager Larry Garrett said the company will no longer manage the site after it closes for repairs.

Once that occurs, the county will step in to complete the necessary upgrades, hire staff to operate the station, and purchase the equipment needed to re-open under local management. Garrett said the county will also be looking to contract for hauling local trash to a landfill.

Residential garbage and recycling will not be affected by the commercial side closing, so people will still be able

to bring bagged trash to the Transfer Station. Businesses with roll-off and front-end load dumpsters will likewise continue to enjoy pickups during the closure.

But local garbage services and construction companies that typically cross the scales – upwards of 125 vehicles a day – will have to haul their garbage to Waste Management's alternate site in Fannin County.

By Union County Government's estimate, the temporary closing period will add an average of three hours per week to the driving time of the seven garbage pickup services that operate locally.

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The commercial dumping shed at the Union County Transfer Station has been deemed unsafe for continued operation and will be shut down for renovations starting next week.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Retired local first responder giant Worden, 74, honored for life of service

By Shawn Jarrard
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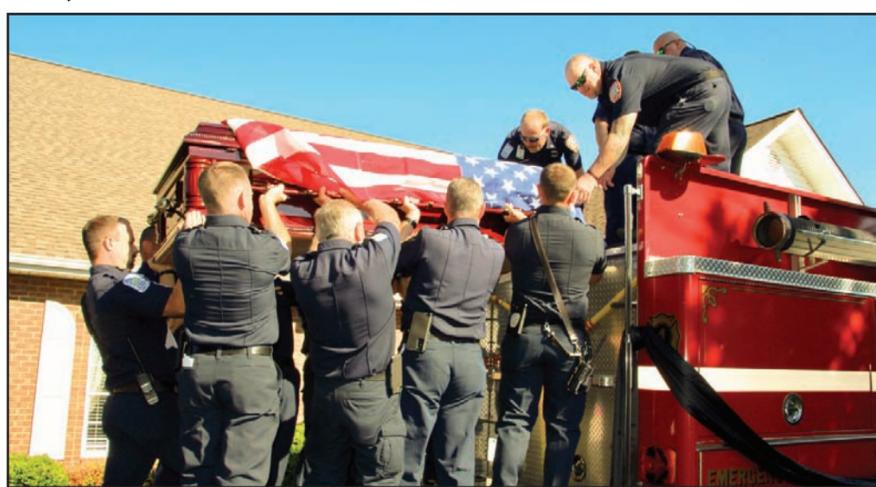
One of Blairsville's beloved longtime first responders, Charles Grady Worden Sr., 74, passed away Sept. 22 following an extended illness, with his son C.J. by his side until the very end.

A native and lifelong resident of Union County, Worden lived a life of service to his community.

He was an inaugural member of Union County Fire Department Station No. 2 and later served as Fire Chief for 22 years, Emergency Management Agency Director for 20 years, and 911 Dispatcher and Director for 18 years.

Worden will be remembered as a loving husband and father as well as a decades-long public servant to Union County residents.

He was preceded in death



Charles Worden received a Fire Department escort from Mountain View Funeral Home for a small private service at Meadow View Cemetery on Sept. 27.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

by his parents, Marshall Joe and Cora Bella Hughes Worden; and his wife, LaQuetta Marie Williams Worden. He is survived by his son C.J. Worden

and many cousins, friends and colleagues.

"For the safety of all of Charles' friends and family due to COVID-19, a memorial

service will be held at a later date to be determined," per his obituary. "Mr. Worden will be interred at the Meadow

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Pfizer booster shots are now available



By Shawn Jarrard
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Good news, Union County residents – booster doses for eligible recipients of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine have been approved for specific groups of fully vaccinated individuals.

Georgia Department of Public Health District 2 made the announcement Friday after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued official recommendations for who may get their third shot.

Booster vaccine doses are approved for people aged 65 and older; residents of long-term care facilities; people 18 and older with pre-

existing medical conditions; and residents 18 and older who have an occupational or institutional exposure risk.

To be eligible to receive a booster, people must have received their second Pfizer vaccine at least 6 months ago.

Currently, there is no booster available for Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccinees, "as right now there is not enough data to support a booster dose recommendation," according to District 2 Public Information Officer Natasha Young.

"Both Moderna and J&J are expected to submit data to the FDA in support of booster doses in the coming weeks," Young said last week.

District 2 will be re-opening mass vaccination sites in most of its 13 counties as of Sept. 27, including in Towns County. All doses of the Pfizer vaccine will be available. First

See Pfizer Boosters, Page 2A

Most students attend classes on campus despite COVID



L-R: John Hill, Casey Jones, Doug Harper, Pat Donaldson and Mark Hughes, pictured here recognizing Harper's excellent work as an Administrative Assistant at the Union County Alternative Education Program.

Photo by Mark Smith

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

In his update at the monthly Union County Board of Education meeting on Sept. 21, Superintendent John Hill said that, by far, the majority of students had opted to come to classes on campus rather than take the online option presented recently.

"We did offer the virtual option for students that were concerned about COVID, and as of this afternoon, we had about 70 students across the district choose that option," Hill said. "Total enrollment as of this afternoon is 3,011 students in our school district."

The math works out to about 98% of students deciding to continue with in-person learning at Union County

Schools.

"Overall, we're extremely thankful and feel very blessed to be in a much different situation than we were a few weeks ago concerning COVID," Hill said. "We've got some really sick employees, so we need to pray for them that they heal fully and quickly."

"One thing is, if a child is sick, they need to stay home. We've had that issue of folks sending (sick) kids on the school bus. It seems like every morning we're having to call the nurses to meet the school bus."

Added Hill, "Our COVID numbers are very much down. We have 16 positive cases and 49 quarantines in the district (as of Sept. 21). And that's down from approximately 250 (positive cases) three weeks

ago.

"If it wasn't for everybody pitching in and working together, we would have had to close down the system. I am very thankful for everybody's hard work and dedication and prayers."

Moving along, Hill said that Union County Schools is facing the same staffing challenges as many businesses, both in the county and across the nation, no matter the size or field of occupation.

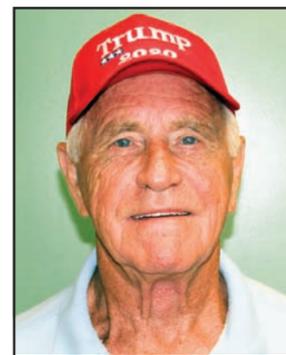
"We're working to be creative as we can to fill those needs as quickly as we can," Hill said. "I really do want to commend our staff for being so flexible. I want to thank the folks that have worked hard to keep us in school, and that's everybody."

See School Board, Page 8A

Three qualify for Nov. 2 Special Election in Blairsville



Teresa Moore



Frank Pack



Kayla Hemphill

By Shawn Jarrard
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Teresa Moore, Frank Pack and Kayla Hemphill qualified last week for the Special Election to fill the unexpired Blairsville City Council term of Betty Easter,

who passed away Aug. 31 following a brief illness.

The election will take place on Tuesday, Nov. 2, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. inside Blairsville City Hall at 62 Blue Ridge Street.

Early voting will open on Oct. 12 and continue each weekday through Oct. 29, with

two days of Saturday voting, Oct. 16 and Oct. 23, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day at City Hall.

People requesting absentee-by-mail ballots should contact Blairsville Elections Superintendent Kaye McCann at 706-745-2000. The last day

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Georgia Senate Bill 202 changes are in effect for 2021 election

Voter registration deadline Oct. 4

By Shawn Jarrard
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Due to recent updates in Georgia election law, voters will be seeing a few changes during early voting and on Election Day for the Nov. 2 Special Called Election.

This would normally be an off year for countywide elections, but Union County Government has called a Special Election to ask voters to consider the Single County Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax.

Advanced in-person

voting will take place in the Jury Assembly Room of the Union County Courthouse, running weekdays Oct. 12-29 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., even during lunchtime.

Early voting hours differ from past years due to Senate Bill 202, but Election Day voting remains 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., to take place Nov. 2 at the 11 pre-assigned precincts of Union County.

New this year is the addition of a second day of weekend voting, giving people too busy to vote during the week chances to cast ballots

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Diana Nichols
Deputy Registrar

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Transfer Station...from Page 1A

The alternate site is located at 10169 Lakewood Highway in Mineral Bluff, with hours of operation being Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Customers hauling to Mineral Bluff will need to have an account, which will be transferred over for existing accounts.

"Please inform the scale house attendant if you plan to utilize the Mineral Bluff location," Waste Management said in a notice issued earlier

this month. "If you have any questions, please call 404-794-6707."

As to why another company will not be hired to run the day-to-day operations, Garrett said the county already owns the land and facilities under management, so taking over control locally will enable the county to make revenue to better maintain and upgrade the Transfer Station over time without affecting taxpayers.

After the local landfill closed decades ago, Union County continued to run local waste management efforts at the Transfer Station before turning over operations to Appalachian Waste Systems.

Advanced Disposal purchased Appalachian Waste Systems some years back and ran the station until recently, when Waste Management acquired Advanced Disposal to become the newest site manager.

For the last several months, the county has been working to negotiate a new arrangement with Waste Management, during which time Garrett said the county asked for additional time before the company closed the commercial side for repairs.

Garrett said the county has known this day was coming and had even budgeted to complete the repairs in 2022, fully expecting Waste Management to grant the additional time.

However, citing an issue with insuring the facility in its current state, the company



Union County Government has pledged to undertake safety upgrades as well as a makeover at the commercial dumping site of the Transfer Station.
Photo by Shawn Jarrard

ultimately decided not to budge on the original closing timeline as the county anticipated it would, which Garrett said is why the present temporary situation seems rushed and out of the blue.

Next steps include having contractors come out and look at what safety renovations are needed to get the commercial side back up and running before the end of November, and the county will be able to use SPLOST funds to make the necessary repairs.

At the same time, the county will be working to hire staff and purchase equipment to operate the facility, with an end goal of making the Transfer Station a nicer, safer place for people to haul their trash and recycling.

The North Georgia News reached out to several local garbage businesses last week to ask how the temporary closure will affect their operations and

customers.

Tony's Garbage Service said customers may experience delays and/or changes in their service as adjustments are made to accommodate the closure.

"Please leave out garbage until dark the day of pickup, and if not picked up that day, then please have out the next day by 8 a.m. until dark again," Tony's Garbage said. "We will not be accepting any new customers for the next few weeks until we see how the changes will affect us."

"We appreciate your business and understanding during these unforeseen circumstances."

In the meantime, residents and construction companies used to discarding building materials and other types of debris may call Georgia Mountain Grinding & Recycling at (706) 835-2000 to see about dropping off waste from jobs and projects.

Pfizer Boosters...from Page 1A

and second doses of Moderna as well as the single-shot J&J vaccine will be available upon request.

The Towns County Recreation Department at 150 Foster Park Road in Young Harris will be hosting vaccination clinics Mondays and Wednesdays from 1-4:15 p.m., and on Tuesdays between 1 p.m. and 5 p.m.

Union County will continue offering COVID vaccines at the Health Department until demand requires a transition over to the Union County Sports Center.

All health departments will be vaccinating every other Saturday. Appointments are not required to attend any day of vaccination, but people may schedule an appointment via <http://phdistrict2.org/>.

"Although the booster dose is not required, it will help fully vaccinated people maintain protection over the coming months," Young said.

Continuing, Young noted that COVID-19 vaccines "are working well to prevent severe illness, hospitalization and death, but with the introduction of the delta variant, public health experts noticed a reduction of protections against mild and moderate disease."

This certainly seems to be holding true locally, as hospitalizations among Union and Towns residents have consistently been occurring primarily among the unvaccinated.

Local COVID-19

hospitalizations are down from recent weeks, with room for sicker patients expanding in other area hospitals as well. Last week, COVID inpatients at Union General Hospital dipped into the 20s before ticking back up above 30 at the end of the week.

And while emergency room visits for COVID have slowed dramatically of late, people in the community are still getting sick and dying from COVID-19. Sadly, deaths have continued to increase, with 14 September deaths in Union County through Friday, and six in Towns.

Union General Chief Nursing Officer Julia Barnett said Friday that she has been seeing younger patients becoming incredibly ill with the disease, including those in their 30s, 40s and 50s "without previous significant health issues."

On a positive note, COVID positivity continues to decline in the area, hitting 16.7% in Union over the last two weeks dating from Sept. 24, down from 32% on Sept. 1.

The same trend applies in Towns County, which on Sept. 1 saw 26.8% positivity over the previous two weeks decline to 14.7% by Sept. 24.

Importantly, this is still considered a high rate and is indicative of ongoing community spread, though it's a welcome trend, nonetheless.

Union County School District has experienced a

massive drop in positivity, going from more than 200 positive cases at the end of August to just 12 districtwide as of Sept. 23. And Towns County Schools hit a remarkably low number of three positives systemwide as of Friday.

People are being advised to continue following COVID best practices, as the dynamics and exact mechanisms of viral transmission continue to prove elusive.

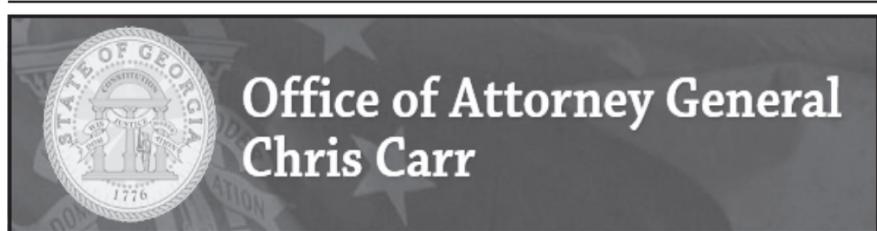
COVID vaccines are available for free and without appointment at local health departments, and people may also find them at any number of area pharmacies.

With 46% of eligible residents being fully vaccinated and 51% having received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, Union County has fallen slightly behind the state rates of 47% fully and 54% partially vaccinated.

Towns County is faring better than the state average with 49% of its residents being fully vaccinated.

District 2 Public Health continues to offer free drive-thru PCR testing at Union General Hospital for anyone wanting or needing one.

Testing is available Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at 35 Hospital Road in Blairsville. No appointment is required to receive a test, but registration via <https://honumg.info/LTSGA015> is encouraged to decrease wait times at the testing site.



Carr warns Georgians to look out for Imposter Scams

ATLANTA, GA – Attorney General Chris Carr is cautioning Georgians about several imposter scams that are making the rounds.

"Scammers may try to gain your confidence by posing as a legitimate company or government agency," warns Attorney General Carr. "Consumers should be very wary of unsolicited text messages, emails and phone calls and avoid providing sensitive information, clicking on links, or downloading file attachments unless they know for a fact that the sender or caller is who they claim to be."

Below are descriptions of several imposter scams to look out for:

Order Confirmation Scams: One imposter scam making the rounds takes the form of an automated phone message from a major company (such as Walmart, Amazon, Costco or Target) confirming a recent purchase you supposedly made for a big-ticket item totaling several thousand dollars. You are told that a shipment confirmation will follow shortly at which time your credit card on file will

be automatically charged. The message asks you to call a phone number if you did not make the transaction in question or to report an unauthorized transaction. If you dial the number, you will likely be asked to provide your account credentials or payment information so that your account can be "credited." The scammers will then use that information to steal your money or commit identity theft. This scam can also occur via email or text message.

To avoid this scam, do not call the number provided or click on any links. Instead, log-in to your online account with the retailer, or contact the company through a verified telephone number or website to see if, in fact, there was an unauthorized charge made to your account.

Sweepstakes Scam: Scammers call or mail a letter to consumers saying they have won a cash prize in a sweepstakes. The scammer may claim to be a representative from a government agency or indicate that the sweepstakes has been "approved" by a federal law enforcement agency,

such as the Office of the Attorney General. The consumers are informed that in order to collect their prize, they must first pay various fees—usually via wire transfer, gift cards or prepaid cards—to cover taxes or handling fees.

First and foremost, consumers should know that if you are asked to pay money to collect a prize, no matter what the reason, it is a scam. Being asked to wire money or pay via gift cards or prepaid cards is another red flag of a scam. Furthermore, the Attorney General's Office does not endorse sweepstakes.

Amazon AirPods Raffle Scam: The Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division has also received complaints about text messages that purport to be from Amazon and claim that you have won a pair of AirPods in an Amazon Raffle. The text contains a link to click for more information. Do not click on the link. Doing so could load malware onto your device or lead you to a phishing website that prompts you for personal information, such as your Amazon login and password.

Special Election...from Page 1A

to request a mail-in ballot is Oct. 22.

The term of the office will begin Nov. 9, 2021, and will expire on Dec. 31, 2023.

As required of qualifying candidates, all three are residents of the city.

Teresa Moore grew up in Blairsville and graduated from Union County High, as did her children, and many will remember her grandfather, Ed Nicholson, who was the town barber for many years.

In 2015, she retired from United Community Bank after working there for 28 years, during which time she was involved in numerous community service and outreach initiatives.

She has served her community in a variety of roles, including as treasurer of the Union County Historical Society, past chair of the Mountain Regional Library Board of Directors, original member of the Downtown Development Authority's Promotions Committee and many more.

"I loved my job, and one of my greatest joys was that we were often United Community Bank's instruments of good in local businesses and organizations," Moore said. "By serving on the Blairsville City Council, I would love to again be an instrument of good in our community."

Moore has prior knowledge of city government and the challenges therein, as her husband is Robert "Buddy" Moore, who will swear into his fourth term as a Blairsville City Councilman in January 2022 after qualifying unopposed in August for the 2021 General Municipal Election.

"I think our relationship is a positive (in terms of running for City Council), in that I have some insight as to what goes on in the council," she said. "We have a very successful marriage, and I think that is because we're both communicators and good listeners, and those are things that could also be beneficial if you're a member of the council."

"We occasionally have things that we stand firm on, but we're willing to negotiate and find middle ground, and that, too, could be important in an organization like the City Council."

Anticipating pushback about serving on the council alongside her husband if elected,

Moore said that, "for the people who know me and know us, I hope they would know that I would not run in order to collude or to bolster whatever his agenda might be. That's not who we are."

On top of wanting to serve her community again in retirement, Moore said she chose to run for office after Easter passed. She considered Easter a dear friend who represented the city well, and only in her absence would she have wanted to take on the position, she said.

"For me, it is 100% about serving this community, Blairsville, Union County," Moore said. "The council and the mayor have done an amazing job, and I just want to continue on that path. And I think it would be really rewarding to be a part of that."

Frank Pack is U.S. Air Force veteran and retired local builder/developer. He was born and raised here and still owns his family home on Cook Street. He has been critical of the direction City Hall has taken in recent years and is seeking election to add a new voice to city leadership.

Of course, Pack is no stranger to city politics. He has run in the past for both the mayor's seat and the City Council. This time around, he decided to qualify out of a sense of duty to his hometown of Blairsville.

"I do not want to serve – that is the last thing I want to do; I've got too much that I still like to do in my life to waste it sitting there at City Hall," Pack said. "The only reason I ran was because nobody else would have run, and someone is going to have to take the reins here one of these days, because this place is going down so fast it's pitiful."

Specifically, Pack believes "our present mayor and council are not concerned with the citizens of Blairsville," and he said that, if elected, he would aim to pay more attention to the needs of city residents.

"(The current mayor and council) are only interested in a few close businesspeople that they like to cater to," he said. "Like this new parking lot they're putting in, that's a lot of money, but they won't spend \$10 out in the city."

"They're going to put a sidewalk down to a whiskey still, but they cannot build a sidewalk for children to get to

school or for people to walk to the store. They could care less about the residents of this city."

"I don't want to be on the council, and I don't want to be mayor – I just want someone to step up and do what's right. This country is good to us, and we need to pay it back, and the only way we can pay it back is seeing to it that our government is run right."

Added Pack, "The residents of Blairsville pay taxes and support this community. They're here 12 months of the year and 24 hours a day. They deserve to be treated first. Forget about the people who come up here and spend \$10 at the hamburger joint, and look after the people who make this town."

Additionally, Pack said the council's recent decision to pay city employees and elected officials for receiving the COVID vaccine played a role in his resolve to run for the vacant seat, as he believes that money should be spent instead to educate the public on the benefits of vaccination.

Kayla Hemphill is also from Blairsville and currently lives in the house in which she grew up. She is a first-grade special education teacher at Union County Primary School, where she has worked for 11 years.

Like Moore, she is familiar with the goings on of city government through a familial connection to City Hall, as her mother, Debbie Phillips, served on the Blairsville City Council from 2002 until her death in 2010, after which Councilman Tony Dyer was elected to complete the term.

"I grew up hearing all about the City Council meetings," Hemphill said. "(My mom) really had a love for it and kind of passed it on to me. It meant a lot to her, and it means a lot to me."

Having lived in Blairsville her whole life, Hemphill said she got into teaching to serve the children of her community and give back for all the ways in which she has benefited here, "and I feel like I can do that on the City Council in a different capacity for my community."

If elected, Hemphill said she would play an active role in shepherding Blairsville responsibly into the future.

"We live in a great town, and I'd like to have a part in keeping it that way, but also take a small part in the progress and the change that's to come," Hemphill said. "I like the level of change (I've seen in

SB 202...from Page 1A

in person on Saturday, Oct. 16, and Saturday, Oct. 23, also from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

People will want to pay attention to the new absentee ballot request process, which will require voters to fill out an "Application for Georgia Official Absentee Ballot" form as opposed to simply requesting one from the Registrar's Office.

Now, voters will have to provide a Georgia driver's license number or a Georgia ID card number on the new official form. If a voter has neither, there are other forms of acceptable identification listed on the form that may be submitted, e.g. U.S. passport, military ID, etc.

This form can be picked up from the Registrar's Office located at 65 Courthouse Street in Blairsville or printed at https://sos.ga.gov/admin/uploads/2021_Absentee_App.9721_2.pdf.

"Georgia law allows for absentee-by-mail ballots to be requested no earlier than 78 days and no later than 11 days prior to an election," per sos.ga.gov. "Absentee ballot applications can be returned by mail, fax, email (as an attachment), or in-person to the local County Board of Registrar's Office."

People are encouraged to request and return their absentee ballots early to give their ballot "enough time to travel through the mail and resolve any issues that may arise when voting by absentee ballot," per [georgia.gov](https://sos.ga.gov).

For the November election, the deadline to return absentee-by-mail ballot applications is Oct. 22, whereas before the change, voters could turn applications in as late as the Friday before Election Day.

This year, absentee ballots will be mailed to voters beginning the week of early voting, which is a change from the previous start of ballot mailing 45 days prior to Election Day.

In the past, if voters listed their name and birthdate along with a signature matching what was on file, they did not have to submit any proof of identification to request a ballot. Under the new law, driver's license and state ID numbers will be used instead

of signatures to match mail-in ballot requests to voters.

When absentee ballots are received by the Registrar's Office, they must also contain a voter's name, birthdate, signature and driver's license number or state ID number. However, for returning ballots, voters may also supply the last four digits of their Social Security number.

Wildly divergent signatures might spur the Registrar's Office to look into a particular ballot or application, but signature matching is no longer a requirement for requesting or casting an absentee ballot.

As for drop boxes, last year, voters could drop their ballots into a designated box outside the courthouse. SB 202, however, requires drop boxes to be placed inside early voting venues – the Jury Assembly Room in this case – to be accessible only during early voting hours.

Voters can also drop completed absentee ballots off at the Registrar's Office through Election Day.

SB 202 has also resulted in a slight change to provisional ballot voting. There are three reasons someone may vote provisional, which is a type of ballot that requires additional verification by a voter before being allowed to count toward an election result:

1) Being unable to show one of the required forms of photo ID when voting in person.

2) If, when a voter first registered to vote in Georgia, he or she registered by mail but did not provide any identification at that time and are unable to present acceptable ID the first time he or she votes in person.

3) If a voter's name does not appear on the list of registered voters at the precinct in which he or she is trying to vote.

The recent change deals with this last provision. Before, people could cast a provisional ballot at any precinct at any time during Election Day voting.

Now, they may do so only between the hours of 5 p.m. and 7 p.m., and only if they sign an affidavit attesting to why they were unable vote in person at their assigned precinct. These affidavits will be submitted to the Secretary of State's Office for review.

There are many more behind-the-scenes changes

in SB 202, but those outlined above are the biggest ones that will directly affect voters during this election.

A key deadline for would-be electors is Oct. 4, the last day that people may register to vote in Union County. This is the same deadline as always, with a registration cutoff 30 days before Election Day.

As far as tracking the number of votes, the Registrar's Office is now required to post daily updates online showing the number of people casting absentee/in-person early ballots to prevent surprise ballot dumps on Election Day.

So far, only a handful of absentee-by-mail ballot applications have been received at the Registrar's Office, but that's likely due to the fact that this is an off year for elections, with only TSPLOST on the ballot, according to Deputy Registrar Diana Nichols.

"I think people have not realized it's only about a month and a half till the election," Nichols said. "After people do start voting, that will change some, I think, whenever early voting actually starts."

Currently, there is a mask mandate in effect for courthouses of the Enotah Judicial Circuit, so all early voters will be required to wear a mask unless the judicial order requiring them is lifted or expires during the three weeks of advanced in-person voting.

The same early voting changes will apply in the upcoming City of Blairsville Special Election to fill the unexpired term of Councilwoman Betty Easter, who passed away on Aug. 31.

Early voting for the city's Special Election will begin on Oct. 12 and continue each weekday through Oct. 29, as well as on two Saturdays, Oct. 16 and Oct. 23, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day at Blairsville City Hall.

Blairsville Elections Superintendent Kaye McCann asks that registered city voters wanting to request an absentee-by-mail ballot contact her at 706-745-2000. The last day to request an absentee ballot by mail in the city's Special Election is Oct. 22.

City of Blairsville Election Day voting will take place inside City Hall from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. at 62 Blue Ridge Street.

School Board...from Page 1A

As a testament to the employees and staff, especially High School Principal C.T. Hussion and his team, Hill reported that 107 high school students had taken the SAT exam, with an average combined score of 1069.

According to SAT website PrepScholar, the average SAT score in 2020 in the State of Georgia was 1053, and the national average was 1,051. The combined score range is 400 to 1600.

"I think that's really good work," Hill said, speaking of both students and staff.

"Going the Extra Mile Awards" were conferred upon staff members in the meeting to celebrate those who have been especially helpful in the last few weeks amid the rise and fall of COVID in the school system.

"We've got several folks here tonight that have joined us and really have gone above and beyond the call of duty," Hill said. "They do more than they

get paid for on a regular basis, and we wanted to publicly recognize them."

Brad McAfee, a 21-year employee of Union County Schools, was introduced and recognized by School Nutrition Director Cindy Jones and Middle School Principal Pat Donaldson. McAfee works in the cafeteria.

"He always has a positive attitude, and he just works so well with everyone that's around him," Donaldson said. "He never complains and always gets right in there and just works hard. He brightens everybody's day."

"And he's a die-hard Union County Panthers fan," added Hill to a round of laughter.

School Nurses Leigh Ann Hartley, Jeri Ann King, Donna Dyer, Letitia Jackson and Rosella Williams were recognized for their special and most valuable talents this school year.

"We have many heroes

that work for our school system," Assistant Superintendent Dr. Paula Davenport said, "but right on the front line are our school nurses. I do appreciate them very, very much."

Transportation Director Kody Owenby introduced and recognized Charlie Cattanach for his outstanding help with school bus transportation. Hussion said Cattanach also teaches classes at the high school during the day.

Hussion introduced and recognized P.E. and Health Director Corey Garrett for his outstanding work with students and subbing in where needed during the past few weeks.

And former Union County Alternative Education Program student and graduate Doug Harper, now the AEP administrative assistant, was introduced and recognized by AEP Director Casey Jones.

Harper was described by his former teachers-turned-colleagues as loyal, hardworking, and worthy, carrying on the traditions of the Union County AEP Program.

The Students Against



Union County School District Hard-Working Nurses, L-R: Leigh Ann Hartley, Jeri Ann King, Donna Dyer, Tish Jackson and Rosella Williams.
Photo by Mark Smith

Destructive Decisions grant in the amount of \$6,500 was approved for the Union County Schools S.A.D.D. program, which is overseen by School Police Chief Chad Deyton. The S.A.D.D. grant was made by the Governor's Office of Highway Safety.

The Drug-Free Community grant in the amount of \$125,000 per year for at least six years was given to Union County Family Connection Coordinator Katy Jones. Hill said Dr. Davenport helped

Jones to write the grant and submit it.

Jones, Deyton and Dr. Davenport will all work together with these grants to promote a drug-free school environment.

Dr. Davenport commented during personnel recommendations that, for those who are interested in teaching at Union County Schools, one of the best things they can do is to become a substitute teacher, which allows them the opportunity to

demonstrate their abilities and work ethic.

Local residents Laurie Brothers and Cindy Vandereed approached the board with concerns over a curriculum called "Culturally Responsive Teaching" that is not being taught in Union County Schools, and board members listened to the contents of the address.

The School Board meets the third Tuesday of every month at 7 p.m. inside the Board of Education Office.

Worden...from Page 1A

View Cemetery where he will rest next to his beloved wife LaQuetta."

Mountain View Funeral Home had charge of Worden's arrangements, and he received a small private graveside service with Fire Department escort on Monday, Sept. 27.

People may sign the family guestbook and send condolences online at www.mountainviewfuneralhome.com. In lieu of flowers, the family has requested that donations be sent to the Union County Fire Department at 507 Shoe Factory Road in Blairsville.

Worden retired from his life of public service in 2017. In his various posts, he shouldered many responsibilities over a long career devoted to first response and leadership in emergency situations.

He was one of the pioneers of Union County's first five volunteer fire stations, which he would later lead as Fire Chief between 1993 and 2014, during which time he grew the department to its current 12 fire stations.

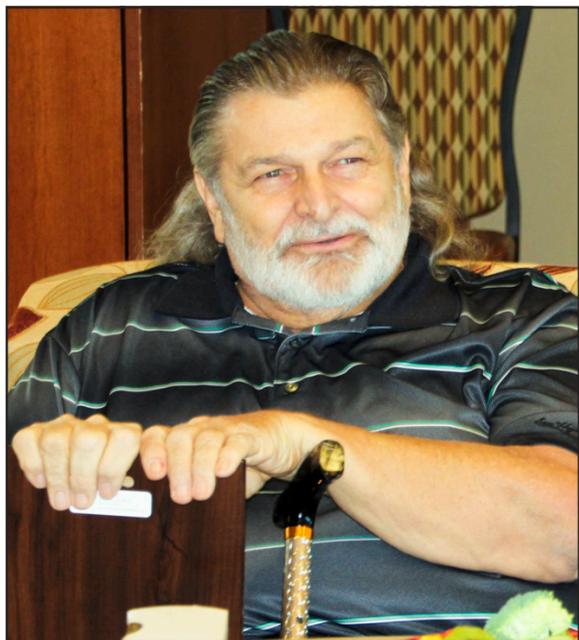
A graduate of Union County High, Worden attended Young Harris College after high school before going on to work for the Tennessee Chemical Company in Copperhill for 23 years.

In the 1970s, Worden joined the company fire brigade, kicking off his decades-long involvement with firefighting.

He continued to work for the chemical company through the 1980s, and in 1984 Worden became a founding member of the volunteer fire departments of Union County, where he worked his way up to battalion chief.

When the chemical company folded in 1990, Worden went to work as a jailer for the Union County Sheriff's Office, where he forged a healthy respect for the men and women of local law enforcement.

He was a jailer for a couple of years, and even spent a few months in 911 dispatch before being hired on as Union



Charles Worden in his 2017 retirement reception at the Union County Community Center.
Photo by Shawn Jarrard

County Fire Chief in 1993. Up until the mid-1990s, Worden farmed hay as a side business, something his family had done for decades on their 86-acre farm.

In the mid to late '90s, Worden was appointed EMA director by then-Gov. Zell Miller following the retirement of Hughes Chatham, and it was in the early 2000s that he took over as 911 director.

Worden retired as fire chief in 2014, at which point he received a commemorative fire ax from his firefighters, and David Dyer took over as fire chief while Worden continued as EMA and 911 director.

When he finally retired from all of his duties, Charles' son C.J. said he was especially proud of his father's accomplishments and would like the community to know that Worden Sr. had helped launch many promising first responder careers in Union County, including his own.

The North Georgia News would like to thank Charles Worden for his many years of service in Union County,

over which time he positively affected countless lives for the better.

For more history and information about Worden, please read this week's column by Fire Chief David Dyer located inside the Editorial Section of the newspaper.

"I have known Chief Charles Worden for most of my life," Dyer said. "We had volunteered and worked together responding to many calls of every type over the years."

"His leadership helped make us what we are today. He was instrumental in developing and advancing the E911 center, the Emergency Management Agency, and the Fire Department."

"Charles was always willing to help anyone in any way that he could, especially his employees. He was there for the good times and triumphs. He was there in the hard times when we struggled."

"He was more than just a chief or a director; he was a mentor, a leader, and a friend. He will be greatly missed."

Ira Weaver American Legion Post 121 honors contributions and support given by Karen Brendle and The Skillet Cafe



(L-R): Glen Cousins, Post 121 Legion Riders director, Cody Brendle, Dan Wickersham, Post 121 commander, Molly Brendle and Patti Cousins, Post 121 Auxiliary and Legion Riders member.

Members of The American Legion Blairsville Post 121 presented a plaque to The Skillet and the Brendle family September 17th in appreciation for the personnel and financial support of Ira Weaver Post 121.

"The past couple of years, The Skillet and Karen were very helpful in selling raffle tickets and promoting multiple events in which our Post was involved," explained Dan Wickersham, Post commander.

"It's a tragic irony that this plaque was planned prior

to the sudden passing of Ms. Brendle. She and her entire staff were always so accommodating and eager to assist with community organizations and local fund-raising projects, Wickersham added. "We're pleased we could recognize them and especially Karen with this."

The plaque reads: This plaque is presented in honor of Karen Brendle of Blairsville's The Skillet Cafe.

In recognition of her admirable commitment and service to The American Legion and the US Armed

Forces veterans and their families of this community. Her willingness and desire to promote Americanism and loyalty to these great United States has made a lasting impact on many veterans, their families, visitors and citizens of Union County.

The American Legion, Ira Weaver Post 121, Blairsville, Georgia, is eternally grateful for her personal contribution to the foundation of our common cause which is to support and "never forget" the sacrifices of our veterans and their families.