

Director...from Page 1A

County Library Board; and nin County Library Board. Ron Bolin, Chair of the Fan-

Howell served as a facilitator to the committee, but had no vote in the process.

"The committee also asked for input from all the library staff in all the branches," said Howell.

And while the current situation is certainly a setback, the board still has options.

"The committee will have to get together again to decide whether to offer to another of the current candidates or re-advertise the position and try again," said Howell.

The MRLS comprises the Mountain Regional Library in Young Harris, and public libraries in Towns County, Union County, and Fannin County. These libraries have benefited from Howell's leadership for 25 years, as she has served 15 years as assistant director, followed by the last 10 years as director.

Howell has worked hard over the years amid shrinking staff and state-mandated furlough days, and as such has given up more than 200 days of authorized leave time to keep things running smoothly. Even now, as she retires, she can only be paid out a maximum annual leave of 30 days.

"One of the issues that I raise is that the way the state

does the budget, the difference between my salary and the new person coming in goes back to the state — we don't get to keep any of it," said Howell. "So, if your new person starts in December, then my payout for my unused annual leave will have to come out of local money because the state will not pay a person to fill a position and the unused leave of a person who's leaving, even though I earned every bit of that leave as a state-paid person."

Howell, who is "unwilling to put the board in the position of having to furlough locally paid staff in order to pay out" her annual leave, presented a compromise to the board that would allow her to retain 30 days of her unpaid leave and keep things running at the same time.

Since her retirement is set for Dec. 1, she is not legally able to work for the month of December. Should a new director be selected before the New Year, she proposed that this person start on Jan. 1, which would leave the library system without a director for December.

"My recommendation is that Wilma Ash, who has been with the library system over 40 years — she actually retired with 40 years and she still works part-time for us when we need her as a fill-in person," said Howell. "But she used to be bookkeeper for the system. I would recommend that we allow Wilma to do the review of the vendor checks to reconcile the invoices and everything, and approve the payouts."

Ash is currently on payroll as a part-time accounting assistant, and would be able to handle the financial matters of the library system for December, such as payroll and fiscal responsibilities.

"We're already closed most of the last week or so on that month, and typically our library usage is down during that month because so many people are out of town," said Howell. "So, if we're going to be without a director for a month, December's the month to do it."

The board approved that plan, and is now deciding how to proceed in selecting the next candidate to fill Howell's shoes.

Halloween...from Page 1A

came out to play. Ghosts and ghouls, zombies, a ghoulish-looking Santa Claus, vampires, escaped inmates, and three-year-old serial killers stalked the roundabout, hunting for treats. There was even a baby Captain America.

And low and behold, there was even an appearance by Snow White and the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man.

It seemed as though the entire community was there in some form or fashion, in makeup and, or masks. Churches and medical professionals were there to participate, and so were a vast array of businesses.

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris was amazed at how the holiday event continues to grow each year.

"You can feel the town changing — for the better," Commissioner Paris said. "The downtown businesses, the chamber, the Downtown Development Authority, everything is coming together in Downtown. The redevelopment that's taking place, new shops are coming into town, it's just an incredible feeling.

"To see this event continue to grow, it's just a tribute to the cooperation of Downtown businesses with the city and it's an exciting time," Commissioner Paris said.

Downtown Development Authority Program Director Darren Harper got in on the excitement, dressing as a version of Robin Hood.



"It's an exciting time in Blairsville," he said. "The Holiday Season is now upon us."

The Downtown Development Authority, Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce and those who

helped set up and manage the event should be proud. The broad range of trick-or-treaters, hard-working volunteers, and community involvement made this year's Hometown Halloween on the Square a truly spooktacular occasion.

Election ...

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Democrat Valarie Wilson, taking 78.56 percent of Union County's votes. He took the statewide vote over Wilson.

County residents voted 79.72 percent in favor of Republican Incumbent Labor Commissioner Mark Butler over Robbin Shipp, a Democrat.

And for District 4 Public Service Commissioner, Republican Doug Everett gets to keep his job in a tremendous show of public support, both statewide and in Union County, where he garnered 85.17 percent of votes over Libertarian opponent John Monds.

Lauren "Bubba" McDonald, the Republican incumbent for District 1 Public Service Commissioner, defeated Democrat Daniel Blackman and Libertarian Robin Aaron Gilmer in Union County by attracting 75.82 percent of votes.

U.S. Rep. Doug Collins very clearly won the race against Democrat David Vogel, capturing 79.36 percent of Union County votes. Collins represents Union in the 9th Congressional District.

Constitutional Amendments, first, asking if Georgians wanted an amendment to prevent the General Assembly from increasing the maximum state income tax rate won overwhelmingly, with 74 percent of Georgians voting 'Yes.'

Second, Georgians voted 'Yes' to allow for additional reckless driving penalties for the Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund.

Finally, Georgians voted to keep the University System of Georgia properties tax exempt.

Of the 13,583 registered voters in Union County, 7,877 voted, a 58 percent voter turnout for this midterm election.

Statewide, 2.5 million registered voters took to the polls during Early Voting and Election night.