

# Election...from Page 1A

general, commissioner of agriculture, commissioner of insurance, state school superintendent, commissioner of labor and more vie for political office.

Union County voters will also be voting to support or reject ESPLOST V in the May 22 primary.

An ESPLOST (Education Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax) is a 1-cent sales tax that is collected by school systems for up to five years, for the purposes of building new facilities, renovating existing facilities, upgrading HVAC systems in the schools, adding

to aging bus fleets, updating technology and more.

The current sales tax in Union County is 7 cents on the dollar, which includes a penny for current ESPLOST IV collections.

Since the schools are already collecting ESPLOST money, if residents decide to renew the ESPLOST, the sales tax rate within the county will remain at 7 percent.

Should residents choose not to renew the ESPLOST, the sales tax rate will drop to 6 cents on the dollar.

ESPLOST V would have a collection cap of \$21 million over its five-year collection period, just like ESPLOST IV.

The board has retained the ability to sell bonds for up to \$13.5 million in the event of an emergency, though current board members have pledged to maintain a "pay-as-you-go" model of SPLOST project funding to keep the school system out of debt.

# City Council...from Page 1A

McCann recommended the council approve a contract with e-payment specialists RevoPay.

"What RevoPay does, it allows customers to go online themselves, pay for their city water bill or any other type of service we have - occupational tax certificates, alcohol licenses, permits - everything," said McCann. "There's no fee to us. We do not pass the fees on to the customer, RevoPay actually charges the service charge."

"So, in doing that, there's no cost to us for this plan. If customers decide, they can also choose to pay by phone. There will be a telephone number they can call directly into to pay their bills. But also, customers will be able to come into city hall.

"We will all have access to this RevoPay program where we can log on and process payments as well. So, people don't have to do it themselves, they can come into city hall and do it."

The council approved the contract with RevoPay.

Blairsville City Water customers will soon be seeing their bills in brand new white, full-face window envelopes.

The new envelopes will allow for easier sorting at the post office, and they will also enable the city to include useful information for customers in the form of inserts in future bills.

Council members approved the new envelopes in the March 6 meeting, which will cost \$855.50 per mailing versus the old method at \$468.60.



Photo by Shawn Jarrard  
Blairsville Police Officer Shawn Dyer in the March 6, 2018, Blairsville City Council meeting.

"It's an additional cost, but it's money well spent," said Mayor Conley.

Shawn Dyer of the Blairsville Police Department led a presentation in the meeting, asking the council to approve dedicated phones and hotspots for full-time officers and their cars.

The phones will be used for official business, allowing the officers to keep police matters separate from their personal phones, and the internet hotspots will give officers instant access to police records during traffic stops.

Dyer presented a quote from Verizon for six phones and eight hotspots, and the city approved the plan, which will cost \$564.57 per month including the cost of the phones.

The council also

approved a \$2,000 purchase of a new locker for the Blairsville Police Department.

This locker will act as a secure holding place for materials awaiting transfer into the evidence room, which is only accessible by two members of the force.

In closing, Council Member Tony Dyer recommended that the city start working with the Blairsville Downtown Development Authority to get a paved parking area and public bathrooms on the Haralson property behind city hall.

Also that March 6, the city held a public hearing on and the first reading of Environmental Health Ordinance #2018-01 to amend Ordinance #2010-02, reflecting a difference in chapter number designations.

## UCHS Marching Band Mulch Fundraiser



Photo by Mark Novak

Members of the Union County High School Marching Band spent their Saturday out on Georgia 515 selling mulch to raise money to purchase tubas and other instruments. Pictured here: Students Case Hand and Jaiden Murphy with Band Booster Club Secretary Haley Dyer.

## Art contest to benefit Hamilton Gardens

Hamilton Gardens invites you to submit your two dimensional art in their "As Our Gardens Grow" art contest. This contest will benefit Hamilton Gardens at Lake Chatuge, Inc. and is the forerunner to A Blooming Affair at Hamilton Gardens. On April 14 and for several weekends following, there will be plant sales and various activities to celebrate the beauty of the Gardens and share with the community what is happening as our gardens grow.

Artists are encouraged to include one or several botanical elements in a creative yet realistic piece. The image size must be no smaller than 11" x 14" in oil, acrylic, watercolor, mixed media or drawing. Cash prizes will be awarded to the first, second, and third place winners with amounts to be announced later. The deadline to enter your art will be April 20th.

Our friends at Artworks in Hiwassee will be displaying all of the entries beginning April 23rd. ArtWorks Gallery is owned and operated by the Mountain Regional Arts and Crafts Guild, Inc. a 501(c)3 organization, where members may sell their work and share their expertise with students on a regular basis by teaching classes. Artists participating in Hamilton Gardens' Art Contest, with the exception of the winner, may have their art entries available for sale while the exhibition is open at Artworks. A complete set of rules and guidelines and an entry form are available at hamiltongardens.org. You may also call (706)970-0011 for more information. NT(Mar14,A1)