

Voting...from Page 1A

Nearly 400 people had first week of early voting, and voted early by the end of the 40 absentee ballots had been

requested for mailout.

There is one weekend day set aside for voters at the Registrar's Office, which will be this Saturday, May 12, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., for people too busy to vote during the scheduled weekdays of voting.

Since this is a primary, voters will need to declare a political party to receive a ballot, otherwise, voters will only be able to vote in the Nonpartisan General Election.

Election Day will be on Tuesday, May 22, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., and that day, voters should report to one of the 11 pre-assigned Union County voting precincts.

Voters looking for absentee ballots will need to contact the Registrar's Office in the courthouse, or call (706) 439-6016.

Union County has 17,004 total registered voters, and Tuesday, April 24, was the voter registration deadline heading into the election.

Each of the following candidates appears on the ballot of his or her respective political party:

For Governor, L.S. "Casey" Cagle, Eddie Hayes, Hunter Hill, Brian Kemp, Clay Tippins, Marc Urbach and Michael Williams, all Republican; and Stacey

Abrams and Stacey Evans, both Democrat.

For Lieutenant Governor, Geoff Duncan, Rick Jeffares and David Shafer, all Republican; and Sarah Riggs Amico and Triana Arnold James, both Democrat.

For Secretary of State, David Belle Isle, Buzz Brockway, Josh McKoon and Brad Raffensperger, all Republican; and Josh Barrow, Dee Dawkins-Haigler and Rakeim "RJ" Hadley, all Democrat.

For Attorney General, Incumbent Chris Carr, Republican, and Charlie Bailey, Democrat.

For Commissioner of Agriculture, Incumbent Gary Black, Republican, and Fred Swann, Democrat.

For Commissioner of Insurance, Jim Beck, Jay Florence and Tracy Jordan, all Republican; and Janice Laws and Cindy Zeldin, both Democrat.

For State School Superintendent, Incumbent Richard Woods and John Barge, both Republican; and Sid Chapman, Sam Mosteller and Otha E. Thornton Jr., all Democrat.

For Commissioner of Labor, Incumbent Mark Butler, Republican; and Richard Keatley and Fred Quinn, both Democrat.

For Public Service Commissioner District 3, Incumbent Chuck Eaton; and Lindy Miller, John Noel and Johnny C. White, all Democrat.

For Public Service Commissioner District 5, Incumbent Tricia Pridemore and John Hitchins III, both

Republican; and Dawn A. Randolph and Doug Stoner, both Democrat.

For U.S. Representative in 116th Congress from the 9th Congressional District of Georgia, Incumbent Doug Collins, Republican; and Dave Cooper and Josh McCall, both Democrat.

For State Senator from the 51st District, Incumbent Steve Gooch, Republican.

For State Representative in the General Assembly from the 8th District, Incumbent Matt Gurtler and Mickey Cummings, both Republican.

For District Attorney of the Enotah Judicial Circuit, Incumbent Jeff Langley, Republican.

For County Board of Education District 2, Incumbent Tony Hunter and Joan Anderson, both Republican.

For County Board of Education District 4, Incumbent Keith Potts, William McQuillan and John T. Strickland, all Republican.

For County Board of Education District 5, Incumbent Patrick White, Republican.

On the Nonpartisan General Election Ballot, John Ellington and incumbents Michael P. Boggs, Britt Cagle Grant, Harold D. Melton and Nels Peterson are all running unopposed for Justice, Supreme Court of Georgia.

Incumbents Charlie Bethel, Stephen Dillard, Amanda H. Mercier, M. Yvette Miller, Clyde L. Reese III and Brian Rickman are all running unopposed for Judge, Court of Appeals Georgia.

Ken Hodges and Ken Shigley are running against one another for Judge, Court

of Appeals Georgia, to succeed John Ellington.

Raymond E. George and N. Stanley Gunter are both running unopposed for Judge, Superior Court of the Enotah Judicial Circuit.

Union County voters are also being asked to support or reject ESPLOST V during early voting and in the May 22 election.

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 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 voters decide to renew the ESPLOST, the sales tax rate within the county will remain at 7 percent.

Should voters 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 Union County Board of Education 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 ESPLOST project funding to keep the school system out of debt.

Budget...from Page 1A

to (an additional) \$762,000 is what we're responsible for contributing to TRS, and we have zero control over that," said Hill. "Every school system in the state of Georgia is in that boat, and that's a totally unfunded mandate there, but we do have to pay it."

In 2014, the local share of TRS stood at 12.28 percent. That number has increased in recent years to 20.9 percent for FY19.

Hill pointed out that the only locally derived increase in expenditures is \$75,000 for a new school resource officer to patrol the primary school, which he will ask the board to approve in the May 15 regular meeting.

"That is an estimate, because the sheriff has asked us to contribute towards fuel and vehicle expenses, and that includes salary and benefits - I don't want you to think that that's straight salary," said Hill of the \$75,000 figure.

Currently, the system has three SROs from the Union County Sheriff's Office that guard the schools: one at the high school, one at the middle school and another at the elementary school.

All three SROs take turns patrolling the primary school and Woody Gap School, and Hill believes the school system would do well adding a dedicated SRO to the primary school, which would in turn increase the number of deputies available to respond to Woody Gap.

Taken together, the new expenditures add up to \$1.162 million, though that number is nearly balanced by the increase in revenues coming from the state in Quality Basic Education funding.

The FY19 budget includes about \$15.4 million in state funding, an increase in QBE funding of more than \$1.1 million over FY18.

As previously reported, initial QBE funding estimates for FY19 put additional monies at about \$267,000, though the numbers have been revised upward following an official notification of funds from the state.

"Local property taxes will be about the same (at \$14.45 million)," said Hill. "And the good thing is, our increase in expenditures and increase in revenues will be essentially a wash, so you're going to see very little change in this FY19 tentative budget proposal from the FY18 budget."

With the help of School Federal Programs Director Dr. Paula Davenport and School Finance Director Karen Bundy, Hill gave an update on the FY18 Final Budget, which is the system's current budget.

According to the final budget, the projected ending fund balance of the school system's General Fund will be approximately \$29,000 higher than the beginning fund balance, ending at \$11.13 million for FY18.

In the May 1 public hearing, Union County resident David Leopard, a former educator, offered the only public comment.

"I'm just amazed at the job that's done here, and how effectively we do that and how well we manage our money," said Leopard. "I just want to speak and say that y'all have got my vote of encouragement."



Photo by Shawn Jarrard

New Union County Schools Finance Director Karen Bundy at the May 1 school budget public hearing.

"The budget appears quite reasonable, great funding sources for the increases. Regrettable that we don't have the state increasing teacher pay any, but that's what it is."

The board held another budget public hearing on May 8 at 5 p.m., which occurred after press time.

A complete version of the FY19 tentative budget will be available by the May 15 regular board meeting at 7 p.m.

Next steps for the FY19 tentative budget include a first reading of the budget in the May 15 meeting, followed by advertisement of the budget in this newspaper, which is the legal organ of the county.

The board is then expected to adopt the FY19 budget in the June 19 board meeting, and it

will be transmitted to the Georgia Department of Education by June 30.

Fiscal Year 2019 runs from July 1, 2018, through June 30, 2019.

In other news, the school board accepted the resignation of Union County speech teacher Gwen Sparkman in a called meeting on May 3.

As previously reported, the Union County Sheriff's Office arrested Sparkman following an April 25 incident involving her at Union County High School, per the sheriff's office.

She faces charges of criminal trespass and tampering with evidence, both misdemeanors, and she made bond on Sunday, April 29, per the sheriff's office.

Relay For Life Spaghetti Supper



Enjoy a delicious spaghetti supper and support Relay For Life on Friday, May 11th, at 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. at Mountain Presbyterian Church. Preparing your meal will be "Chef Guido"—a.k.a. Rev. K. Travis Adams. There will be door prizes and included with the spaghetti dinner will be salad and dessert.

Those who have enjoyed this meal in years past have raved about his culinary abilities.

A free-will offering will be received with all proceeds going to the American Cancer Society. Bring your family; invite your friends, for an evening of good food, fellowship and door prizes.

Mountain Presbyterian Church (a supporter of Relay For Life for over 20 years) is located at 3831 Highway 515 East (Young Harris Highway), Blairsville, GA. For more information or for directions to the church, please call 706-745-8036. NMay9.Z6/CA