

County Meeting...from Page 1A

the growing environmental problem fostered by plastic bottles and bags.

The Firewise Program, said Riley, is an international program that promotes fire safety around the home.

"Fire (prevention) is just simple stuff like our ancestors did," said Riley. "You can't have leaves under your deck, you can't have leaves on your roof when you have a big fire danger in the community."

"Most homes in these communities like Gatlinburg (Tennessee) were destroyed by ember showers. Flaming embers come off the mountain, dropping on top of the houses and catching them on fire. So, we promote using common sense."

The Firewise Program helps entire communities as well as individual homeowners to clear brush, leaves and other detritus away from close proximity to residential structures.

"Since we've started in Towns County ... we've cut our wildfire costs 75 percent," said Riley. "We're now working in Union County with Mickey Cummings and Diane Woodruff."

The Firewise Program does not cost the homeowner

anything, all while potentially saving a homeowner everything.

For more information on the Firewise Program, go to www.nfpa.org and query Firewise.

Paris thanked Riley for his presentation and urged Union County homeowners to take advantage of the Firewise Program for their own safety and peace of mind. Due to the drop in humidity this time of year, the risk of fire escalates exponentially.

Union County has been working with the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC to get a fiber optic line up to Neels Gap at the top of Blood Mountain from above Vogel State Park, said Paris in his Oct. 18 meeting.

Since the Gainesville Highway is Union County's primary avenue for additional medical services, the Georgia Department of Transportation installed cameras and a weather station at Neels Gap to help the county monitor road conditions in the winter.

The equipment is connected with cellphone technology at this time, which



Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris sharing a proclamation on polio with the Rotary Club of Union County on Thursday, Oct. 19.

Photo by Mark Smith

is unreliable in the winter months when it's most critical for ambulances to know if the roads are passable.

Paris said the project is a very difficult one that will require a specialized drone to install the requisite fiber optic cable, but that it should begin by the end of October.

When completed, both the county and the public will be

able to access the cameras and road condition data for Neels Gap throughout the year.

The Union County Road Department will be doing a lot of ditch and road edge cleaning this winter, said Paris, and he asked that residents be patient with them. They will be picking up piled up debris as fast as they can.

Amendments...from Page 1A

and promote predictable judicial outcomes."

As it states, Amendment 2 would lead to the creation of a statewide court system dedicated to business cases. Judges serving in these courts would be appointed by the governor and approved by the Judiciary Committees of both the state House and Senate.

Most Georgia judges are elected, not appointed.

Amendment 3

Ballot Title: "Encourages the conservation, sustainability, and longevity of Georgia's working forests through tax sub-classification and grants."

Basically, a vote for Amendment 3 would pave the way for the creation of a new timberland property classification for tax purposes, and counties would receive state grant monies to offset lost revenue caused by lowering the tax burden on timberland

owners.

Amendment 4

Ballot Title: "Provides rights for victims of crime in the judicial process."

Better known as the Marsy's Law Crime Victim Rights Amendment, this amendment is aimed at adding specific rights of crime victims to the state constitution, thereby strengthening many provisions already provided for under Georgia law.

Under Marsy's Law, crime victims must be notified of hearings and other proceedings in their cases in a timely manner, and victims would also be able to demand a court hearing if they felt proper notice had not been given concerning developments in their cases.

Amendment 5

Ballot Title: "Authorizes fair allocation of sales tax proceeds to county and city

school districts."

This amendment would remove the requirement that county and city school districts within a single county agree before calling an ESPLOST referendum. This wouldn't apply here, but it would in larger Georgia counties with multiple school systems.

In addition to the amendments, the 2018 General Election Ballot also contains two proposed statewide referenda.

The first referendum provides for a homestead exemption "for residents of certain municipal corporations," which basically means that City of Atlanta residents could qualify for a new tax break.

The second proposed statewide referendum provides a tax exemption "for certain homes for the mentally disabled," and would essentially guarantee that an existing tax exemption for nonprofit homes could still be applied even if a business helped to build or renovate such a home.

Water Leak...from Page 1A

Mayor Jim Conley. "It'd be good if we knew that we were fixing to have one, but that just doesn't happen."

"So, we do the best we can, when we have a break like this, to identify it. The thing with this break, it was such a big break, and it was on an 8-inch line, it just reduced water levels in all of our tanks really quick."

Because the city was able to swiftly isolate the leak, the only people who went without water for a short while were the few residents on Woodside Drive, though the Boiled Water Advisory would need to stay in place systemwide until the water could be tested for contaminants.

"Boiled Water Advisories are issued when an event has occurred allowing the possibility for the water distribution system to become biologically contaminated," per Health Department information. "An advisory does not mean that the water is contaminated, but rather that it could be contaminated."

"Because the water quality is unknown, food service establishment operators should assume the water is unsafe to drink or use and take the appropriate precautions."

Several food service establishments around town were affected by the Boiled Water Advisory, including Chick-Fil-A, which remained open to drive-through customers but closed its dining room to conserve water during the advisory.

The deli department at Ingles was also affected by the advisory, as employees were required to wash equipment used to prepare food with water from gallon jugs, and customers were unable to purchase fountain drinks.

Test results for potential water contaminants came back negative on Oct. 19, and Blairsville City Water lifted the Boiled Water Advisory around 9 a.m. that Friday.

In the past, both city and county officials have urged residents to sign up for UCWENS, the wireless emergency notification system that allowed Blairsville City Water to quickly share word of its water leak last week.

The benefit of signing up for the alert system is that residents will know right away via text messages, emails and phone calls any time an advisory is put into place.

People can also receive targeted alerts through UCWENS based on their physical address, as some emergency notifications might only apply to certain parts

of the county.

Examples of other alerts residents might receive include notifications about extreme weather, as well as information concerning city activities, water department alerts, and parks and recreation alerts.

Signing up for the program can easily be done online by navigating to tinyurl.com/ucwens,

at which point residents just need to complete the form that comes up.

Union County's Emergency Management Agency office has stressed the importance of completely filling out the form to include a local address so that localized emergency notifications can reach the proper residents.

For more information or to register for UCWENS by phone, call 706-439-6091 on weekdays between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Halloween...from Page 1A

falls on a weeknight this year, there are no additional activities planned after the event. However, there will be several groups participating in a few surprises for this year's Hometown Halloween on the Square, though people will have to attend to see what they are.

The cost to vendors is \$10 for a business or organization, and that money goes right back into the community for flower beds, banners and such. Harper had 38 vendors signed up about a week from the event,

but he expects to have 50 by Halloween.

Blairsville always has its Halloween celebration on the actual day of Halloween, because a lot of municipalities around Blairsville have theirs the weekend before, leaving many kids with nothing to do on Halloween.

Also part of the Halloween festivities that evening will be spooky music coming from the Old Union County Courthouse.

Sears Hometown Store - Blairsville

Sears Hometown store has been a part of the Blairsville and North Georgia community for 18 years! The Sears Holdings bankruptcy filing is very unfortunate and its sad to see a retail icon, steep with American history, go down this path. But its important our customers understand we are not a part of that company as we continue to grow our business. We are a very different business model than the Sears

mall stores.

Sears Hometown stores are locally owned and operated and offer a higher level of service than what is typically found today. Sears Hometown of Blairsville continues to be a national top performing store and we are just a few days away from moving into our new location on Hwy. 515 past Wendys. Its a very exciting time for us here in North Georgia! - Andy Burks