

# Community...continued from Page 1A



Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley

of the Blairsville Downtown Development Authority.

"He made us aware that it's time to update our Comprehensive Plan for our community," said Allison.

Allison and the others put together a list of names to form a special stakeholder committee, which met for the first time on Tuesday, Jan. 24, to start forming a draft of the Comprehensive Plan.

The stakeholder committee is composed of leaders located within various aspects of Union County community life, including county government, the City of Blairsville, local schools and education, the chamber, small business, real estate, the medical community, the financial industry and more.

Of course, the community itself is a huge part of the process, and in recognition of this, GMRC has come up with a survey it hopes residents will complete called the 2017 Comprehensive Plan Survey.

The survey asks residents how they see their community growing over the course of the next 20 to 30 years, with questions like "How much growth and development should Blairsville/unincorporated Union County pursue?"

Another thing the survey does is try to identify strengths and weaknesses within the county, so as to shore up or emphasize different areas during the planning process.

Hazell has announced a public meeting for Thursday, Feb. 2, at 5:30 p.m. upstairs in the Union County Community Center. Union County, Blairsville and Suches residents are encouraged to attend and bring questions about the Comprehensive Plan process.

"This is our opportunity to say what direction we want for our community," said Allison. "This is looking long-term, 10, 20, 30 years out - how do we want Blairsville and Union County to look?"

One of the things Allison highlighted from last week's stakeholder meeting is that local leaders seem to get along behind the scenes, and that disagreements are handled respectfully, all of which plays an important role in promoting a unified vision of growth and development within the community.

"We've got a strong sense of teamwork in this community, a strong sense of people caring genuinely about one another that you don't find everywhere, which is great,"

said Allison. "That's one of the things that makes us stand out and makes us unique."

Housing and road development were two of the more concrete examples of what the stakeholders told Hazell the county would need to explore before experiencing much more growth, though Allison said that everyone agreed they wanted to keep future levels of growth in perspective.

"We are expecting Union County to continue to grow, but we want to do it at a rate where it's smart growth, it's not explosion, so we want to be smart in how we grow," said Allison.

People can find physical copies of the 2017 Comprehensive Plan Survey at chamber headquarters inside the Union County Community Center, or online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZHDRFQQ>.

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris said that, though the state mandate has proven somewhat of a challenge in the past, he's glad to involve as much of the public as possible in order to keep the future of the county moving in a direction that is representative of the desires of the people.

"On the one hand, we used to think about it as being kind of aggravating, because that five years seems to come along pretty often," said Commissioner Paris. "In government, it's really hard to plan ahead, because so much is dependent on budgets and money and how the economy is."

"But the state realizes that it's important for governments to plan, so the more we can try to do and the more public we can involve in that planning process, the more inclusive that process is."

The commissioner and Allison both are hoping for a big turnout in the Feb. 2 public meeting.

"This is going to be a chance for everybody who wants to be part of it to let their voices be heard as to what they feel like needs to be addressed," said Allison. "What issues do we have now that they think are problems?"

"What came out of our meeting was jobs. We need to have good-paying jobs. My husband (Stephen Allison) brought up the point, and he said, 'What I want to see 10 years from now is that our kids don't have to leave Union County after they graduate college and high school, that they can stay here and get a job, and make this their home - they don't have to move away.'"

# Collins...continued from Page 1A

Having a president who is willing to sign legislation passed by a Republican majority is refreshing for Collins and his colleagues, and he sees the coming days of President Donald Trump's administration as a chance to turn back "eight years of overreach and government leaving behind the hardworking taxpayer."

Collins met with President Trump and Vice President Mike Pence at a Republican retreat last Thursday, Jan. 26, and he spoke with the leaders of the executive branch about his home state as well as something they could all celebrate - putting America first.

And though the congressman is delighted to be working in an arena suddenly free of many of the obstacles he faced during his first term under Barack Obama, he realizes that the momentum he's currently riding has hit many of Washington's elite like a tidal wave.

"I think there's still some shock in D.C. at this point, among many who sort of liked it the way it was and were very happy with government solutions," said Rep. Collins. "Those folks are very disturbed right now, and we saw that acted out in many ways."

Added Rep. Collins: "We have the House, which we've had now for six years, and we maintained control of the Senate, but we also have a president who is actively engaging Congress. He's already had meetings in the first week with a bipartisan delegation from both the House and the Senate."

"This is a president who actively wants to engage Congress, and understands that the legislative process has a vital role and place, whereas the other administration simply stayed at the other end of 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., and basically pitched a temper

tantrum when they didn't get their way.

"So, I think this is going to be a big change in the culture in Washington, that you have a president who is actively involved and wanting to be a part of the legislative process."

Another reason the current political environment carries so much promise for Collins is that, for the first time in years, he and his fellow Republicans can act on their conservative principles with realistic expectations of having those principles translated into laws of the land, such as the recent pro-life bill Collins co-sponsored that makes permanent the Hyde Amendment.

And while major news outlets around the country were quick to criticize Trump's inauguration speech, Collins, who was there for the ceremony, had a different take on the speech and the inauguration in general.

"It was an interesting time, seeing people come out," said Rep. Collins. "Hearing the president's rather short, straightforward inauguration message was refreshing - it was sort of, let's just get to work. I think for many Americans, they would rather hear, 'Let's get to work,' instead of the grandiose speeches of high thought, which are always a part of discourse, but just simply saying we're going to put America first, we're going to put (first) the ideas of American business and tax reform to have a healthy economy to help hardworking taxpayers."

Another way Rep. Collins hopes to give back to his constituents is through the upcoming repeal of the Affordable Care Act, which the congressman believes will empower states and businesses "through a health care plan that is not government mandated."



U.S. Rep. Doug Collins of Georgia's 9th Congressional District

"I've had many folks in the 9th District say, 'Look, I'd hire two or three more people, but I don't want to go over the 50 threshold,' or, 'I can't afford the new health care or the new regulations.'"

From tax reform to stripping Obama-era rules regulations, Collins says that he and his colleagues will be working hard to shore up small businesses and ultimately help them to grow, for the betterment of their districts as well as America.

"I think the folks up in Union, Towns, and really all throughout the 9th District, can look forward to a more pro-taxpayer (environment), and just looking out for the folks that get up every morning and want to go to work, and want to raise their families - want to do the things that are part of that American dream."

"If they wanted to start a business, they'd have access to capital at the banks, and re-doing it to where it's more focused on everyday Americans doing what we do best, and that is to continue to make this country the brightest and shining light that it is around the world."



Rep. Collins had a nice chat with the president and vice president about his home state of Georgia.

## Free computer classes for adults

Union County Adult Ed is excited to announce that it will be offering free computer classes. These classes offer a perfect opportunity to learn how to thrive in the 21st century by becoming computer literate. Registration dates are Tuesday, February 7, at 2 PM; and Thursday, February 9, at 2 PM. Classes are held Tuesdays

and Thursdays from 2 to 4 PM, and will begin February 14. We are located at the Shirley Miller Building, 38 Blalock Street, Blairsville, GA 30512 (beside Union County Public Library).

Please call Paula Ary, Instructor, at 706-439-6321 or e-mail her at: [pary@northgatech.edu](mailto:pary@northgatech.edu) to register. NT/Febl.1A/ISH

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