

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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## Phillips resigns from EMC board for personal reasons

By Charles Duncan  
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The man who started the petition ballot revolution on the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Board of Directors in 2014 has resigned.

Steven Phillips, a representative from Towns County and the vice chairman of the BRMEMC Board of Directors, has tendered his resignation from the board for personal reasons, BRMEMC Chair Mickey Cummings said Friday.

"This board is what it is today because of Steven Phillips," Cummings said. "Steven simply stated that he was resigning for personal reasons, and he did not elaborate on that."

Director Ray Cook will replace Phillips as chair of the EMC's policy committee in the interim, Cummings said.

Phillips bested Incumbent Julie Payne with 69.1 percent of the vote to Payne's 28.1 percent in the September 2014 election at BRMEMC's annual meeting.

"This election meant everything to me," Phillips said after he learned he had been elected to the board of directors. "I think it's time for change, and obviously so did the membership."

Phillips, former House District 8 State Rep. Charles Jenkins, and North Carolina forester Chris Logan, all three petitioned candidates in 2014, each ousted an incumbent to earn a seat on the BRMEMC



Steven Phillips

board of directors.

A year later, the petition trend continued as three more petition candidates emerged

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## Blairsville PD on lookout for Dunkin' Donuts burglar

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

In the early morning hours of Wednesday, July 19, a masked man broke into the Dunkin' Donuts on Brackett's Way in Blairsville.

The crime was caught on the store's surveillance cameras, and the burglar got away with an undisclosed amount of money.

Only the Dunkin' Donuts side of the building, which is adjoined to a Marathon convenience store, was burglarized.

Now, the Blairsville Police Department is asking the public for help in cracking the case.

"There's somebody out there. See Burglary, Page 2A



The Blairsville Police Department is looking for any tips that could lead investigators to the apprehension of the individual in this picture. Photo/BPD Facebook

## Weldon and Naomi Reece honored



Weldon and Naomi Reece at the Shady Grove Methodist Homecoming on July 9.

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

The first thing on the agenda in the July 18 regular meeting of Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris was a proclamation designating July 9, 2017, as "Weldon and Naomi Reece Day."

Lifelong Union County residents Weldon and Naomi Reece, married since 1952, received the honor for their many years of service to their community and church, Shady Grove United Methodist.

The couple was also See Reece, Page 3A

## BOE to accept millage rollback rate as property values increase

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

The Union County Board of Education voted in its July 18 regular meeting to set the 2017 tentative school millage rate at the rollback rate of 11.780.

The 2017 rate is down slightly from the 2016 rate, which was 11.787 mills, though due to an increase in existing property values and added property since the 2016 tax digest, the schools will be bringing in roughly \$213,000 more in tax revenues this year over last year.

Under last year's millage rate of 11.787 mills, the schools projected to collect \$14,205,828 in 2016 property taxes. Accepting the rollback rate of 11.780 mills will bring in \$14,418,723.24 in net taxes levied this year toward the system's FY18 budget, or roughly \$213,000 more in tax monies in 2017 than in 2016.

Again, this additional tax revenue for the schools comes from property gains made within the county, as existing real property values have gone

up by about \$750,000, and the county has experienced a net gain of about \$18 million in property values since 2016.

Thanks to relatively stable property values in recent years, which have seen an increase this year and last year, the school millage rate has either decreased or stayed the same since at least 2011.

"As you look at the data that we've provided," said Union County Schools Superintendent Dr. Fred Rayfield to the board in that July 18 meeting, "it's the first time in a while that we've had a good increase in the digest, which puts us in a positive position so that we might be able to recommend a millage rate to you that is a rollback from the rate that we are currently under."

Final adoption of the 2017 school millage rate is slated for the Tuesday, Aug. 15, regular meeting at the Union County Board of Education office at 7 p.m.

Also in the July 18 meeting, Dr. Rayfield recognized students in the UCHS STEM program who



Union County School Board Members Tony Hunter and Cindy Odom. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

came in First Place in the 9/10 Written portion of the TEAMS Competition at the Technology Student Association's National Conference in Orlando, Florida, in June.

STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, and the high school's STEM Academy is headed up by UCHS Science Department head Alecia Frizzell.

"During this competition," explained

Frizzell after the meeting, "students had to write a scientific essay that displayed their scientific knowledge, complete a problem-solving challenge, solve engineering mathematics problems, and present a professional presentation on technological solutions for environmental problems."

TEAMS, another acronym, means Tests of Engineering Aptitude. See BOE, Page 6A

## Union County EMA continues to plan for Aug. 21 eclipse



Many of Union County's finest met for the EMA Solar Eclipse Workshop on Thursday, July 20. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

As the moon moves between the sun and the earth to darken the day sky on Monday, Aug. 21, residents can rest assured knowing that the Union County Emergency Management Agency will be at the ready.

EMA Director David Dyer and other county first responders will be posted on standby in the Emergency Operations Center at Union County Fire Station No. 1 throughout the duration of the eclipse.

See Eclipse, Page 7A

## Sens. Gooch and Wilkinson visit with Movers and Shakers

By Shawn Jarrard  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

HIAWASSEE - There was plenty of good news to go around at the July 21 meeting of the Mountain Movers and Shakers, featuring Georgia Sen. Steve Gooch and John Wilkinson.

The meeting, which took place at the Sundance Grill, gave residents a chance to hear from the state senators of both Union and Towns counties.

District 50 State Sen. Wilkinson, in introduction of his friend and fellow senator, See Senators, Page 7A



State Sens. Steve Gooch and John Wilkinson. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

## Shook indicted for rape; Cowan indicted on multiple charges

By Charles Duncan  
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A 51-year-old Blairsville man has been indicted by a Union County Grand Jury of two counts of rape, and two counts of exploitation and

intimidation of a disabled adult, Union County court records show.

Franklin Regeine "Reggie" Shook was indicted by the July Term of the Union County Grand Jury, Superior Court records show.

He is accused of raping a disabled adult female by force on Aug. 27, and Aug. 30, 2016 by force and against the female's will, Superior Court records show.

Shook was a fugitive from justice for three days until his

capture in Clay County, North Carolina following a manhunt that ended across the state line, according to the Union County Sheriff's Office.

Reggie Shook, was arrested Sept. 3, 2016, in Clay See Shook, Page 2A



Reggie Shook



Jeffrey Dean Cowan

## Indictments by the July Term Grand Jury of Union County

From Staff Reports  
North Georgia News

Jonathan Dewayne Davis, theft by taking.  
Kayla Marie Green,

Violation of Georgia's Controlled Substance Act, two counts possession of a controlled substance, possession of marijuana, less than an ounce, five counts possession

of drug-related objects, and drugs not in original container.

Jason Matthew Stepp, Violation of RICO Act, two counts Violation of Georgia's Controlled Substance Act,

illegal use of communications facility, possession of methamphetamine, possession of drug-related objects,

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