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TWSA hears results of Cashiers water capacity study

By David Joy
Staff Writer

The Tuckasegee Water and Sewer Authority (TWSA) met at the Albert-Carlton Library on Tuesday, May 10 to hear the results of a study commissioned to McGill and Associates engineering firm in Franklin, which looked into the current capacity and future needs of sewage in the Cashiers area.

No decisions were made, as the meeting was ultimately just a work session.

McGill Engineer Forrest Westall presented the preliminary results of the study. He discussed at length the current

condition of the TWSA treatment plant in Cashiers.

“The original wastewater treatment plant was designed privately and was originally permitted at 100,000 gallons per day (GPD) with a provision to go to 200,000 GPD if the need arose,” Westall said. “In 2005, TWSA expanded the facility to 200,000 GPD and that’s the capacity that is available at this



Westall

time. No capacity can be added at that facility due to regulatory constraints on the Chattooga River. The allocations and actual flow of the facility is approaching maximum capacity for that plant.”

With the facility already nearing capacity, TWSA has stopped allocating additional flow, though there have been formal requests for an additional 114,830 GPD. The study showed that annual average flow for the plant since 2005 is around 61,000 GPD, with flow increasing to 81,000 GPD during the peak season summer months. Furthermore, TWSA has already approved some

85,178 GPD in allocations.

“If that facility goes over 200,000 GPD it will be in violation of its permits,” Westall explained. “If you total (the current peak flow, the current outstanding allocations, and requested allocations) together you are already well beyond the current capacity of the system.”

Realizing that the current facility will not be able to meet the ongoing demands of the Cashiers area, the McGill group sent out a survey in a four mile diameter area around the Cashiers Commercial Area



Photos by David Joy/Staff

TWSA Chairman Randall Turpin holds up a copy of the completed McGill study that he says will be made available to the public in the coming weeks.

See TWSA, Page 8A



File photo

The paperwork process to hold fireworks shows like this one in Glenville recently became easier.

Fireworks process streamlined

By David Joy
Staff Writer

At their May 2 meeting, Jackson County Commissioners voted to speed up the permitting process for Jackson County firework displays by allowing Fire Marshal Alan Farmer to approve the permit and then placing his approval on the commissioners’ consent agenda. The decision came as Farmer detailed his first fireworks application of 2011 to the commissioners.

County Manager Chuck Wooten said that though this was the first application commissioners had seen that they immediately recognized a way to speed up the application process.

“The general statutes actually require that the commissioners approve the application,” Wooten said. “The first one that the fire marshal had in his possession is for Mountaintop for July 4, and so he brought that one to the commissioners and talked about that application to let them know what he does.”

“This is the first time the commissioners have been required for approval, so we said that going forward any fireworks application that the fire marshal approves will be put on the consent agenda for the commissioners to approve so that we won’t have to have the fire marshal there every time”

The need for commissioner approval stems from an accident on Ocracoke Island two years ago that killed four people in an accidental explosion. According to Wooten, “the state saw a need to tighten up the process,” and so

See Fireworks, Page 8A

Our piece of the pie

By David Joy
Staff Writer

While the 141-page proposed county budget for the upcoming fiscal year goes into great detail of the ongoing budget crunch facing Jackson County, the document also offers a valuable insight into both the Cashiers-area and the county as a whole.

When making an argument for increased funding, for projects like the Cashiers Recreation Center, citizens in the area often point to the idea that those on the plateau pay the majority of the county’s taxes.

Page 29 of the budget offers a detailed look into county property taxes.

The pie graph on page 29 indicates that the Cashiers-Glenville area generates 56.5 percent of the county property taxes. Cashiers is responsible for 32.14 percent of the revenues, with a total taxable value in the area of \$3,470,174,010. Hamburg (Glenville) is responsible for 24.36 of the revenues, with a total taxable value in the area of \$2,630,239,740. Combined, Cashiers and Glenville make up a total of \$6,100,413,750 worth of taxable property in the county. The county’s total taxable property as of December 31, 2010 was \$10,798,555,686.

Meanwhile, the Sylva City and Sylva Rural areas only account for a combined

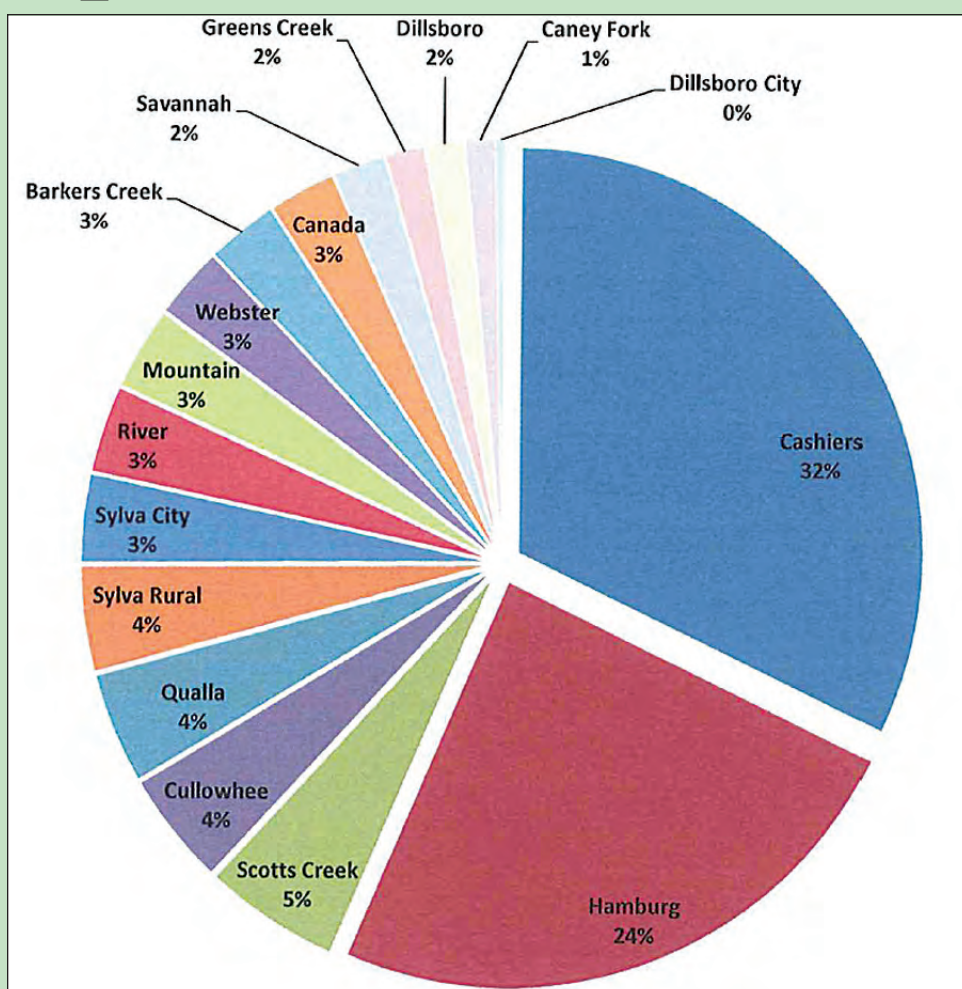


Photo submitted

The above pie graph taken from the 2011-2012 proposed county budget, indicates that the Cashiers (blue) and Glenville (red) areas generate 56 percent of the total property tax revenues for the county.

seven percent of county taxable property, Cullowhee only accounts for four percent, and the Dillsboro and Dillsboro City areas only account for a combined two percent.

However, looking at pop-

ulation density, which is outlined on page 10 of the document, Cashiers and Glenville are two of the least populated areas in the county. Cashiers currently has 1,974 full-time residents, and Hamburg (Glen-

ville) currently has 1,738. Countywide there are currently 40,271 citizens (82.02 per square mile), marking a 50.6 percent population increase since 1990 (26,846 citizens). Cashiers has experienced

a 223.6 percent population increase since 1970 (610 citizens), and a 79.6 percent increase in the past 20 years. Hamburg (Glenville) has experienced a 109.9 percent population increase since 1970 (828 citizens, and a 36.9 percent increase in the past 20 years.

Lastly, page 124 of the proposed budget offers a detailed look into recreation center construction county-wide. While many on the plateau often complain that little has been done to insure the construction of the future Cashiers Recreation Center, a look at the numbers shows a different tale.

The county has spent a total \$1,161,601 on the Jackson County Recreation Center: \$82,520 (architect fees), \$1,045,834 (construction), and \$33,246 (furnishing and equipment). Yet the county has already spent a total \$3,220,570 on the Cashiers Recreation Center that remains unfinished: \$573,403 (architect fees), \$88,681 (construction), \$2,558,485 (site preparation). In all, the chart on page 124 indicates that the county has already spent nearly twice the total cost of the Jackson County Recreation Center on the development of the Cashiers Recreation Center without a building currently standing in Cashiers.

See the proposed budget visit the county’s website at www.jacksonnc.org.

Proposed county budget sees large cuts across board

By David Joy
Staff Writer

With the county continuing to face lower revenues due to the economic crunch coupled with declining state funding, Jackson County Manager Chuck Wooten had his work cut out for him in trying to develop the budget for the upcoming fiscal year (FY11-12).

Overall the proposed \$58,114,421 budget is 2.4 percent decrease from the FY10-11 \$59,541,868 budget. Furthermore, there is a 3.15 percent decrease in the county’s general fund expenses, from \$51,296,805 in FY10-11 to \$49,680,895 for FY11-12.

Wooten said that realizing what would likely be the case, the county asked all of its departments early on

to anticipate cuts when requesting funding for the upcoming year.

“We don’t want to impact our tax rate by any means. So, we recognized that the tax value we had for this year was overestimated. We asked our departments early on to try and submit budgets that were five percent less this year than last year. We really just left it up to the departments to do that and they responded very well. We went through and looked at other areas and made some changes.”



Wooten

Within the proposed budget, many departments in the Cashiers area will see significant change if the current budget is approved. The changes that will face departments in the Cashiers area are as follows:

The Glenville-Cashiers Rescue Squad would see the same \$86,350 as FY10-11 for the upcoming year for general operations. However, the rescue squad would see a 66.67 percent increase in funding as an ambulance service, from \$300,000 in FY10-11 to \$500,000 for FY11-12.

The Cashiers-Glenville Volunteer Fire Department would receive the same amount of funding in the upcoming year as they received in FY10-11: \$135,890 for general operations and a \$20,000 building payment.

The Cashiers Building Inspections would see a 4.33 percent decrease, from \$302,152 in FY10-11 to \$289,083 in FY11-12.

The Glenville CDC would see the same \$1,500 allotment as FY10-11 through the Community Development funding for FY11-12.

The Pine Creek CDC would see the same \$1,500 allotment as FY10-11 through the Community Development funding for FY11-12.

The Norton CDC would see the same \$1,500 allotment as FY10-11 through the Community Development funding for FY11-12.

The Cashiers Area Chamber of Commerce would see the same

See Budget, Page 5A

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INSIDE Open house

Zachary Tolbert House opens with variety of events. **Page 8B**

Fire on the mountain

Local emergency responders receive invaluable training in Cashiers. **Page 1B**

Index

Calendar	5-6, 8B
Classified	3-4B
Opinion	4A
Religion	2B
Sports	7A
Weather	5A

COMMUNITY



Hearty breakfast

On Saturday, May 14, the Cashiers United Methodist Church held its second annual Relay for Life breakfast. About 80 people attended the event, which raised \$842 for Relay for Life. In the photo on the far left, from left, Larry Morris and Jay Webster prepare some pancakes. In the photo on the near left, CUMC youth pastor Matt Smith assists Megan Parker, Hope Ward, Kayla Parker and Simon Hudson-Smith with face painting and balloons. Photos by Kelly Donaldson/Staff

FIREWORKS: Paperwork process becomes easier

from Page 1A
legislation was passed to provide more oversight. With around a dozen applications per year in Jackson County, the already lengthy process could have been prolonged by on-going presentations to the board. Farmer explained the process he goes through for each application.

"They have to submit applications to my office," Farmer explained. "They have to complete the application, send me a copy of their certified display operator, provide a minimum of \$500,000 in liability insurance (most are no less than \$1 million), provide a site diagram of the shoot area including distances to structures, and provide me a shot list of what fireworks they will be shooting. When I have all of that in hand that's what I present to the board of commissioners." Now, Farmer will be able to approve or deny the applications and then place his rec-

ommendation on the board's consent agenda for a speedy vote. The application Farmer presented to the board on May 2 was from Mountaintop, and Farmer went on to say that most applications he sees are from the Cashiers area.

"Right now I've got applications this year for the Mountaintop shoot, the Dillsboro shoot, the Cashiers Community Center shoot, and the Cedar Creek Racquet Club shoot," Farmer said. "Last year I had nine shoots on July 4 and seven were in downtown Cashiers, one was at Bear Lake Reserve in Tuckasegee, and one was in Dillsboro. The majority of the displays are in the larger, gated communities in Cashiers."

Despite approval, permits will not be given out until after the final inspection. On the day of the event Farmer will visit each site and make sure everything is set up and ready to

go meeting all fire codes. If they meet all of those criteria then he will issue a permit the night of the shoot.

Farmer said that he is happy that commissioners decided to streamline the process, but that time is still fading fast for this year's July 4 application process.

"The three I have in hand right now that haven't been approved will be on the agenda for the next board meeting," Farmer said. "Then I only have two more board meetings before July 4."

With only two more commissioner meetings before July 4 all of those who wish to have a fireworks display this year need to hurry with their application. For more information on the rules and regulations criteria for displays in North Carolina visit the website of the state fire marshal at www.ncdoi.com/osfn/pyrotechnicoperatorcertification.

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TWSA: Water capacity study revealed for Cashiers

from Page 1A
(CCA) in order to recognize future development plans and sewage needs for the area.

"We got a 42 percent response rate," Westall said. "That is a pretty good indicator that the people in this community are thinking about what they may want to do with their property... In regards to future development, 71 percent of people within the CCA planned on doing some type of development in the next five years and 46 percent of people outside the CCA said they were planning some type of development as well."

Furthermore, the survey showed that 71 percent inside the CCA and 54 percent outside of the CCA said that they would like to be able to connect to TWSA. The McGill study was meant to look at the Cashiers-area sewer needs over the next 20 years (2012-2032) and Westall said that the predicted development means that a much greater sewage capacity will be needed eventually.

"There are a huge percentage of people here who want to have access to a public sewage system," Westall said. "Based off of the current allocation requests, the current flow and allocations, and the responses from these surveys we estimate that the Cashiers area will need around 700,000 GPD."

"If you subtract the current 200,000 GPD capacity from that then you end up with approximately 500,000 GPD needed. That's our estimate of what a

new wastewater treatment system would need to do to meet the needs in the Cashiers area in the next 20 years. I believe that this is a realistic flow that would give this area a long-term public sewer capability."

In regards to solutions, the McGill study looked at every alternative from "no action" and "private" solutions which would mean TWSA would do nothing to address the issue and instead rely on private parties to develop their own sewage systems to "land applications" and "regional connectivity." But in the end, the group found that the best solution will probably be a new wastewater facility on the Horsepasture River that can handle 496,000 GPD at a construction cost of approximately \$5.2 million.

In regards to the added 500,000 GPD in capacity, County Manager and TWSA representative for Western Carolina University Chuck Wooten said that he feels the addition is reasonable.

"I think that the extra 500,000 GPD is accurate in regards to the study," Wooten said. "I think that the option that the study suggested seems to be our only option at this point. Now this isn't something that could happen overnight. This is a long process and I'd anticipate that it would be at least a five-year project to develop."

One of the two Jackson County TWSA representatives and a local who has been coined the "Cashiers representative," Tom Sawyer said that though he is sur-

prised by the 500,000 GPD need he feels that it is something the community has known for a long time.

"Yes, I think everyone is surprised by that," Sawyer said. "We all knew that we needed added capacity, but we didn't know how much. Certainly there is a lot of it that is wanted right now. Everyone that I talked to seemed to be very excited about the report and thought that it seemed to tell us exactly what we already thought. Now we have a basis for proceeding."

Wooten added that the response from the survey indicates that in the coming years the Cashiers area could be one of the most developing areas in the county and that this indication may show some signs regarding the state of the economy.

"The 42 percent response rate from the survey was incredible," Wooten said. "Furthermore, I think the amount of people looking to develop their property is astounding. That may be a sign that this economy is finally turning around, that perhaps we've bottomed out and are starting to come up again. I don't think that there is anywhere else in the county that is anticipating that type of growth right now."

Discussing the possibility of a treatment plant on the Horsepasture River, Wooten said that this seems to be the only alternative.

"Its either going to be that river or else we are going to be stuck," Wooten explained. "It

seems that all of the other rivers are so restricted, so the Horsepasture seems to be the only other option."

Sawyer agreed with Wooten's assessment of the Horsepasture River.

"It basically is the closest and most cost effective of the plans," Sawyer said. "The Horsepasture was their thought between it and the Whitewater River. It is a lot closer and there just aren't a whole lot of other options."

Though no decisions were made at the May 10 TWSA work session, the board was scheduled to discuss the report at their next meeting on Tuesday, May 17 at the TWSA headquarters in Sylva. Overall, Westall said that this study and the decisions to come represent TWSA's interest in providing sustainable options for growth in the Cashiers area over the coming years.

"This is a critical issue for this community, but also for the whole county," Westall said. "TWSA is responding to a need for sewage; they are not determining growth, they are not projecting growth, and they are not managing growth. They are providing a resource to the community as it grows."

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