

Development authority creates prospect team

By Shelby Harrell
Staff Writer

The Rabun County Development Authority has formed a "minutemen" prospect response team to help prepare and promote the Rabun County Business Park.

"It would be a trained group of volunteers that are briefed on the selling points and amenities that are available," Sean Brady, executive director of the development authority, said at the July 27 meeting. "There wouldn't be much cost associated with making the team, just time from volunteers and staff."

Brady said training the volunteers would require instructional materials. They would get monthly briefings and quarterly driving tours to be

prepared for prospects. Members would be on call to help promote and sell the community.

"This team would all be on the same page," Brady said. "If I was out of town, this group of folks would be available as needed."

Brady said the authority intended to pull volunteers from the education and health care system, and it is looking to work with people from different backgrounds since prospective companies are looking for different things.

The development authority also discussed awarding three new checking accounts based on proposals from four different banks: Regions, Rabun County, United Community, and First American Bank and Trust in Athens, which

took over the failed Mountain Heritage Bank.

The new accounts included a bonds repayment reserve account, an operating account for the development authority's employment center to deposit rent revenue and to pay off operating expenses, and a construction account that would pay for the completion of a fiber-optics line from Clayton to the Rabun County Business Park.

The construction account also would help ensure that the authority kept OneGeorgia grant funds separated from other accounts. The grant is for construction of the fiber-optics line.

The selection of the new accounts was based on the best interest rate a bank had to offer and which fees, if any, would

be charged. United Community Bank and First American provided the best rates. First American received the bid for the bond repayment account. The authority has a 30-year, \$16 million bond issue.

Authority member Elliott Keller asked Brady when the authority should open the account.

"We need to have some seed money in there," Brady said. "We did specify the target amount on the return on payment to everybody. The project itself has some expenses, and it gives us less concern to have some cushion in the account."

The authority also awarded the operating account for the employment center to First American.

Keller pointed out that the proposal from United

Community Bank would bear interest but required a monthly minimum balance of \$10,000. That is an amount the authority could not maintain and would cost it a fee of \$25 a month.

United Community Bank was awarded the account for the construction grant because the authority could earn some interest while meeting the bank's minimum balance requirement.

Brady recommended that \$5,000 be taken out of the authority's general operating account for starting money in the new employment center account and that \$50,000 be taken out of the authority's business park account to begin the bond repayment account. The authority approved his recommendations

and decided to postpone opening the construction account until it received the OneGeorgia grant.

In other business, the authority:

- Discussed its options of funding a hospital feasibility study for Mountain Lakes Medical Center and a consolidation study for the Clayton-Rabun County Water and Sewer Authority. Authority member Leckie Stack made a motion for the authority to give a forgivable loan or grant to fund either study. The authority made no decision.
- Named Stack as the new chairwoman, replacing George Allen. She committed to serve as chairwoman for a year but said she hoped someone else would replace her by next year.

PAINTER

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

name basis with the first couple.

"I spent about 45 minutes just taking pictures of them and instructing them, believe it or not," Villon de Benveniste said during a recent interview in Cleveland. "(It) got to the point where I'd say 'George and Barbara.' I'd say, 'George, move over this way just a little bit. Barbara, you move in front,' stuff like that because when you're working fast, you don't have time to say, President Bush."

The idea to make a portrait of the couple was born in Paris when Christina Cassinni, daughter of famous fashion designer, Oleg Cassinni, and a friend of Villon de Benveniste, suggested that it would be good publicity for Republicans Abroad. Oleg is best known as Jacqueline Kennedy's wardrobe designer in the 1960s.

According to Villon de Benveniste, Christina Cassinni grew up as a neighbor with George W. Bush and knew the family well.

"She absolutely loved the parents, George and Barbara," Villon de Benveniste said about Christina.

A replica of the Bush portrait can be found at the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum in College Station, Texas. Villon de Benveniste said the portrait was well received by the Bush family upon completion.

"They loved it," she said. "They used it for their Christmas cards."

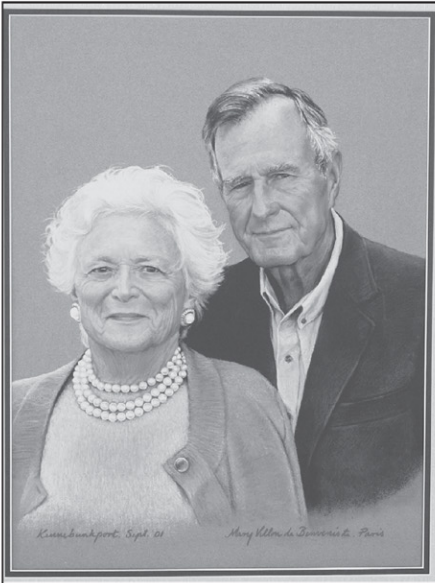


Photo courtesy of Mary Villon de Benveniste

Pictured is a painting of Barbara and George Bush created by Mary Villon de Benveniste in 2001. The former first couple are pictured at their home in Kennebunkport, Maine.

While having lunch with the family on their deck in Maine, George Bush contacted Villon de Benveniste's father, Aaron Christensen, by phone while she was working with the family in Kennebunkport.

"President Bush called my dad and said very nice things about me and my son, and my dad was a Republican, so I got many brownie points," Villon de Benveniste said. "... He just called and said, 'Hello, this is President Bush calling, and I've

got your daughter, Mary, and your grandson, William. We're having such a lovely time.'"

Villon de Benveniste, who has lived in Batesville for about a year, has an extensive client list in Atlanta, Paris, England, northern Virginia and elsewhere. Her head and shoulders pastel portraits go for \$7,000 per subject, with discounts available for additional children.

Rhapsody president Margaret Patrick said she met Villon de Benveniste recently at a local

restaurant, and the meeting caused quite a stir at the eatery.

"We met her at Grapes & Beans, and she brought her artwork, and she had the whole place buzzing," Patrick said.

Patrick said her work stood out because of its realism.

"It looks like it could walk right off the page," Patrick said.

"Her work is just spectacular," she added later in an interview. "It's going to be a highlight of our evening having her participate with us."

Longtime friend and customer Diana Reynolds of McDonough said Villon de Benveniste created a portrait of her son, Oliver Reynolds, when he was 5 years old. Oliver is now 22.

"She's fabulous," Diana said about the painter. "And I'll tell you, and I used to say this, and I meant it. If there was a fire, and I had to leave and I had to grab something, it would be the portrait of Oliver. That's how special they are."

Other items being donated at Rhapsody include a handcrafted Dwayne Thompson china hutch, a performance by The Foxfire Boys and a Carol Stribling piece of artwork.

The gala takes place from 6-11 p.m. Sept. 12 at Rabun County Civic Center. For reservations, call Mary Ann Rich at 706-490-1494.

For more information on Villon de Benveniste's work, visit: <http://maryvillondebenveniste.com>.

DYEING

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

Foxfire. During her career, she has taught and inspired numerous people to pursue their own yarn and weaving projects.

"It's been delightful working here," Grist said. "Children who come are able to see something they have never seen before. And older people may get to remember something they have seen in the past. It gives them a way to recall their past and remember their experiences."

Grist apprenticed at Rabun Gap Crafts from 1978-79 and currently spends many of her days demonstrating the old-fashioned practice of weaving, spinning and dyeing homemade woolen yarn for Foxfire visitors.

She spends other days producing yarn garments and accessories for purchase.

Lynn Johnson, a customer and student of

Grist, said she got lost in her knitting projects because of Sharon.

"I first met Sharon when I took one of her spooling classes," Johnson said. "I fell in love with the yarn she makes. The natural fibers breathe and endure well. I recently bought a bunch of yarn for a sweater I am knitting for a trip I'm taking to Scotland. I know the yarn will make it very warm."

Grist will be sharing her love for spinning, knitting and weaving with visitors from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturdays during August. Admission to the museum costs \$6 for adults, \$3 for those 7-10 and children 6 and younger get in free.

"I never dreamed I would spend my life spinning, but now it has taken a huge portion of my life," Grist said. "Weaving is my way of sharing beauty and joy - and my love for life."



Shelby Harrell/The Clayton Tribune

Foxfire visitor Cheryl Shular admires many colors of handmade yarn during an Aug. 6 demonstration by weaver Sharon Grist.

Election qualifying just around corner

By Shelby Harrell
Staff Writer

Qualifying for city elections will begin Aug. 29. Fourteen council posts and two mayor positions will be open in Clayton, Dillard, Mountain City and Tiger.

To qualify, candidates must stop by the Rabun County Board of Elections office to fill out an application and pay a fee, which varies by city.

Clayton City Council currently has three posts up for re-election as the terms of Councilmen Willie Fortson, Roy Quilliams and Debbie Chisholm are set to expire. A qualifying fee of \$54 must be paid to apply.

Dillard City Council also has three seats up for re-election regarding the posts of Councilmen Gordon Jenkins, Carron Grist and Jake Roberts. Dillard charges a qualifying fee of \$27.

All council seats in Mountain City are up for re-election. Currently those positions are held by Mayor Grace Watts and Councilmen Ruth Fountain, Charles Hooper,

For your information

- **Qualifying:** Opens Aug. 29 and runs through Sept. 2.
- **Election Day:** Nov. 8.
- **Clayton:** Post 3, Post 4 and Post 5 are open. Qualifying fee is \$54.
- **Dillard:** Post 2, Post 4 and Post 6 are open. Qualifying fee is \$27.
- **Mountain City:** Mayor, Post 1, Post 2, Post 3 and Post 4 are open. Qualifying fee is \$15 for mayor, \$10 for council members.
- **Tiger:** Mayor, Post 1, Post 2, Post 3 and Post 4 are open. Qualifying fee is \$45 to run for mayor, \$15 for council members.

Carolyn Hart and Eric McCrackin. Mountain City charges a qualifying fee of \$15 to run for mayor and \$10 to run for council.

All Tiger seats also are up for re-election. Those positions are held by Mayor Tom Ramey Jr. and Councilmen Roy Lovell, Karen Lovell, Susan Rickman and Don Melton. Tiger charges a qualifying fee of \$45 to run for mayor and \$15 to run for council.

Qualifying for those cities is held from 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. daily through Sept. 2.

Elections Supervisor Tammy Whitmire said candidates must disclose their finances, be a city resident and not owe any delinquent taxes. Candidates must fill out a notice of candidacy and an affida-

vit stating that they have never been convicted and sentenced for fraudulent violation of primary or election laws, malfeasance in office, a felony involving moral turpitude or convicted of domestic violence under the laws of the state.

Elections will be handled by the county this year. Early voting begins Oct. 18 and will be located at the elections office in Clayton. On Election Day, city elections voting will take place at their respective city halls.

Clayton residents will vote at the elections office, while Dillard, Mountain City and Tiger residents can go to each town's city hall to vote on Election Day.

The registration deadline is by Oct. 11.

HAWK WILD BBQ & CATFISH HOUSE

NOW RE-OPENED

Tues. - Sat. 11 a.m. - 9 p.m.
Sun. 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.
515 Grant Street, Clarkesville
706-754-4323
www.hawkwildbbq.com

VOTED BEST BBQ IN HABERSHAM 2011

MP1811-17-2