

The Braselton News

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Qualifying held this week in Hoschton

Qualifying is being held this week for an election to fill a vacated seat on the Hoschton City Council.

Hope Weeks previously held the seat, but

was forced to resign her post since she is running for Hoschton mayor in the March 24 election.

Qualifying opened Monday for Weeks' at-

large council seat and runs through Wednesday, Feb. 12, at 4:30 p.m.

As of press time, only one person had turned in their qualifying paperwork, Jared

Thompson. Complete qualifying results will be posted on BraseltonNewsTODAY.com and in next week's paper.

The election will be held May 19.

Hotel/motel tax increase clears first hurdle

By Alex Buffington
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Braselton has taken its first step towards raising the town's hotel/motel tax, a move that would generate additional funds for tourism in the city.

The Braselton Town Council voted Feb. 10 to move forward with increasing the hotel-motel tax from 5-percent to 8-percent. That increase must go to the Georgia General Assembly for ultimate approval.

Braselton is among several local municipalities making similar requests. Town manager Jennifer Scott said Lanier Islands, Oakwood and Flowery Branch all have similar requests, while the City of Gainesville increased its rate last year.

Scott noted the town's Visitors Bureau Authority has held off on raising the rate in order to keep Chateau Elan and its confer-

ences competitive with other area venues, specifically Lanier Islands.

"Now that Lanier Islands is going to 8-percent, it'll be an even playing field," said Scott.

If the local legislation is approved, the additional 3-percent will be spent on tourism within the town. Scott said half of the increase must be spent on marketing, while the remaining can be used on construction and maintenance of tourism-related capital projects.

MERITAGE DISCUSSION

Also at its February meetings, the council discussed an upcoming vote on a large development request by Meritage Homes.

The council decided last month to defer a decision on annexation, rezoning and

See Braselton, page 3A

Snow blankets Braselton area



Snow blanketed Braselton and the surrounding area over the weekend. Pictured here is Heidi Cash enjoying the snow along with Ziggy, Zeus and Zelda. Michelle Howell submitted this photo.



Mike and Bree McGoldrick play in the snow in Braselton.



Mandy Guinn submitted this photo of her grandson, Cayden, enjoying the snow. See more snow photos on pages 2 and 3.

Hearing on candidate challenge is Wednesday

Jackson County elections leaders will hold a hearing this week on the qualification of James Lawson, a candidate for the Hoschton City Council.

The Jackson County Board of Elections will hold a challenge hearing Wednesday, Feb. 12, at 9 a.m. to determine if Lawson meets the residency requirements to hold office in the City

of Hoschton. Lawson is the owner of Lawson's Funeral Home in Hoschton.

Lawson and Raphael Mayberry are seeking the at-large Hoschton City Council seat vacated late last year by Jim Cleveland. That election is set March 24.

See coverage from that meeting in next week's paper.

Hoschton planning director resigns

Hoschton's planning and zoning director Justin Kilgore has resigned.

Kilgore reportedly resigned a couple of weeks ago to take a job elsewhere.

Jennifer Kidd-Harrison, the city's event coordinator and public relations representative, said the town's staff is still processing per-

mits and other planning-related items.

The city won't be able to fill Kilgore's vacated position until after the March 24 election. There are currently only two members on the city council, which keeps the council from a quorum, so it cannot hold a meeting to discuss personnel.

Jackson becomes '2nd Amendment sanctuary'

Jackson County leaders declared the county is now a "Second Amendment Sanctuary" last week, but the move is more symbolic than enforceable.

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners adopted a "sanctuary county" resolution Feb. 3 after it was presented to the board by chairman Tom Crow.

The resolution says that the BOC stands behind the sheriff's office if it decides to not enforce "unconstitutional firearms law." It also states that the county will not use any county money to enforce "...laws, orders, mandates, rules or regula-

tions that infringe on the right by the people to keep and bear arms..."

Jackson joins several other counties in Northeast Georgia and around the nation that have adopted similar statements.

The resolution has no legally-binding effect since local laws cannot overrule state or federal laws. Laws regulating firearms, such as mandated background checks to purchase a gun, the prohibition against convicted felons from having a gun and the prohibition against guns on school campuses are still in effect.

County law enforcement officials could choose to ignore those and other existing gun laws, but that could also open the county up to being sued.

The sanctuary gun movement began in 2013, but recently gained steam following last year's win by Democrats in the Virginia statehouse. Democrats in that state vowed to enact stronger gun control measures. The reaction has spread from that state around the nation as gun rights advocates push for their local government to not enforce gun laws that they believe violate their

Second Amendment right to bear arms.

The movement is also gaining steam this year due to upcoming elections where some candidates seek to embrace the pro-gun movement for political gain. After presenting the sanctuary county resolution last week, Crow announced his intention to seek re-election to the BOC chairman's seat this year.

One person spoke out against the resolution at the BOC meeting, saying it was just "ploy" and that it will have no impact on the county.

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