

County Meeting  
August 16, 2018  
Minutes  
Union County Courthouse

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Paris at 6:02 pm. The invocation was given by Carol Mckechnie and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Bill Royce. The minutes from the June 21, 2018 County Meeting and the July 24, 2018 County Meeting were approved as presented. The Minutes from the July 31, 2018 Called Meeting were also approved as presented.

The Commissioner stated that in 2010 when the alcohol referendum was passed, he made the commitment to set aside up to \$50,000 each year from alcohol license fees and tax receipts to put back into the community for the purpose of helping to combat the alcohol and drug abuse problems that already existed in Union County. Roughly half of these funds are distributed each year in the form of grants that interested organizations must apply for. There is a completely independent, committee set up to review the applications and award the grants. The committee has done an excellent job and the Commissioner commended them highly for the time they spent selecting recipients, but this Committee wishes to remain anonymous. Commissioner Paris had no input what so ever into which organizations received the grants nor how much they received. Six organizations applied for a grant and this year and because of so many excellent applications, all six were awarded funding. There were representatives from the organizations present at the meeting and the Commissioner recognized them and presented them with their checks. In this time of such a tremendous problem nationwide with the opioid addiction issue, it is very nice to know that there are these non-profit groups spending their time and effort to assist locally.

Commissioner Paris awarded Substance Abuse Grants to the following local organizations:

Change in our World, Inc. - \$1,727.71

Rebecca Brendle

Freedom Ministries - \$5,000

Joe Dyer

H.O.U.R. Ministry - \$2,100

Roger Lampert

New Hope Counseling - \$5,000

Troy Beaver

NAMI of Union County - \$1,000

Linda Beaver

Union County Family Connection – \$5,000

Kay Jones was unable to attend the meeting, but she will pick up her check at a later date.

Commissioner Paris appointed Stacy Head to the Union County Library Board of Trustees for a three-year term to end on June 30, 2021.

The Commissioner then stated that the five following grants are all for the Accountability Courts in the Enotah Judicial Circuit. These grants are awarded through the Accountability Courts State of Georgia Grant Program for the period of July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019. All of these courts are an effort by the State of Georgia to keep the jail and prison population down while trying to help

people with drug and alcohol abuse issues. Union County is part of a four county region called the Enotah Judicial Circuit made up of Towns and Union in the North and White and Lumpkin in the South.

Commissioner Paris then accepted these five grants.

Accountability Court Grant for the Adult Felon Drug Court – North in the amount of \$201, 749.

Accountability Court Grant for the Adult Felony Drug Court – South in the amount of \$261,587.

Accountability Court Grant for Enotah Family Treatment Court in the amount of \$163,533.

Accountability Court Grant for Enotah Mental Health Court in the amount of \$111,574.

Accountability Court Grant for Juvenile Justice Incentive Grant in the amount of \$116,605.

Commissioner Paris approved Resolution R-2018-07 reappointing Jennifer Mahan as County Clerk and Executive Assistant together with all duties and powers, including but not limited to execution of documents, serving as signatory on County bank accounts, affixing the County Seal and such other responsibilities as delegated to her by the Commissioner of Union County.

The Commissioner then stated that all of the staff in the Commissioner's Office does an outstanding job, but he gave Jennifer a little extra credit, as she is often working late at night from home in order to try to keep tabs on county business and the Commissioner.

Commissioner Paris approved Resolution R-2018-08 removing Catherine Taylor and Patti Holder from the Employee Fund Account at United Community Bank. This Resolution also adds Lamar Paris and Jennifer Mahan as signers. Somehow over the years the changing of the signers on this account has been missed, but this Resolution will correct that.

Commissioner Paris approved an Agreement between CHA Design and Construction Solutions and Union County for Professional Design Services for the Youth Sports Complex that will be located on the property adjacent to the Farmers Market. The cost of this contract is not to exceed \$11,500 and went into effect July 25, 2018. They will be completing the master plan and the rendering for the complex along with collecting data, design, bidding assistance, and construction administration. While this project is a couple of years out, the County must let GDOT know exactly what the plan for the property is and a general time line in order to receive access and grant funding approval for the new access road to the Farmers Market at Highway 515 and the Glen Gooch By Pass.

The Commissioner approved a contract between Hayes James and Associates and Union County for professional design services for the Union County Recreation Complex that will be located on Chase Drive off of the Glenn Gooch By-Pass. The cost of this contract is not to exceed \$20,000 and went into effect on June 29, 2018. This will be the site of the new double gym which will be located near the Health Department on the Gooch By Pass.

Commissioner Paris proclaimed August 6, 2018 as Alvin Todd, The Dahlia Man, Day here in Union County. Mr. Todd moved to Suches in 1925 where he married Zura Gooch. In 1928 Alvin's mother-in-law gave him 100 Dahlia bulbs which he began growing and him and his wife turned into a major mail order business. They grew and sold some of the most beautiful and unique Dahlias to places as far away as Canada, Holland, Germany, and England. Alvin was also involved in the community of Suches by being a Deacon of the Baptist Church, a Justice of the Peace, and the Polling Officer in the Gaddistown District, all of which he served for 40 years. Alvin Todd made lasting contributions to Suches and Union County through his hard work, and his lasting legacy of growing some of the most beautiful Dahlias, rightfully earning him the name "The Dahlia Man". This Proclamation was presented to the family last week at the Historic Courthouse.

The Commissioner proclaimed September 16, 2018 as Let's Move! Day. Nearly 1 in 3 children in America are overweight or obese, increasing their risk for asthma, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, sleep problems, depression, and bullying. The Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America has joined some 50 other faith and community organizations in supporting the national initiative to fight the epidemic of childhood obesity by launching Adventists InStep for Life, an initiative to assist Adventist churches, schools and health care organizations in tackling the challenge of childhood obesity. The Blairsville Seventh-day Adventist Church will be participating in the Seventh-day Adventist church's national Let's Move Day on Sunday, September 16<sup>th</sup>, at Meeks park between the hours of 2 and 4 p.m.

Commissioner Paris approved three Business Licenses for the following businesses:

Cozy Cove, LLC located at 607 Cozy Cove Road

GA Mountain Rental, LLC located at 707 Wilmar Circle

Home Minders is a property management company so they will have various locations for their rentals.

The Commissioner then said that unfortunately their office would be delivering to the North Georgia News, a property tax increase notice that will be in the Tuesday, August 21<sup>st</sup> edition of the newspaper. They are all very sorry that this will be required, but the Accounting Director has been working diligently on next year's budget, and there is no choice. The Commissioner did not know the exact amount of the increase yet but was hopeful that everyone understands Union County is a growing county. The County's expenses have increased 6% in the past year, and the revenue has not been able to keep up. The property digest, the value of all property in the county, has only increased 2% over the past year. The Commissioner is very hopeful that it will begin to increase in the following years, which could help prevent further increases, but nothing can be guaranteed. Commissioner Paris said his goal for the past 18 years has been to keep the property tax rate as one of the lowest in the State of Georgia. Union County has ranged from the lowest in the state to the 5<sup>th</sup> lowest in the state throughout the years. Union County is currently the 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest and he hopes even with a tax increase, Union County will remain in the top 10 lowest counties. When you combine the school and county taxes together, Union County should be in the lowest five in Georgia. So, while any tax increase hurts, it probably should have been raised more all along.

The Commissioner and Staff pride themselves on having the best county possible at the very lowest cost to the tax payers. He then explained why taxes are going up when the economy is the best it has been in years.

Medical costs for county employees have escalated about \$700,000, housing prisoners out of town will exceed \$100,000, and employee salary and benefit costs are increasing, especially for the Sheriff's Office and Jail employees. For counties to maintain employees, they are now having to compete with higher wages in the public marketplace. The County is facing the first inflation in years and the cost of gasoline, tar, asphalt, vehicles and other supplies are going up without a comparable increase in revenue. E-911 and Public Safety radios and equipment upgrades will exceed \$650,000 this year. The County will also have to purchase a ladder truck for the Fire Department. They are also starting the process of adding a fire training center to provide more intense training for the firemen to maintain better abilities to protect you and themselves. The County is also having to consistently maintain and upgrade equipment for all departments.

In 2017, the County was over budget by 2.2 million dollars. They are looking at ways to cut the budget but are not going to sacrifice quality of life for citizens or their children if at all possible. Commissioner Paris stated the county has and will continue to do their very best at operating Union County in a practical and resourceful way. He asked that citizens please stand with them as everyone works together to continue making Union County one of the best and safest counties anywhere in which to live, work and play.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 6:45.

Respectfully submitted by:

  
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Jennifer Mahan, County Clerk

Approved this 20<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2018

  
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Lamar Paris, Commissioner