

County Meeting
May 19, 2022, 6:00pm
Minutes
Union County Courthouse

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Lamar Paris at 6:00pm. The Commissioner welcomed everyone to the meeting. The invocation was then given by David Dyer, EMA Director/Fire Chief, and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Bill Walker. The minutes from the April 21, 2022 County Meeting were approved as presented.

The first item on the agenda was a Proclamation to proclaim May 12, 2022 as Patrick Malone Day. Commissioner Paris summarized the Proclamation stating that Patrick Malone was born on August 12, 1942 in Cleveland, Ohio and attended John Carroll University in University Heights, OH. Mr. Malone married his wife, Kathy, on October 14, 1967 and they welcomed three children into their family, Bryan, Lance, and Sean. Patrick worked for American Greetings moving up through the company and then became Vice President of Sales for Hyponex. He then became Senior Partner for the PAR Group and moved to Blairsville in 2010. Mr. Malone and his wife Kathy helped to dedicate a portion of Meeks Park to a perpetual children's memorial and Patrick served on the Board of Directors for the Blairsville Union County Chamber of Commerce. He continues to contribute to community service and community involvement through two morning radio shows, Mountain Daybreak and Mountain Morning, as well as a weekend show called This Week in Blairsville. The Commissioner then proclaimed May 12, 2022, as Patrick Malone Day. The Proclamation had previously been presented to Mr. Malone on May 12, 2022.

Commissioner Paris accepted an agreement between CHA and Union County for design and engineering services for the roundabout project at the intersection of Pat Haralson Drive and Deep South Farm Road in the amount of \$342,500.00. The effective date of this agreement was May 18, 2022. Union County received a \$1 million dollar commitment from the State Road and Tollway Authority through the Georgia Transportation Infrastructure Bank Grant to put towards this project. It is anticipated that this project will cost in the \$2 million dollar range with the utility relocation to be an unknown until the plans are completed. The biggest unknown issue in this project is all the utility lines in Union County run in front of this property. It will be a real issue and struggle for all the utility companies to get together and figure out how to relocate the utilities.

The Commissioner then approved a Notice of Award of Contract dated May 19, 2022, for paving through the Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant through the Georgia Department of Transportation to Colditz Trucking in the amount of \$1,280,011.20. We received three bids for our LMIG paving this year. CW Matthews was \$2,214,550.00, Colditz Trucking was \$1,733,305.10 and Colwell Construction was \$2,053,173.71. The roads that will be paved this summer include Cooper Gap Road, 1.18 miles, Jones Creek Road, 1.47 miles, Kiutuestia Creek Road, 1.27 miles, Cook Henry Road, 1.25 miles (the entire road), Trackrock Gap Road, 1.08 miles, and Jewell Mason Road, 0.54 miles. GDOT will pay \$762,000, while Union County will only be required to pay \$384,000. However, Union County made the decision to go ahead with additional SPLOST funds and pay the additional \$133,000 so that basically the same amount of

miles could be paved as last year. The cost of paving continues to escalate as are a lot of other things.

Commissioner Paris accepted an Intergovernmental Agreement between the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce and Union County for the distribution of 90% of funds received from the Hotel-Motel Excise Tax. The duration of this agreement is from January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2022. This Intergovernmental Agreement is in compliance with the existing Hotel-Motel Ordinance.

The Commissioner accepted a Lease Amendment between Union County and the State Properties Commission for the Department of Juvenile Justice, for the address of 76B Hunt Martin Street, Blairsville, GA 30512 containing 185 square feet of rentable office space. This Lease Amendment has an effective date of July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023 in the amount of \$1.00 annually.

Commissioner Paris accepted a Lease Amendment between Union County and the State Properties Commission for the Department of Driver Services for the address of 149 Chase Drive, Blairsville, GA 30512 containing 1,440 square feet of rentable office space. This Lease Amendment has an effective date of July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023 in the amount of \$1.00 annually. This lease makes it possible for Union County Citizens to be able to get their driver's license in Union County and not have to drive to Blue Ridge.

The Commissioner accepted an Agreement between AirMedCare and Union County for payroll deduct only for employees of Union County Government who sign a membership agreement with AirMedCare. There is no cost to Union County Government for this agreement as Union County is only agreeing to deduct membership fees from an employee's payroll if the employee chooses to sign a membership with AirMedCare. Union County will then remit those fees deducted to the company on the behalf of the employee. This is for the other helicopter service that Union County does not have the membership with for the entire county. The only reason to need the additional service would be if an emergency happened to coincide with another one and the Union County based helicopter were to be in use and unavailable for life flight. The odds are against this happening but still possible. This is just an option for county employees and the general public can sign up for this membership if they have an interest in it.

Commissioner Paris asked County Attorney, William Mercer, to come up for the 2nd Reading of the revisions to the Alcohol Ordinance. Attorney Mercer summarized the changes to the Union County Alcohol Ordinance. He stated that all the proposed changes had been discussed and voted on by the Alcohol Board and were approved by the Commissioner prior to being presented. This was the second reading of the new changes to the alcohol ordinance. The first reading was at last month's county meeting and then a public hearing was a couple days ago. Attorney Mercer stated that at the end of his presentation he would take questions.

The first change was regarding Section 10-76(e) which pertains to percentage leases. In this section percentage leases were not allowed for licensees. This is being changed to allow percentage leases for licensees as long as those percentages do not include the sale of alcohol.

Section 10-81(h) is being removed entirely. This section states no coin operated gaming machines are allowed in an establishment with an Alcohol License. The state legislature

overruled counties on this issue. A state law went into effect allowing businesses to have these types of machines making this section of the ordinance void.

Mr. Mercer went on to explain that Section 10-82(v)(3) requires that any licensee renewing their Alcohol License must be caught up on all their taxes, both local and state. Alcohol License renewals are approved in Union County around the first of December, but property taxes are not due until around December 20th of each year. Some licensees have skirted by with not actually being in compliance with the ordinance because the license was approved prior to the taxes actually being due for the current year. To fix that, the ordinance will now require licensees to pay their local taxes for the calendar year or their license will not be approved.

Section 10-76 (j)(1-12) pertains to alcohol permits. Alcohol Permits are different from licenses. An Alcohol License is what an employer would get if they wanted to sell alcohol in Union County and an Alcohol Permit is for any of the employees who will be selling or serving alcohol in the establishment that has an Alcohol License. Currently, employees who are going to be touching alcohol in any way whether that be a busboy, store clerk, or a waiter are required to have a permit. To get a permit the employee has to come to the courthouse and meet with Union County's one Alcohol Enforcement Officer, who is responsible for issuing over 1,000 permits a year. Since a permit has to be renewed each year, the one Alcohol Enforcement Officer basically spends every day doing permits. This section will be removed from the ordinance and the officer can go out and enforce the ordinance to make sure everyone is in compliance. Provisions will be put in place of this removed section. Employees will be required to complete training within 14 days of the start of their employment and the ordinance suggests or recommends the employer do a criminal background check on new employees.

Mercer then continued to explain the revisions to Section 10-80(A)(6), 10-81(1)(2), and 10-81(1)(5) pertained to removing the permit language that was taken out of 10-76(j)(1-12). Once Mr. Mercer had completed the explanation of the Alcohol Ordinance Revisions he asked if there were any questions.

Question: Was there a charge for getting an Alcohol License?

Answer (Mercer): An alcohol license is a license to sell alcohol, and yes, there is a fee for that. There is also a fee to get the Alcohol Permit.

Answer (Jennifer Mahan): Renewals were \$16.00, and the initial permit was around \$32.00.

Question: What was the revenue?

Answer (Mercer): I don't know, I don't have those numbers.

Commissioner Paris then adopted the amendments to Chapter 10, Article III of the Union County Code of Ordinances generally referred to as the Union County Alcohol Ordinance. The first reading was held at the April 21, 2022 County Meeting and the Public Hearing was held on May 17, 2022. There were no question or comments from those in attendance at the Public Hearing. There was one question at this meeting, but it was not significant to the amendments to the ordinance. The Commissioner explained why when alcohol comes up, he always has the county attorney speak. There are a lot of different issues in Union County where people have the notion that a Sole Commissioner controls and does everything. That couldn't be further from the truth and this was a perfect example that the Commissioner doesn't really have anything to do with the alcohol ordinance or the alcohol group. They do their thing, and Commissioner Paris stated he

pretty well stays away from that. The same with the Development Authority and several other things in the county. He stated that he can't be everywhere and do everything. The advantage of a Sole Commissioner is getting to learn, know and be aware of everything going on in the county but it doesn't mean the Commissioner knows or controls or does everything in the county. Commissioner Paris said he just wanted to pass that on.

The Commissioner then approved the following seven Business Licenses.

- Psychedelic Shack - 25 Woodland Hills Drive
- Rockwood Rental - 288 Rockwood Trail
- Waters Rental - 792 Voylestown Road
- Apple Rental - 76 Horizon Drive
- Bowman Rental - 227 Seminole Road
- Spooner Rental - 85 Lois Lane
- Puga Rental - 177 Earney Road

Commissioner Paris stated that since rental cabins were being discussed he wanted to discuss VRBO. Unfortunately, in this year and day and time of Facebook and all kinds of other social media forums people can get on and say what they want to say. The Commissioner felt this had kind of happened on the VRBO issue. He knew of at least a couple of sites that people had dropped by to him, but they were talking about how awful Union County's situation for VRBO rentals was and all the complaints, problems, noise and headaches for everybody in the county. Commissioner Paris went on to say it was kind of interesting. It is an issue and may become a larger issue. He personally talked one time to two people who had an issue with a VRBO across the street that had a noise issue late at night. Then one other person called about a VRBO in their neighborhood. Commissioner Paris felt that if he had only two or three people contacting him about a problem, it wasn't a problem yet. Whereas it may become one and Union County is looking at it and working with other counties to figure out what's the best way to attack the problem. If people own a home and they are not here full-time or they happen to have two homes, they might want to make some money on it. The Commissioner asked if the county should tell them, "No you can't do that?" He went on to say that the county would tell them, "If you do that, you're going to be responsible, and you have to be responsible for making sure the people renting your property treat it like their own neighborhood."

Commissioner Paris said he is working with eight counties in North Georgia on a comprehensive set of ordinances. He is hopeful they will have their next meeting in 30 days. They are looking at all the issues related to growth in counties and trying to look and listen to what some of the other counties have done. Some of those things have worked. Some of them have not worked. A lady from the University of Georgia is working with these counties to help facilitate this process. The Commissioner said it is something the county is going to continue to be working on, but it's not an emergency. It is not something that is all over the county and ruining our county. He went on to say if you live next door to one and there are issues, call the county or call the Sheriff's Office if they are making noise until the ordinances are done. If the county does not receive problem and does not hear of them, it is not really a problem to the county. Commissioner Paris also reminded people that when reading statements on these different sites to realize that there are a lot of people making statements that are sometimes irrational, inaccurate, an exaggeration or maybe they just don't understand what they are writing about. If you have had an issue or are having an issue, call the Commissioner's Office.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 6:26 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

Jennifer Mahan
Jennifer Mahan, County Clerk

Approved this 16th day of June, 2022

Lamar Paris
Lamar Paris, Commissioner

