

County Meeting  
September 15, 2022, 6:00pm  
Minutes  
Union County Courthouse

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Lamar Paris at 6:04 pm. The invocation was given by Fire Chief David Dyer and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Bill Walker.

Commissioner Paris then approved the minutes from the August 18, 2022, County Meeting as presented. He then approved the minutes from the September 8, 2022, Called Meeting. Attendees were provided a copy of the August 18, 2022 minutes and the September 8, 2022 minutes.

Commissioner Paris proclaimed September 17 – 23, 2022 as Constitution Week with Constitution Day being September 17, 2022. On this day in 1787, the US Constitution Convention signed the Constitution of the United States of America. The proclamation is the give recognition of the document and the anniversary of its signing. He further asked the citizens of Union County to affirm the ideals of the US Constitution by vigilantly protecting the freedoms guaranteed for us.

Commissioner Paris adopted a moratorium on cryptocurrency mining sites effective September 15, 2022, at 7pm. The duration of the moratorium will be 180 days. This is the second moratorium enacted on cryptocurrency mining sites and the County will maintain a moratorium until an ordinance can be drafted to address these sites. The cryptocurrency mining sites require a great deal of power and large fans for cooling – creating noise problems in nearby communities in North Carolina.

Commissioner Paris approved an agreement between Union County and the Georgia Association of Conservation Districts, Inc. in the amount of \$95,200. He stated that the agreement is effective from October 1, 2022, to September 30, 2024. Union County will be responsible for \$47,600 and the GACD will be responsible for the other \$47,600 during the term of this agreement. The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) provides support to landowners to implement conservation practices on eligible land.

Commissioner Paris appointed Shanna Prather to the Board of Directors for the Avita Community Partners. This appointment will be from September 1, 2022, until June 30, 2024. Avita provides mental health services to the citizens of Union County.

Commissioner Paris appointed Maryjane B. Wysocki to the Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities & Addictive Diseases Advisory Council of the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities as the representative from Union County. This appointment will be from September 15, 2022, through September 15, 2025. Commissioner Paris invited Linda Beaver with the National Alliance on Mental Illness to speak about Wysocki's appointment to the Council. Ms Beaver stated that the purpose for the council is to bring local issues to the table and to report out on any issues with the Regional Commission and with the Commissioners. She further stated that Georgia is still 48<sup>th</sup> in the nation in cases of mental illness so there is still work to be done. Ms. Wysocki then thanked Ms Beaver for recruiting her to take Ms Beaver's place on the council. She further confirmed her past

experience with disability services and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to help others in our community.

Commissioner Paris accepted a contract between Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D Council and Union County for writing of a community Wildfire Defense Grant Application, which if granted will be used to fund the creation of a Community Wildfire Protection Plan for Union County. There is no cost for this contract. He further explained that he was approached by Frank Riley and explained that the purpose for the Community Wildfire Protection Plan is to help those who live near a wooded area understand what to look for in protecting their homes from a fire.

Commissioner Paris accepted a contract between Winkler and Winkler and Union County for the construction of Union County Fire Station 13 in the amount of \$2,437,583.00 with an effective date of August 26, 2022. Work shall be completed within 360 days following the Notice to Proceed.

Commissioner Paris accepted a notice to commence work on Union County Fire Station 13 for Winkler and Winkler in accordance with the contract dated August 26, 2022, on September 8, 2022. The work shall be fully complete on or before October 3, 2023. The Commissioner invited Fire Chief David Dyer to speak about the specifics of the new Fire Station. He stated that Station 13 is something the county has been working on for several years. This fire station will be built to expand and will be able to house an ambulance and Sheriff's Office personnel if they should need to work out of the building. A rescue and fire truck along with career fire fighters will be stationed in the building as well.

Commissioner Paris approved a Lease Agreement between the 9th District Opportunity and Union County for the use of office space located at 185 Welborn Street, Suite 8, in the Pat Haralson Memorial Civic Center in the amount of \$230.00 per month totaling \$2,760.00 for the term of the lease. The duration of this lease will be from October 1, 2022 through September 30, 2023.

The Commissioner explained while the cut off day for applications for Business Licenses was August 16, 2022, there were a few that turned in all their paperwork before the 16<sup>th</sup> but were missing a piece or something had not been completed correctly on the application. The following items are those few remaining Business Licenses. They have corrected the mistakes or provided the missing documentation to complete their license application. The Commissioner approved the following Business Licenses which are only issued for the purpose of collecting the Hotel/Motel Tax:

3rd & Lowry, LLC  
62 Smokey Creek Cove

Rempe Rental  
Parcel #081 040 A105

Olivard Rental  
Parcel #081 040 A103

Kruger Rental

Parcel #081 040 A117

Pilot Cabin Rental, LLC  
55 Upper Pilot Road

Stejskal Rental  
258 Litton Lane

The Commissioner asked Laurie Brothers to come to the podium. Ms. Laurie Brothers requested to speak regarding open records requests, laws, freedom of speech and stopping the suppression of freedom of speech and public records. Commissioner Paris reminded her that the time limit was three minutes. Commissioner Paris requested that County Attorney William Mercer facilitate this portion of the meeting.

Ms. Brothers stated, "Thank you. In regards to the just real quick, the multi-housing short-term rentals I just request that there be a moratorium on short-term rentals because the young people who have lived here all their lives are getting married and we are running out of houses for them to actually purchase and rent and live and so I know someone personally. She said that all the houses were bought on her street and she and her fiancé can't find a place to live so I just request the looking into no more business licenses and I know there is a moratorium for six months, because you are going to do ordinances, but I would also really make that request that you permanently stop visitors no more houses for residents. So, with that said, the open records. I started attending meetings here last Summer and we could freely speak. We could ask questions and we could speak for 5 minutes. I can now speak for 3. I hope that I get to speak more because I do have more to say. And so I just feel like um I request that you these rules only three minutes now. You have to have a question that is going with on the topic of what you guys spoke about and we only get 1 question now so I'm going to request that you roll those back. I did an open records request. There is nothing on the books. There's no minutes regarding any of these rules that are limiting us and to have to go to your office to ask you a question. We are busy. We don't have time to go to your office all the time just to ask a question. So that's what I wanted to say about that. And then I would like to request that you consider having Union County use paper ballots for the November 8<sup>th</sup> election and here's why. The Board of Elections are supposed to maintain election results which includes ballot images for 2 years per the Georgia Election Integrity Act of 2021 Chapter 2 and title 15. We learned yesterday at the board of elections meeting that there have been no images of ballots made for the last 3 elections, 2020, 2021 runoff and 2022. It is my understanding that it is impossible to tabulate elections results without the images. And since they just reported that they have no ballot images, based on the authority um based on the authority giving you Mr. Commissioner and O.C.G.A. 21-2-366, I would like to respectfully request a remedy for this maladministration situation which would be to have paper ballots in November. Thank you.

Commissioner Paris commented that residents can come to the county office at any time and ask questions. Residents can also call by phone, send an email or text message. He further stated that what the Commissioner's Office often experiences is that people don't always want answers as much as they are interested in telling others that they feel there is a problem. There are so

many ways to communicate with the public. On balloting, he explained that Union County complies with state law. There are no provisions in the state law that you have paper ballots to vote on. All paper ballots by state law go directly to the Clerk of Court Office. They are sealed and neither our election board has the right to unseal them. I don't believe that anyone is trying to keep anything from anyone. The ballots are there, and they are sealed. He then called on Libby to speak.

Libby Stevens stated a 2-hour meeting was held yesterday and Ms. Brothers issues were addressed. She confirmed that ballot images were not recorded. The new machines were set up by the manufacturer to do what they were supposed to do, but they did not record the ballots. However, the ballots were counted by hand three times for that election with only a one vote discrepancy. The next time, she stated she was positive that they had the ballot images. They did have images for voting by mail and provisional ballots. However, they did not have any images for ballots when voting was done by machine. They do have a record of the voting done by machine on a computer card. The Elections Office is not required by law to make images of ballots. The original ballots are in the courthouse – none have been destroyed – and Ms. Stevens stated she asked the judge personally to allow her to unseal the ballots in order to create trust between the office of elections and the people who believe the Dominion machines are corrupt. She further stated that the judge refused to allow the ballots to be opened unless it would change the election, if there was a sign of corruption, and if it was time worthy. Ms. Stevens thanked Marsha Lodes for continuing the dialogue so that Ms. Stevens could fully understand the issues being questioned. Because the provisional ballots are digital and because the paper ballots are digital, they were copied. The early voting ballots do not go through the tabulation scanner, only the flash card goes through which has recorded the information. As a result, the elections board decided that for the Governor and Senate races, they will plan to do a recount using a bi-partisan committee at each counting table. The goal will be to identify any significant ballot counting differences with significant meaning that the number of differences in ballot counts being 10-15. Ms. Stevens explained that the Election Board would like to see more public confidence in the machines. She also stated that the digital images would be available through open records.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 6:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

  
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Jennifer Mahan, County Clerk

Approved this 20<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2022

  
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Lamar Paris, Commissioner