

County Meeting
April 20, 2023, 6:00pm
Minutes
Union County Courthouse

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Lamar Paris at 6:05 pm. The Commissioner welcomed everyone to the meeting. The invocation was then given by David Dyer, Fire Chief/EMA Director and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Bill Walker. The minutes from the March 9, 2023 County Meeting and the April 4, 2023 Called Meeting were approved as presented. Attendees were provided with copies of the minutes.

Commissioner Paris accepted an agreement between Air Methods Corporation and Union County, Georgia for emergency air medical transportation services for the County's citizens and their household members from June 1, 2023 to May 31, 2024. The amount of this agreement is not to exceed \$63,802.50 and the county will only be responsible for half of that amount while Union General Hospital pays for the other half. The total amount of the agreement decreased from last year in the amount of \$12,962.50. This is the local emergency helicopter service provided to residents whether full or part time.

Marcus Lindsey, the Account Executive for North and Central Georgia with Air Methods Corporation spoke briefly regarding the helicopter service. His comments are summarized as follows: Air Methods Corporation and Union County have had an agreement of this type since 2016. Air Methods provides helicopter ambulance services to Union County residents. There are a couple of other helicopters in neighboring counties that provide backup as needed. Air Methods provides air transport to those patients that require specialized emergency care beyond the care available at a local hospital, time critical care, to another center. This specialized treatment is often located in metro or urban cities. This service helps close the gap in providing access to this care that is truly affordable. If a citizen is transported by Air Methods, there will be no out of pocket cost associated with the transport. The costs are covered by the county at the agreed upon rate. In 2019 Air Methods overhauled their entire model of operating, and now if the patient, due to insurance, does not have any out-of-pocket costs, the county is not billed for that. Air Methods has brought the costs down and has not had to adjust Union County's per transport pricing to the current date. The county is billed on a quarterly basis and is currently midway through the fourth quarter of the current agreement. To date, Union County has been billed \$17,625.42 and if the trend continues for the remainder of the current quarter the total should be around \$23,500 for this agreement. The cap on the current agreement is \$76,765, so this would be \$50,000 below budget, and keeping costs down for the county is good for citizens as well. Last year Air Methods transported 146 residents for specialized care and 55% of those transports were Medicare recipients, 8% were Medicaid, 10% were self-pay, 3% other government insurance, 23% were under private insurance, and 1% were covered under automobile insurance.

Citizen: If you are not a permanent resident, are you still covered?

Mr. Lindsey: Yes, the county has agreed to cover those part-time residents as well.

Mr. Lindsey added that occasionally people get mailers for other membership programs. Union County residents do not have to do anything to apply. If this service is needed Air Methods will verify residency after the time of service and put the patient or family in contact with the patient advocate to get insurance information and sign paperwork. There are no out of pocket costs and residents do not have to do anything in advance.

Citizen: This only applies if you are here in Union County and going somewhere else. If you are sitting in Seattle...

Mr. Lindsey: If you are flown by and Air Methods helicopter and billed by Air Methods you are covered regardless of where you are located.

Citizen: International too?

Mr. Lindsey: We don't have any bases international, but throughout most of the states. Don't quote me on this, but we serve somewhere in the neighborhood of 48 states, including Alaska. In an area serviced by us and you are transported by us, you're covered as a Union County Resident.

Citizen: Bringing us back here?

Mr. Lindsey: Our goal in an emergency situation, the purpose of this is emergency transport, is to get you to the closest appropriate center that is going to have the services you need. If you or your family has a request, say your doctor is located at a particular hospital, and you request that of our crews, if it is feasible to do so, and if it is safe and depending on your condition, we do our best to honor that. Our number one goal is to get you quickly and safely to the services you need.

Citizen: I have done some research on it. If you are in Seattle you're right, you will be taken to a hospital. But then you come back, this way, you are going to need something else. If you are going to be air lifted back.

Mr. Lindsey: You would have to direct any of those questions to your insurance or your third-party health care provider.

Citizen: What makes you different from MASA?

Mr. Lindsey: I am not extremely familiar with MASA. It is a general supplemental membership program. They handle things like international repatriation, other types of transport and those types of things. They are more of a generalized program and beyond that of what we have here for Union County residents.

Citizen: This is a great deal. Thank you, Lamar.

Mr. Paris: Your very welcome and not me, it is your money going to pay for it. I am very proud we made that decision and glad we found willing partners to work together. It has been incredible.

The Commissioner then asked Jennifer Mahan, County Clerk, to present summaries of the Proclamations that were on the agenda.

Ms. Mahan stated that Commissioner Paris proclaimed April 2023 as Child Abuse Prevention Month and summarized the proclamation as follows: Children are the key to future success, prosperity, and quality of life in Union County. They are the most valuable resource, but also the most vulnerable. Child abuse and neglect can be prevented by supporting and strengthening families, thus preventing the far-reaching effects of maltreatment. This provides the opportunity for children to develop healthy, trusting family bonds, and consequently, building the foundations of community. By providing a safe and nurturing environment for children, free of violence, abuse and neglect, citizens can ensure that Union County's children will grow to their full potential. Commissioner Paris urged families and communities to become involved in protecting Union County's and Georgia's children. This Proclamation was signed in the courthouse on March 14, 2023, with Della Lago, Executive Director of Enotah CASA, Mayor Jim Conley and Commissioner Lamar Paris. Enotah CASA placed 208 blue pinwheels on the square representing the number of children who were served by Enotah CASA in 2022. Enotah CASA stands for Court Appointed Special Advocates and this organization operates on grants, donations and fundraisers to provide each child in the court system an advocate. This advocate looks out for the best interests of the child as they work through the family court system.

Jennifer Mahan stated that the Commissioner proclaimed March 24, 2023 as Sam Ensley Day here in Union County and summarized the proclamation as follows: Mr. Ensley dedicated many years to educating the youth of the community as well as preserving the history of Union County all while entertaining us with his stories and musical talents. As a middle school teacher Sam was a great advocate of the middle school model and was dedicated to the success of his students along with their enjoyment of their educational journey. He demonstrated a deep personal commitment to helping students succeed and live up to their full potential. Upon his retirement Mr. Ensley dedicated his time to being an active member of the Union County Historical Society where his commitment and persistence helped with safeguarding and preserving the historical buildings behind the Mock House which consist of the Payne Cabin, the Blacksmith Shop, and the Duncan Cabin. His musical background and his appreciation for all types of music aided him with engaging various genres of musical entertainment for the Friday Night Concert Series at the Historic Courthouse, so there is always something for everyone to enjoy. Also, the tradition of storytelling has been continued for years by Mr. Ensley who shares his stories about the history of Union County and about his life experiences for the enjoyment of all those who listen. As quoted by a longtime friend "Sam does tell a good story." I urge local residents to recognize the substantial contributions made by Sam Ensley to the education of our youth and the preservation of Union County's History. The Historical Society held a reception honoring Sam Ensley at the historic courthouse on March 24, 2023 and this proclamation was signed and presented at this event.

Ms. Mahan stated that Commissioner Paris proclaimed April 26, 2023 as Confederate Memorial Day in Union County and summarized the proclamation as follows: The United Daughters of the Confederacy is an organization whose purposes include honoring the memory of its Confederate ancestors and honoring the service of veterans from all wars as well as active military personnel. Smith's Legion Chapter #2699 was chartered in January of 2014 to carry out the organization's purposes in Union County and the surrounding area. The Commissioner encouraged all citizens to participate in activities under the leadership of Smith's Legion Chapter #2699 that commemorate and honor our shared history and cultural inheritance. This proclamation was

signed in the Commissioner's Office on April 5, 2023 with representatives from the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Sons of Confederate Veterans.

Jennifer Mahan stated that the Commissioner proclaimed April 19th, 2023 as Patriot's Day in Union County. April 19th marks the date in 1775 when the towns of Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts were marched upon by the British regulars in an effort to confiscate munitions of the local militia. This resulted in the "shot heard round the world" and the defeat of the redcoats is now celebrated at Patriots Day. Patriots Day serves to remind citizens of our Revolution and the sacrifices endured during the years of struggle for American independence by the patriots. The descendants of the soldiers who fought in the American Revolution encourage the community to proclaim April 19th of each year as Patriots Day in commemoration of the American Revolution and the struggle for American independence. The Commissioner urged all Union County residents to become more knowledgeable of the role which the Revolutionary War played in establishing the United States of America. This proclamation was signed in the courthouse on April 12, 2023 with representatives from the Blue Ridge Mountain Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution and the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Ms. Mahan then asked David Dyer, Millie Baxter and any dispatchers present to come up for the reading of the next proclamation. She then stated that Commissioner Paris proclaimed April 9th through April 15th, 2023 as National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week and then summarized the proclamation as follows: Our dispatchers are the first and most critical contact our citizens have with emergency services. When an emergency occurs the prompt response of law enforcement officers, firefighters and paramedics is critical to the protection of life and the preservation of property. The Union County 911 Center has contributed substantially to these by exhibiting compassion, understanding and professionalism during the performance of their job. Public Safety Telecommunicators of Union County have contributed substantially to the apprehension of criminals, suppression of fire and the treatment of patients. Commissioner Paris asked everyone to join him in honoring the men and women whose diligence and professionalism keep our county and citizens safe.

David Dyer, Fire Chief and EMA Director spoke regarding the important role dispatchers play in providing emergency services to the citizens of Union County. His comments are summarized as follows: It takes a special person to be a dispatcher. They have to take the call, keep people calm, get the information and get the right people. They have two customers; the person calling and needing help and then they have the people they are having to dispatch out. They are very special people and the most dedicated people to any kind of service. They are the unsung heroes of public safety.

The Commissioner accepted Supplemental Agreement No. 1 between Union County and the Georgia Department of Transportation to amend the agreement dated December 15, 2022 and approved at the County Meeting on January 19, 2023. The original grant agreement was for the amount of \$104,864 for the operation of the Union County Transportation System. This supplemental agreement provides additional capital assistance funds in the amount of \$12,000 for the period of July 1, 2022 to December 31, 2023 to be used for camera equipment for the Union County Transit buses, which they do not currently have. These cameras are needed for

the safety and protection of the citizens utilizing the buses as well as the employees driving the buses and transporting citizens.

Commissioner Paris accepted an Agreement between Mallory & Evans Service, Inc. and Union County for the maintenance services program for the Union County Courthouse HVAC Systems. There are huge units on the roof of the courthouse that require regular maintenance. This agreement has an effective date of April 1, 2023 and shall remain in effect for a period of three years in the amount \$8,830 for the first year, \$9,094 for the second year, and \$9,366 for the third year.

The Commissioner accepted a contract between Colwell Construction Company, Inc. and Union County for asphalt resurfacing of multiple roads through the Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant in the amount of \$1,820,729.38 for 2023 LMIG Roads and \$275,539.35 for Cleveland Street with a contract effective date of March 29, 2023. The cost for Cleveland Street paving will be reimbursed to Union County by the City of Blairsville. Union County received two other bids for this year's LMIG paving. C.W. Matthews bid was \$2,146,111.05 for LMIG roads and \$365,249.54 for Cleveland Street, Colditz bid was \$1,852,736.88 for LMIG roads and \$316,708.20 for Cleveland Street. The roads that will be paved this summer include:

Trackrock Gap Road
0.88 miles
Spiva Bridge Way
0.487 miles/Entire Rd.
Big Sky Road
0.963 miles/Entire Rd.
Owltown Road
0.689 miles
Poteete Creek Road
1.00 mile/Entire Road
Loving Road
1.40 miles
Ivy Log Road
1.066 miles
Tomahawk Trail
0.875 miles/Entire Rd.
Moccasin Road
1.136 miles

The roads that need to be paved come to the Commissioner from the Road Department. They provide a list of the roads that are the worst in the county and need to be resurfaced. Staff then takes the amount of money that Union County has and what they will receive from the state and do as many as they can from the list. Sometimes later in the year, if there are additional funds they will try and do additional work.

Commissioner Paris accepted a contract between the University of Georgia Board of Regents of The University of Georgia on behalf of The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension and Union County, Georgia in the amount of \$54,690 for the period of March 1, 2023 to June 30,

2023 for cost sharing of the salaries for the UGA Extension Office Employees. Salaries of employees at the UGA Extension Office are paid by Union County Government, the University of Georgia and the Board of Education. This contract is for a cost of living raise for Union County's portion for 2023 for these employees.

The Commissioner accepted a commitment letter between Union County and Legacy Link for the required local share during FY-2024 in the amount of \$14,050.00. These funds are used by the Area Agency on Aging as match to draw down federal and state monies for administration, coordination, information and referral, employment and training of older workers and volunteer programs at the Union County Senior Center. This is funding that works with and through the Union County Senior Center. Commissioner Paris stated that Union County has one of the best Senior Centers.

Commissioner Paris accepted a lease agreement between the Estate of John Nix, Elba Vernella Nix, Karen Leigh N. Berry, Erik Ekeberg, and Melissa A. Ekeberg and Union County, Georgia for the property located at 714 John Nix Road consisting of 2.0 acres and a 12,400 square foot poultry house. The amount of this lease is \$600.00 per month and the duration of the lease is from January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2024. This is the lease for the Animal Control facility. The Commissioner stated that the county is very thankful to these families for renewing this lease on a regular basis at a zero-cost increase from previous years.

The Commissioner accepted an Accountability Courts Grant for Enotah Judicial Circuit Family Treatment Court in the amount of \$2,148.00. The grant period is from April 1, 2023 to June 30, 2023.

Commissioner Paris accepted an Accountability Courts Grant for South Enotah Felony Drug Court in the amount of \$2,490.00. The grant period is from April 1, 2023 to June 30, 2023.

The Commissioner accepted an Accountability Courts Grant for Enotah Judicial Court in the amount of \$4,787.00. The grant period is from April 1, 2023 to June 30, 2023.

The next item on the agenda was the adoption of the revisions to Union County Ordinance, Chapter 44, Land Use. The first reading for these revisions was held at the January 19, 2023 County Meeting, a Public Hearing was held on February 21, 2023 and the second reading was held at the March 9, 2023 County Meeting. Drafts have been made available to the public via the website and printed copies have been available in the Commissioner's Office for the duration of this process. Attendees were provided with the final draft. The Commissioner then adopted the revision to Chapter 44, Land Use, of the Union County Code of Ordinances.

The next item on the agenda was also an adoption of the revisions to Chapter 18, Section 18-105, the Construction board of adjustment and appeals. The first reading for these revisions was held at the March 9, 2023 County Meeting, a Public Hearing was held on March 28, 2023 and the second reading was held at a Called Meeting on April 4, 2023. Drafts have been made available to the public via the website and printed copies have been available in the Commissioner's Office for the duration of this process. Attendees were provided with the final

draft. The Commissioner then adopted the revisions to Chapter 18, Section 18-105 of the Union County Code of Ordinances referring to the Construction board of adjustment and appeals.

Commissioner Paris adopted Resolution R-2023-10 to appoint Charles Anderson to the Union County Construction Board of Adjustment and Appeals for a three-year term starting on April 20, 2023 and ending on April 19, 2026.

The Commissioner adopted Resolution R-2023-11 to appoint Lisa Haggas to the Union County Construction Board of Adjustment and Appeals for a two-year term starting on April 20, 2023 and ending on April 19, 2025.

Commissioner Paris adopted Resolution R-2023-12 to appoint John Chitwood to the Union County Construction Board of Adjustment and Appeals for a two-year term starting on April 20, 2023 and ending on April 19, 2025.

The Commissioner adopted Resolution R-2023-13 to appoint Robert Mawyer to the Union County Construction Board of Adjustment and Appeals for a three-year term starting on April 20, 2023 and ending on April 19, 2026.

Commissioner Paris adopted Resolution R-2023-14 to appoint Jason Kelly to the Union County Construction Board of Adjustment and Appeals for a one-year term starting on April 20, 2023 and ending on April 19, 2024.

The Commissioner adopted Resolution R-2023-15 to appoint Chris Priebe to the Union County Construction Board of Adjustment and Appeals as an alternate board member for a one-year term starting on April 20, 2023 and ending on April 19, 2024.

Commissioner Paris adopted Resolution R-2023-16 to appoint Lelani Nickerson to the Union County Construction Board of Adjustment and Appeals as an alternate board member for a one-year term starting on April 20, 2023 and ending on April 19, 2024.

The Commissioner explained that this Board was set up because there are ordinances for building projects. As time has gone on, there are more and more people requesting variances for certain ordinance requirements related to building. He elaborated that he does not feel confident in giving variances on things he does not fully understand. The Board is comprised of people in the county who have some construction know-how and knowledge and understanding on what the variance requests would be on. When there is a variance request there is now a Board to take that request to and be able to get a decision from that Board.

The Commissioner accepted a Settlement Statement and Warranty Deed dated March 21, 2023 for Union County to sell 3.38 acres, more or less, located in Land Lot 22, 10th District, 1st Section of Union County to Hangar One Investors, LLC in the amount of \$750,000. This property in the community is referred to as the Hill Property. Commissioner Paris discussed the potential sale of this property at the February County Meeting and explained the legal agreement as discussed with our County Attorney, Boyd Pettit who approved this sale. The Commissioner said this property was purchased in 2020 with the hopes that either the county or the hospital

would end up with the entire tract. They felt it was critical that one of the entities be able to hold on to and own this center three and a half acres. It was critical to have this because if someone else had purchased it, this could have prevented the hospital or the county from being able to use the larger tract of property in the future. In the interim, once the hospital decided to sell their property, which the county declined purchasing, this three-and-a-half-acre tract was offered for purchase to all people bidding on the larger parcel. This company purchased both tracts of land.

Commissioner Paris stated that he has made two trips to Atlanta this week. On Monday he had a speaking engagement in Atlanta where he had been invited to serve on a three-person panel. The purpose of the panel was to discuss growth issues in our area, while the other two speakers spoke regarding large projects. They met downtown at the Georgia Tech Hotel and Conference Center. He then stated he had also attended POST, which is the Peace Officers and Standards Council, in Atlanta. He has served on this council for quite a few years. The committee that Commissioner Paris serves on hears testimony from deputies throughout the state who have lost their certification and would like to get it back. They appeal to this committee to get their certification back.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:44 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:



Jennifer Mahan, County Clerk

Approved this 18th day of May, 2023



Lamar Paris, Commissioner