

County Meeting
August 22, 2023, 6:00pm
Minutes
Union County Courthouse

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Lamar Paris at 6:00 pm. The Commissioner welcomed everyone to the meeting. The invocation was then given by Fire Chief, David Dyer and the Pledge of Allegiance as well. The minutes from the July 20, 2023 County Meeting were approved as presented and attendees were provided copies.

Commissioner Paris asked Mr. Sam Latimer, from Rushton and Company Certified Public Accountants, to present the Union County Audit Report for FY2022.

Mr. Sam Latimer's presentation is summarized as follows: Everyone was provided a copy of the presentation provided by Rushton and Company. The audit presentation is a summary of the highlights of the large document that contains the full financial statements. The audit went well, and the auditors were on site in Union County for almost a full week. As auditors, we walk through the transactions, test some of the transactions and test some of the internal controls to give our opinions on those. The first slide contains the audit opinion, and that is what we are hired to do, which is issue an opinion on the financial statements as of December 31, 2022. We issued an unmodified opinion so that is the best opinion you could have. We issued that under governmental auditing standards. That is what we are required to do. I want to remind you that Union County is responsible for these financial statements. They have accepted responsibility for the financial statements. As the auditor we are required to issue our opinion on whether these financial statements are fairly stated or not. We provide reasonable assurance that the numbers are reasonably stated. We are talking about year end December 31, 2022. In the report there are government wide financial statements and then there are fund financial statements. There are multiple governmental funds. Those are aggregated together on what we call the statement of net position. There are two columns. You have the business type activities, such as the golf course and the other enterprise funds. Then you have all your governmental activities and those are aggregated together in the governmental activities column. These are on full accrual basis which is like you would see in a business. If looking at the governmental financial statements those are modified accrual. Those don't contain things like capital assets, depreciation, and long-term debt. On pages fifteen and seventeen of the report you will see the statement of net position. That statement of net position is the assets minus the liabilities, and you end up with what we call the net position. That is the same as what you would call equity in a for-profit entity. On page seventeen we have the statement of activities. That is the income statement, or the equivalent of the income statement for those aggregated business type activities and governmental activities. Residual balances that are left over are what we call net position. From 2020 to 2022 is shown in the report so you can compare. In governmental reports we break up that net position into different columns. Net investment in capital assets makes up the majority of that number. Union County has 51.3 million invested in capital assets. So that is your total capital assets minus depreciation and any related debt. Then you have your restricted net position which you can see has gone up quite a bit. You have about 10 million dollars in

restricted net position. Those assets are restricted for certain purposes. Then after you take all those numbers you have whatever is left over and you can see that has gone from almost 7 million to almost 10 million dollars this year. All the way on the right-hand column you can see revenues over expenses. You had about 7.8 million dollars in positive revenue, or change in net position, in governmental activities. Over the last three years you have had very healthy numbers and most of that is due to increases in property taxes and sales taxes. Sales tax has gone through the roof. We audit over 70 governments across Georgia and sales tax is up everywhere. It has been at least 15-16% each year. That continues this year as well. Looking at the next page. This would be the general fund, and this is the largest fund. That is the fund that is used to account for anything that does not need to be in another fund due to restrictions. Revenues in the general fund are up 8% or 1.8 million dollars. As I mentioned property taxes have increased, insurance premium taxes have increased as well. About \$310,000 dollars there. LOST is up \$730,000. Very healthy numbers in the Local Options Sales Tax. Intangible taxes decreased about \$148,000. Looking at expenditures, those increased about 1.6%, you can see those revenues are up 8% and your expenses are only up 1.6%. You want to see revenues up and expenditures down. The general government administration is down, and contract services are due to most of that change. Risk management is up \$430,000 due to an increase in insurance claims. That is an item that is hard to control and tends to fluctuate quite a bit because you have a self-insured plan. The Sheriff is down about \$700,000 and most of that is due to a large amount of capital outlay in the previous year. I believe most of that was the purchase of vehicles and so there were less vehicles purchased this year. Fire and Emergency Management is up about \$211,000 due to personal services and Public Health Administration is up about \$100,000 with most of that being due to supplies. Now in the general fund, you have what we call fund balance. You have multiple categories of fund balance. Some are due to restrictions some are due to things in non-spendable forms. What you are most interested in is that unassigned fund balance. That is the amount that management has control over and can make decisions. It will also fund your budget going into the next year. If you are looking at 2022 you have about 8.4 million in unassigned fund balance. That would cover about 41% of your expenditures of the next year or about 5 months' worth. You have had a healthy increase. If you look at the 2021 numbers, it was about 6 million. That would cover about 30% of expenditures or about 3.6 months. You have had a healthy move in the fund balance the general fund. You are spending down 2015 SPLOST. The funds have already been collected and at this point it is just spending down what is on the referendum. You had about \$370,000 in expenditures there with \$224,000 being improvements to your streets, roads and bridges and \$80,000 being for public service vehicles. Then you have your 2021 SPLOST (SPLOST 5) where about 2.8 million was spent. \$600,000 went to the city of Blairsville, 1.4 million was spent on roads and bridges throughout the county and \$450,000 was spent on solid waste improvements.

As the auditor, I am required to make some communications to you. I am responsible to obtain reasonable assurance and I do that obtaining evidence on a test basis on transactions throughout the county. We assess the accounting principles and determine if we agree with the way management has treated the accounting principles. So, we agreed with the way management was handling those. If we didn't, we would talk through that with management and make an adjustment if we have to. We didn't have to do that. We are looking at the significant accounting principles, we are looking at significant estimates. We look to see and test whether

or not if we agree with those and if they are reasonable or not. We believe our audit accomplished all those objectives. The significant accounting policies are outlined in note two in the financial statements. That will tell you how things are treated in the financial statements. The county implemented GASB87 this year. This was a new accounting standard and this was a big change for the accountants. It changed the model on how we treat leases. Capital Leases are no longer treated as leases, they are treated as a purchase. You have technically purchased those assets. Operating leases which used to be expensed are now capitalized onto the balance sheet and are then intangible assets. Accounting estimates are looked at by the auditors. They can change; what we estimate is different than what happens. Some of the more sensitive estimates that you find in the financial statements would be the life expectancy on your capital assets or the allowance of uncollectible property taxes. These are things we have to make an educated guess on. I am happy to report that any audit adjustments that we proposed, management agreed with those and we ultimately make those adjustments. We did not have any uncorrected audit adjustments. We have supplied a list of those trivial or immaterial differences to management. We did not have any disagreements with management and they did a fantastic job getting us all the information we need. Management has given us a representation letter stating they have taken responsibility for these financial statements. We did not have any management consultants during our engagement. I am required to read some of this to you and make this communication to you. As we see things throughout the audit we will make suggestions on how things should be treated. We want to be the auditors that help management make good decisions and use good policies and procedures. We see ourselves as advocates for the public. As auditors we like to give you an idea of what is coming up as far as accounting standards. GASB96 is requiring you capitalize an intangible asset such as subscription technology arrangements. This is like having data stored in the cloud, that is more than a year in duration. This is a change for next year. GASB101 will be some changes in some of the requirements related to the way people are paid and what should be in the compensated absences. This replaces GASB16. That won't be effective until December 31, 2024.

Question: Where do I find these changes?

Mr. Latimer: Go to GASB.org. If you are to pull up the lease standard there will be a summary.

Question: GASB87, as far as leases go, what would fall under that category?

Mr. Latimer: A golf cart lease is a good example. Say that all the materiality thresholds are met, and you have a lease that is 5-10 years. We use materiality when it comes to these things to make sure we are accounting for things that matter and would affect the financial statements. It needs to be a longer-term contract. It is just an intangible asset. These used to be accounted for as an operating lease, so you never saw them, and they were just disclosed in the financial statements. Delta leases their planes. These planes are huge amounts of money, but they are not on the balance sheet and there is no liability on the balance sheet for those. The accounting community has said that we need to put these on the balance sheet so that users know what the true liabilities are for the city or the county.

Question: As far as leases in the county goes, what would make the single most... Do we lease the Sheriff's Office cars?

Mr. Latimer: There are machinery equipment at the golf course. I am not sure what the equipment is. You put the asset on the books for that amount and then you have an offsetting liability to see what those liabilities are. It is really just transparency, to see what those liabilities are, instead of just having them disclosed in the financial statements.

Question: A lease on the equipment at the golf course is an asset to the county?

Mr. Latimer: Yes.

Question: Do we take the depreciation on it as well?

Mr. Latimer: You do. In this case you have an intangible asset, and this is now a right to use asset. This is just an asset you have the service capacity to use. Those are just added to the balance sheet and the corresponding liability.

Question: Typically, a lease would only be a portion of what the actual cost would be if you are only leasing it for a portion of time?

Mr. Latimer: Leasing can be a very good way to use equipment.

Question: When you do your auditing do you do it by a line-by-line budget?

Mr. Latimer: We do compare the budgets on a departmental basis.

Question: Not line by line?

Mr. Latimer: If we need to. We don't dive necessarily into every line because our audit is based on risk. We do a risk assessment and we look at what we think the numbers that could be or are most likely to be misstated. We don't look at every line, but we do a budgetary comparison to make sure that the county is in line with state law and that is they don't spend more than 3% on any department line. That could be an aggregate of several lines.

Question: Could you explain a little more about what would cause a net position to be restricted versus unrestricted?

Mr. Latimer: The best example of restricted net position would be SPLOST. It is a tax that is collected through sales tax, and it is restricted to the project that is passed by the voters. We make sure that those dollars that are collected are spent on what voters passed in the referendum.

Commissioner Paris stated that the audit shows that all of our county employees and department heads all over the county do an excellent job of maintaining information and getting things done correctly.

In 2010 when the alcohol referendum was passed, Commissioner Paris 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. There is a completely independent committee set up to review the applications and award the grants. The committee has done an excellent job every year and are commended highly for the time they spent selecting recipients, but they wish to remain anonymous. Commissioner Paris had no input into which organizations received the grants nor how much they received. Five organizations applied for a grant this year and four were awarded funding. Representatives from the organizations were present.

Commissioner Paris awarded Substance Abuse Grants to the following local organizations. Representatives from each organization came up to receive their funding and gave a brief description of what their organization does to help those in recovery. These grants are \$5,000 each but there may be additional funding available this year if certain criteria are met.

Freedom Ministries - \$5,000/No one was present to accept the funds.

New Hope Counseling - \$5,000/Troy Beaver accepted the funds.

Positive Pathways, Inc. - \$5,000/Linda Beaver accepted the funds.

Union County Family Connection – \$5,000/Becky Tracy accepted the funds.

Commissioner Paris accepted an agreement between Union County and Document Destruction Services, Inc. for document destruction for the Union County Courthouse every four weeks at \$105 per service and for the Union County Fire Department every twelve weeks at \$50 per service. The duration of this agreement is from July 13, 2023 through July 12, 2024. Union County has used this company's services for years, and the company requested the county enter into an agreement for the services provided.

The Commissioner accepted an agreement amendment between Union County and CorrectHealth Union, LLC for inmate health services at the Union County Jail. This is an amendment to the existing contract with an effective date of July 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023. This amendment increases the contract total from \$169,809.14 to \$188,658.43 for 2023. CorrectHealth Union is providing additional services, which is the reason for the increase in the contract mid-year. This increase will cover nurse availability at the Union County Jail on the weekends, which has become necessary. They have tried for a long time to just call in on the weekends, but now a nurse is needed on site for the weekends.

Attendees were provided, as part of the agenda, a list of Business Licenses that have been issued in Union County from July 17, 2023 to August 13, 2023 for the purpose of operating a Short-term Rental within Union County. Commissioner Paris approved all Business Licenses contained on the list provided and this list will be made a part of the minutes. In the past month Union County has added 33 Short-term Rental Licenses. The total number of available licenses in Union County is currently 253 with the number of available licenses increasing because some STR Properties have sold.

Commissioner Paris accepted 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 21, 2023 through September 30, 2024. This is the location of the 9th District Food Pantry here in Union County.

The Commissioner accepted a Notice of Award of Contract dated August 22, 2023 for construction of the Union County Multi-purpose Gym to Winkler and Winkler in the amount of \$2,802,463.00. This will not only be a multi-purpose gym but will also serve as the main voting facility during future elections in the county. There will still be precincts but some of the precincts may be combined over time.

Commissioner Paris asked William Mercer to address the second reading of the proposed Cryptocurrency and Data Mining Ordinance. The first reading was held June 15, 2023 and the Public Hearing was held on July 20, 2023. All attendees were provided with the second draft outlining changes made since the first draft. A summary of Mr. Mercer's discussion is as follows: The SOC2 compliance standard was added to section 4.9 of the ordinance. The standard is to hold data mining operations accountable for how they handle customer data. It is possible that companies may have to be in operation for up to 12 months to obtain the certification; therefore, the ordinance specifies that within 13 months, they have to acquire the certification. The certification will have to be renewed annually. Additionally, in section 4.4, new language states that measurements shall be made proximate to, but no closer than 100 feet from any adjacent property line. Therefore, this makes the measurement tighter and should alleviate many of the concerns about noise at the public hearing.

Question 1: I saw it was a measurement of 50 dBA for daytime and 45 dBA in the evening. Many people cannot tolerate this rate. Other counties have passed an acreage requirement, so would you consider adding an acreage requirement for example of 100 acres as a requirement – which would take some of this off the table.

Mercer response: I know a land requirement was discussed. The folks who considered this ordinance decided that changing the language in 4.4 to “no closer than 100 feet from an adjacent property line” basically sets it up that they can't break that sound barrier without having to make accommodations for the noise. This keeps the sound within their own property boundaries.

Follow-up Question: What is the drop off level of 50 dBA to 45 dBA at night? I'm having to deal with a gun range and I don't have a tolerance for anything over 0 so I'm trying to look for solutions so that nobody has to be in that spot. Now having this on top of it. Having an acreage on top of it might help as right now all of Choestoe is going to hear this. Adding the acreage language would keep it out of neighborhoods. I respectfully request that some thought be given to that if you don't mind.

Mercer response: Yes Ma'am, we will give some thought to that. Let me try to give you some peace of mind. Let's just say that they put one right in the middle of a subdivision and somehow they could keep below the required decibels – in this case, neighbors can still bring a nuisance civil action against a business.

Follow-up Response: Respectfully, would putting an acreage requirement in there not prevent that? But thank you for the consideration and for the work you are doing.

Question 2: Thank you for adding the SOC2 in there. My other concerns had to do with the megahertz within a certain range and the impact on people's health. I did some research and I did send it to your office. Maybe its in here and I missed it. It matters for people – especially those with pacemakers. If you would think about the health aspect, that would be great. My second concern has to do with climate change and things going on currently. I'm concerned about electrical surges if you have all these containers with all this electricity going to it. We are seeing a lot of climate-related things such as wildfires in Maui and such and also putting us at risk. I think we have currently 9 states with 350,000 acres on fire.

Mercer asked for clarification.

Followup Response: With electricity, the fire, the heat, sparks...all the climate storms can cause a huge situation with the fire.

Question 3: If they did come and this didn't stop them. They are wanting to expand in Murphy and they have sub companies. They are very powerful. Each one of these units make about \$3-6k per day. It's a company within a company within a company.

Mercer: Do you have any suggestions?

Followup Response: Just make it as strict as possible.

Question 4: Have you considered also the effect that it will have on the environment?

Mercer: My understanding is that the decibels and megahertz standards are from other governmental agencies and other studies to minimize the nuisance that they would cause nearby properties. I do believe that the change in 4.4 to measure the sound no closer than 100 feet from any adjacent property line would make decibals created to be contained within their own property line. They would be required to create barriers or whatever it takes to keep the sound within their own property line.

Commissioner Paris stated that the goal is to discourage companies from coming here. We want it to be impossible for them to set up an operation and follow the guidelines.

Question 5: Can you not just not allow a business like this to come in?

Commissioner Paris stated, "No, we cannot just disallow them to come in. We don't have zoning or business licenses and such – we can just make it as hard as possible for a business like this to come in. We're comfortable that what we are doing is vastly more than any other county has done in this area so far. We are always open to new ideas though."

The Commissioner accepted a Quitclaim Deed dated July 21, 2023 between Union County, Georgia and Dianne Lavonda Fleming for all that tract or parcel of land lying and being in Land Lot 21, 8th District, 1st Section, Union County, Georgia, and being shown as: "Portion of Tract D", containing 0.09 acre, "Portion of Tract C", containing 0.06 acre, and "Area in R/W as Shown on Plat Book J, Page 147", containing 0.21 acre, as shown on a plat of survey for Dianne L. Fleming by Cleveland & Cox Land Surveying, LLC, Roger L. Owenby, G.R.L.S. #2763, dated May 24, 2023 and filed of record on July 13, 2023 in Plat Book 74, Page 93. This quitclaim deed was requested to confirm title to the individual because of a surveying error made in 1980 regarding private property and the road right of way. This corrects that error.

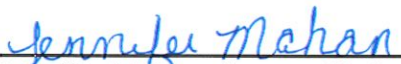
Commissioner Paris adopted Resolution R-2023-25 to set the Board of Health Environmental Health Fees in accordance with Chapter 38, Article II, Section 38-31. This schedule is established by the county board of health and approved by the district director of health. The schedule of fees for environmental health services then has to be approved by the commissioner.

The Commissioner reminded everyone that Union County was one of the first counties in the area to redo and rework their handicap parking and handicap parking signs. Things have changed over the years, and everything needed to be updated. Union County has also installed Veterans Parking signs at county facilities. This sets aside spaces specifically for veterans. With


the dryer weather hopefully the gun range contractor will be able to finish up the grading so the building of the facility can begin. The county is anticipating this project will be completed by summer of 2024. The new voting building is on schedule to be completed prior to the end of the year. The contract for the gym next to the election facility is moving forward as well. Fire Station 13 will be completed in about a month, maybe less. The roundabout near the hospital on Pat Haralson will hopefully go to bid in October. The additional roundabout at the intersection of Glen Gooch Bypass and 19/129 is in the early engineering phases. The county has the money in hand for the first three projects and will incur no debt related to them.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:16 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:


Jennifer Mahan, County Clerk

Approved this 19th day of October, 2023


Lamar Paris, Commissioner



Union County Short-term Rental Licensees
July 17 – August 13, 2023

28 LAKE VISTA LLC
28 Lake Vista
Blairsville, GA 30512

668 ARROWOOD LANDING LLC
668 Arrowood Landing
Blairsville, GA 30512

Bear Summit, LLC
421 Paradise Road
Blairsville, GA 30512

BIG DAWG DADDYS INC
37 Jamie Court
Blairsville, GA 30512

BO HOLT LLC
343 Canaan Valley Road
Suches, GA 30572

GONZALEZ JONATHAN NIEVES &
BIYUN HUANG
63 Dogwood rd
Blairsville, GA 30512

GRIFFITHS DAVID ROGER & PATRICIA
CAPITAIN
127 Berry Reister Rd
Blairsville, GA 30512

GRUE RICHARD A & JOAN ALLISON
83 Allison Lane
Blairsville, GA 30528

HABERLIN WILLIAM J
56 Fairview Rd
Blairsville, GA 30512

HUBBARD JOANNE/STEPHANIE H
MEISEL/ STACEY H MAGNUM &
MATHEW BORDEN HUBBARD
499 Arrowood Pointe
Blairsville, GA 30512

Jimmy and Sharon Leroy
517 Copperhead Pkwy
Blairsville, GA 30512

K & G Services, Inc
54 Mtn Top View Rd
Young Harris, GA 30582

Kimberly Holden
2639 Hwy 180
Blairsville, GA 30512

KIZER NICHOLAS JAY
572 Copperhead Parkway
Blairsville, GA 30512

KROCHMAL LIDIYA & NATHAN
315 cook lane
blairsville, GA 30512

Kyle Walker
199 Scouts Overlook Ln
Morganton, GA 30560

Lee and Amanda Jackson
2333 Dean Gap Rd
Blairsville, GA 30512

MARCUS LENNON AND SARA QUICK
363 Arrowood Pointe
Blairsville, GA 30512

Maurice and Erin Ramsey
460 Wild Acres Road
Blairsville, GA 30512

My Angel Fund 1, LLC
32 Wilmot-Fabus Mountain Road
Blairsville, GA 30512

NAGLE RICHARD CARL II
3311 Meridian Way S
Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33410

NALASCHI EUGENE
577 AJ's Holler
Blairsville, GA 30521

NOTTELY VISTA LLC
120 Watts Pl S
Blairsville, GA 30512

NOTTELY VISTA LLC
6 Lake Vista Drive
Blairsville, GA 30512

Owl's Nest (TA)
57 Catch a Trout Rd
Suches, GA 30572

PARKER VANESSA R
334 New Jewell Mason Rd
Blairsville, GA 30512

PINKERTON JOHN S & BONNIE S
TRUST
37 Hawksclaw Trail
Morganton, GA 30560

PURDY DONNA & CHAD
43 Barberry Court
Blairsville, GA 30512

RELAX AND ENJOY THE VIEW GA LLC
314 Mull Lane Extention
morganton, GA 30560

SEYBOLD RENATE B (TRUST) &
SANDRA W & WILLIAM K VALENTINE
110 Enotah Lane
Blairsville, GA 30512

STEJSKAL WILLIAM A & CANDACE W
258 LITTON LANE
BLAIRSVILLE, GA 30512

STEJSKAL WILLIAM A & CANDACE W
258 LITTON LANE
BLAIRSVILLE, GA 30512

TOLBERT TIMOTHY J & ANDREA
121 Low Creek Ln
Blairsville, GA 30512