

County Meeting
September 21, 2023, 6:00pm
Minutes
Union County Courthouse

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Lamar Paris at 6:02 pm. The invocation was given by David Dyer, Fire Chief/EMA Director, and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Bill Walker. Commissioner Paris announced to attendees that the Cryptocurrency and Data Mining Ordinance would be adopted at the October County Meeting. The minutes from the September 7, 2023 Called Meeting on the millage rate and the September 8, 2023 Called Meeting regarding a moratorium on commercial firing ranges were approved as presented. Attendees were provided with copies of the minutes. The Commissioner advised attendees that the minutes from the August 22, 2023 County Meeting would be presented for approval at the October 19, 2023 County Meeting.

Items number 1 and 2 on the agenda were both Proclamations for Constitution Week and Constitution Day. Both the Old Unicoi Trail Chapter of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Blue Ridge Mountains Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution requested a proclamation for this momentous week and day in American History. Both proclamations were signed in the Commissioner's Office on September 7, 2023 with representatives from both organizations present. The Commissioner proclaimed September 17-23 as Constitution Week, with September 17, 2023 being Constitution Day. On this day in 1787 the U.S. Constitutional Convention signed the Constitution of the United States of America. This proclamation gave official recognition to this document and the anniversary of its signing. Union County citizens were asked to reaffirm the ideals the Framers of the Constitution had in 1787 by vigilantly protecting the freedoms guaranteed through this guardian of liberties. Commissioner Paris stated there has been a lot of talk about the constitution and different people accusing different people of not following the constitution and some of the things are a little complicated. Nevertheless, the idea of the constitution was set back then, and he hopes that will be able to continue going forward.

The next item on the agenda was a proclamation for Patriot Day and National Day of Service and Remembrance which was September 11, 2023. This proclamation was presented at the 9/11 Remembrance Ceremony on September 11, 2023 at the Fine Arts Center. This is a very important proclamation, and I think it warrants being read in its entirety. County Attorney, William Mercer, was asked to read the proclamation.

The proclamation read as follows:

Whereas, the horrific terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001 tested the strength and resolve of our country resulting in Americans performing extraordinary acts, including rushing into the crumbling remains and fires of the Twin Towers and the Pentagon to save others; and

Whereas, we commend the firefighters, police officers, and first responders who courageously risked or gave their lives to rescue those in need, as well as the ordinary citizens and volunteers who selflessly gave their lives to aid friends, coworkers and strangers; and

Whereas, these Patriots, people of courage, uncommon resolve, and unwavering perseverance, are forever ingrained in our national character, and they are reminders that we are a great country because we are a good people; and

Whereas, on this day we also honor and remember the innocent victims lost in these tragic attacks and we continue to offer support to the families and friends who lost loved ones in the devastating events of this day; and

Whereas, it is right to honor the men and women of our Armed Forces who have fought tirelessly to keep us safe from further attacks on U.S. soil and those who answered the call of duty by joining the military to defend our freedom and our democracy.

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved that our Commissioner, Lamar Paris, of Union County, Georgia does hereby proclaim September 11, 2023 as Patriot Day and National Day of Service and Remembrance in honor of all individuals who lost their lives on September 11, 2001.

In Witness Thereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the official seal of Union County, Georgia, to be affixed this 11th day of September 2023.

Commissioner Paris added that there was a very powerful and touching service for 9/11 at the Union County School. All the middle grades through the high school were in attendance. Chief Dyer and the Chamber of Commerce headed up the ceremony. Chief Dyer gave a rendition of what happened that day. The whole purpose of the ceremony is to make sure that what happened that day is never forgotten.

Attendees were provided, as part of the agenda, a list of Business Licenses that have been issued in Union County from August 14, 2023 to September 17, 2023 for the purpose of operating a Short-term Rental in Union County. Commissioner Paris approved all Business Licenses contained on the list provided and this list will be made a part of the minutes. A total of 528 licenses have been granted since the adoption of the ordinance in March. The new STR licensing system is working great, and everything is now done online as far as registration and payment. A total of 4 STR dwellings have closed their licenses – meaning that the addresses are no longer rented as Short-term rentals. The STR Enforcement Officer has spoken to several groups, including homeowners' associations and the North Georgia Realtors. If anyone would like the STR Enforcement Officer to speak at any group event, please contact the Commissioner's Office.

The Commissioner accepted an agreement between Union County and CHA to provide a concept layout for intersection improvements at the Glen Gooch Bypass at SR11/US 19/US129. The cost of this agreement is \$12,500 with an effective date of September 5, 2023. GDOT has requested that Union County assist with getting the concept layout done and work with GDOT on the funding they have available to get this project moving quicker than if we were to wait for GDOT. This will allow work to get started quicker because this intersection needs improving desperately. The sooner it can be done, it will be a much better safety situation. GDOT will approve this intersection once the plan is complete. The plan will incorporate a roundabout at the intersection of 19/129 and the Glen Gooch Bypass. Commissioner Paris advised that the plan for Pat Haralson Intersection is almost complete and they hope to let a contract in the next month.

The Commissioner accepted an agreement between Union County and Carter Engineering Consultants, Inc. to provide civil engineering services associated with Poteete Creek Campground to prepare a campground master plan in an amount not to exceed \$18,600. The effective date of this agreement was September 8, 2023. This master site plan is one of the first steps in working with TVA on allowing Union County to expand Poteete Campground with additional campsites. Union County is working toward getting one hundred new sites, a new boat ramp and possibly a new beach area. TVA had to give Union County a longer-term lease and some additional property.

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 July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024 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 contained no increase from the previous contract.

The Commissioner accepted the Employee Safety Grant awarded to Union County in the amount of \$6,000 from ACCG (Association of County Commissioners of Georgia) – Group Self-Insurance Worker’s Compensation Fund. This money will be utilized for turnout gear for the Union County Fire Department.

Commissioner Paris accepted an Intergovernmental Agreement between the Union County Tax Commissioner and the Union County Sole Commissioner to amend the disbursement schedule for county collected taxes from bi-weekly to once per month starting on October 1, 2023 and to remain in effect until the agreement is terminated by both parties. This agreement was requested by the Tax Commissioner as this change in the disbursement schedule will streamline processes in their office and help them balance their check register and reconcile the balances in an easy and consistent way.

The Commissioner accepted a lease amendment between Union County and the United States of America Department of Agriculture Farm Production and Conservation for 2,364 square feet of rentable office space in the Pat Haralson Memorial Civic Center. The United States Department of Agriculture Farm Production and Conservation will remit to Union County \$600.00 per month with the duration of this lease being 60-months effective January 1, 2024.

Items 11 & 12 on the agenda were first readings on proposed ordinance revisions, and item 13 is a proposed new ordinance. Commissioner Paris asked Mr. Mercer, County Attorney, and Renee Deibert to come up and conduct the first readings of the revisions and the newly proposed ordinance.

Renee Deibert approached the podium to conduct the first reading of Item 12 on the agenda related to the proposed revisions to Chapter 38, Article III, Section 38-51 of the Union County Code of Ordinances pertaining to Tattoo and Body Piercing Establishments. Ms. Deibert’s comments are summarized as follows: The change that is being proposed takes into account a cosmetology related service regarding semi-permanent dyes that are used to fill in the eyebrow and also the lip. Ms. Deibert read the section of the ordinance to be revised and it currently states: Tattoo and body piercing mean to mark or color the human skin by pricking in, piercing the skin, or implanting coloring matter so as to form indelible pigments, dyes, marks or figures under the skin or by the production of scars; provided, however, that the term "tattoo and body piercing" shall not mean a tattoo and body piercing placed upon the skin by a physician for medical identification purposes and shall not apply to ear piercing or the tattoo and body piercing of farm or domestic animals for the purpose of identification. The proposed change reads as follows: Cosmetic services utilizing semi-permanent pigments or dyes for enhancing the natural appearance of physical traits such as microblading (eyebrows) or lip blushing (lips) which are performed by an individual with the certifications and/or certificates, in compliance with the state rules and regulations as required by Georgia law, and are supervised by a physician or nursing professional are excluded from this definition. Ms. Deibert explained that these cosmetic related services having to do with the eyebrow and the lip that enhance a person’s natural appearance are excluded from the definition of tattooing in essence. She closed by stating that questions about this particular proposed change could be directed to the Commissioner’s Office.

Commissioner Paris stated that this is semi-permanent versus permanent so that is why this was removed so it could be done for those who think they need it.

County Attorney, William Mercer, conducted the 1st Reading of the proposed revisions of the Union County Code of Ordinances pertaining to Chapter 10, Article III, Section 10-80(A)(2) addressing Temporary Special Event Licenses for the sale of alcohol. His presentation is summarized as follows: Non-profit organizations and for-profit organizations can apply for a Temporary Special Event License. The current ordinance, Section 10-80(A)(2) reads “All special events must comply with the times and days allowed for selling alcoholic beverages for consumption on the premises. The proposal that was brought to the Alcohol Board, which they voted to accept, was to change the wording of Section 10-80(A)(2) to read “All licensed temporary special events must comply with the times and days allowed for selling alcoholic beverages for consumption on the premises. On New Year’s Eve or December 31st, at a licensed temporary special event, consumption on the premises must stop prior to 1:00 a.m. the following day. State and local alcohol consumption laws will apply.” Prior to this change all temporary special events would have to stop serving at 11:00pm. This revision would allow for an exception to be made on New Year’s Eve for temporary special events to serve until 1:00am the following day, unless the following day was a Sunday, then all local and state laws would apply.

County Attorney, William Mercer, conducted the 1st Reading of the proposed Commercial Firing Range Facilities Ordinance. The proposed ordinance was read as follows:

CHAPTER 33 - FIRING RANGE FACILITIES – COMMERCIAL ONLY

Sec. 33.1 Firing range facilities, outdoor. These are any facilities where outdoor firing of firearms is performed on a commercial basis (i.e., requires a fee or membership), including private gun clubs, target shooting ranges, etc.

- a) Minimum lot size: 100 acres.
- b) A 200-foot vegetated buffer shall be required for all sides of the property abutting residential or commercial zones
- c) Firing ranges for rifles and pistols should be oriented so that firing is not directed towards any residential property within 2000 yards that is touching an arc width of 20 degrees, centered on the axis of firing (that is, within ten degrees of either side of said axis);
- d) All portions of any firing range (for pistol and rifle ranges, this is defined as the area from the firing line to the target backstop or berm, for the width of the shooting lanes; for sporting clays, skeet, trap and five stands, this is defined as the area from the firing stations to a distance 100 yards from the firing stations in the direction of fire) must be located at least 1,000 feet from all property lines.
- e) Hours of firing shall be limited to between 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., Monday to Saturday. No firing permitted on Sunday.
- f) A site plan shall be submitted with the conditional use application showing all facilities and ranges, the direction of firing, all residential property within 2000 yards downrange, and all buffers and distances, plus such other information as is required by GA law.

Sec. 33.2 Firing ranges facilities, indoor. These are facilities where all firing ranges are inside buildings.

- a) Minimum lot size: 10 acres.
- b) A 50-foot vegetated buffer shall be required for all sides of the property abutting residential or commercial properties.

- c) No building containing a firing range may be located within one hundred feet (100') of the property boundary.
- d) Building's housing firing ranges must be constructed to prevent the escape of bullets and also constructed with sound-proofing or setbacks such that no sound of the discharge of firearms is audible at the property line.
- e) A site plan shall be submitted with the conditional use application showing all facilities, all buffers and distances, plus such other information as is required to enforce this section and in accordance with Federal, State, and Local guidelines and laws.

Sec. 33.3 Existing firing ranges. Outdoor Firing Ranges in existence as of September 8, 2023 in Union County shall, commencing 90 days after the firing range ordinance goes into effect will be subject to the following restriction: hours of operation shall be limited to Monday to Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. No firing shall be permitted on Sunday. Note: The foregoing provisions concerning firing ranges (Sections 33.1, 33.2, 33.3 shall not apply to property owned by the County or property owned entities exempt from this ordinance including the U.S. Government, a municipality within the County, or an entity regulated by the Georgia Public Service Commission (i.e., a public utility).

Sec. 33.4 Violations / Consequences

- a) Any section of this ordinance that is not followed constitutes a violation.
- b) This article shall be enforced by any Court of competent jurisdiction, Code Enforcement Officer, or State, and county law enforcement.
- c) The ticketing agent has the discretion to issue a warning or a citation on a case-by-case basis.
- d) Any violation of this ordinance, the property owner is subject to a maximum fine of \$1000, and/or 60 days in jail.

Sec. 33.5 Variance Application

- a) Any request for a variance from this article must go through the Construction Board of Adjustment and Appeals. Section 33 is incorporated into the oversight of Section 18-105.

The Commissioner adopted Resolution R-2023-27 declaring a local state of emergency in Union County, Georgia on August 31, 2023 at 11:00 am. This Declaration of Emergency recognizes that significant damage was done to parts of Union County and the City of Blairsville due to the storms and flooding that happened during the night of August 29th. The declaration allows Union County Government and Emergency Management to operate under the Civil Emergency Ordinances to quickly recover from the damage caused by flooding. The State of Emergency also allows Union County Government and the City of Blairsville to request assistance and reimbursement funding from the State of Georgia and FEMA in the event that the damage from the flooding on August 29, 2023 would qualify for reimbursements to cover the cost to the county and city for their cleanup efforts and repairs. Union County is still in the process of requesting assistance. Commissioner Paris stated that Union County is the only county in the State of Georgia that got a storm that night. This has made it a little more difficult to convince the government how bad it was here as it has cost a lot of time and effort. The DOT has also been frustrated by the problem at the red light here in town. There is no guarantee that Union County will receive any reimbursement for their clean up efforts. The Commissioner explained that in the area of the sink hole at the intersection of 19/129 and 515/76 GDOT is working on repairs. They have built a wall and this is to allow them to now dig down 40 feet to the water lines to see what the problem is. They are estimating the repairs in this area will take three months.

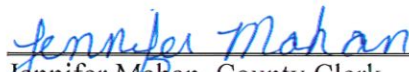
Commissioner Paris adopted Resolution R-2023-29 authorizing the filing of an application with the Department of Transportation, United States of America, and Georgia Department of Transportation,

for a grant under Title 49 U.S.C., Section 5311. This resolution authorizes Union County to file for the grant they receive each year for the Transit Busses that covers part of their operation.

The Commissioner's closing comments are summarized as follows: There has been a lot going on in the city and county and the Commissioner stated he was pleased with the progress. The new fire station is about two weeks from completion. The voting precinct is about 30-45 days away from completion. The gym that will be built beside the voting precinct will start construction as soon as the materials get on site. The millage rate was rolled back to the state requirement of rollback and the meeting regarding that was already held. Commissioner Paris stated he was proud of all employees and departments for all they do to keep their budget in check. The millage rate was 5.11 and went down to 4.286. Even though the valuations have increased, this rollback should prevent an increase in actual taxes for anyone who had a normal to average valuation increase. The purpose of the reassessment was not for the county to gain more money, but to keep the state apprised and agreeing that the county is doing their job to keep the values of the property current.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:



Jennifer Mahan, County Clerk

Approved this 19th day of October, 2023



Lamar Paris, Commissioner



Union County Short-term Rental Licenses Granted
August 14, 2023 – September 17, 2023

39 COTTAGE CREEK WAY
39 Cottage Creek Way
Blairsville, GA 30512

Alex Jobin
81 Meadow HI
Morganton, GA 30560

BHAILA RIZWAN TRUST
44 MILLER COVE BRANCH
BLAIRSVILLE, GA 30512

BHAILA RIZWAN TRUST
194 LINGER LONGER ROAD
BLAIRSVILLE, GA 30512

BROCK RENAI M & JERRY WENDELL
HERREN
101 McCullers Rd.
Blairsville, GA 30512

Carol Donoghue
238 Notla Trail
Blairsville, GA 30512

CLAYTON AMBER
36 Amy Lynn Dr
Blairsville, GA 30512

DEMARAY DAVID EDWIN & BARBARA
A SOURIALL
65 Dallas Hill
Blairsville, GA 30512

Ellen Law
99 Laurel Woods
Suches, GA 30572

Frank Boccia and George Salpurido
28 Coon Tail Road
Blairsville, GA 30512

GARRETT DONALD RAY & GERRY
SMEDLEY
616 Burnett Ln
Suches, GA 30572

HANLON SUSAN LEE
1600 Highland Trace
Blairsville, GA 30512

HARTLEY & RICHARDS CONSULTING
LLC
905 Garrett Circle
Blairsville, GA 30512

HENAO GLADYS CLEMENCIA
CEBALLOS
27 TWO CEDARS RD
MORGANTON, GA 30560

HERMAN JOHN H TRUSTEE
182 Loop Lane
Blairsville, GA 30512

HOSTEL LA VISTA LLC
670 Arrowood Landing
blairsville, GA 30512

INGELS MARTHA S OR JOSEPH O
DOBSON
897 Tomahawk Tr
Blairsville, GA 30512

KOREY ALESYA A & ALEXI
196 Lake Shore Drive
Blairsville, GA 30512

Melinda Hernandez
21 Confidence Church Rd
Blairsville, GA 30512

NICHOLAS TANNER MARTIN
63 By the River Dr.
Suches, GA 30572

NICKERSON JOSEPH J & LINDA
209 Grace Mtn Rd
Blairsville, GA 30512

PACE GABRIELLE & PAUL FAULKNER
63 Canaan Lane
Suches, GA 30572

POWELL THOMAS R
103 Sugar Branch Lane
Young Harris, GA 30582

ROPER JAMES R & CLAUDIA B TRUST
62 Davenport Hills Drive
Blairsville, GA 30512

Rui and Deolinda Cortez
211 Amy Lynn Dr
Blairsville, GA 30512

SAMS TIMOTHY & MARIA
297 Magnolia Lane
Blairsville, GA 30512

SCHEUTER CHARLES FREDERICK
43 Lois Lane
Blairsville, GA 30512

WORDEN CHARLES G SR
225 Worden Farms
Blairsville, GA 30512