

County Meeting  
March 21, 2024 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 was led by Bill Walker. The minutes from the February 15, 2024 County Meeting were approved as presented, and attendees were provided copies.

The first item on the agenda was a Proclamation. In December of 1941 following the attack on Pearl Harbor and the United States' entrance into World War II, Admiral Ben Moreell was authorized to establish the "Naval Construction Battalions" on March 5, 1942. Also, on this day in 1942, all personnel of the Naval Construction Battalions were officially given the nickname of "SEABEES" by the Department of the Navy - which was derived from the initial letters of the Construction Battalion. The earliest Seabees were recruited from civilian construction trades and placed under the leadership of the Naval Civil Engineer Corps with an emphasis on experience and skill. The Seabees have built bases, bulldozed and paved thousands of miles of roadway and air strips, constructed camps, built and maintained supply causeways, erected hospitals, and aided in untold emergency recoveries. The Seabees construction projects were all completed while fending off enemy forces alongside Marine, Army and Navy colleagues. Their knowledge and skill was utilized in World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam, Bosnia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait and countries throughout the world. For over 80 years the Seabees have repeatedly demonstrated their skills as fighters and builders, building and fighting for freedom, and in peace time being Good Will Ambassadors - all while living by the Seabee motto "Can Do!". Now, be it resolved that I, Commissioner of Union County, hereby proclaim Sunday, March 5, 2024 (2023 was stated in the meeting) as the United States Navy Seabees 82<sup>nd</sup> Birthday and ask all citizens to join me in recognizing the service, skill, and determination the Seabees have shown their country and its citizens. This proclamation was presented to the Seabees at the annual Military Ball that was held on March 2<sup>nd</sup>.

The next item on the agenda was also a Proclamation. The Extension Master Gardener Program was started in the State of Washington in 1972 and in Atlanta, Georgia in 1979 as a means of extending the educational outreach of the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension. This program is a volunteer horticultural educational training program sponsored nationwide by the Cooperative Extension of the US Department of Agriculture. The Georgia Master Gardener Program provides avid gardeners with intensive education in research-based horticultural principles and pest control practices. Master Gardener Extension Volunteers and Master Gardener Extension Volunteer Trainees began serving Union County in April of 2010 with nine members, and their volunteer base has grown to 65 members in Towns and Union Counties. In 2023, Master Gardeners in the two counties volunteered 4,627 hours - representing a savings of \$134,183 to the respective counties. Therefore, be it resolved that I, Lamar Paris, Commissioner of Union County, hereby proclaim Saturday March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024 as Master Gardener Appreciation Day and express to them the gratitude and admiration of the people of Union County.

Commissioner Paris then asked the representatives from the Master Gardeners to come up. Six members were present to receive the Proclamation, and one of the representatives thanked everyone for supporting their organization by purchasing plants during their annual plant sale and their plant sale at the Kris Kringle Market at the Farmers Market each year.

The Commissioner proclaimed the month of April 2024 as Donate Life Month. More than 100,000 men, women, and children await lifesaving or life-enhancing organ transplants, with nearly 3,000 residing in Georgia. In 2023, 46,630 transplants occurred nationwide with 1,268 transplant recipients being in Georgia. The need for organ, eye, and tissue donation remains critical as a new patient is

added to the national waiting list for an organ transplant every 10 minutes and millions more could experience improved quality of life through tissue transplantation. The critical donor shortage remains a public health crisis as an average of 20 people die daily due to the lack of available organs. Donating life through organ, eye and tissue donation is the ultimate act of generosity and kindness that we Union County citizens can perform. Commissioner Paris encouraged all citizens to honor all those who made the decision to give the gift of life and to focus attention on the extreme need for organ, eye and tissue donation.

Commissioner Paris asked his niece, Lyric Brogden, to come up and talk about organ donation since she had received a liver transplant 28 years ago.

Ms. Brogden's comments are summarized below:

Ms. Brogden was twenty-five and ended up in the hospital with two of the three main veins in her liver clotted. Eight months later she found out she was in the middle of liver failure and needed a new liver. It was thanks to God and a young boy, named Nick, who decided he wanted to be an organ donor that Lyric is with us today. There are so many people on the waiting list for an organ. The Georgia Bulldogs stadium will hold about 98,000 people and there are 107,000 people waiting for an organ. Lyric only waited one day because she crashed and was able to get a liver. One organ donor can impact 75 lives. The organs can be used as well as tissue, skin and corneas. Kidneys are the most common organ needed and those can be donated by a living donor. The New York Times reported that at Mass General they have successfully transplanted a genetically modified pig kidney.

The Commissioner accepted an agreement between Carter Engineering Consultants, Inc. and Union County for a site development plan for the building that is to be constructed at the Union County Transfer Station to house a new baler. This agreement has an effective date of February 28, 2024, and the cost will not exceed \$18,900.00. It is estimated that the RFP will be put out within two months for the construction of the building.

The Commissioner accepted an agreement between Geo-Hydro Engineers, Inc. and Union County for construction materials testing and special inspection services for the Fisher Field Bridge replacement. This agreement has an effective date of February 29, 2024 and the cost will not exceed \$19,500.00. The new bridge will accommodate heavy traffic (gas trucks, construction type vehicles, and Fire/Emergency Services). However, during the engineering process, it was discovered that the existing soil conditions wouldn't support a typical foundation. Therefore, there will be a significant amount of concrete and the contractors will have to drive steel I-beams down to bedrock (approx. 40'). This agreement is for all of the engineering and testing required to guide the contractors throughout the construction and verify that the required structural support is actually in place. Commissioner Paris said this was a tough thing to run into.

The Commissioner accepted Amendment 2 to the Intergovernmental Agreement dated March 29, 2021, between the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and Union County for the construction of a target shooting range located approximately nine miles southeast of Blairsville on Highway 180. This amendment has an effective date of January 23, 2024 and amends Section 10 of the agreement in reference to the fee structure. The Annual Membership will be \$200 per person and \$300 for a family and the Daily Usage Fee will be \$5.00 per person for ages 15 and under and \$15 per person for ages 16 and over.

Commissioner Paris accepted a contract between CivicPlus and Union County for NextRequest records request software in the amount of \$8,242.50 for the remainder of 2024 and \$10,788.00 for the period of January 1, 2025 to December 31, 2025. This software will allow Union County to securely accept, process, track and fulfill records requests digitally. Jennifer, our County Clerk,

would like to speak regarding this contract and how this will streamline the Open Records Requests process.

Ms. Mahan's comments are summarized as follows:

Ms. Mahan said that a lot of research was done on this software. There were a few meetings, and the company did multiple demos with the departments that this would affect. This was not just a decision that she made by herself. All involved agreed this was the best course of action. Jennifer explained that requests are submitted to the Commissioner's Office in many different formats. Some come in via the website, email, fax, they are hand delivered, and some are even called in. This is confusing for everyone. Ms. Mahan logs the request, assigns it a number, and then gets it to the correct department that will provide the response. Sometimes this is difficult as she must figure out what department the request needs to go to. If a person submits a request for their Birth Certificate, they receive a response via email that advises them to contact Probate Court and she includes the link to the form online to request a Birth Certificate. This software will pick up on the words "Birth Certificate" and send them the standard response automatically. Ms. Mahan will see the request and see the automated response but will not have to spend the time writing the response each time. This will save a lot of time and effort. Currently, when a request is submitted for the audio recording of a 911 call, Ms. Mahan receives the request, sends it to dispatch, dispatch then downloads the call to a disk, and then has to hand deliver the request to the Commissioner's Office. Then Ms. Mahan contacts the requestor, and they have to come in and pay for the request and pick it up. That is a whole lot of steps that will be eliminated with this software. The online portal will allow staff to complete this process digitally, requestors can pay for their requests online, and then the records will be delivered to the requestor via email. This software also redacts, versus staff having to make required redactions with a sharpie.

The Commissioner commented that Jennifer has one of the hardest jobs in the county and it is made even harder in political times when a lot of people want open records. It is really a struggle for her because the brunt of all this falls on her. Commissioner Paris stated that he signs his name to the requests, but Jennifer must do all the work. He asked people to really need the request before submitting the request.

Commissioner Paris accepted a Rental Service Agreement between Cintas Corporation and Union County for the rental of large door mats and scraper mats for the Union County Civic Center. This agreement has an effective date of February 29, 2024 and the cost will be \$28.82 per week. This company brings clean floormats weekly. Since this is a highly utilized facility, these mats help dramatically with keeping the dust and dirt to a minimum within the facility - especially since there is no carpet in the main areas of the facility.

Everyone was provided a copy of the list of Business Licenses that were issued in Union County from February 12, 2024 to March 10, 2024 for the purpose of operating a short-term rental within Union County. The Commissioner approved all Business Licenses contained on the list provided and this list will be made a part of the minutes.

Commissioner Paris accepted a Notice of Award to Rise Equipment, LLC in response to the Request for Proposal for the purchase of a Two-Ram Baler for the Union County Transfer Station. The amount for the baler will be \$496,050.00. The Commissioner said he was very proud of the staff and employees at the Transfer Station. This new baler will allow all types of recyclables to be recycled with just one baler. More and more people are recycling now, so this is a very important piece of equipment. Commissioner Paris then asked Matt White, Director of the Transfer Station, to come up and provide attendees information on the two-ram baler.

Matt White's comments are summarized as follows:

With this baler more products can be baled at one time, and everything can be baled with one baler. Currently the Transfer Station is utilizing three separate balers. This is going to help get everything baled a lot quicker than is able to be done with a vertical baler. The purchase of this equipment will allow the Recycling Center to start taking more items, including numbers 3-7 plastics and steel cans. This will also allow them to bale everything in-house versus having to take some products to the Pickens County Transfer Station to be processed.

Question: What is the timeframe for the new facility?

White: The 1<sup>st</sup> of next year, if everything goes right.

Question: Will this baler replace the other three balers or will they be working in unison?

White: It will replace the three current balers. New storage bins will be built in the new building. There is not enough storage space now. The new baler will do everything we take.

Question: A lady in your office said the trash is making us money. We're selling a lot of this stuff? Is this correct.

Paris: That is true. I won't say it is making us a lot of money, but it has always cost us a lot of money. Now we are showing, of course this will hit it for a little while, but we are showing an increased revenue over there, over the cost of doing the work. The roadways are also the cleanest they have been in a long time.

Question: The income from the cardboard and the recycled materials, will that pay for the baler within a years' time?

White: No, it will take it about four years to gain it back.

The Commissioner accepted an Agreement between the Georgia Department of Transportation and Union County for grant funding in the amount of \$215,380.00 for the period of July 1, 2023 to December 31, 2025. This is for funding for two new shuttle buses for Union County's 5311 Transit program and Union County will not be required to provide any matching funds related to this grant. As part of our FY2023 5311 grant Union County was supposed to receive two new buses. The county paid the required 10% match back then based on the cost of the buses at that time. This amount was around \$10,280. Due to delays across the US related to computer parts, and other parts for vehicles, they still have not received the buses. In the meantime, the cost of the buses have increased substantially. The Federal Department of Transportation decided that counties who received the 5311 grant should not have to bear the burden of this cost increase and are purchasing the buses and are not requiring any matching funds. This is great since the 10% match would be about \$21,500. A delivery date has still not been given for the buses.

The Commissioner adopted Resolution R-2024-07 re-appointing Andrew Burks to the Board of Directors of the Union County Development Authority for the term of March 6, 2024 to March 5, 2028.

Commissioner Paris adopted Resolution R-2024-08 re-appointing Tsali Bently to the Board of Directors of the Union County Development Authority for the term of March 6, 2024 to March 5, 2028.

Jennifer Mahan, County Clerk, announced to attendees that the Recreation Department's annual Easter Egg Hunt was going to be held on March 23, 2024. The time was changed from 11:00am to 3:00pm. Electronics Recycling and Document Destruction is scheduled for April 13<sup>th</sup> from 10:00am to 12:00pm. Last year, Union County hosted a Litter Clean Up Contest and the participants picked up two garbage trucks full of litter off of the roads in Union County. There were prizes of \$1,000, \$500, and \$250. The county is hosting the same event this year, since there was such a great turnout.

It will be Saturday, April 20, 2024 from 8:00pm to 1:00pm and lunch will be provided for participants.

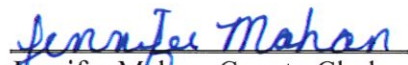
Commissioner Paris closed by stating the Union County is blessed to have some of the best volunteers and employees. The Recreation Department is outstanding, and they are all the time looking at ways they can better serve the public, and we appreciate them very much. The Sheriff's Office also does an outstanding job for the county. People sometimes forget that the County Commissioner does not run all of these things within the county. Commissioner Paris said he only goes to the Recycling Center when he takes his recyclables. The Commissioner said he also never tells the Sheriff what to do because the Sheriff knows what to do and does an excellent job. Union County also has one of the best rural fire departments in the State of Georgia and it is because of Chief Dyer and his staff and volunteers.

Sheriff Mason stated they had just settled on a \$20,000 settlement through the drug seizures. 90% of it is going to the Sheriff's Office and the other 10% is going to the District Attorney's Office. They also have a closing coming up in the next couple of weeks on a house that was a drug seizure. The sale of this house should generate the Sheriff's Office close to \$276,000 and the District Attorney's Office 10% of an additional \$29,000. These are just some of the things the Sheriff's Office is doing. Sheriff Mason closed stating that the offenders are also going to prison.

The Commissioner gave an update on the Gun Range. There are two streams that run on either side of the range. Every time it rains it knocks out about three days of grading. The interiors of the buildings and gun range itself are getting close to completion. The County is hopeful that the range will be open by the middle of May, but that all depends on the weather. Commissioner Paris closed by announcing Union County still has the second lowest tax rate out of 159 counties and Union County has been debt free for the last four years and plans on remaining debt free.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:46 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

  
Jennifer Mahan, County Clerk

Approved this 18<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2024

  
Lamar Paris, Commissioner



**Union County Short-term Rental Licensees  
February 12, 2024 – March 10, 2024**

**BOMELI NICOLE RICHTER & STEVEN  
RICHARD**

784 Whispering Pines  
Blairsville, GA 30512

**Jennifer Breisser**  
38 Cane Creek Ridge  
Blairsville, GA 30512

**KEHOE MARJORIE & ANTHONY B**

819 Bruce Mountain Road  
Morganton, GA 30560

**LANGSTON, BRYAN SCOTT**

85 Buck Ridge Dr.  
Blairsville, GA 30512

**Tommy and Angela Pelletier, Chad and  
Monica Lee**

24 Chantelle Ln.  
Blairsville, GA 30512

**Gary G. and Darla A. Schroeder**  
Revocable Living Trust  
173 Hemphill Dr.  
Blairsville, GA 30512

**LINDNER PATRICK & TINA COOLEY**

564 Piney Point Road  
Blairsville, GA 30512

**KING RALEN & SAMANTHA**

26 Daybreak Lane  
Morganton, GA 30560

**SHAW LANE G**

237 Kathwood Ln  
Suches, GA 30572