

County Meeting
April 20, 2017
Minutes
Union County Courthouse

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Paris at 6:00 pm. The invocation was given by Bill Honaker, who also led the Pledge of Allegiance. The minutes from the March 16, 2017 County Meeting and the April 11, 2017 Called Meeting were approved as read.

Commissioner Paris asked Mayor, Jim Conley, and Sharon Morrison with the National Day of Prayer to come to the front for the first Proclamation of the evening. There were other Pastors present and they came to the front also. The Commissioner then proclaimed May 4, 2017 as a Day of Prayer in Union County. The National Day of Prayer is an opportunity for Americans of all faiths to join in united prayer. The 2017 theme "For Your Great Name's Sake" is based on Daniel 9:19 which says, "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name." After the Proclamation was presented Sharon Morrison spoke. She asked that everyone pray for lost souls, pray for protection, pray for peace, pray for provisions, and pray for proficiency.

The Commissioner proclaimed April 2017 as Child Abuse Prevention Month. Children are the key to the future success, prosperity, and quality of life in Union County. They are our most valuable resource, but also our 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 our children, free of violence, abuse and neglect, we can ensure that Union County Georgia's children will grow to their full potential. CASA, which stands for Court Appointed Special Advocates, did a sobering display on the lawn of the Historic Courthouse. The display consists of 217 blue pinwheels which represents the number of children in our district who had to be removed from the home due to abuse or neglect.

Commissioner Paris proclaimed April 4, 2017 as National Service Recognition Day. Service to others is a hallmark of the American character and the nation's counties are increasingly turning to national service and volunteerism as a cost-effective strategy to meet their needs. AmeriCorps and Senior Corps participants address the most pressing challenges facing our communities and serve in more than 50,000 locations across the country, bolstering the civic, neighborhood, and faith-based organizations that are so vital to our economic and social well-being. National service represents a unique public-private partnership that invests in community solutions and leverages non-federal resources to strengthen community impact and increase the return on taxpayer dollars. These participants demonstrate commitment, dedication, and patriotism by making an intensive commitment to service. Commissioner Paris encouraged residents to recognize the positive impact of nation service in our county and thank those who serve.

The Commissioner proclaimed April 21st and 22nd, 2017 as White Cane Days. Lion's International, with over 1,350,000 members in the free world, has been dedicated to serving sight for over sixty years. The Union County Lions Club has been outstanding in its community in helping the needy with sight problems through the use of its White Cane donations. The Commissioner invite all citizens to join in sharing the Lion's concern for the best sight possible for our neighbors in need, by giving generously to The Lions on White Cane Days.

Commissioner Paris proclaimed April 26, 2017 as Confederate Memorial Day. 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

duty military personnel. Smith's Legion Chapter #2699 was chartered January 2014 to carry out the organization's purposes in Union County and surrounding areas. It has been the practice of Georgia governors since 1984 to proclaim April 26th as Confederate Memorial Day. Commissioner Paris encouraged all citizens to participate in programs, displays, and activities that commemorate and honor our shared history and cultural inheritance under the leadership of Smith's Legion Chapter #2699. The county and city are in the process of restoring the Old Blairsville Cemetery near the old-school cannery where there are five confederate soldiers buried.

The Commissioner proclaimed the month of April as Sexual Assault Awareness Month calling attention to the fact that sexual violence is widespread and impacts every person in our community. Child sexual abuse prevention must be a priority being as young people experience heightened rates of sexual violence, and youth ages 12-17 are 2.5 times as likely to be victims of sexual assault. Our community must work together to educate others about sexual violence prevention, supporting survivors, and speaking out against harmful attitudes and actions. The first step is increasing education, awareness, and community involvement.

Commissioner Paris proclaimed May 2017 as National Drug Court Month. Treatment courts have served over 1.5 million individuals and are now recognized as the most successful criminal justice intervention in our nation's history. They save up to \$13,000 for every individual served and 75% of treatment court graduates are not re-arrested. Treatment courts reduce crime, improve substance use treatment outcomes, and facilitate community-wide partnerships. Treatment courts demonstrate that when one person rises out of addiction and crime, we all rise.

The Commissioner stated that the two following resolutions have to do with the County's new Finance Director. He took this opportunity to introduce to the county, Laura Driskell. Laura is from Union County but has been living and working in Athens, Ga for the past few years. Laura competed against 43 applicants for the Finance Director, or CEO of Union County Finances. The past three years she served as an auditor for the state, auditing schools, colleges, and universities and was lead auditor over a team. She has a mathematics degree, an accounting degree, and last year received her CPA certification. Her parents, Bill and Denise Driskell live in Blairsville and are proud to have their daughter back in the mountains. We certainly are proud to have her working with Union County Government.

The Commissioner approved Resolution R-2017-07 authorizing Laura Driskell, Finance Director for Union County, to have full access to all Union County checking and savings accounts.

Commissioner Paris approved Resolution R-2017-08 authorizing Laura Driskell, Finance Director for Union County, to communicate and have full administrative powers over Heartland Payroll.

The Commissioner approved an Agreement between the Union County Sheriff's Office and the USDA, Forest Service Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest for the FY 2017 Cooperative Law Enforcement Annual Operating Plan and Financial Plan. The USDA will reimburse Union County Sheriff's Office no more than \$2,640 for the patrol of various US Forest Service roads and properties.

Commissioner Paris approved an Agreement for Indigent Defense Services between the Public Defender Office of the Enotah Judicial Circuit and Union County, Lumpkin County, White County, and Towns County. The cost to Union County is \$88,649.16 for FY 2016-2017.

The Commissioner approved an Agreement between Futurity IT, Inc. and Union County for Orion Disaster Pre-Planning & Damage Assessment Solution Software. The cost of the

agreement is \$2,625 for the first year. The agreement will automatically renew each year for the amount of \$1,875.

Commissioner Paris said the County is in the process of making a change to its policy for the county retirement plan. The county has a lot of valuable employees that because of their training and ability, help keep our property taxes low, so he thinks it is only fair to help benefit them as much as reasonably possible.


The county has their retirement system set up with GEBCORP, an ACCG (Association County Commissioners of Georgia) Company. Union County does not have a **defined benefit plan**, meaning a plan that allows an employee to receive a set amount of money per month after retirement, because of the extreme and unknown future cost to a county. Instead the County has a **Defined Contribution plan**. This type of plan allows the employee to put some money in their savings account, (401A), similar to a 401K, and the county will contribute their part to them in a corresponding 457B account. The good part of this defined contribution plan is that it **does not put a future burden on the county taxpayers**, as the funds that a retiring employee will have access to will simply be a sum of what the employee has put into the account, combined with the amount the county has put in the account, plus any interest gain or loss that the investments made by GEBCORP bring. Union County has been very fortunate in that the county plan has averaged about 5% to 6% increase per year over the past five years. Of course, that is always subject to change with the market.

Currently the county matches dollar for dollar what an employee puts in the retirement account up to 6%. The problem is that some employees still not putting money into this fund, especially the younger ones and deputies/jailers. Out of 170 eligible full time employees, only 60% of them contributing to the program at all. So, in hopes of encouraging more of them to save for the future, the County is going to make some changes to their policy with the retirement company. In order to incentivize the employees, the county will soon begin changing the system and will begin doubling the employee match. So, if the employee wants to receive the county match, they will only have to put in 3% of their pay instead of the 6% currently required. Senior management employees will have some additional options based on having fewer future pay raises and instead be able to add to their retirement plan. The problem is with the economy improving, it is more difficult to attract and keep good employees. Union County is fortunate that it is a long commute to go to Gainesville or Atlanta to work if you live here, so many people are willing to accept somewhat less pay for the quality of life here. But, the County does not want to take advantage of them and this will help in a small way. This new policy will be developed with GEBCORP and hopefully be adopted at next month's county meeting.

The Commissioner said we have had a wonderful Spring so far and the weather has been just about perfect. There are a lot of projects going on in the county and the Road Department is hard at it already. The Commissioner hopes to summarize all of them at the next meeting.

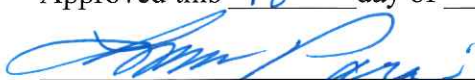
There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 6:50.

Respectfully submitted by:



Jennifer Queen, County Clerk

Approved this 18th day of May, 2017



Lamar Paris, Commissioner