

County Meeting
June 15, 2017
Minutes
Union County Courthouse

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Paris at 6:02 pm. The invocation was given by Patrick Malone and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Bill Royse. The minutes from the May 18, 2017 County Meeting were approved as read.

The Commissioner approved an Agreement between Union County and Legacy Link for the required local share during FY 2018 in the amount of \$95,000. These funds are used by the Area Agency on Aging as match to draw down the federal and state monies for administration, coordination, information and referral, employment and training of older workers and volunteer programs. This program is provided through the Union County Senior Center.

Commissioner Paris approved an Agreement between Union County and Communication Service, Inc. in the amount of \$420.00 per month for the maintenance of radio and other communications equipment located at 911 Dispatch. The duration of this agreement is from June 1, 2017 until May 31, 2018.

The Commissioner approved an Agreement between Union County and Air Methods Corporation for emergency air medical transportation services for the County's citizens and their household members from June 1, 2017 to May 31, 2018. The amount of this agreement is \$55,668 and the County is only responsible for half of that amount, with Union General Hospital picking up the balance. The Commissioner said he appreciated Union General Hospital and Air Methods working with the County to make this excellent service available to the residents without the potential extreme cost that can sometimes go along with the use of the emergency helicopter service

Commissioner Paris accepted a Settlement Agreement between Union County and Winter Construction Company in the amount of \$20,000 payable to the County. This has to do with a water leak that the company has been unable to stop at the Community Center. The County is in the process of having a specialty company come in and make the repair.

The Commissioner appointed Jack Parker to the Union County Board of Assessors for a five-year term to end June 1, 2022.

Commissioner Paris accepted a matching grant award in the amount of \$121,736 which was made under the Accountability Courts State of Georgia grant program for a period from July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018. This grant is for **Mental Health Court**. This will be funding coming through the Governor's office but appropriated by the Georgia Legislature, to help keep the mentally ill out of our jails and instead provide them with local intervention programs and counseling. The hope is that over time, the recidivism rate will be reduced and the cost to society, the legal system, prison system and jails will also be reduced.

The Commissioner accepted an Accountability Courts Grant for Adult Felony Drug Court – North in the amount of \$223,080.

Commissioner Paris accepted an Accountability Courts Grant for Adult Felony Drug Court – South in the amount of \$214,192.

The Commissioner accepted an Accountability Courts Grant for Family Drug Court in the amount of \$195,858.

Commissioner Paris stated that all of these courts are an effort by the State of Georgia to keep the jail and prison population down and to try to help bring many people back into society to where they will eventually be an asset instead of a liability.

The Commissioner approved Business Licenses for Gessman Cabin Rental and Sun Oak Cabin Rental. This is the only type Business License issued in Union County for the purpose of collecting the Hotel/Motel Tax.

Commissioner Paris announced that the County Meeting scheduled for Thursday, July 20, 2017 will be changed to Tuesday, July 18, 2017 at 6:00 pm.

Last month when discussing the purchase of the Davenport Property the Commissioner said the County was purchasing the property with SPLOST Funds. This was an incorrect statement as the funds will be coming instead out of the County's surplus balance. In this case that will be surplus funds from the past couple of year's budgets and the balance can be replenished over the next year or two if necessary.

The Commissioner let everyone know at last month's meeting that the County has been working on paving roads already this year. The County applied for and received an LMIG (Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant) Grant from the Georgia Department of Transportation. For the year 2017, Union County received \$659,248, which is specifically for paving roads. The roads that have already been paved this year are Flatrock Gap Road, Ivy Log Creek, Kings Road, Pearl Wright Road, Rogers Road, Parker Road, Cavender's Gap, Dewberry Road, Earl Patterson Road, Copperhead Road, and Wilmar Circle. The County is required to match LMIG money with a 30% local match, which comes out of SPLOST Funds. In 2017 the state funded \$659,248 as mentioned and the county matched around \$200,000. This does not include the several miles of surface treatment the county will do this year. Union County appreciates GDOT working with the County this year and the local GDOT office for paving Richard Russell Highway. GDOT plans on paving Highway 180 to the Towns County line at the Brasstown Bald Mountain access road later this year. They are also planning on resurfacing Highway 19/129 South from the top of the mountain next year.

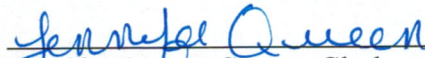
There have been two letters to the editor, one last week and one this week. The one last week was related to the county purchasing the Davenport Property and accusing the Commissioner and the county of paying much more than the property is worth based on the Tax Assessors value of the property only being \$9,600 per acre. The County paid \$52,000 per acre and it is assessed through the Tax Assessors office at 9,600 per acre. This particular letter was misleading and the Commissioner clarified. The County will be paying \$678,000 for the 13 acres and it is only assessed from the Tax Assessors office at \$168,000. However, this assessment was based on the property being used as a farm and not commercial property. To be a part of this conservation use covenant you have to have a minimum of 10 acres in the conservation use covenant. It has nothing to do with the commercial fair market value of the property. In order to determine a reasonable value to begin negotiation with, the Commissioner had a real property commercial appraisal performed on the tract. Very few properties are changing hands along the 515 corridor which makes comparisons hard. A new graded site almost directly across Highway 515 is only 4.4 acres and sold through a distress sale back in 2015 for \$42,000 per acre. Commercial sites along 515 range from \$450,000 to \$700,000. The County offered the Davenports 15% over the appraisal price for the 13 acres, of which 2 acres are highway frontage, and Commissioner Paris feels this will be a great asset to the community.

The Commissioner then clarified another letter in the North Georgia News that was concerning the Jail. The writer stated that the county's population had more than doubled since Lamar Paris had been in office from 10,000 to over 21,000. The writer further stated that our anticipated


population would expand to 30,000 by 2020 and the jail would not be adequate. According to the US Census, in 2000 the population of Union County was 17,289 not 10,000. In the 2010 Census it was estimated to be 21,365 which is only at 1.9% population growth per year. If the county's population growth was as much as 2% for the next four years, we would only be at an estimated population of 23,845 with is a long way from 30,000. The Sheriff is doing a great job at arresting those who break the law, and the District Attorney is processing them out quickly. The Commissioner stated he hopes that the criminal element will be tired of being arrested by our active Sheriff's Department and decide to move to another county.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 6:31.

Respectfully submitted by:


Jennifer Queen, County Clerk

Approved this 18th day of July, 2017


Lamar Paris, Commissioner