

County Meeting
July 24, 2018
Minutes
Union County Courthouse

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Paris at 6:00 pm. The invocation was given by Pat Malone and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Lamar Paris.

Commissioner Paris asked Sam Latimer from Rushton and Company to come to the front. Rushton and Company, Certified Public Accountants, is the auditing firm that completed the 2017 Audit for Union County. Mr. Latimer gave the audit presentation and gave an unmodified opinion of Union County Finances.

The Commissioner accepted Resolution R-2018-05 approving a SPLOST Intergovernmental Agreement and authorizing the Commissioner to execute the Agreement on behalf of Union County.

Commissioner Paris accepted an Intergovernmental Agreement between Union County and the City of Blairsville for the use and distribution of proceeds from the 2021 Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) for capital outlay projects. The City of Blairsville will receive 8.5 percent of the SPLOST proceeds estimated to be \$24 million dollars for the 6-year SPLOST.

The Commissioner stated that staff and himself recently made the decision to advance the time of the SPLOST election by over a year. The County is currently in SPLOST 4. Normally, they allow enough time for the SPLOST to be on the ballot twice before collections end, which will be April of 2021, just in case it doesn't pass the first time. The reason they do this is because having a lapse between SPLOSTS would cost businesses a lot of time and money in changing percentages on their sales tax.

Because of this, the normal time to put SPLOST 5 on the ballot would be the general election in November of 2020, but that doesn't allow for one more election in case it doesn't pass, so that would require them to back it up and have a special called election in 2019 just for the SPLOST vote, which would cost the taxpayers money for a special election that is not necessary. Therefore, they are including it in the November 2018 General Election, on November 6, 2018, which does not cost taxpayers any undue expense for an extra election as it will just be added to the upcoming statewide general election.

Commissioner Paris then explained what SPLOST does cover and why is it so critical to the operation of Union County Government. SPLOST funds can cover any new capital improvement facility or building, parking lot, roofs, and heating and air equipment. It can also be spent on new vehicles including motor graders, dump trucks, bobcats, track hoes, tar distributors, Sheriff's Office vehicles along with other county vehicles, ambulances, fire engines and rescue vehicles. Real estate purchases can be made using SPLOST funds also. Paving of new roads but not patching can be done with SPLOST and this includes gravel, asphalt and tar.

All of the things the Commissioner mentioned are necessary to the operation of Union County except some facilities and real estate purchases. Everything else the County would have to pay

for and acquire with or without SPLOST. So, when Commissioner Paris talks about property taxes increasing if we do not have SPLOST, it is simple. Just on paving alone the County spends over a million dollars per year, which would require a 17% property tax revenue increase just to break even. Union County has the second lowest property tax rate in the state of Georgia out of 159 counties. The property tax mil rate is 5.699 and just to break even without SPLOST would require close to a 30% property tax increase. The Commissioner said when you separate out everything that SPLOST pays for that is not optional, it is not optional for us to continue to have the best county in Georgia without SPLOST.

The Commissioner then asked who pays for SPLOST? Everyone that purchases a product in Union County contributes to SPLOST. People are coming here to eat from Murphy, Hayesville, Hiawassee and especially Blue Ridge and paying toward SPLOST. All the new homes that are being built and resultant sales tax from the two hardware stores, plus Home Depot – the sales tax comes to Union County and Blairsville. If anyone purchases gas in Union County then the county gets a portion of that sales tax also. People from out of town are contributing to SPLOST sales tax and helping us pay for the improvements in our county. It is estimated that about 1/3 of sales tax is paid by out of county residents.

The Commissioner then read a list of what SPLOST has made possible in Union County.

Library

Horse Arena

Farmers Market

Cannery

Drug Court Facility

Byron Herbert Reece Homeplace

In Suches, the Community Center, Tennis Courts, Fire Station expansion and equipment, and the medical clinic

New addition at the Mock House

Historic Courthouse elevators and annual contributions

Hospital Ambulances

Sheriff Dept Vehicles

New Fire Station #1

Fire engines and rescue equipment

New E 911 equipment, now and all that will be required this next year.

Meeks Park including ball fields, play grounds, picnic pavilions, dog park, disc golf course, water park and pool, adult exercise area, reconstruction of Tate Mill, Batting Cages, Canoe and Kayak Launch Ramp, Skate Board Park, hiking trails, Butternut Creek and much more, for every age.

Senior Center addition and improvements plus those in the planning stages

Union County Community Center

Hogpen Gap View Shed Area

New Road access to Farmers Market and covered bridge

Coming soon there will be a double gymnasium within the next two to three years, a new pavilion at Meeks Park as they are full all the time and a possible amphitheater. Also, in the planning phase is a small youth ballfield complex that will include coaches pitch, T-Ball and 8 and under ball fields and soccer field just across from Farmers Market and road paving and

equipment purchases as needed along with Sheriff's Office Vehicles each year. The City of Blairsville will be continuing their downtown development, sewer and water expansion and police vehicles.

Commissioner Paris then accepted a Rental Agreement between the State Properties Commission on behalf of the Department of Driver Services and Union County for office space located at 149 Chase Drive, Blairsville. The amount of this agreement is \$1.00 per year and renews each year for five successive one-year periods. This rental agreement is for the time period of July 1, 2017 and June 30, 2018. This rental agreement is for the year that has just concluded. It was somehow missed by the State Properties Commission that their lease was due last year. This gets the lease current and the next item will be the lease renewal for the upcoming year.

The Commissioner then accepted a Rental Agreement between the State Properties Commission on behalf of the Department of Driver Services and Union County for office space located at 149 Chase Drive, Blairsville. The amount of this agreement is \$1.00 per year and renews each year for five successive one-year periods. This rental agreement is for the time period of July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019.

Commissioner Paris approved business licenses for Christine Pittman Rental located at 1564 Ridge Pointe Way and for the Troy and Megan Brown Rental located at 505 Pat Colwell Road. This is the only type of Business License issued in Union County for the purpose of collecting the Hotel/Motel Tax.

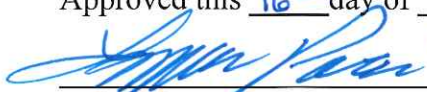
The Commissioner then said the Road Department has been very busy with all the rain and storms we have had lately. They have been cleaning out culvers and very busy with fallen trees. The County is still waiting on a permit from GDOT to finish the Farmers Market entrance and they will be working on the road that will connect 515 to Panther Circle. Commissioner also said they Hunter England Cabin was complete, and the dedication had been a couple of weeks ago. Soon the County will be moving a log storage building and a log spring house to this same site at the Farmers Market. Both are being donated to the County.

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

Respectfully submitted by:


Jennifer Mahan, County Clerk

Approved this 16th day of August, 2018


Lamar Paris, Commissioner