

County Meeting  
March 15, 2018  
Minutes  
Union County Courthouse

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Paris at 6:05 pm. The invocation was given by Pat Malone and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Lamar Paris. The minutes from the February 15, 2018 County Meeting were approved as read.

Commissioner Paris began the meeting by welcoming the Leadership Union. Every two years the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce facilitates the Leadership Union with classes lasting 3 months. Participants can be small and large business owners, CEOs, Board Members, healthcare professionals, Educators, members of management, and individuals in positions of authority or responsibility within the community. The purpose of this program is for participants to explore our community's issues and assets, enhance their knowledge of Blairsville and Union County, expand their personal and professional networks, and enrich our community. The Commissioner thanked the Blairsville/Union County Chamber of Commerce and the facilitator of the program, Renee Deibert with North Georgia Technical College. They always do a great job and he looks forward to speaking with them immediately after the meeting.

The Commissioner then announced that he had a very special presentation to make to Amy Myers Miles. Amy is the mother of Pvt Caleb Miles who just recently graduated from Marine Boot Camp on February 23, 2018, Paris Island, NC. Also, Amy is the Daughter of Ray Myers, and of course Ray is the grandfather of Caleb Miles. Commissioner Paris mentioned this, because on February 10<sup>th</sup> he attended a Quilt of Valor Ceremony at the Historic Courthouse in which Ray Myers was presented a quilt. The Commissioner then read the following statement about Ray Myers which was also read at the Quilt of Valor Ceremony.

Haley Ray Myers, Sr. went to boot camp at the Naval Training Center in Great Lakes, Michigan on August 18, 1965. After boot camp, he was stationed in San Diego, CA on the USS Agerholm DD-826. While stationed aboard the USS Agerholm, Mr. Myers worked as a Gunners Mate. He worked with anti-submarine rocket support to back up and protect servicemen on the ground. His ship, USS Agerholm was awarded the Bronze Star for episodes of intense gunfire continuing for 21 days of constant gunfire with no rest off the coast of Vietnam. During his service, he was also deployed to the Western Pacific for 3 cruises to Japan, China and the Philippines. During his last deployment they crossed the equator to go to Australia and New Zealand. He was Honorably Discharged July 31, 1969 from San Diego, CA. He was employed by Union Parcel Service upon his return home in 1969 and worked there for 32 years. He went on to get his CDL's and became a cross county double trailer driver. He played on the Teamster softball league for several years. He retired in 2001 and came to live permanently in Blairsville, GA in 2008. Mr. Myers met his wife, Anne, before he was deployed while still a star quarterback for the Avondale Blue Devils. They were married and had three children, Haley Ray, Jr., Shari Leigh, and Amy Elizabeth. He now has 6 grandsons, 3 step-grandsons and one granddaughter.

Commissioner Paris then asked the family to come up while he made the presentation. At the time the Commissioner talked to Amy about Caleb, he was about to enter the three-day Crucible,

The **Crucible** is a test every recruit must go through to become a **Marine**. It tests every recruit physically, mentally and morally and is the defining experience of recruit training.

The **Crucible** takes place over 54-hours and includes food and sleep deprivation and over 45 miles of marching. The Commissioner then presented the family with a flag that had been flown over the state capitol in honor of PVT. Caleb Miles on February 23, 2018. It was accompanied by a certificate from Congressman Doug Collins Office which certified it had been flown over the Capitol. The family was then presented with the flag and the certificate.

At the previous County Meeting Commissioner Paris discussed the issue with trashy and or unkept properties in the county and that the county was in the process of working on this issue, he also addressed it in his Q & A in the North Georgia News. Mr. Michael O'Brien asked to be placed on the Agenda to speak regarding the issue. The Commissioner asked Mr. O'Brien to please come forward.

Mr. O'Brien said he has lived in Union County since 1991 and they love Union County. He stated that he felt pride is missing from the people who live in these distressed homes. He asked the Commissioner if there were enough ordinances to cover the issues regarding these distressed homes. Commissioner Paris responded that he would talk about that once Mr. O'Brien was finished. Mr. O'Brien went on to say the amount and frequency of distressed homes has gotten worse over the past few years. Property values of neighboring properties are affected, and no one wants to drive past these homes every day. He stated that the County needs to have a way to deal with these types of homes on a short-term and long-term basis. He would like for the enforcement to continue. He also stated that the demographics of the County are changing and the pressure on the services of the county are increasing. Enforcing the issue of trash is very important and the enforcement needs to continue. Mr. O'Brien suggested providing a one-time curbside pickup provided by the county to these property owners that we needing to clean up their property. He closed with Union County is still one of the best counties to live in.

Commissioner Paris said he discussed this issue in detail in his newspaper column last week and also at the previous County Meeting, but some things have changed since then. The Commissioner is a property rights advocate and does not feel the County should tell everyone what to do on their own property. That is why Union County does not have zoning, but as the County we don't want people to think that we are not doing anything about the issue of distressed properties. The County has had issues with distressed properties since the Commissioner took office in 2001. The County does have ordinances that can and are being enforced, but unfortunately you cannot instill pride. As of now, the County is contacting property owners and working with them to get these distressed properties cleaned up. They are currently working on 24 complaints and letters have been sent to most of them. Some properties are already being cleaned up prior to being contacted. The County is also planning to help those that are unable to help themselves with a onetime haul off. The Commissioner feels this is providing a service to the whole county. If the ordinances have to be made stronger they will be, but the Commissioner thinks the ordinances in place are enough to handle the issue. He also said, to please be patient because these types of things take time to be handled correctly.

A citizen asked what if a property owner has received a letter and have done a partial clean up? Do you have to start the notification process over? She was concerned about the rodents because there is household garbage. The Commissioner responded that they do not receive additional notice. The County follows up and continues from the original notice.

Another citizen stated she had damage to her home caused by rodents that were drawn to the garbage next door and it cost her money to have the problem taken care of. Commissioner Paris said if she still has that problem to call the office the following day.

Another citizen asked if there is anyway those in the community can come together and help with this process? The Commissioner responded by telling her there is still a litter problem and there is a program where the public can get involved, the Adopt a Road Program. There is not a community organization to help individuals clean up their property.

A citizen stated they live in the Trackrock area of Union County. They have neighbors who use their land as a dumping area and their property values are being affected. Commissioner Paris said for her to call his office and give them the address. She said she had already done that.

Commissioner Paris then continued on with the Agenda items. He closed this discussion by telling all present to report any trash issues to his office.

The Commissioner proclaimed March 5, 2018 as United States Navy Seabees 76<sup>th</sup> Birthday. 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. 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 construction projects were all completed while fending off enemy forces alongside Marine, Army and Navy Colleagues. For 76 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!". I ask all citizens to join me in recognizing the service, skill, and determination the Seabees have shown their country and its citizens.

Commissioner Paris proclaimed Friday, February 16, 2018 as Arbor Day. A tree was planted at the Old Blairsville Cemetery to commemorate the 146<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Arbor Day and the 24<sup>th</sup> year in Union County. This is all in cooperation with the Georgia Forestry Commission, The City of Blairsville, the Blairsville Garden Club, and the Union County Commissioner's Office. The Commissioner thanked all that had a part in the celebration of Arbor Day.

The Commissioner accepted an Agreement between Union County and Baker Interactive Services d/b/a Baker Audio for 24 hour/365 days per year support for the 911 Dispatch communication systems in the amount of \$15,706.60 for one year, commencing on February 1, 2018. Commissioner Paris took this opportunity to thank all of the dedicated E-911 dispatchers who are the heart and soul of our county emergency management and public safety departments.

Commissioner Paris accepted Carney Lane into the county-maintained road system. All homeowners have signed over right of way to the county. Carney Lane is located just off the Blue Ridge Highway and off Nichols Circle.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 6:45.

Respectfully submitted by:

Jennifer Queen  
Jennifer Queen, County Clerk

Approved this 19<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2018

Lamar Paris  
Lamar Paris, Commissioner