

County Meeting  
July 16, 2020 6:00pm  
Minutes  
Union County Courthouse

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Lamar Paris at 6:00 pm.

The invocation was given by Patrick Malone and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Bill Walker.

The first item on the Agenda was the Audit Report presented by Clay Pilgrim from Rushton and Company, the Certified Public Accountants who performed the 2019 Audit of Union County Finances. Clay Pilgrim stated the county was given an unmodified or clean opinion of the Union County Finances. Mr. Pilgrim summarized the 2019 Audit Report and the Commissioner then let all attendees know that if they wanted a copy of the Audit it would be available in the Commissioner's Office the following day.

The next item on the Agenda was a presentation given by Doy Lively who is President of the Lake Nottely Improvement Association. Mr. Lively's presentation was regarding leachate water processing at the City of Blairsville's Wastewater Treatment Plant. The following is a summary of remarks made by Mr. Lively. Mr. Lively stated he wanted to make sure that the Commissioner and County were aware of this process. They are concerned this could deteriorate the quality of the lake over time. Mr. Lively stated that in 2019 Senator Steve Gooch asked the City of Blairsville to allow leachate water to be brought in from outside of the county by the Senator's company to be processed at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Leachate water is wastewater that is extracted from the landfill and then is processed at the Wastewater Treatment Plant and discharged into Butternut Creek once processed. The City of Blairsville entertained this proposal in May 2019, and it was approved. There is no contract and no proposal according to Mr. Lively. If Blairsville gets sued for anything that could happen with regards to processing leachate water then Union County will also be liable. If there was a contract it was not released in the open records request from the City or Union County. Mr. Lively's major concern is that there is no county wide knowledge that this leachate processing is happening. EPD does not come in on a regular basis and check the Wastewater Treatment Plant but relies on their own self testing methods. There is no extensive reporting of what is contained in the leachate water. Their concerns are for the drinking water that comes from Lake Nottley and is processed by Notla Water. LNIA contacted EPD in June of 2019 to get the EPA to come and do additional testing. The report showed that PFAS was shown in the testing. PFAS chemicals never go away. He suggested Googling PFAS and seeing what the concerns across the country were. Leachate water is water that drains off landfills and is stored in a holding area until it can be taken somewhere to be processed. He asked why Union County has not notified all the residents that leachate water is being processed at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. This is attractive to Blairsville because they could make money from doing this. This is a money operating venture for the City of Blairsville, and they should not be making a profit. The other issue in the lake is Ecoli. Mountain True, which used to be Hiawassee River Watershed Coalition tests the water and the guidelines for Ecoli were exceeded in each test. LNIA contends there is a serious pollution problem in Lake Nottely. He stated that they tried contacting the Commissioner's

Office in June of 2019 and he was copied in every email regarding leachate water processing. He concluded that they wanted the county to stop processing leachate and to increase testing. They also wanted information on the county website regarding the effects of the leachate water processing.

Commissioner Paris approved Resolution R-2020-15 to Amend the FY2019 Budget from \$17,040,161 to \$18,405,000. The Auditors report at the beginning of the meeting provided an explanation of their required Budget Amendment. He stated if you had questions regarding this to reach out to the Finance Director, Laura Driskell.

The Commissioner adopted the Union County Procedures for Financial Administration of Grants. This policy is a requirement because Union County is the grant administrator for the Accountability Court Grants.

Commissioner Paris appointed Katy Jones to the Department of Family and Children Services Advisory Board effective April 1, 2020 for a four-year term to expire on March 31, 2024.

The Commissioner appointed Rhonda Colwell to the Union County Library Board of Trustees for a three-year term to begin on July 1, 2020 and to end on June 30, 2023.

Commissioner Paris appointed Jordan Rogers to the Union County Library Board of Trustees for a three-year term to begin on July 1, 2020 and to end on June 30, 2023.

The Commissioner accepted an Agreement between the Georgia Department of Corrections and Union County for six work details for the period July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021. The cost for these details is \$49,318 per detail totaling \$295,908.00 for the term of this agreement. At this moment the work details are not able to be out working in the community due to the threat of COVID-19. If the work details are unavailable to work our cost is adjusted accordingly per the agreement.

Commissioner Paris accepted an Agreement between Union County and the Georgia Department of Transportation for grant funding in the amount of \$129,722.00 for the period of July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021. This funding is for the Union County Transit System. The grant for this period contains supplemental funding provided through the Cares Act. In addition to requesting the normal reimbursements in the upcoming year, we can request additional reimbursements going all the way back to January 1, 2020 since there are still expenses with very few riders or lots of days with no riders. This will be a great help to the transit program as it allows them to keep operating for those who need public transportation.

The Commissioner accepted 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 \$112,425.82 for the period of July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021. There is an additional cost of \$20,000 contained in this agreement for an additional Public Defender to work additional hours in Union County. This extra cost paid by the County helps get offenders in Union County processed through the system quicker helping keep jail numbers lower.

The Commissioner accepted an Agreement amendment between Union County and Gardner, Spencer, Smith, Tench & Jarbeau for Design Services for the expansion of the View Grill Dining Area. The cost of this amendment is \$6,300.00 and went into effect on July 10, 2020.

Commissioner Paris accepted a Memorandum of Understanding between Union County and the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia on behalf of the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension. This MOU states that Union County will provide partial salary payments to UGA Extension Employees at the Union County Office, and that we will provide them with office space. UGA will provide the employees, various services, and the remainder of salaries.

The Commissioner accepted a Contract between Union County and the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia on behalf of the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension in the amount of \$33,184.00 for Union County's portion of salaries for UGA Extension personnel in the Union County Extension Office. The term of this contract will be from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021. This is the salary funding agreement that is outlined in the previous Memorandum of Understanding. This contract will be renewed each year.

Commissioner Paris approved a Lease Extension between Union County and the State Properties Commission for use by the Department of Juvenile Justice for 185 square feet of office space located at 76B Hunt Martin Street in the amount of \$1.00 annually. The term of this agreement will be from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021.

Commissioner Paris approved the Business License for Hillside Cottage located at 979 Forest Drive, Blairsville.

The Commissioner approved a Lease Extension between Union County and the State Properties Commission for use by the Department of Driver Services for 1,440 square feet of office space located at 149 Chase Drive in the amount of \$1.00 annually. The term of this agreement will be from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021.

Commissioner Paris was then notified that he has missed approving the minutes at the beginning of the meeting. The Commissioner then approved the Minutes from the June 17, 2020 Called Meeting as presented and the minutes from the June 18, 2020 County Meeting as presented.

The Commissioner stated that these past nearly five months have been the most difficult in his time as Commissioner. Almost every day, it is another decision that must be made and almost all of the decisions related to COVID 19 do not have any precedent to go by.

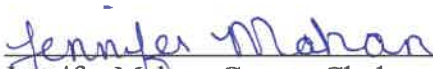
Several issues the county has already dealt with are when and if the pool will open, when will the county open playgrounds, basketball courts and pickleball courts. Will the fireworks show continue, and should facemasks be required?? Then a judicial order now requires face masks, temperature checks and social distancing within the courthouse. In the Governor's latest Executive Order, he gave the courts the authority to require facemasks within courthouses.

Commissioner Paris stated that county government will just continue operating the best it can and will continue to recommend, like the Governor, that you wear masks whenever you are in the public. He then thanked everyone for their support, and he realizes that not everyone is going to agree with all the decisions made.


The Commissioner then addressed everyone regarding Leachate Water. He said that LNIA was a great organization and did a great job protecting Lake Nottely. He said he had responded to one person regarding Leachate and that was Tom Tournabene in late spring of 2019. As soon as the information came to the Commissioner, he called the Mayor to see what was going on with the lechate water processing. Union County Government does not have control over any part of this situation. The permit was issued through the EPD to the City of Blairsville. The contract is between Steve Gooch's company and the City of Blairsville. The city had extra capacity in their plant and was told by EPD they could process the leachate water. The Commissioner then stated that he talked to the guy that runs the Wastewater Treatment Plant who assured him. He then called Callie Moore with Mountain True and she said the water from the Wastewater Treatment Plant was not negatively affecting Butternut Creek or Lake Nottely. The Commissioner closed by saying that he would reach out to EPD regarding this issue.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 7:08 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

  
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Jennifer Mahan, County Clerk

Approved this 20<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2020

  
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Lamar Paris, Commissioner