

North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

www.nganews.com

Legal Organ of Union County

Your Hometown Newspaper Since 1909

Wednesday, July 24, 2019

Union County Schools to start 2019-2020 school year with Aug. 1 kickoff

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Union County Schools will begin the 2019-2020 school year with five days of activities for students, teachers, staff and parents beginning on Thursday, Aug. 1.

Assistant Superintendent Dr. Paula Davenport announced the kickoff schedule in the July 16 regular meeting of the Union County Board of Education.

Thursday, Aug. 1, will begin with a 7 a.m. breakfast at the high school, followed by a systemwide meeting at the Fine Arts Center, then individual school faculty meetings.

On Friday, Aug. 2, the schools will offer in-house training for various groups and a Safe Talk presentation for designated school first responders.

House of Prayer Church will host the annual Backpack 2 School Bash! event on Saturday, Aug. 3, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

School Police Chief Chad Deyton has arranged for a vaping presentation at the

Fine Arts Center on Monday, Aug. 5, which will be followed up by the annual "Meet Your Teacher" event for kindergarten through eighth-grade students.

The five-day kickoff will close on Tuesday, Aug. 6, with the traditional employee health fair at the Middle School Media Center, followed by various in-house trainings to include a first-aid class, plus the annual barbecue, and classes will begin on Wednesday, Aug. 7.

Also in the meeting, School Facilities Director Chris Crow gave an update on the progress of various summertime construction projects.

Crow said Colditz Trucking and Paving would be finished with the paving project at the primary and elementary schools by the time school starts. The striping will also be completed, as will the new fence in that same area, but there may be a slight delay on the slats.

New kitchen equipment for School Nutritionist Cindy Jones may be slightly delayed because of shipping issues



Lady Panthers Soccer was honored in the July 16 school board meeting for going undefeated in region play last season. Photo by Mark Smith

but should arrive very soon, he said.

Technology Director Bill Driskell said nearly all the new security cameras were

See Schools, Page 3A

Paris hears good audit results, offers county updates in meeting

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The accounting firm representing Union County had good news for Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris and guests in his July 18 monthly meeting.

"I am pleased to present that, for 2018, we have an unmodified opinion, or clean opinion, on the financial statements," said Clay Pilgrim, a certified public accountant with Rushton & Company.

In his presentation of the 2018 annual financial report, Pilgrim said the county's general fund for the last fiscal year featured increased revenues of nearly \$1.3 million, or about 8% in total increases.

He described those increases as largely due to Local Option Sales Tax, title ad valorem taxes, property taxes, insurance premium taxes and intergovernmental revenues, or grants.

"On the expenditure side, those also increased by \$1,319,428," Pilgrim said, describing those increases as largely due to risk management,

i.e. insurance claims, and first responder needs.

"We still have two open SPLOSTs," Pilgrim said. "One is winding down, the 2009 SPLOST. There was \$5,921 expended on it for fiscal year '18. You had \$3,608,643 expended on the 2015 SPLOST for 2018."

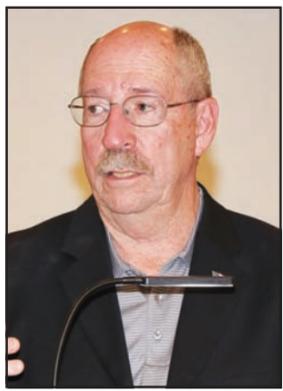
Copies of the 2018 Union County audit may be requested at the Commissioner's Office.

Also in the July 18 meeting, Commissioner Paris announced the settlement and disbursement for the right-of-way purchases between Union County and the Georgia Department of Transportation.

One purchase by GDOT was in the amount of \$450,000 for 1.264 acres along Georgia 515. The other 0.076 acres was considered a donation to GDOT in light of the 1.264-acre purchase.

Paris accepted an Association County Commissioners of Georgia Grant in the amount of \$5,000, which will be used to purchase two sets of turnout gear for the Fire Department.

Moving along, Paris



Commissioner Lamar Paris

proclaimed June 29, 2019, George Berry Day. Berry is a native of Union County, a graduate of both Union County High and Young Harris College, and was the driving force behind the construction of the Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport in Atlanta.

Paris proclaimed July 14, 2019, as Glenn and JoAnn Hamby Day. The Hambys are natives of Union County.

"Glenn and JoAnn Hamby have a true servant's

See Paris, Page 3A



The Panther Soccer Team receiving recognition in the July 16 meeting of the Union County Board of Education. Photo by Mark Smith

Incumbents set for re-election as EMC receives no petition nominations

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

YOUNG HARRIS – The Blue Ridge Mountain Electric Membership Corporation received no nomination petitions by the July 15 deadline for members to appear as year's election to the EMC Board of Directors.

As such, the three incumbents nominated in June – Gene Mason of Union County, Cory Payne of Clay County, North Carolina, and Ray Cook of Cherokee County, North Carolina – will be automatically re-elected following this year's annual meeting in September.

All three won election to their first board terms in 2016, which were set to expire this

year. And as Mason, Payne and Cook were the only members to submit nomination paperwork, they will simply begin their second terms in September once elected at the annual meeting.

And since the only items to appear on the ballot ahead of the 2019 annual meeting are the elections of three unopposed candidates, EMC board members decided in their July 15 regular meeting not to bulk mail paper ballots this year, saving the EMC roughly \$35,000.

The board voted 5-0 not to mail the ballots, with abstentions from the three directors who will appear in this year's uncontested election.

Members will still be able to vote in the election, both at the annual meeting and



Jeremy Nelms

online, and people can check back with brmemc.com for more information on acquiring absentee ballots.

On top of the \$35,000 in

See EMC, Page 2A

Brothers admits to groping girl, likely avoids prison due to Ralston tactics

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

Her case helped change state law, making it easier for future victims of sexual assault and other crimes to find justice. But at what cost?

What nightmare started in 2012, when she was just 14 years old. Her family had taken in a man they trusted named Paul Jason Brothers, a traveling minister from Ohio who preached at their home church of North Mt. Zion Church of God in Hiwassee.

It was almost unthinkable that a man of faith like Brothers could be capable of sexually assaulting anyone, let alone a child. But one night, as the rest of the family slept, Brothers forced himself on her and, according to his victim, raped and molested her.

As uncovered by the investigation into the horrors of that evening, Brothers distanced himself from the family afterward, suddenly telling them, without any explanation, that they could no longer be friends.

The reason for his avoidance became abundantly clear when, several months later, the victim and her family

approached law enforcement with their tragic story, and Brothers was arrested and subsequently indicted for rape in 2013.

Fast forward to 2019 and that girl, who had grown to become a young woman of 21, still sought justice.

So, when Brothers received a specially-set trial date of July 29, 2019, it looked like justice might finally be delivered in a case that had long been delayed through a legal loophole exploited by Brothers' famous attorney, Georgia House Speaker David Ralston.

In preparation for the case, Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney Jeff Langley's office once again presented evidence before a Towns County Grand Jury, which handed up revised charges of statutory rape, two counts of aggravated child molestation, three counts of child molestation and simple assault in May.

At long last, would that wolf in minister's clothing be made to face the consequences of his terrible actions? The answer, as it turned out, was complicated.

Instead of going to trial, Brothers entered into a plea agreement with Langley's



Paul Jason Brothers

office.

It was a negotiated deal that required Brothers to publicly admit wrongdoing, and he pleaded guilty to two felony counts of sexual battery on a minor on Wednesday, July 17, at the Union County Courthouse, with Ralston present for the proceedings.

The outcome wasn't exactly what the victim and her family had hoped for, but they agreed to it, given the age of the case and the victim's diminished health, as she suffers from a heart condition and seizure disorder.

See Brothers, Page 6A

Carter indicted for attempted murder; admits to shooting, concealing evidence

By Shawn Jarrard
North Georgia News
editor@nganews.com

A Union County Grand Jury has indicted Crystal LeAnn Carter for attempted murder and aggravated assault in the September 2018 shooting of William Craig Henderson of Young Harris.

The GBI initially brought a charge of aggravated assault against Carter in Union County, and upon further investigation, Enotah Judicial Circuit District Attorney Jeff Langley decided to pursue an attempted murder charge as well.

Handed up on July 11, the indictment comes about a month and a half after a May 29 bond hearing in which Carter admitted to shooting Henderson and attempting to conceal evidence of the crime by throwing the gun in Lake Chatuge and burning her

clothes with Henderson's blood on them.

Following the shooting, Carter eluded authorities for more than seven months until she was finally apprehended on April 16, 2019, at the residence of a man named Joe Tiger in Hayesville, North Carolina.

In the May bond hearing, the assistant public defender representing Carter attempted to paint her in a sympathetic light, highlighting her church attendance, willingness to pay child support, longstanding medical issues, and lack of any prior serious criminal history, according to court documents.

Superior Court Chief Judge N. Stanley Gunter denied the motion by Carter's legal counsel to set bond, determining that she was both a flight risk and likely to intimidate the witnesses in the case.

The GBI has alleged that Carter shot her ex-boyfriend



Crystal Carter

Henderson around 7 p.m. on Sept. 8, 2018, at or near a home located at 11 Lindsay Lane in Union County, after which she drove him to Chatuge Regional Hospital in Hiwassee.

As previously reported,

See Carter, Page 3A

Vol. 110 No. 30

4 Sections 28 Pages

Weather

Thurs: Sunny Hi 81 Lo 59

Fri: Sunny Hi 81 Lo 58

Sat: Sunny Hi 81 Lo 60

Arrests 7A

Church 3B

Classifieds 3D

Opinion 4A

Legals 5D

Obits 5B

Sports 2C

See page 7A

Weekly Patriot Reflection

See page 7A

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA EXTENSION

Well Water Program July 25

See page 7C

Historical Society Annual Picnic July 30

See page 7A

UCS UNION COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL

Parking Space Reservation

See page 6C