

# Opinions

Everybody has one...

## September 11th, Did You Remember

September 11th is many things to many people. Officially, it is the date when 19 militants associated with the Islamic extremist group al Qaeda hijacked four airplanes and carried out suicide attacks against targets in the United States. The attacks resulted in the destruction of the World Trade Center towers, damage to the Pentagon, and the deaths of almost 3,000 people, including 343 firefighters. But September 11th is not just a date.

When a person says, "September 11th" we see an event. A terrible tragedy where people who were determined to destroy our country and our way of life killed a lot of innocent people. We are reminded of the images on the TV and the live news reports as we saw the twin towers collapse, the walls of the pentagon fall in, and a smoking crater in a Pennsylvania field where the final plane crashed as the brave passengers overtook the terrorists.

For the people who were alive and remember the events of September 11th, it will forever be ingrained in their memory. Each person can tell you where they were and what they were doing on that day. They remember the details of how they felt when they saw the first plane hit the towers. The feeling of awe and tragedy for those people in that plane and that building. They can also tell you about the feeling of fear and anger when the second plane hit the towers; knowing all to well that this was no accident and that our country was under attack.

As a firefighter, I also remember the same feelings. I felt concern for the brave firefighters who were going to, "the call of their careers" and how they must be feeling. I was proud to be a firefighter and to be associated with such people. I then remember the feeling of fear and anger when we know its intentional. But the worst was wondering how many firefighters may die trying to help those people. And when I learned of the collapsing of the first tower, I knew that a lot of firefighters just died. I felt a personal attack on my country, my way of life, and on my profession. The terrorists killed Americans but more important to me, they killed brother firefighters who were doing everything in their power to save people.

After September 11th, we made a promise. That promise was to Never Forget. But how short are the memories!!!! A famous

See Dyer, page 5A

**Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief**

David Dyer



## Your Ebenezer

God help us. That's a prayer, not a swear. How often those words escape our lips upon hearing news of Afghanistan, COVID, and American politics.

You do remember He already has helped, right? You have to remember that to keep your sanity.

God's people wanted to remember. In ancient times, God gave them a victory. He sent thunder to confuse their enemy so they could reclaim their cities.

Samuel set a symbolic stone near the scene of the victory and named it Ebenezer, which means "rock of help" (1 Sam. 7:12).

One evening when I lived in Haiti, I noticed the reflection of a significant fire nearby. I went outside and saw in the middle of the dirt road a fire consuming household items and various containers. A local voodoo practitioner was burning his occultic paraphernalia.

In his advanced age, he embraced faith in Christ. This was his public recognition of God's help. It was his Ebenezer.

The U.S. has its Ebenezer, too. At 555 feet atop the Washington Monument, the highest structure in Washington D.C., an aluminum cap displays the words "Laus Deo," meaning "praise be to God."

In 1885, Americans reached to the heavens with the moving sentiment. It was their Ebenezer, and ours.

We have a rock of help that is more than symbolic. Jesus said, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). He could promise that because as He said, "I and the Father are one" (v30).

Jesus shows you a reality that is beyond what you see, beyond what happens today, and beyond the bounds of time. Your response, your Ebenezer, is to present yourself as a holy sacrifice (Rom. 12:1). The beautiful hymn lyrics say, "Here I raise my Ebenezer, here by Thy great help I've come. And I hope, by Thy good pleasure, safely to arrive at home."

Whenever the news makes you want to utter, "God help us!" let it remind you that He already has.

Raise your Ebenezer by presenting yourself to God as a living sacrifice, your greatest act of worship.

mountainchristian@brmeme.net

**All Things New**

Wayne Fowler



## Commissioner's Questions

The following questions/answers illustrate your property taxes at work to help make Union County a safer and more affordable environment in which to live.

We feel that Union County has one of the best rural fire departments in Georgia. We have a total of 16 paid firemen working for you with four on shift 24/7 – all day and every night – plus five additional staff for a total of 21 full-time paid staff. In addition, we have approximately 65 dedicated volunteer firemen that donate much of their time and effort to assist the public and are constantly taking additional training to improve their skills. Our fire department makes about 2500 calls per year – all in an effort to make Union County one of the safest counties in which to live.

**Q. When was Union County last surveyed for ISO (PPC™) fire rating?**

A. Union County was surveyed in January of 2021. Union County Fire Department, Union County E911 Communications, City of Blairsville Water Department, Notla Water Authority and Coosa Water Authority were all proud to announce that Union County's PPC™ class remained at 4/4Y. The PPC™ ranges from class 10 (worst) to class 1 (best).

**Q. How does Union County Fire Department rank in the state?**

A. Union County is one of 32 counties in the state of Georgia with a class of 4 and one of five counties north of Atlanta with a 4 class. All departments work continuously to prepare for the survey.

**Q. What agencies are examined and to what extent by ISO?**

The E-911 dispatch center, which makes up 10% of the survey, was evaluated for equipment, personnel, and training. The water departments, which make up 40% of the survey, were evaluated for hydrants, water pipes, supply, and usage. The fire department, which makes up 50% of the survey, was evaluated on apparatus, equipment, training, station placement, response times, and the number of firefighters on scene of structure fires.

Union County is very proud of our Fire Department, both

See Paris, page 5A

**Q & A from Union County Commissioner**

Lamar Paris



## VALOR Clinic

Over the last two weeks, I've written about a program that my husband and I attended in August at VALOR Clinic, and I thought that I would take the opportunity to write a parted series about the program, ahead of the game, as my husband and I venture off to Yellowstone. This is the continuation from last week.

**Military Musings**  
Janice Walters-Taylor

Janice Walters-Taylor



Monday morning, after a delicious breakfast cooked by local volunteers from local churches, we jumped right into program. Our first session, Module 5, covered "What is Veteran's Unstoppable?" If you are interested too, please visit [www.valorclinic.org](http://www.valorclinic.org) to read more about the core program and its founder, Mark Baylis. Module 6 covered Brain and Trauma, and how they are tied to our emotions. Trauma can be physical or emotional. Module 7 played on the back of 6, "Understanding Triggers and Managing Stress," and once you can identify the trigger, you can start to manage the reactions.

See Walters-Taylor, page 5A

## Letters to the Editor

### Blowing Smoke

The "good news" is that the millage rate is dropping by 3.159 mills from last year's rate. BE NOT DECEIVED! In last week's North Georgia News article titled, "Combined millage to drop 3.159 mills after revaluation," Tax Commissioner Lee Knight says "they're going to roll back the inflationary increase," they being Lamar and the School Board. So, I did the math on my property using the advice in the article. Using my new fair market value, \$237,600, multiplied by 0.4, minus my \$2,000 homestead exemption, further multiplied by 0.015759, and came up with a new tax bill of \$1,466. Last year, I paid \$1,050. So, let's do the math on the increase. \$1,466 - \$1,050 = \$416, divided by \$1,050 = 0.396, or a 40% increase. Exactly how is this a "rollback" that collects only what "they" collected last year? Someone is blowing smoke and I'm choking on it.

I would urge all you property owners to do the same math on your property using the new rate, and compare your upcoming tax bill with last year's. When you get the "good news" on your new tax bill, you may want to contact the taxing authorities. I intend to do just that. Again, here's the math: New market value (you should have received the info earlier this year) multiplied by 0.4, less any homestead exemption, multiplied by 0.015759 (as spelled out in the newspaper article). DO IT!

As Gomer Pyle often said, SURPRISE, SURPRISE.  
Steve Bernthal  
Union County Resident Since 1993

### Thankful for a Near Miss

Dear Editor,  
September 11th this year will be very special for me, the 20th anniversary of the day I almost died in a terrorist attack on the Pentagon. At the time I was working for Northern Virginia Community College. As a military retiree who once served a tour in the Pentagon, I still had a building pass, and the college naturally selected me to operate their extension office there. On 9/11, I planned to arrive early, but as I backed out of our driveway, I noticed an apparent food stain on the front of my shirt. So, I went back inside and changed, a process that took about 10 minutes. That's about how much I missed the plane crashing into the building. While still on the highway about a mile away, I could see a tall, dark column of smoke rising from the site. When I got to the parking lot, hundreds of people were running from the building and police and fire trucks were everywhere. I later learned that 125 persons, some of whom I knew personally, had

See Gibson, page 5A



## Letters to the Editor

### TSPLOST Tax

Dear Editor,  
In 2012, we had a 1% statewide TSPLOST sales tax that the State of Georgia offered. That tax was a six-year tax where all the monies were to go to Metro Atlanta for the first five years, and Union only got the dollars for the sixth and final year. This year, 2021, our single commissioner is having a Union County-only vote for a 1% sales TSPLOST tax. The dollar amounts of this tax follows: as of Aug. 1, 2021 (apparently the plan is a work in progress), the state projects by the Georgia Department of Transportation listed in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program section of the master plan for Union County is mainly for the four-lane highway from Blairsville to Young Harris. This is a four-year plan, but a five-year tax.

The estimated contributed dollars for the four-lane highway are: Federal \$49,813,566, Georgia \$2,468,089, Union \$251,137.

See Sims, page 5A

### Tax 'Em Some More

Dear Editor,  
The North Georgia News reports, Sole Commissioner Tax-Em has proposed a "TSPLOST" referendum to add an additional 1-cent to the county sales tax (to 8%). Yes, Commissioner Tax-N-Spend argues that "tourists" and "visitors" will pay the tax and it's not really "our money" paying for it. However, he misses the point that the 25,000 residents of the county will pay it all of the time. He is proposing the TSPLOST to potentially reduce the millage rate based on the new county digest value. It's all "funny money": pull it from different pots to make whatever argument you need to stay in office.

Commissioner Tax-N-Spend raised the property millage rate by over 17% last year. When confronted, the commissioner shed some crocodile tears and went ahead and did it anyway. He then hinted that the millage rate might be lowered in future years as the countywide reassessments took place.

See Smythe, page 5A

### Thank You Dr. Kelley

Dear Editor,  
I want to thank you and Dr. Kelley for the front page article regarding the COVID vaccines. Hopefully his appeal to the people in our county to get vaccinated will result in a much higher rate of people getting vaccinated and a much lower rate of hospitalizations in our local hospitals. "The bottom line is, if you care about others and you care about people in your community, then I think you're going to be vaccinated." Amen, Dr. Kelley!  
Suzanne Paul Carter

## Mr. Newell

Old Man Newell was a little different. Some folks said he was a mite "quare," while others just said he was "turned funny." The bottom line was that he just didn't like young boys for some reason or another. He was always rough talking and short tempered when it came to the boys around Trapp-town. No one knows the reason why, but, Old Man Newell just didn't trust any of the local boys.

Paul and Bud Cummings grew up during the late 1940s and early 1950s. They ran with the likes of Tommy Trapp, William Shelnett, Jerry Cohen and Hubert Brooks. These boys grew up and did everything together. They had a code and it was enforced. None of the boys ever told on another one of the boys. You might not agree with what one of the boys was doing, but, you never told on your buddy.

One day during church the boys were all sitting together, and Paul, my father, noticed that Tommy Trapp had something in his pockets that was causing them to budge. When asked about the contents of his pockets, Tommy pulled out a big nail and whispered, "I am getting even with Old Man Newell." After church the gang of boys walked outside to Old Man Newell's log truck. Tommy walked around the front of the log truck and emptied his pockets of the nails. There must've been 2 pounds of 16 penny nails in front of the wheels of that truck.

Paul and his younger brother Bud felt sorry for Old Man Newell, so, after Tommy and the other boys left, they began trying to kick the nails away from the front of the truck. At this point in time, Old Man Newell came up and thought the boys had placed the nails in front of his wheels. The old man had a fit and screamed out, "You boys are trying to give me a flat tire." Papa ran up to the boys and whipped them in front of the whole crowd. Paul and Bud would not tell on their buddies. So, they took the whipping without a word. But, they vowed to take vengeance on Old Man Newell.

Some years later Old Man Newell's logging truck broke down, and the old man was relegated to driving his little buggy back and forth to town. A plan was soon hatched among the boys. One Saturday in the month of June, the boys, including Paul and Bud Cummings, Tommy Trapp, Jerry Cohen, William Shelnett, and Hubert Brooks, went out to Old Man Newell's house and waited for him to go to bed. After Newell went to sleep, the boys took apart the old man's buggy and re-assembled it on top of his barn. Paul and Bud didn't make it back home until the wee hours of the morning. They slipped

See Cummings, page 5A

**Around The Farm**

Mickey Cummings



## Crape Myrtle

Crape myrtles are a great landscape tree. They come in lots of different sizes, so you can get one that fits your space. Many folks have them planted around their yard or business, but I've gotten more questions than normal about people having problems with them. While they are usually pretty hardy against diseases and insects, there are a couple of things that can affect them, so I will discuss those here.

One of the most concerning things that I've gotten calls about on crape myrtles is ambrosia beetles. We have ambrosia beetles every year, but this year it does seem like there are more of them around. Ambrosia beetles are boring insects that will attack a variety of trees including crape myrtle, dogwood, redbud, maple, cherry, apple, persimmon, rhododendrons, azaleas, and others. They burrow into the heartwood of the tree where they make their galleries. Generally, they attack young plants, but they will attack mature trees, especially if they are under stress. That stress could be from drought, flooding, or mechanical wounding. The adults will introduce a fungus they and their young will feed on inside the tree. The adults are only 2.5 millimeters long, so they are very small. The simplest way to identify ambrosia beetle is that they push out some thin strands of sawdust that look like toothpicks attached to the tree. Because ambrosia beetles are feeding on the fungi they introduce and not the tree, a systemic insecticide will not kill them. You can use an insecticide like permethrin or bifenthrin as a preventative spray on your trees. If you catch the infestation early on mature healthy trees and treat them, they may be able to recover.

You can create a trap to monitor when ambrosia beetles start to show up. Collect a bolt of wood that is 2-4 inches in diameter and about 2 feet long. Drill a half-inch diameter hole into the wood as deep as possible. Fill that hole with Ethyl alcohol that is at least 70% and put a stopper cork in the top of the hole. Isopropyl alcohol does not work. Place the near the wood line where you have crape myrtles. The ambrosia beetles will attack the trap first, and you will see the sawdust toothpicks from the trap. When you see that occur, start treating your trees.

Powdery mildew is a common disease on crape myrtle. You'll see this growing as a white fuzz on the leaves. It's something that we get every year; it's just a matter of when. This disease may look unsightly, but it will not kill the tree. Leaves that have a lot of powdery mildew on them may start to shrivel up and drop early.

See Williams, page 5A

**Blairsville - Union County Chamber President**

Steve Rowe



I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those that have shown their gratitude to the employees and staff at Union General Hospital for all their hard work and long hours. That's what makes our community so great is the local governments, the great schools and a health system that goes above and beyond to keep our community healthy. Snacks and food can be delivered to the hospital or you can come by the Chamber office and be a part of the package we are putting together.

A stat that keeps appearing in the hospital's social media post is the number of unvaccinated patients that are being treated. We believe that it is a personal choice, but we do ask that you do your research and talk to your medical professional and consider getting the vaccine. You can receive the vaccine at the Union County Health Department. Please check their website for additional info and times.

This Saturday is the 20th anniversary of

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**Paris... continued from Page 4A**

paid and volunteer as well as our E911 Communications Center!!

**Q. When dealing with our homeowner's fire insurance, what does ISO mean?**

A. ISO stands for "Insurance Service Office". This is a for profit organization that provides statistical information on fire risk for insurance companies nationwide. They examine each community or county, usually on a four or five-year cycle. They assign a Public Protection Cycle (PPC™) rating that insurers use for underwriting and to calculate premiums for fire insurance. It is based on ISO's Fire Suppression Class Schedule (FSRS).

**Q. What does lowering or in this case maintaining of the ISO or PPC rating mean to the homeowner?**

A. The lowering of the ISO/ PPC rating could mean lower insurance rates for home and business owners. Although there are many factors that make up the insurance rates, the lowering of the PPC™ can contribute to the reduction of the overall insurance premium. It is up to the individual insurance companies to determine premiums, and not all are affected the same. If you have a question, contact your insurance company to make sure you are being rated properly. You can call the Union County Fire Department to confirm your ISO rating.

**Q. What are the exact numbers we need to know to discuss this issue with our insurance company?**

A. If a building or home is located within five road miles of a fire station and has a fire hydrant within 1000 feet, it is considered a class 4 in Union County. If a building or home is located within five road miles of a fire station and there is NO fire hydrant within 1000 feet, it is a class 4Y (formally class 8B). All homes or buildings beyond five road miles of a fire station are classified as class 10.

**Q. What are some of the major fire protection factors considered within a county?**

A. The major elements that are considered in the FSRS are emergency communications, fire department, and water supply. It also has added a Community Risk Reduction section that recognizes community efforts through the fire department to reduce losses through fire prevention, public fire safety education, and fire investigation.

**Q. When will Union County be surveyed again for ISO ratings?**

A. The last new ISO rating took effect on August 1, 2021. ISO expects to survey Union County's fire suppression efforts every 3-4 years or sooner if there have been any major changes to the dispatch center, fire department or water systems. Union County Fire Department works continuously to maintain and improve Union County's ISO PPC™ class. Union County Fire Department – Our Family Protecting Your Family.

**Gibson... continued from Page 4A**

died inside.

Reporters were announcing the attacks on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York and speculating that another mysterious plane was en route for an attack on the White House or Capitol. This was especially worrisome, because my wife was at work near the White House and our daughter at the U.S. Forest Service between the Pentagon and White House.

Traffic was gridlocked on all major highways, so I steered onto city streets, eventually making my way home, and got on the telephone (we had no cellphones then). There was no answer from either my wife or daughter's office. Our son was frantically calling from California, where he

had just got the news and was worried that his whole family had perished. It was almost six hours later before we could confirm that we were all still alive, although in a deep state of shock.

We lived about 12 miles out of Washington, D.C. in a noisy location with an airport almost in sight and six-lane interstate highways on both sides. Now, most of the road and air traffic were stopped, and I will never forget the weird, uncommon quiet with only an occasional fighter jet making a pass over the city.

That was by far the strangest day of my life, and I am forever grateful to have been spared thanks to that coffee spill on my shirt.

**Wm. Ronald Gibson**

**Sims... continued from Page 4A**

For this year 2021, the dollars are: Federal \$3.15 million, State \$779,000, Union \$31,247.

The largest output of dollars during the four-year cycle is estimated to be in the year 2022 by the Federal, State, and County governments. The dollar amounts come from pages 326 and 327 of the STIP plan for counties.

For the years 2022 through 2024, the estimated costs and share cost for Union is as follows: Federal tax dollars \$81,345,869, State tax dollars (GDOT) \$803,981, with Union County's share at \$227,114. This sounds like a good deal for Union county. But let us look at the nuts and bolts of this deal, and it looks like Union comes out not as expected by the commissioner. Here's why.

An intergovernmental agreement with Blairsville for a 1% TSPLOST tax kicks off a policy or procedure or a set of rules (one never knows for sure which word to use when the Georgia legislature acts) established by the State. These are the facts: a 1% sales tax as proposed by our commissioner will enable an automatic minimum 30% withholding rule by GDOT (when GDOT says minimum, it usually means more).

As you can see from the numbers above, Union's share cost of the four-lane is small. But when you add that min 30% hold back, it becomes a huge amount of money Union county gives up, or more accurately, never receives, as GDOT gets it. And Union County is left begging for some of those local dollars, but there are no traffic problems in Union to even come near the criteria GDOT requires to spend those metro dollars here.

So you may ask, where do those min 30% withholding dollars go? To the metro areas such as Atlanta, Macon, Savannah, Gainesville, etc. Let us look at Fulton County in Atlanta. Fulton County passed a 3/4 of 1% TSPLOST tax. A 3/4% tax does not kickoff the 30% withholding rule. They lose 1/4 of that 1% tax but come out smelling like roses. That's because GDOT gets none of those dollars. GDOT has no choice but to spend billions, yes billions, in Metro Atlanta. Atlanta now ranks as the most congested city in America. So Fulton gets their reduced tax dollars to spend the revenue in Fulton County only.

On their streets, etc., etc., and not give up 30% to GDOT to be used in the whole metro area where GDOT will be spending their money anyway. Smart move by the Fulton Commissioners.

Estimated collections (no one can predict how much) for Union County with a 1% tax would generate the same amount of dollars as the SPLOST tax, but with a huge difference — Union loses 30% upfront to GDOT with TSPLOST. A good estimate from a 1% tax is approximately \$20 million to \$24 million over five years. So let us calculate. I will use a midrange of \$22 million as an example. 22-30% = \$15.4 million Union will receive with a 1% tax.

The commissioner stated in the North Georgia News an estimated collection of \$35 million over five years would be collected. There is slim to zero chance of Union ever coming that close to \$35 million because of the minimum 30% holdback by GDOT.

What have the metro areas done for you lately?

**Mike Sims**

**Dyer...**

**continued from Page 4A**

quote comes to mind. "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." George Santayana.

The factual events of that day should be remembered and taught to future generations. The sacrificial heroism demonstrated on that day and the days that followed to prevent another such attack should be celebrated. On this September 11th, Patriots Day, renew your promise to Never Forget and celebrate the sacrifices.

Union County Fire Department ~ Our Family Protecting Your Family ~

**Chamber...**

**continued from Page 4A**

9/11, so please come out to Meeks Park at 8:00 a.m. and help us remember all those who gave the ultimate sacrifice and those that risk their lives to save others. With everything going on today, it is even more important than ever that we do not forget.

And remember, It's Better in Blairsville!

**Cummings... continued from Page 4A**

into the house and their beds with the smug satisfaction of finally getting even with Old Man Newell.

Paul and Bud were awakened the next morning by the familiar booming voice of Old Man Newell screaming out the words, "Your boys put my wagon on top of my barn." Papa called his sons into the kitchen for breakfast and asked them about Newell's claims. The boys couldn't lie to their Daddy considering the fact that they had not cleaned the wagon grease from their hands after their escapades the night before. The boys confessed their crimes to their Daddy and explained why they had committed them. Their Daddy listened and stated that he understood. However, they were told to go and take the wagon down from the top of the barn. They were also told to go and get the other boys to help the old man.

When the boys drove up, the old man began screaming. He stood at the bottom of the barn and watched to make sure the job was done to his satisfaction. Tommy Trapp asked the other boys, "How are we going to do this?" The old man screamed, "The same way you got it up there." So, Tommy shrugged his

shoulders and began taking apart the buggy. He pulled the iron wheel from the axle after the hub was removed and said, "Watch this." Tommy let go of the wheel right above Old Man Newell and it rolled down the sloped roof of the barn. The wheel came within 6 inches of Old Man Newell's head.

He must've got the message, because he left the boys alone to finish the job, and Old Man Newell never again screamed at the boys from Trapptown.

**Walters-Taylor... continued from Page 4A**

Module 9 addressed diet and nutrition. Following a specific cookbook provided in the materials, a low sugar, high vegetable and fruit diet was stressed, as it reduces stress and improves health. Much about what we eat drives how we feel. Module 10 dealt with Alternative Medicines. Sometimes traditional medicines may be replaced with herbal remedies, as well as food-based remedies, to manage stress.

Module 11 addressed Service as Therapy. Many stud-

ies support the premise that we generally feel better when we are able to give to others. And for the Veteran community, that is important, as we are a small segment of the population, and only other vets understand other vets. We finished the day talking about attitudes and responsibilities, owning our own actions and feelings, knowing that in every encounter, we are always at least half of the problem, or the solution.

See you next week. Until then, I bid you, "At Ease!"

**Williams...**

**continued from Page 4A**

Flower buds that are infected may not open.

Cercospera leaf spot creates large dark brown leaf spots on the leaves. This can lead to leaves dropping early. Some cultivars are more susceptible to leaf spot than others are. Susceptible varieties are more likely to lose their leaves early.

Sooty mold is dark brown or black coating on leaves and stems. It can be rubbed off. It is a fungus that grows on honeydews. An aphid feeding on the plants most likely forms the honeydews. Sooty molds only cause superficial damage. The aphids causing the honeydew can be treated with an insecticide, but usually treatment is not necessary.

If you have questions about crape myrtles, you can contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

**Smythe...**

**continued from Page 4A**

The reassessment took place and the county tax digest was increased by nearly 32%. The average homeowner saw their valuation increase by over 40%. Mine went up 46%. When the irate citizens raised boisterous objections, he claimed that the "state made him do it" because the assessments had lagged for nearly 20 years. He then blamed the County Tax Assessor for conducting the dirty deed and then removed himself another arm's length by saying the contracted consultant actually did it and he had no control.

His 2020 millage rate increased property taxes by nearly 18% over 2019 (see page 5B of the Sept. 1, 2021, edition of the North Georgia News). The increase between 2020 and 2021 will be an additional 10.63% (page 5B). This amounts to over a 29% increase in the county tax digest in two years!!!! The Sole Commish is packing the coffers for more tax-n-spending put on the backs of Union County citizens. Page 5D of the newspaper shows a proposed 10% tax revenue increase by the County School Board.

The Sole Commissioner had bragged about how low the Union County taxes were compared to other Georgia counties. Is it possible that the 20-year hiatus in reassessments is coincident with his 20-year plus or minus tenure as the Sole Commish? Whose fault is it that the assessments have not been done as required by state law? Sounds like his 20-year shell game and free ride to belly up to the public trough may be reaching a day of reckoning.

He is at it again, trying to confuse and sell the citizenry of Union County on another set of increases. His lengthy blather in the Sept. 1 edition of the North Georgia News attempts to confuse and bamboozle the Union County taxpayer. The Sole Commissioner, alone, has the sole authority to develop, propose, adopt and implement county budgets (and his own salary too) and the tax requirements to meet them. You can voice your opinion, but he can do as he pleases. VOTE NO ON TSPLOST (A.K.A...SLUSH). This is ALL money coming out of your wallet, regardless of what he chooses to call it at that moment.

Be sure to attend the Sept. 8, 2021, Public Meeting where the Sole Commish will perform his latest version of same old tax song and dance routine. You've seen and heard it enough before. You ought to be able to sing along by now. It's time to pull the curtain on this show.

**Johnathon Smythe**