

Opinions

Everybody has one...

At the Front

In previous columns about COVID-19, there have been many subjects discussed. Some of those subjects included guidelines, status of the situation, and what public safety has been doing to respond to this event. But what is it like to be dealing with the response to COVID-19 on the front lines? That is what public safety, health care, schools, governments, and many others experience every day. They are on the front lines of this event.

There are the supervisors, administrators, and other managers who are on the front lines. Although they may not be dealing directly with a COVID-19 positive person, they are making decisions concerning COVID-19 within their organization every day. They are doing this on limited information or guidelines that are constantly changing.

It is easy to get lost in the multiple possibilities and scenarios. The stress of making these types of decisions can be exhausting. However, these leaders have one common theme; they all have the safety of the public and employees in mind. They are trying to make the best decisions for all involved.

There are also the public safety workers who are dealing directly with COVID-19 patients. These are the firefighters, EMTs, paramedics, deputies, police officers, and dispatchers. They are taking the E911 calls, entering homes, treating patients, transporting them, and being in close direct contact with them to deal with their emergency or issue.

These calls require them to wear extra personal protective equipment (PPE). The PPE is hot, restricting, uncomfortable, cumbersome, and it makes everything you do more difficult. These responders also have to follow complicated procedures for response and cleaning after the call.

They are concerned for their health and safety but have a greater concern for helping people and performing their duties. They are also concerned about preventing the spread to their co-workers and their families. That is why they follow the procedures and guidelines put in place for responding to COVID-19 calls.

This is a public safety point of view. There are others on the front lines such as doctors, nurses, technicians, and many other healthcare professionals who are dealing directly with COVID-19

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Taken Captive

"See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ" (Col. 2:8).

This warning could not be more applicable to movements afoot in America today. Those movements clamor for free health care, food, real estate, and abortion. They would dispense with the traditional family, capitalism, police, and jails. They divide the world into two classes - oppressor and oppressed. Ironically, the success of those campaigns would ferment more oppression because they have misdiagnosed the problem. That happens when you don't get the Big Story right, or if you believe there is no Big Story. It's just us, them, and destructive chaos.

By contrast consider Benjamin Watson, a pro football player. In 2014, his social media post after the events in Ferguson, Missouri, went viral. After identifying with the emotions of the moment, he diagnosed the problem. "Ultimately the problem is not a SKIN problem, it is a SIN problem," he wrote. "SIN is the reason we rebel against authority. SIN is the reason we abuse our authority. SIN is the reason we are racist, prejudiced, and lie to cover for our own. SIN is the reason we riot, loot and burn." Whether you call it sin or not, you can see that something is wrong in the world. That is because: (1) The source of morality is your Creator; (2) God's morality is right for everyone, not just for those who believe it; and (3) Everyone has some sense of that morality, even if you try to suppress it.

Watson didn't leave it there. Having put his finger on the problem, he continued. "But I'm encouraged because God has provided a solution for sin through His Son Jesus and with it, a transformed heart and mind—one that's capable of looking past the outward and seeing what's truly important in every human being." Watson knows the Big Story.

Justice and transformation are the language of the Christian worldview. But if you borrow that language, indict other people or the system as the ultimate oppressor, and seek transformation by public policy, then you have fallen into the "empty decep-

See *Fowler*, page 5A

All Things New
Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. The grass on the roads is so tall this year. When is the county going to get caught up on mowing?

A. This year has proven especially difficult for the Road Department and the State of Georgia Department of Transportation to keep up with mowing county-maintained and state roads. If you have a problem and you live on a county road with a green road sign, you can call the Road Department with any visibility problems at 706-439-6062. To call GDOT, you would need to call 706-781-3957.

Q. Why is the grass growing different than other years?

A. With all the rain and warm weather, the grass is growing faster than we could have ever imagined. Then, when you add in the fact that we do not have access to detainee crews for assistance with mowing and litter pickup because of Covid-19, it is about impossible to keep up. We are making sure the highly trafficked roads within the county get mowed and moving out to the less traveled roads when possible. We really feel this is just an issue for this year and next summer our mowing will be back on schedule.

Q. Why is the county not able to utilize detainee crews this year?

A. As with about everything else, it is due to COVID-19. The Carlton Colwell Detention Center has always worked with us and had six crews available for us to use as we needed for maintenance and general labor, including mowing. With the threat of COVID-19 and the high probability that if one inmate gets it then it could spread through the entire detention center population, the detainee crews are not available to anyone at this time. I completely understand this concern and feel the detention center is doing the right thing, but without the help of detainees, it is very hard for us to keep up.

Q. Why don't you just hire more employees to do the mowing or contract all the mowing out?

A. Paying someone to mow or hiring additional employees for a task that we normally pay a nominal fee for is just not feasible. Especially this year when we still do not have a good idea of the effects of COVID-19 on the county budget.

Q. I requested some patching be done on my county-

See *Paris*, page 5A

Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



Letters to the Editor

More Revenue or A Cleaner Environment?

To the Editor,

The City of Blairsville, in alliance with State Sen. Steve Gooch and Gooch Trucking, seems to have no issue with continuing to process out-of-county leachate to release into our river, streams and lake. In recent weeks, thanks to Lake Nottely Improvement Association (LNIA), we have learned that some 11,000 gallons/day of leachate from metro Atlanta has been being processed at the Blairsville Wastewater Treatment Facility for nearly a year (3.6+ million gallons so far). There was apparently no public discussion of this environmental concern prior to this agreement being entered.

Now we learn that the city has petitioned the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) for a permit to increase its capacity for treating wastewater by 2 1/2 times, from the current 400,000 gallons/day to 1,000,000 gallons/day. This request was posted one time on the back page of last week's paper with a 30-day time frame for the public to voice concerns.

With excess capacity currently at the treatment facility, it is obvious that the city is putting profits over environmental concerns. Though there

See *Brownhill*, page 5A

My First Letter in Opposition

To the Editor,

I know this is a "first" for me, because I have been one of Commissioner Paris' most faithful supporters since meeting him about 15 years ago, and have always voiced my opinion that our county did not need a "board" of commissioners as long as Lamar was in office.

However, two controversial articles in the past couple of weeks have me scratching my head, asking, "What is going on in our county?" I had questions about the first "sweet deal" of property being purchased involving land recently owned by a convicted criminal.

Yet, now just a week later -- here -- in the midst of the most horrific shutdown of our economy in our lifetime, Commissioner Paris has made an announcement that the finalization of a second purchase of land will be within the next 30-60 days. This land was bought by local magnate W.C. Nelson's group for \$628,000 in 2006; however, now in this depressed and ongoing-depressing new normal economy, it apparently is worth an additional of \$200,000-300,000 more?

I am not only confused, but I believe I am in the majority who believe that, in this desperate economy, such a decision may need to be reconsidered, or at least the purchase price, despite any "final appraisal," would need to be re-negotiated. I see the need for a new jail facility, but with a large population of elderly residents and dimin-

See *Gray*, page 5A

What Is Local Gov't Doing?

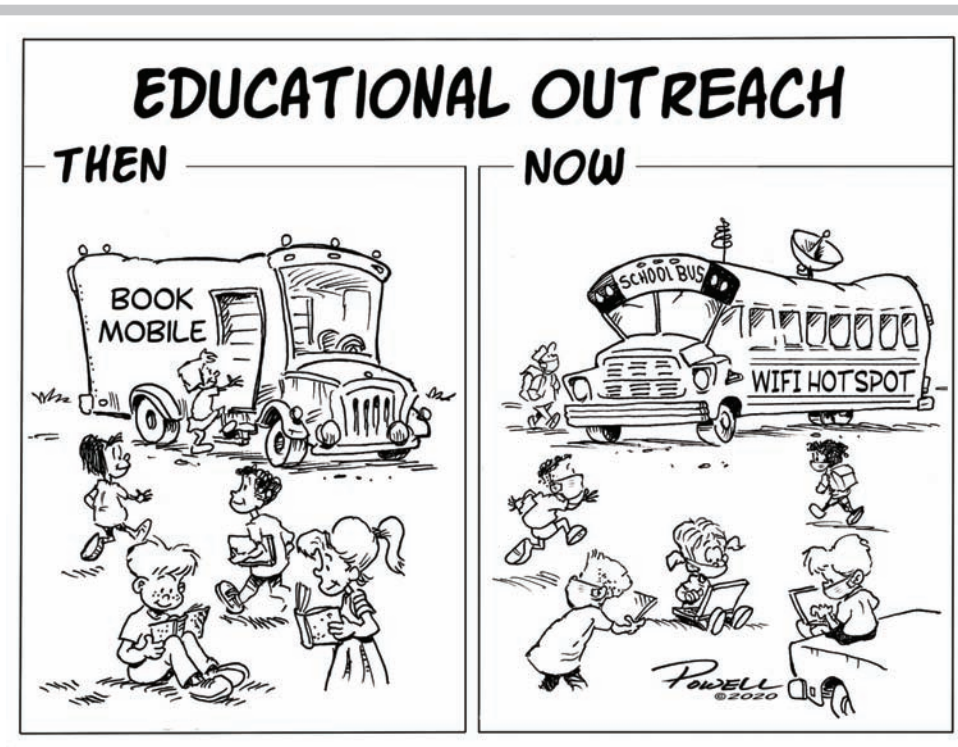
Dear Mr. Paris:

As of today (Aug. 5) we see the number of COVID infections in Union County at 235. This is a huge increase over last month and no indication of slowing. And we have crossed the 1 percent of population benchmark which makes this as a grave concern. And our children are preparing to return to school.

Yet there is little if any coverage in the newspaper or other communication as to what local government is doing to help slow or deal with this problem. Why has there been such a spike in cases? Is our Health Department doing anything? Where and how can residents get tested if they choose to? How is this affecting our government departments, and what will/can your office do about helping to keep our county safe and curtail the increase?

Your attention and response would be appreciated. Perhaps you can persuade the North Georgia News to include a special edition in the next publication.

Respectfully,
Peter Reo



Letters to the Editor

LNIA Reply to Paris Aug. 5 Q&A

Dear Commissioner Paris:

I am writing to you in response to your Commissioner's Questions column that appeared in the Aug. 5, 2020, edition of the North Georgia News. In your column you have impugned the integrity of the Lake Nottely Improvement Association by implying that the LNIA has not fully researched the wastewater permit issue and has spread misinformation. I assure you, sir, members of LNIA have spent hundreds of man-hours researching the issue, talking to municipal and EPD representatives, and locating and reviewing public documents. The LNIA has great confidence in the facts that it has disclosed. We always are looking for additional information and are willing to be corrected if we are wrong. But in this case, it appears that you are spreading misinformation and for some inexplicable reason you have attempted to discredit the LNIA that is only trying to protect the drinking water and recreational uses of the Lake Nottely watershed generations into the future.

The one thing we agree on is that the renewal application seeks to expand the discharge capacity from 400,000 gallons to 1,000,000 gallons per day. Nobody has claimed that this entire output consists of leachate. Rather, leachate is included in this discharge. The concern is that a large portion of the proposed increase may consist of leachate. This concern is heightened by the previous public statements made at the time when the leachate contract with Sen. Steve Gooch's company, The Water Authority, was being considered. At that time, it was represented that the Blairsville Wastewater Treatment Plant (BWTP), with a 400,000 gallon per day discharge permit, had more treatment capacity than was needed then and into the foreseeable future by the local residential and commercial population. The immediate question is why in the world does the BWTP need to increase its capacity by 2.5 times to 1,000,000 gallons per day? Why is the renewal application not just that, a renewal of the 400,000 gallon permit that already includes excess capacity, rather than a modification that more than doubles the daily discharge to 1,000,000 gallons per day? Is the proposed increase intended to facilitate an even larger leachate discharge volume in the future? While the proposed increase arguably may put a few dollars more into the Blairsville coffers, is the proposed increase primarily intended to further line the pockets of Sen. Gooch? At what cost to future generations?

In your column you represent that the BWTP has a permit to process 25,000 gallons of leachate per day, but is only processing 11,000 gallons of leachate per day. Two points here.

See *Lively*, page 5A

Hootie and Old John

Hootie was a likable fellow who loved to make people smile. He enjoyed telling stories and looking important. He always enjoyed being in the limelight. This man was a person which would give the shirt off of his back to help another person. But, sometimes his stories would become exaggerated with age. For example, a fish he caught as a boy grew nearly 5 inches during his lifetime. An old boar coon he and his daddy caught years earlier had increased by 10 pounds as Hootie aged.

His favorite coon hound which was just an average dog when living had become a world beater during his senior years. According to Hootie he even walked to and from school in 10 inches of snow, and it was uphill both ways.

But, there was another side to this storytelling old man. Once a family down the holler from Hootie had some trouble. Old man Mitchell broke his leg and couldn't plow his mules to break up the ground for spring planting. Hootie showed up at the Mitchell Farm to break the land for the family and wouldn't take any payment for his service. Later in his life our storyteller cut firewood for the young family of a fellow named Homer. Homer was laid up sick in the dead of winter and Hootie's efforts kept the family from freezing. Hootie was always the first person to show up and the last to leave when workdays were held at the church house.

But, later in life, Hootie developed some problems of his own. He had trouble with one of his legs that necessitated his use of a crutch. This resulted in a real slowdown to his escapades in the woods. Hootie's wife became ill and passed away while one of his sons ran into some legal trouble resulting in his incarceration. However, the man's demeanor never changed. He still spent his time smiling, telling stories and trying to help others.

There was another man in the community called Old John. John, like Hootie, was an outdoorsman. He loved fishing and hunting. But, John was a person who always thought he had to be the best at everything. Unlike Hootie, John's version of the story always revealed that he wanted to be better than everyone else. So, if your coon hound treed 45 coons last winter, then John's would have treed 46. Or if you killed a 6-point buck, John would kill a 7-pointer. But, these were stories where John always did better than anyone else. And he enjoyed letting you know that he was better than you.

Old John was especially hard on Hootie. All the old men would gather down at the little country store and begin telling stories. Hootie

See *Cummings*, page 5A

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Fall Gardening

Do you usually have a fall garden? Now is the time to start thinking about one. There are some benefits to having a fall garden that we'll get in to. Let's talk about what vegetable crops and cover crops are an option for a fall garden and how to start your fall garden.

Cover crops are planted in the fall and grow throughout the winter into early spring. Cover crops are beneficial to soil health and are often used in organic production. I like to think of the soil as a muscle in the body. If you work a muscle too hard or with only one exercise then you may injure the muscle by straining it or even tearing it. However, by diversifying your exercises and making sure that you're eating properly for muscle growth you can grow stronger. Soil also requires development over time, and cover crops can help with that. Common crops are clovers and cereal crops like cereal rye, black oats, and wheat. Come springtime they can be tilled into the soil or laid down so that you can plant into them. Planting cover crops can help to develop organic matter in the soil, reduce erosion, suppress weeds, and conserve soil moisture. Around Labor Day is the ideal time to plant cover crops in our area.

Broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, kale, turnips, radishes, spinach, lettuce, beets, and onions are some good options for a fall garden. For fall gardens it is important to use mulch to protect the plants from the frost. You may need to get another soil test done on your garden to see if you need to add any fertilizer for the coming crop. Ideally, you want the plants to have 50 - 60 days to mature before the first frost. Our average first frost date is mid-October. That makes mid-August a good time to plant.

There are a couple of benefits to planting in the fall that you don't see in the summer. One of these is there are fewer insect pests around. That means you won't need to spray as many insecticides. If you are trying to grow your garden organically that is a very good thing! There will also be fewer diseases that you have to contend with in the fall. Diseases like hot, humid conditions. As the temperature drops in the coming months diseases will become less and less of a problem. Winter weeds can still be a problem but they are not as much of a pest as summertime weeds. Use mulch to suppress weeds.

Pansies and violas are an option for flowering plants that will last through the winter and keep their flowers. Plant pansies mid-September once the temperatures have cooled down.

Gardening in the spring means working

See *Williams*, page 5A

Blairsville - Union County Chamber President
Steve Rowe



Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



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