

# North Georgia News

Hometown newspaper of Blairsville, Suches and Union County

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## Paris sets 2018 millage rate after six public hearings

By Shawn Jarrard  
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In a called meeting on Wednesday, Sept. 12, Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris set the 2018 county millage rate at 6.153 mills.

The meeting to set the millage rate occurred after a total of six public hearings, only three of which were required by state law – on the commissioner's decision to increase taxes this year.

Paris announced in August that property taxes were going up in 2018, and in early September, he lowered the increase from 6.626 mills to 6.153 mills, a reduction of 0.473 mills over the previously proposed increase.

Concerning his rationale for raising taxes in the first place, Paris cited decreased revenues and increased costs across the board, adding that he feels confident his office can continue to squeeze the budget before its final adoption at the

end of the year. "The reason for the decrease is that the county has decided to continue to look for more and more ways to cut expenses over 2018, while also concentrating on increasing revenue," Paris said at the time.

Being lowered from the initial millage rate proposal, the 2018 county property tax increase is dropping from 14.9 percent to 6.69 percent over the rollback rate of 5.767 mills.

Of course, it's important to take a look at the whole property tax picture, as people's tax bills are not actually increasing by 6.69 percent this year.

As previously reported, every property owner's tax bill is composed of a county portion and a school portion, where the county portion makes up only a third of the bill.

The Union County Schools accounts for the other two-thirds of property tax bills, meaning the school portion

is weighted more heavily on tax bills.

And the school's millage rate went down this year, further helping to offset the county increase.

Together, the 2018 county/school combined millage rate is 17.893 mills, which is a total increase of 0.327 mills over the 2017 combined county/school millage rate of 17.566 mills.

This works out to an actual property tax increase of 1.86 percent between 2017 and 2018, provided property values remain the same.

Initially, the commissioner had hoped to bring in an additional \$1.19 billion in 2018 revenues with this year's property tax increase.

However, cutting the proposed rate by 0.473 mills will result in a levy of \$7,755,944, which is only \$597,587 more than was levied in 2017.

With health care costs alone estimated to be growing by as much as \$750,000 in



Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris in his sixth and final public hearing concerning the 2018 millage rate increase on Sept. 12.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

2019, Paris has his work cut out for him as he strives to finalize the upcoming budget by the end of the year.

"What we've decided to do, we're just going to tighten our belts more than we're accustomed to or that we're

comfortable doing, and we're going to try to make it work," said Paris in his Sept. 12 public hearing. "There's two or three things that we think could really help us."

"No. 1 is our medical insurance. That's a big driving

factor in all of this, is our medical insurance for the employees went up about \$750,000 above budget. We're only raising taxes \$600,000, so \$750,000 plus of that would be for the medical insurance.

"We feel hopeful that, based on what our insurance company has told us, that our rate could drop back this year."

Continued Paris: "We are partially self-insured, and in the case of our particular plan, for those covered under insurance, the county pays up to the first \$40,000 of medical expense for anybody that has an insurance plan with the county."

"If it were to be above \$40,000, it's covered by what's called a re-insurance company, and that's a company that we pay through our insurance company. They pay them a fee to be that re-insurance, and they're kind of the backstop."

According to Paris, in this particular setup, heavy See Millage Rate, Page 2A

## UCHS 2018-2019 Homecoming Queen to be crowned Friday



The 2018-2019 UCHS Homecoming Court

Photo by Todd Forrest

By Todd Forrest  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

Union County High School will crown its 2018-2019 Homecoming Queen before Friday night's football game

against Putnam County on Sept. 21, at 7:05 p.m.

Fourteen representatives make up this year's UCHS Homecoming Court, with the senior class being represented by Aladriel Arnold, Brianna

Hemphill, Carolyne Stone, Maddie Sutton and Madeline Tanner.

Junior class representatives include Emily DiMartino, Brooke Dockrey, Britany Pendley and See Homecoming, Page 2A

## Cybercrime, audit and fiber expansion highlight EMC Board meeting

By Shawn Jarrard  
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YOUNG HARRIS – In the Sept. 11 regular meeting of the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Board of Directors, EMC General Manager Jeremy Nelms delivered an update concerning the recent cybercrime committed against the co-op.

During his Manager's Report, Nelms told the board that he had posted a statement on the attack to BRMEMC.com.

"At our annual meeting on Sept. 8, we shared with members that Blue Ridge Mountain EMC was the victim of a cybercrime this past July," reads the statement. "Since the incident, our leadership has worked, diligently with our attorneys, insurance company,



Jeremy Nelms

bank, IT experts and federal law enforcement to determine exactly what happened, its impact, and the appropriate

next steps. "Based upon what we know to date, this crime appears to have been focused on the bank accounts of the EMC, not personal or financial member information."

"At this point in our investigation, we are confident that none of our members' personal or financial information has been compromised."

"We also want to ensure our members that this incident has not impacted our ability to deliver service."

"BRMEMC maintains crime loss insurance coverage for situations such as this, so there will be no financial impact to our membership."

"In addition, while we have and always will adhere to best practices with regard to cyber security, we are also See BRMEMC, Page 2A

## Blairsville man arrested in connection with Murphy murder

By Shawn Jarrard  
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A Union County man has been arrested in connection with the beating death of 77-year-old Jerry Dalrymple of Murphy, North Carolina, according to the Union County Sheriff's Office.

Colton Russell Harkins, 21, of Blairsville, has been charged by the Cherokee County (NC) Sheriff's Office with aiding and abetting in a crime of murder, according to UCSO Lt. Daren Osborn.

See Murphy Murder, Page 6A



Colton Harkins



Isaiah Beavers

## UCSO arrests drug dealer, three others in Owltown raid

By Shawn Jarrard  
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Investigators with the Union County Sheriff's Office made four drug arrests in a raid of an Owltown residence last week.

"On the night of Sept. 12, around 10 p.m., the Narcotics Division and the Sheriff's Emergency Response Team of the Union County Sheriff's Office executed a search warrant at 128 Nix Lance Drive, and there were four people arrested," said UCSO Lt. Daren Osborn.

Daniel Taylor Rogers, 28, of Blairsville, lived at and sold drugs out of the house, according to Lt. Osborn.

Rogers was arrested on the possession of marijuana with intent to distribute; two counts sale of marijuana; possession of methamphetamine; two counts sale of methamphetamine; possession of alprazolam (Xanax); possession of drug-related objects; possession of a firearm during the commission of a crime; and three counts illegal use of a communication facility.

"I'll just reiterate what



Daniel Rogers



Brandon Patterson



Norbert Gausepohl



Janet Martin

Sheriff Mack Mason says," Lt. Osborn said. "If you want to come to Union County to sell your drugs, it's not a good idea. We're still working hard on it, and we will continue to work hard on it."

Also arrested at the

residence that evening were Brandon Gene Patterson, 24, Norbert Jerome Gausepohl, 25, and Janet Elizabeth Martin, 25, all on charges of possession of marijuana less than an ounce, according to the Sheriff's Office.

## Two-vehicle crash sends four people to hospital



This car crash at K Creek Road and Georgia 515 flipped one vehicle and sent four people to the hospital. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

By Shawn Jarrard  
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A two-car collision at the intersection of Georgia 515 and

Kiutuestia Creek Road sent four local individuals to the hospital on Saturday, Sept. 15.

Fortunately, none of the injuries sustained in the

crash were thought to be life threatening as of press time Monday.

A formal report of the See Crash, Page 2A

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**PANTHERS FOOTBALL**

Sept. 21 vs. Putnam Co. 7:30 PM

**HOMECOMING**

**SOFTBALL**

Thurs. Sept. 20 vs. Oglethorpe Co. 5:30 PM SENIOR NIGHT

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**Nelson Thomas**

in concert at  
**Old Union County Courthouse**

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**Career Coach**

at the  
**Union County Library**

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**Mountain Education Charter High School**

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