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agree with the school system or the county with the way the funds are expended, then the ballot box is the place to make the changes, not cut off our nose to spite our face and raise our own property taxes just because either your candidate did not get elected or the person that got elected chooses to follow their own principles instead of yours," he said.

Paris said it's his and everyone in Union County's responsibility to vote 'yes' for ESPLOST.

"I will support the school

SPLOST because if we do not take care of our children, then we have failed in life," he said. "While I do not work with the school system, I have always volunteered my entire life in youth sports and activities. That is why we have one of the best parks in Georgia, Meeks Park, for our youth and adults. It is important."

He talked about growing up in Union County, when there was only one ball field.

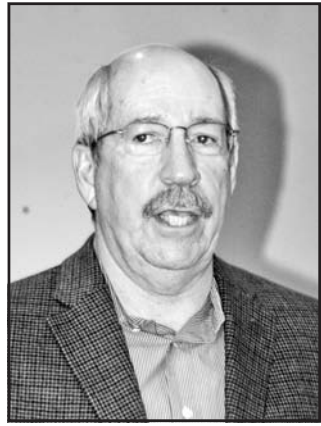
"And it was rough," he said. "We have a duty and an obligation to support educa-

tion in our county.

"If you have ever been to the school and taken a tour and see how excited the teachers are and how involved the students are, how could you vote against our kids and their schools?"

"Our students consistently rank among the best in the state," he said.

"Let's get politics out of our voting and support our kids and do what is not only right for our county but what is best for keeping our own property taxes low," he said.



Lamar Paris

Commissioner...continued from Page 1A

not all go into service right now, but we had the opportunity to purchase these new 2011 Ford Crown Vics," Commissioner Paris said. "These are the vehicle of choice for law enforcement and we were able to acquire some of the last remaining ones that will ever be sold as Ford has stopped making them."

Commissioner Paris said that a business already in Union County continues to service Crown Victorias and rebuild them.

"We shouldn't have a

problem keeping these vehicles on the road for years to come," he said.

Commissioner Paris also approved the agreement between Hayes, James & Associates, Inc. and Union County for topography services on the Senior Center Expansion project. The estimate for these services is \$3,200, he said.

Commissioner Paris accepted an agreement between Union County and the Correctional Resource Group, Inc. for the provision of meals for the Union County Detention Center. The cost per meal is

a sliding scale based on the number of meals provided.

"Typically we have around 50 to 70 inmates," Commissioner Paris said. "Meals would range in cost from a low of \$1.97 per meal up to \$2.30 per meal."

Commissioner Paris also held the first readings of revisions to the Hotel/Motel Tax ordinance and the Alcohol ordinance.

"This ordinance revision (Hotel/Motel Tax) is to simply upgrade it to modernize it with the current times. It also strengthens some of the

enforcement measures," Commissioner Paris said.

Revisions to the Alcohol Ordinance would crack down on violators of the ordinance, stagger the terms of board members, clarify requirements for employee training, and provide a provision that would require an applicant for an alcohol license to be a legal U.S. resident.

A second reading of these proposed ordinances and public hearings will be held during the March Commission meeting, Commissioner Paris said.

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Since Union County first passed its ESPLOST in 1998, the school system has been blessed with a new high school and middle school.

Woody Gap received a new gymnasium, cafeteria, and media center.

Other education projects included technology and athletic field upgrades, building renovations, repairs, and improvements, new school buses and maintenance.

According to Williams, Union County Schools have battled growth issues despite a 32 percent decrease in State funding since 1996.

All the while, Union County residents enjoy one of the lowest property tax rates in Georgia since being allowed by the state to use sales tax dollars to fund necessary school projects.

Williams added that Union County students enjoy modern educational amenities, a top quality education, and hope for a bright future.

"The ESPLOST is not a tax increase," Williams said. "We are only extending the tax that's already there. The money can not be used for salaries or operating expenses.

"It can only be used for capital improvements," he said. "It's a safe bet that without the ESPLOST, our kids would still be using the old high school, which incidentally



ESPLOST Committee member Mickey Cummings explains why the sales tax extension is important to the community. Photo/Todd Forrest

used 22 trailers in 1998.

"North Carolina schools don't have a funding mechanism in place like we do," he said. "That's why Murphy High School is still in the same school that was probably 25 years old when I graduated from Union County in the 1970s."

According to Williams, the proposed future projects would include increased security measures, new school buses, classroom additions, and an Agriculture Science Center, multi-use auditorium, HVAC upgrades, textbooks and materials, technology upgrades, and a field house at the stadium.

"An estimated 30-40 percent of the funds raised by ESPLOST are from visitors to Union County," Williams said. "If you had the opportunity to let your neighbor pay 30-40 percent of your house payment, you wouldn't say no to that."

The Union County Board of Education will prioritize the project list and seek input from teachers, parents, and citizens of Union County.

A Town Hall meeting is scheduled for Thursday at 6:30 p.m. at the Union County Middle School.

The public is urged to attend this important meeting.

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all, any legislation has to take into account enforcement of illegal and legal immigration."

Rep. Collins said the country's fiscal issues must also be addressed in the next 45 days.

"We're dominated right now by fiscal issues," he said. "To get the economy back on track, I think the biggest part is getting Washington straight."

"What we're seeing in Georgia is a great example of what's right," he said. "We've put a good fiscal plan together

in our state providing a stability factor and certainty. That's why we've seen Caterpillar come, and that's why you see these other companies coming into Georgia."

"That's what we've got to do in Washington," he said. "We've got to stabilize our economy, and prove certainty without a doubt. We've got to do that instead of every two or three months having a fiscal crisis of some kind."

"We have to do things in a regular order, which means we do it the way it's supposed to be done," he said. "But, we've also have to have some real fiscal cuts. For the president and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi to say we don't have a spending problem is ridiculous. We have a spending problem. We

have to deal with it."

Rep. Collins said he's had a smooth transition during his first few weeks in Washington. However, some things have been somewhat frustrating, he said.

"I have to say it's been frustrating at times," he said. "When you're used to getting stuff done and accomplished, to see the pace that we're dealing with in Washington, it is frustrating."

"You're dealing with stuff that you know should have been dealt with a long time ago," he said.

"Getting used to the schedule is another thing, sun up to sundown, that's a big chore. We've made a commitment to the 9th District and we're going to see the job through," he said.



The Blairsville Cruisers would like to invite everyone to join us for our February meeting on Thursday, February 28, 2013 at North Georgia Technical College in the main hall from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. This is a potluck dinner meeting along with a friendly chili cook-off being prepared by a few members. So bake your favorite casserole or cake, or grab your favorite to go food and join us. Bring your family and friends too. We look forward to seeing you! Feb27.Z10jgg

Woody Gap Student Council yard sale

The Woody Gap School Student Council is planning their annual yard sale and bake sale on March 22nd and 23rd. We need your help! If you have any household items, toys, tools, furniture (no clothes please) or anything that you wish to donate for the yard sale, please contact Althea Cantrell at 706-747-2401 Ext 1619. All proceeds go to help WG Student Council sponsor school and community projects. N(Feb27,W1)CA