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for ways to save money with staff adjustments, if possible, in the future.

**Q. When we voted on the last SPLOST it was stated that we should vote for SPLOST so a tax increase would not be necessary. So why is it now necessary to raise taxes since SPLOST passed?**

A. While it is very true that I did make the statement that if SPLOST did not pass, it would require a significant property tax increase, it was the absolute truth and still is. But thinking that we would never need a tax increase of any kind, no matter what, in the future would have been a mistake. If some people had a misunderstanding of that, then I apologize for maybe not being clearer. But at the time of the SPLOST election, no one could have anticipated that HB 60 (known as the guns everywhere bill) was going to be passed this year in the Legislature with several unimaginable sections added in at the last minute, parts of which many Legislators did not have any idea were in the bill.

SPLOST is the backbone of our county and the operation of our program is what makes our county head and shoulders better than most with SPLOST programs. Having said that, the passage of SPLOST did prevent a large property tax increase, probably four times or more what this one will be.

**Q. How much will our property taxes go up?**

A. They will only go up a little over \$18.00 on a house valued at \$100,000. While this will be an increase, it can also be compared to the cost of about 4 packs of cigarettes a year and it is about the price of going out to eat dinner for a couple, or the price of about 4 gallons of gas. This is not to minimize the cost, because several people have much larger houses and property, but also it is to emphasize that it is a very moderate property tax increase.

**Q. Is there any state funding that comes to the county?**

A. Yes, there is. All of our grants come from the State of Georgia. Some are pass-throughs from the Feds, but many are funded by the Georgia Legislature. At the county meeting Thursday night, we received over \$300,000 in state grants for the accountability courts. The state funds our head librarian, one-third operation of our Health Dept., significant funding for most of our paving and resurfacing on county

roads, DFCS (Department of Family and Children's Services) operation, and many others, but there is still a lot that we are left to fund.

**Q. Has state money available for grants and funding been reduced?**

A. Without a doubt. As the economy worsened during these past several Legislative sessions, the state budget suffered and they had to cut back on the amount of funding available and this certainly included some grants.

**Q. Has the total valuation of vehicles for tax purposes decreased?**

A. Yes, it has and will continue to do so in the future. In the past, vehicle value determined the amount of ad valorem taxes that were paid. But with the law change from last year, new vehicles will no longer be tied to the mil rate, but will be taxed at a fixed rate with 60% of those funds going to the state. Therefore, as older vehicles depreciate, their value decreases and the amount of ad valorem taxes the county receives on the vehicles will continually decrease.

**Q. When was the last property tax increase?**

A. It was 2006. Since that time the price of gas, tar, gravel, asphalt, office supplies, tires, and just about everything the county purchases has increased while we have kept our property taxes ranked as some of the lowest in the state. Even with this small tax increase, we will still be ranked as having the 5th lowest property tax rate in the State of Georgia out of 159 counties. I am still very proud of that.

**Q. Why did property taxes really go up?**

A. First, nearly half of the increase was due to the necessity of installing courthouse security, with other reasons involving increases in our court system cost, increased cost of property insurance, medical insurance, jail operations, indigent defense for adults and kids, library operation, just to name a few. So while our property tax increase will only be about \$560,000, just the increases in the above items are over \$700,000. We still have to make cuts and watch our spending very closely to keep our budget for next year intact.

I apologize for the need to have the small increase in property taxes of 1/2 mil, but when you call E911, the Sheriff's

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his head, brushed his calloused fingers through his thinning hair and sighed with resignation. It was time for lunch. I sighed with relief.

Under the shade of the black walnut tree, we sat at the makeshift table created from an old barrel. Maimeo served us potatoes mashed with garlic that I had dug out of the dirt cellar for her the evening before. A lump of cheese made from the milk of goats that my father raised was served with jam and pickled beets. I watched as my grandfather used his biscuit to push the food onto his fork, being sure to get every morsel.

"Daideo, why is it so important to get the corn field seeded tomorrow?" I asked. He pushed his stool away from the barrel and rested his legs against the elevated roots of the walnut tree. He smiled at me, as if either delighted with my inquisitive mind, or he detected my true hopes that his answer would not be strong enough, and that I might argue that we could quit for the day.

"Rory, has your father not shared with you the phases of the moon?" he in turn queried me. Before I could speak, he continued to explain that he needed to get the seed in the next day, when the moon was full. "I plant corn, pole beans, sweet peas only at this phase because I know that a full moon will make corn grow tall and pull a vining bean right up the pole".

It was several years later when my college professor explained to me that moon planters believe that the same gravitational force that pulls the tides,

the same cosmic rhythms that draw a horseshoe crab ashore to mate, also cause crops, especially those that bear above ground, to leap right out of the earth. And conversely, when the moon is on the wane and its light and gravitational pull are on the decrease, the earth's gravity kicks in again, and roots burrow happily into the ground.

Today, just hours before the moon rises full, my grandson sits tall next to me on my John Deere. As we make our way around the field, my mind drifts back years to that lunchtime lesson with my Daideo. After he explained his intent that day, he took a final slug of his tea, and then rose with a renewed strength and determination. Now I look over at my Rory, the sun resting on the crown of his head, highlighting the identical cowlick I once had. The purr of the tractor as it pushes through the earth can't emulate my Daideo's gees and haws, but the satisfaction of sharing this moment, on this field, on this day, with my grandchild and my memories, I find my soul is satiated.

This Saturday, Aug 30th, the Union County Farmers Market honors and celebrates the history of the farmers that preceded us. All day long there will be activities for the young and old. If you enjoyed this column's fictional recollection, then you will want to be front and center that day for our 5th Annual Tractor Show and Parade. It will be bigger and better than ever this year. See our ad in this week's paper or visit [www.UCFarmersMarket.com](http://www.UCFarmersMarket.com) for the route and details.

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she thought the dog could safely be shot. She said, "The story is funny now. But, back then if a man got bitten by a rabid dog it was a death sentence". Finally, Papa was able to shoot the dog. Papa said, "Your Granny told me to get doors hung on that house and I did".

Our annual salute to our farmers will be next Saturday, August 30th, at the Farmers Market. There are many activities slated for that day. Union County 4-H Members will salute UGA Cooperative Extension. Cooperative Extension is celebrating 100 years of existence. Many Union County 4-H members will be exhibiting their 4-H Projects that day at the Farmers Market. The salute to Farmers and the induction in the Union County Agricultural Hall of Fame will occur at 11:45 at the Farmers Market.

Also, our annual Trac-

tor parade will be held that day. Tractors should be in place by 9 a.m. at the old Gymnasium on School Circle. Judging will begin at 9:30 a.m. and the parade will follow judging. The route will leave the Old Gymnasium and travel down Veteran's Memorial Drive to Cleveland Street. The route will continue north around the Old Courthouse and then turn right on to Young Harris Street at Foodland Grocery. The parade will continue to Fort Sorghum and turn right at Hoyt's. The route will continue to the 4-way stop and turn right traveling up the hill to the square. At this point in time the tractors will be displayed around the courthouse square. Participants will be given t-shirts and prizes based upon oldest tractors, best restored and other categories. For more information please visit our website at [UCFarmersMarket.com](http://UCFarmersMarket.com).

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from our hearts, joy from our lives, takes away fellowship with God, good thoughts from our minds, love from our souls, subtracts and sucks the very life and light from our being, leaving us empty, brittle, drained and lacking any self-worth.

There are those in this society who seem to think that if we remove all Bibles from motels, hotels, schools, court-houses, etc; muffle prayer in

schools, athletics, restaurants, and in all public places, box up nativity scenes in a closet somewhere and remove or do away with any public displays that proclaim the message of Jesus Christ, that our sins will also disappear. The fact remains that we can never hide or cover our sin. Our only remedy for our sin is not creative hiding but humbly confessing whereby Christ covers our sin.

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that management, not the owners, picks the board. Once voted in, members commonly serve for 10 years or more and can be expected to rubber stamp management decisions, even those not in the best interests of us owners. Many of us are appalled by controversial actions by the manager and board including: 1) Location of unsightly substations, 2) Purchase of prime real estate at historically high prices, 3) Construction of extravagant headquarters building, 4) Massive debt, over \$113,000,000 and growing and 5) Recent revelations that a former Chairman of the Board was wrongly allowed to incur a debt of over \$107,000 of our money. When we protest such poor decisions at the annual meeting, management tiptoes around the issues and nothing gets done about matters of serious concern to members. Our bills just keep going up to pay for their misdeeds.

This year we have a chance to start building a new board that could make a difference. As usual, BRMEMC's committee has nominated one person for each of three vacancies (members serve 3-year terms and 1/3 of board is elected each year). Also, as usual, all three nominees are incumbents who bear at least some responsibility for matters like the recently reported

Terry Taylor scandal. However, four "newcomers" through great personal effort have managed to get their names on the ballot. Since the committee would not nominate them, they each went the extraordinary route of getting petitions signed by approximately 115 members to allow their names on the ballot. This procedure is so unusual that Mr. Sorgen, counsel for BRMEMC, told us he could not remember when the last contested election occurred.

The widely publicized Terry Taylor scandal clearly demonstrates that neither the present 9-member board of directors nor the manager is doing their jobs. Board members who knew about the indebtedness of their former Chairman in the amount of \$107,000+ and did nothing about it are likely guilty of criminal negligence. Board members who did not know about a matter of this magnitude are incompetent and unfit to serve in positions of responsibility. I am convinced that to deal effectively with the Taylor scandal and other grave matters facing BRMEMC "new blood" is required. I urge each of you to carefully consider this matter and vote for new board members who will listen to our concerns and manage our co-op accordingly.

**Wm. Ronald Gibson**

**Lanier ...continued from Page 4A**

I used a TASER for a number of years and I can say hands down, that when used properly and in conjunction with good policies and procedures, the TASER or other ECW is the best tool for controlling violent subjects I have ever used. Here in Union County, meth is the drug of choice. It is a fact that heavy, continued use of meth can lead to a condition called "excited delirium" (ED) where the subject exhibits strange behavior, often talks nonsense, and exhibits extra

human strength when trying to subdue them. They also, often die suddenly due to a number of medical reasons immediately after being subdued. The ECW is a great tool for subduing subjects in the throes of ED, WHEN USED PROPERLY.

I am happy to see that due consideration was given to this proposal and that officers be given the best tools and training to deal with the changing aspects of suspect control that we in law enforcement are experiencing today.

**Grant Lanier**

**Anderson ...**

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Nothing in new law forces a county or city to do anything in relation to courthouses or other government buildings.

Can you point me to any articles y'all posted on the new law?

If you have any questions feel free to contact me.

**Jeff Anderson**  
(770) 894-9085

**Gray ...**

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singers, magicians, artists, etc.

Always striving to bring comfort to the residents, Olivia went out of her way to find activities or interests they would enjoy. When my mother was in UCNH some years ago, Olivia learned that Mom had been an avid knitter all her life, so she bought knitting needles and yarn and asked my mother to teach her how to knit. Unfortunately, Mom was no longer able to remember the steps needed for that skill, but Olivia impressed me by her willingness to try to engage my 94-year old mother.

While everyone agrees that Olivia is worthy of "time-off for good behavior," she will be missed. Godspeed, dear lady; may you enjoy the camping and fishing and just lolling around enjoying these beautiful mountains.

**Arlene M. Gray**

**Moore ...**

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retirees, is also a valley of vice for those of illicit intent.

Perhaps some of the offenders are young enough or will wisen up enough to quit their ways, because everyone makes mistakes in life. Or, if not, maybe when their new home is a jail cell, and their only picnic in that tenure is sweating in a road crew, cleaning up and maintaining the city and county's landscape and flora, they will learn to appreciate where they live and the beauty of our town rather than corrupt it.

To boot, if every one of the misguided drug hustlers get busted for their ill-favored ways, promisingly Sheriff Mason will get more than enough money from the felons' effects to support the Narcotics Division than he would have with the ill-fated and empty coffers of the Appalachian Drug Task Force.

**Jess Moore**

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concern for others. If selected, participation is expected by attending all sessions.

Applications and a complete class schedule can be obtained from the Chamber of Commerce, Community & Southern Bank or the high school

counselors. Many students will receive an application in the mail to their home address. Should you need additional information on Youth Leadership Union, please call 706-745-5789 or visit our website at [www.VisitBlairsvilleGA.com](http://www.VisitBlairsvilleGA.com).

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eral's Office.

However, I did not intend to communicate that either was conducting any kind of full scale investigation of conduct by the EMC. I have spoken with the GBI about this matter. The GBI did what is often referred to as "an assistance rendered" response, which means a Special Agent with the GBI met with and interviewed a complaining witness and received documents about the allegations in this matter, but at this time they have not initiated a criminal investigation. Likewise, to my knowledge the Attorney General's Office has not opened

their own investigation, but I have sought their advice regarding the matter. I have also requested a copy of the EMC's internal investigation upon it being completed.

I rarely comment to the press about matters at this stage, but I understand the public's concern and interest. Therefore I want to be very accurate in explaining that steps are being taken to inquire into this situation, but these steps should not be taken to suggest any determination has been made as to any criminal action.

Sincerely,

**Jeff Langley, District Attorney**