

Everybody uses Something, Something for Everybody: SPLOST making things Better

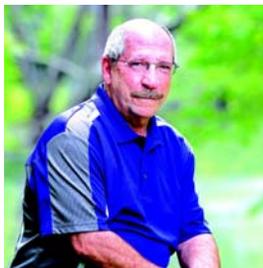
Once Upon A Time local governments existed for the purpose of providing needed services for citizens, such as police protection, fire department, roads, jails, courts, utilities and other services. Government collected money from property owners to pay for services.

In recent years the opportunity became available for local government to pay for some of those services with a special sales tax. In addition, the special sales tax also provides for other things that would benefit the county to be paid for without putting the burden solely on the shoulders of property owners.

The creation of the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) gave all counties in the state options.

"You have the two issues of wants and needs," said Union County Commissioner Lamar Paris. "What SPLOST did for the state of Georgia, it allowed local government to not only have what they need, but also determine what they want. We are able to provide things that no way our county's property taxpayers could afford to do. SPLOST is the fairest way to tax people."

Everybody in the county gets to enjoy and use a portion of what is pro-



Four-term Union County sole Commissioner Lamar Paris has managed numerous projects funded by a special sales tax and maintains one of the lowest property tax rates in the state of Georgia. nc

vided by the SPLOST projects.

In Union County, the county government has a special sales tax. The school system also has a special sales tax for projects. The county government has no control over the school system and vice versa. Paris noted that the school system has used their special tax money for new school construction, facilities construction, improvements and other uses - making it a quality school system the students, parents, teachers and citizens are proud of.

Union County voters have overwhelmingly approved SPLOST votes for county projects, the latest with a 70% approval.

Those projects have the added benefit of creating jobs in time of a national economic slump.

"Without SPLOST our county would be financially devastated," Paris said.

SPLOST funds capital

projects, not operation cost.

Roads and bridges gets the largest share of the money. "The people who pay the extra penny in sales tax are those who use the roads and bridges," Paris said. "Why should only the people who own property in the county foot that bill entirely?"

The SPLOST has allowed Union County to have one of the lowest property tax rate in the state. The property taxes in the county have lowered slightly for numerous years.

"People in our county realize how important it is to not only have a beautiful county in terms of mountains, waterfalls, lakes and streams," said Paris, "but to also have facilities for those who live here and to make people want to come here. With the extra penny sales tax, we are able to do things that contributes to the quality of life in the county."

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Kiwanis Fair



Blairsville Kiwanis Fair at night

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Hearing screams roll through the air is the sweet sound of people having fun at a fair. The source of the screams are the excited riders in seats going in a huge circle that has riders hanging upside down, buckets being whirled around or two giant arms with cages on the end swinging back and forth like a pendulum. The calmer rides include bumper cars, flying elephants and more.

There is something for all ages at a fair, including the famed merry-go-round with horses and carousel music.

The Blairsville Kiwanis Fair is held each spring at the industrial park in Union County.

A major attraction is what is affectionately known as "fair food" that includes, among other things, corn dogs, hotdogs, hamburgers, cotton candy, funnel cakes, and of course, lemonade and soft drinks.

Games of chance gives those attending the opportunity to win prizes, from small trinket items to large stuffed animals. Rolling a wooden ball, tossing a basketball, firing water from a pistol are among the favorites.

Many youngsters go home with a live gold fish, if their aim is good. In addition to the rides, games, prizes and food, it is also the place to simply go and "hang out" for a while. The hanging out and visiting spans all generations - from kindergarten kids to high school seniors to senior citizens.

As night falls in the North Georgia mountains, the bright colorful lights come alive with a magnificent view.

Attendance in some years has exceeded 10,000 guests.

The next Blairsville Kiwanis Fair is scheduled for April 15-19, 2015, at the same location, the Union County Industrial Park on Airport Drive.

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Projects paid for with the Union County SPLOST funds

- SPLOST 2 Projects**
 Road-bridge maintenance/improvements/repair
 Other capital projects:
 Road vehicles and equipment
 Courthouse Expansion
 Meeks park improvements
 E-911 Renovation/expansion/equipment
 Public safety vehicles
SPLOST 3 Projects
 Road-bridge maintenance/improvements/repair
 UC Annex improvements
 Meeks Land
 Civic center renovation/expansion
 Recreation Department improvements
 Playground improvements
 Horse Arena Improvements
 Suches Community Center
 Senior Center renovation & expansion

- Farmers Market new building
 Cannery new building
 UC Community Center new building
 Public Library renovation, expansion, books
 Jail renovation & expansion
 Public Safety facilities/vehicles/equipment
 UC Sheriff's Office vehicles
 UC Fire Department building/equipment
 UC Fire Department fire trucks payoff
 Ambulances
 Solid Waste Transfer Station/Recycling Center
 Historic Courthouse renovations
 Choestoe Community Center / voting precinct
 Historic Courthouse elevator
 Byron Herbert Reece facilities/improvements
 Old gym
 Covered Outdoor Stage
 City of Blairsville projects

George and Cecilia Holland
 Owners
 1-800-84-GRITS (800-844-7487)
 Local: 706-745-5785

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