

County...continued from Page 1A

In the meeting, the commissioner accepted a \$500 option agreement between the county and the estate of Leon Davenport, Sydney C. Vandiver, Laurie Shelnut and Kenneth C. Chambers.

The option agreement is for 90 days, and gives the county exclusive buying rights for the property within that time frame.

The county will be acquiring the land for \$678,500, which works out to \$51,873 per acre for the 13.08-acre tract.

"They were originally asking in a \$1.2 million

range for the property," said Paris. "We had the property appraised. We got an appraisal at \$590,000, or \$45,100 per acre."

Commissioner Paris knew that the county couldn't pay \$1.2 million for the property, but he also knew that the landowners wouldn't accept an offer of half their asking price, so he asked the county attorney how much he could reasonably offer above the appraised value.

The attorney answered back that the county could go as high as 15 percent above the appraised price in its offer.

Fifteen percent above the appraised value of \$590,000 is \$678,500, which is the amount the county ended up offering.

"I presented this offer to the Davenport family," said Paris. "And while it took a while, and we've been working on this a long time, they have finally agreed to the price. I want to say that this is a major property purchase for the future of Union County recreation."

"The family is very excited that the county will be able to acquire the property, and a special thanks to the Davenport family for working

with us and accepting a price that they could certainly have been able to get more with time."

For Paris, whose legacy will undoubtedly be the sheer volume of recreational space within Union County, the announcement was a proud moment.

"I can tell you that I am so pleased and thankful to have made this agreement," said Paris. "Our recreation programs are growing by leaps and bounds. This will give us an opportunity to expand into the future, and it being adjacent to the Farmers Market makes it even more special."

"We anticipate closing on the property within the next 45 days."

After analyzing its recreational growth strategy in the coming days, the county will purchase the land with either SPLOST funds or reserve money.

The commissioner said he will be working hard to figure out how best to utilize

the new property, which brings the total land at the Farmers Market to around 45 acres.

Commissioner Paris noted that the county is looking to expand past its ballfield capabilities and youth sports programs past what is available at Meeks Park, which has reached capacity.

Furthermore, the county will be looking for a place to put a gymnasium, though nothing has been set in stone.

"We have not committed on what's going on this property yet, we've got several different ideas in mind," said Paris. "But the opportunity came now to buy it, and so I felt like it was the best thing to do to go ahead and make this purchase, secure this property, and then we'll have time over the next two, three, four years to plan to expand recreation."

Also in the meeting, Paris announced that the reconstruction of one of Union County's oldest homes, the Hunter-England House, was about 75 percent completed at

the Farmers Market.

The county will be spending between \$600,000 to \$750,000 to replace the 30-year-old irrigation system at the county-owned Butternut Creek Golf Course, with work expected to begin late fall.

"Our golf course has been a real economic development tool for this county for many years," said Commissioner Paris. "It's something we're all proud of, and people come from far and wide to play."

Paris also spoke on the 1.7 acres donated last summer by the developer of Hidden Harbor out on U.S. 129N/Murphy Highway.

He said that the county has acquired another acre, adding that he's still looking to put a fire station on that piece of land, and perhaps even another convenience and recycling center.

The commissioner said the county will likely get started this year on preliminary grading work for the property.

Chambers puts on biggest ever Buy Local Extravaganza



Cabin Coffee was one of the many local vendors available at the 2017 Buy Local Extravaganza. Photo/Lily Avery

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Hundreds of locals came out to celebrate the Seventh Annual Buy Local Extravaganza, presented by the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce, on Thursday, May 18 at the North Georgia Technical College.

From restaurants to retailers, the Buy Local Extravaganza had it all and more for patrons to taste and try and buy.

"There are over 80 businesses, totaling over

100 tables, 225 chairs and I can't even keep up with the number of people we've had come through today," said Linda Lawrence, Chamber Membership Coordinator. "The parking lots keep filling and re-filling. We've got people serving shaved iced. We have a helicopter. We have horses. We've got spas, burgers and retail jewelry. We have everything you can think of."

"All of these people are chamber members. This event itself sold out in two and a half weeks. We had over 80 people ask to be a part of this."

"This is the one event we

give to the community that's free so they can come out and meet all the businesses. We have various restaurants giving away samples of free food. It's an eclectic group but it's one way that we can give back to the community."

Most vendors participated in booth-specific raffles, giving patrons an opportunity to enter their names at individual tables to win prizes, such as a new gas grill from Woodmen Life, a basket full of goods from Rustic Mountain Decor and countless others.

See Chamber, Page 6A

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