

SAR...from Page 1

"Yearly, we like to present awards to people in our community - firemen, EMS and police officers," said Turner, president of Blue Ridge Mountains SAR chapter. "It's a real pleasure to give an award to somebody that puts his life on the line in trying to make this a better place."

The award reads as follows:

"David Ueltzen, Union County Fireman, for his leadership in recruiting and training new firemen, and responding to over 1,200 fire and emergency calls in Union County, obtaining fire trucks and personally providing safety education programs in schools, has been awarded the Fire Safety Commendation Award in recognition for accomplishments and/or outstanding contributions to protect human life and property by preventing injuries or casualties due to fire."

Turner called on Union County Fire Chief David Dyer to present and pin Ueltzen's medal, with those gathered as witnesses to the important event. Also in the meeting, Commissioner Lamar Paris told of his excitement to have finalized a particular land purchase made by the county. "I hereby accept this settlement statement and warranty deed between Union County and Jane Wimpey Rogers for the purchase of 10.166 acres located ... off of the Old Smokey Road," said Commissioner Paris. "The cost per acre is \$32,250, with a total price being \$317,811.14, which includes a \$10,000 reduction in price."

"This property includes the pasture immediately adjacent to the Farmers Market. So, if you go to the Farmers Market and look back toward the highway, that beautiful field there that we've been salivating over and wanting for years, we were finally able to do that."

Commissioner Paris gave a brief history on the county's interest in the land, noting that he'd wanted to purchase the property since the beginning of his tenure as commissioner.

"We first bought the 8 acres where the Farmers Market actually sits," said Commissioner Paris. "Then we came back and bought, I think, about a 5.5 acre strip just across Butternut Creek, which if you've been to the Farmers



Union County Fire Chief David Dyer pins a commendation medal to firefighter David Ueltzen's uniform in the January county meeting

Market, that's where we have overflow parking over there. "And that's all they would sell us, because that was the floodplain of the property, and they wanted to keep the rest of the property for commercial development later on. I've been working on this really ever since I got into office. I think we bought another 8 acres from them last year - a piece that we really didn't need - but I had to buy it in order to entice them to sell us this piece."

The land was purchased in three installments, meant to be paid out over three years at zero percent interest, and the county made a one-third installment over the Christmas of 2014, another last month, and was able to make the last payment early.

"And then next Christmas we were going to pay them another third, but we had the money in our SPLOST account to go ahead and pay it off," said Commissioner Paris. "So I called and asked them, if we went ahead and paid it off, would they give us a discount. So they gave us an 8 percent discount (toward the final installment) on the property to go ahead and pay it off."

Commissioner Paris said that the county will be working with the Georgia Department of Transportation to get an entrance into the Farmers Market at the red light intersection of GA 515 and the Glen Gooch Bypass, once GDOT builds its new four-lane connecting Blairsville and Young Harris.

"This property has a lot of potential uses - we haven't identified all of those," said Commissioner Paris. "People

that know me know that I'm only interested in property that the county owns and anything that touches property that the county owns.

"I try to think ahead, and lots of years ahead sometimes. Meeks Park is completely surrounded. We have now purchased, other than maybe an acre or two, maybe a little strip behind, of all the property really that's available there, and we really can't expand anymore in Meeks Park."

"We've got an opportunity here to possibly expand some ballfields," continued Commissioner Paris. "If we decide in the future we need to expand the Farmers Market, we've got room to do it. This just opens up a lot of options over there that I'm really excited that we'll have to do for the future."

Separately, Williams Drive and Cheyenne Meadows were added back into the county maintained road system, after having been accidentally removed several years ago during a road renaming process.

Commissioner Paris also passed a resolution setting the qualifying fees for the 2016 election cycle, including fees for qualifying for the following county offices: sole commissioner, tax commissioner, clerk of superior court, magistrate judge, probate judge, sheriff, county coroner and board of education.

Qualifying dates for candidates with a party, or non-partisan candidates, are Monday, March 7, through Friday, March 11, at 12 p.m.

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In her acceptance of the president/CEO position at the Cartersville-Bartow County Chamber of Commerce, where beginning Feb. 1 she will embrace new challenges in meeting the needs of a population five times the size of Union County.

In recognition of her nine and a half years of service to Blairsville and Union County, Commissioner Paris decided to designate a day in the county - Jan. 21, 2016 - as "Cindy Williams Day."

At the January county meeting, Commissioner Paris welcomed Williams and her mother and father, Jennie and Larry Williams, to stand with him for the presentation of Williams' namesake proclamation.

"We are certainly going to miss her, and we're going to forgive her, but we haven't yet," said Commissioner Paris in a moment of levity. "We're just deciding at what point we're going to do that. This is kind of the first step in doing that. She has meant so much to Union County and the City of Blairsville, and we wanted to honor her today by doing this proclamation."

Following the proclamation, Williams spoke words of thanks to mark the occasion.

"The decision, of course, was not an easy one for me to leave Union County because of, first of all, so many great people, many of which are in the room," said Williams. "I know a lot of faces here, and you've all been very supportive, so I appreciate that."

"A couple of people, my parents first of all, I want to say thank you to. I feel like so much of who a person is starts at home, and that begins from the day that you're born. They've been incredibly supportive of me and all the success that I've ever had. I certainly owe a lot to them."

Williams then recognized several chamber staff and chamber board members who were in attendance to witness the county's proclamation, and thanked them for their presence that evening.

"The community as a



Jennie and Larry Williams with their daughter, Cindy Williams, middle, for the proclamation of 'Cindy Williams Day.'

whole, I think, everybody has been a big part of the successes that have been named here - certainly never a one man job, so I'm very, very appreciative of that," said Williams. "I, of course, would be certainly remiss if I didn't thank the commissioner and the county as a whole."

"I said to him personally, I said, when you're applying for a job just out of college, you don't really know where you're going to end up. Well, the Lord blessed me to be in Union County for as long as I did. I could not have imagined working under a better commissioner to learn from, and again, the county as a whole."

"I'm super appreciative - this means the world to me," continued Williams. "It's an honor, it's a privilege, and it is very reminiscent of my nine and a half years in the community. Thank you very much."

The content of the proclamation is as follows:

"Cindy Williams was born and raised in Fannin County, here in the North Georgia Mountains. She received a bachelor of art in business administration with a concentration in marketing from Piedmont College. She also went on to receive her master of business administration at Auburn University."

"Cindy Williams came to work for the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce in July of 2006.

With her arrival, she was able to bring the chamber into the 21st century by giving our local chamber an identity and a brand. She immediately began working to promote Union County and Blairsville.

"Cindy Williams assisted in securing the community designations of an Appalachian Trail Community Supporter, Camera Ready Community and an Entrepreneur Friendly Community. In 2011, she executed the application to have the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce become a certified Georgia Chamber. She assisted in the development of an adult and youth leadership program, along with helping start the Annual Scottish Festival and Highland Games."

"Cindy Williams became a living, breathing champion for Union County. Her thoughtful, energetic and outgoing personality has been an asset to this community. She dedicated her days to improving both the business climate and the quality of life for residents, business owners and visitors."

"Now, therefore be it resolved that I, Lamar Paris, Commissioner of Union County, hereby proclaim Thursday, Jan. 21, 2016, as "Cindy Williams Day" in said county, and express to her the gratitude and admiration of the people of Union County for her dedication to the promotion and growth of Union County and Blairsville."

Winter...from Page 1

did, but the snow fell so hard and so quick for that short period of time, that it trapped the moisture underneath the snow," said Commissioner Paris. "Of course, that night it froze, and every road in the county had a slick layer of ice underneath the snow over it, and it's just stayed frozen for a couple of days."

"In the shady areas, it's been almost impossible to get it all. We've spread record numbers of salt and gravel all over the county and are still doing it today (Monday). It's just amazing that that little amount of snow, just an inch, inch and a half, had that much impact on the roads. As usual, GDOT and the road crew did a great job."

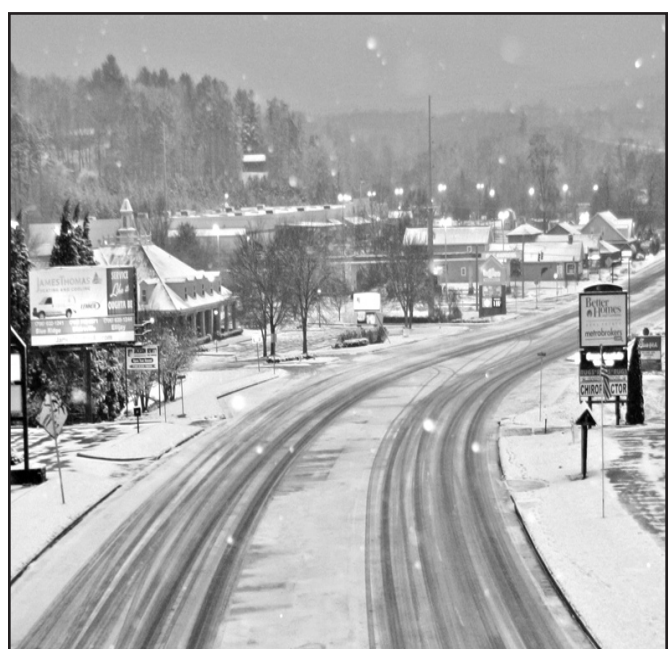
Commissioner Paris said that, while there were still icy spots in places around the county Monday, he was optimistic that rising temperatures would help to take care of clearing the more stubborn icy patches.

"What really helped is that everybody stayed in," said Commissioner Paris. "I think the fact that, not only we had some snow and ice, but it was a weekend and nobody had to go anywhere. There were snowstorms all over the country, and people watching that on TV. We really appreciate the fact that people stayed in a lot."

Union County Sheriff's Deputies and Blairsville Police Officers kept steady patrols over the weekend, and Commissioner Paris highlighted the community effort involved each time there is a weather event, in order to make sure the public stays safe, including cooperation with the city and the state.

"Everybody works together here in the county, and it really makes it seamless to where we don't worry about it," said Commissioner Paris.

Due to strong winds Friday morning, the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC had to



deal with about 1,500 power outages in the region.

Hardworking BRMEMC crews were able to get that number down to about 25 outages by 4 p.m. on Friday, and outages through the weekend were minimal.

"I'm new here, but I've been really impressed with the quality of our employees and with the work ethic that they have," said BRMEMC Interim

General Manager Dan Brewer. "They take on a storm almost like a challenge."

The Union County Road Department would like to thank Vulcan Materials and the employees who worked late hours and on their days off to keep the salt/gravel mixture readily available for the eight county vehicles that were spreading and plowing constantly over the weekend.



Brasstown Bald Visitor Center gets a visit from Old Man Winter /photo by Lowell Nicholson



Union County Historic Courthouse as the snow continues to fall



Frosty paid a visit outside Silver Maple Apartments