

Paris provides updates on new county recreational facilities

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris announced that the Double Gym on the Glenn Gooch Bypass should be completed by late summer 2020 in a special called meeting on Tuesday, Jan. 21.

Paris called the meeting to make up for the regular meeting he missed the week before while out with a cold.

"It's coming along very well," Paris said of the Double Gym. "It was slow getting started, but now they're moving on it. It's going to be one of the most exciting enhancements for our recreation program that we've had in years.

"We've got so many kids involved in the basketball programs, and it keeps growing and growing, and we were running out of gym space. Kids and adults alike were having to play late at night.

"Now, not only will they be able to practice, but also, we'll be able to host tournaments."

The commissioner said there has been a huge need for this facility for quite some time, since the high school gym is not available due to security restrictions.

"We're able to afford this gym, and it's going to be a great asset to the community," Paris said.

The new facility will allow the county to offer exercise, dance, aerobics and other programs for kids as well as adults year-round. There will also be an indoor track.

Two conference rooms in the Double Gym can be rented for children's birthday parties, where they can shoot hoops after their celebration.

Changing gears, Paris mentioned that the new, tournament-class pickleball courts being built behind the Union County Health Department have an anticipated completion date of March this year.

However, the pavilion and restrooms that will make up the pickleball complex can't be completed until the Double Gym is in its final construction

stages. Until then, Paris said the county will provide portable toilets.

The new gun range is moving forward, the commissioner said.

"We're waiting now for the Department of Natural Resources," Paris said. "They're working on the design and the cost estimate of the facility.

"So, we anticipate, probably in March, hopefully getting a final plan from them, and then trying to come up with how we're going to fund it - what the total cost will be and where all of those funds will come from."

Paris said there is a pot of money from DNR for these kinds of projects that comes from state and federal sources. But there is a caveat attached to that funding based on the percentage of time the range will be available for public use, as opposed to exclusive use by the Union County Gun Club and Union County Sheriff's Office.

Paris said DNR is estimating the cost to be somewhere between \$1.75

million and \$2.5 million, so the caveat in the DNR funding will be of great significance.

These details have yet to be worked out, but the project, after well over two years of studies and tests, is finally underway.

The asphalt parking lot and landscaping at the new pavilion at Meeks Park is still under construction, said Paris, and it should be finished in the near future. However, the pavilion itself is finished and has already been used.

Meeks Park will also be home to the new Vietnam Veterans of America War History Mural, which will be located where the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Moving Wall was displayed a few years ago.

"We're letting the veterans group have that spot. They've been working on raising money for a couple of years and still are, and they're still trying to get the design finalized," Paris said.

The four-field T-ball and coach's pitch complex planned for the area between



Lamar Paris

the Union County Farmers Market and Georgia 515 that was announced at the grand opening of Farmers Market Way on May 29, 2019, is still in the design stage, Paris said.

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The four-field T-ball and coach's pitch complex planned for the area between

four-field complex with parking, playgrounds," Paris said. "For the first time, for these younger kids (8 and under), we're going to have a complex that is their complex."

As previously reported, Paris used the Jan. 21 meeting to approve and accept all items from the Thursday, Jan. 16, monthly meeting agenda.

Wet-N-Wild...from Page 1A

Footage from surveillance equipment on the property, which caught the entire burglary on video - including a vehicle tag number - and he was quickly joined by Lt. Tom Mangifesta with the Sheriff's Office Criminal Investigations Division.

According to Mangifesta, the burglary took place after three individuals, later identified as driver Kimberly Dawn Blauvelt and brothers Bryan Aaron Berryman and Mark Larry Berryman, all of Robbinsville, North Carolina, pulled into the Wet-N-Wild early Sunday morning.

"At about 1:17 a.m., (footage showed) a tannish-gold Ford Taurus pull into one of the wash bays," Mangifesta said. "Obviously, the business is closed at this point. There were three occupants, a female and two males."

All occupants exited the vehicle, and as Mark Berryman began to wash the car, Blauvelt

and Bryan Berryman walked the perimeter of the car wash, inspecting the exterior of the business, Mangifesta said.

Bryan Berryman then allegedly used some tools - a blowtorch, then a pry bar - to enter into a door leading to the interior of the business, and he came out with an undetermined amount in quarters and \$1 bills, Mangifesta said.

The three suspects left the car wash and possibly headed back toward Murphy, North Carolina, or the Robbinsville area, Mangifesta said.

It was discovered that Blauvelt had made a trip to the Coinstar machine in the Murphy Ingles to change out about \$440 worth of quarters, and as investigators interviewed witnesses in North Carolina, Deputy Jackson continued asking questions near the car wash, Mangifesta said.

While questioning the convenience store clerk at the neighboring Chevron station

on Georgia 515 about viewing surveillance footage from earlier that morning, Jackson spotted the wanted vehicle at 10:27 a.m. driving the parking lot and passing in front of the store, Mangifesta said.

"He gets on the radio, letting us know that the vehicle has just driven through the parking lot and is now on the bypass getting ready to turn at the light at 515," Mangifesta said. "We all run for our cars, and I pick up on the vehicle at Home Depot and am radioing for additional units.

"When we get a sufficient number of deputies on 515 right at Courthouse Drive, we initiate a felony stop (at 10:29 a.m.), take all the subjects out of the car, separate them. The men had large sums of cash and \$1 bills in their pockets.

"We looked in and saw the blue United Community Bank bags that they put the quarters in. We also see in the backseat the keys to the business, because once they were in, Bryan Berryman stole the keys to all the change

machines and the different equipment. We found the receipt for the Coinstar machine in Murphy in Blauvelt's purse."

All three suspects were taken into custody at 10:33 a.m. - a little over nine hours after the commission of their alleged crimes.

In addition to the money stolen from the car wash, damage to the establishment was estimated at being in excess of \$1,500 following forced entry into the business.

Kimberly Dawn Blauvelt, 38, was charged with possession of methamphetamine, crossing the guard lines with narcotics, driving while license suspended or revoked, burglary, theft by taking, and criminal damage to property.

Bryan Aaron Berryman, 50, was charged with burglary, theft by taking, criminal damage to property, and possession of burglary tools.

Mark Larry Berryman, 51, was charged with possession of methamphetamine, crossing the guard lines with narcotics, burglary, theft by taking, and



criminal damage to property. "Deputy Jackson's keen observation spotting the car greatly accelerated us being able to make an arrest in the case," Mangifesta said, adding that much of the stolen money was recovered.

Continued Mangifesta, "So many times in these cases, they go out and spend the money on drugs or whatever, and the poor victims never get a chance to get restitution - at least we'll be able to get a lot of the money back to them."

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