

General Fund...from Page 1A

udgeted \$14,018,147 to an actual \$14,007,199, while expenditures were up from the budgeted \$11,205,327 to an actual \$12,472,795.

"That's about \$1.2 million roughly, and I wanted to just highlight where those main numbers were, why we were over budget," said Commissioner Paris, pointing to the high costs of risk management.

"We budgeted \$247,000 on risk management, and it ended up being \$1,254,702," said Commissioner Paris. "The reason for that big increase of \$1 million was we had some serious losses for some of our employees, some serious medical issues this year worse than we've ever had. So, any time you have big losses for employees, it's going to cost you on your re-

newal the next year."

Fortunately, the county was reimbursed to the tune of \$1,287,385 on insurance claims.

Other areas that have seen expenditures rise were in juvenile court costs and the sheriff's office, among other places.

"Juvenile court has also gone up, and as you know, the law passed so that every juvenile now has to have an attorney representing them in court as opposed to, we used to have one attorney for juveniles," said Commissioner Paris. "So, this is under expenditures, juvenile court has gone up from \$74,632 to \$162,900.

"And then, public safety, the sheriff's budget went from \$2,099,649 to \$2,406,466. On the other side

of that, the jail budget actually went down. Jail operations went down about \$20,000."

Commissioner Paris cited several reasons the budget for the sheriff's office exceeded originally budgeted amounts, including the cost of sending deputies out to investigate alarms that come back false, and well as an increase in accidental 911 calls, which also require investigation.

"With the sheriff's department, we're trying to evaluate all of these things to see if there's a way that we can cut back on some of this driving all over the county, and sometimes not being worth it," said Commissioner Paris.

Economic development is also up over initial estimates, by about \$45,000.

"That's something I've made it a choice during the middle of the year to do so that we could increase our economic development efforts in attracting business to the county," said Commissioner Paris. "And we may be doing a little bit more of that later."

The takeaway from the amended FY 2014 Budget is that the general fund is up several hundred thousand dollars over the budgeted amount, and looking forward, Commissioner Paris and county departments are working hard on department requests ahead of the 2016 budget, which will likely be adopted in December.

"One good thing that I can say about all of our elected officials, they do a good job of not padding their bud-

gets - they know that if they don't spend it, we're not going to take it away from them the next year," said Commissioner Paris. "So, we don't have a lot of, like the state and federal government at the end of the year, they're all scrambling to spend all their money, and maybe spending it uselessly."

"We don't do that in

the county government. We don't care if they're under at the end of the year, and they know that we're not going to take it away from them - it'll be there for their needs next year. Everybody works together to keep our budget low, and that's why we're able to keep our property taxes low, because everybody looks after the money."

Picnic...from Page 1A

to mingle with each other's families and all, and kind of get away from the humdrum of everyday work and all the calls that we have," said Sheriff Mason. "We just try to get together and have a little fellowship. We have some of the jail personnel that are off today that have prepared the meals, and we're looking forward to a good time and a good meal."

The menu consisted of smoked hamburgers and hotdogs, crispy fried Mississippi catfish fingers, grilled potatoes mixed with onions, garlic, mushrooms and jalapenos, homemade hushpuppies, French fries, coleslaw, watermelon and cake for desert.

Valerie Souza and Nikya Murphy served up the fine fixings, and both are employees of Correctional Resource Group, the company that staffs the county jail's kitchen.

"It's a much more relaxed atmosphere right now," said Souza. "When they're at work, they're working, so business is business, and everybody goes and does their business. So, it's nice to have this opportunity to see them and their families and everybody just kind of on the lighter side."

Blairsville Police Chief Johnny Carroll and Union County Chief Magistrate Judge Johnnie Garmon also came out to celebrate the occasion, and Tax Commissioner Lee Knight shared a little information about upcoming property taxes.

"The tax office should have our digest numbers to the county and the school here in the next few weeks so they can go ahead and work to set the millage rate so we can get our property tax bills ready,"



said Knight. "I believe the property tax bills will be out the first part of September."

Capt. Doug Loyd, who works with the Sheriff's Office over uniformed patrol, enjoyed the picnic with his wife and six children - three boys and three girls - who played the bean bag tossing game, cornhole, and jumped in the bounce house.

"I really appreciate all the work that each and every one puts in, because there's no I in team, it's all of us working together to make this thing happen," said Capt. Loyd. "And by each one of us gathering here today with their families, it helps us to

know each other better and their families. And when you get to know the families better, it just helps everything flow a lot easier, and it helps the spouses understand what's going on and what's taking place."

Staff Sgt. Daren "Bear" Osborn got a surprise, as his fellow deputies and all in attendance sang him happy birthday as he was presented with a cake.

"I knew they were going to pull something off - I know the Chief too well," said Staff Sgt. Osborn. "I'm 51 - of course, my Facebook says I'm 101, because I don't put my real birthday on there."

All in all, good, quality, family time was had by all, and everyone is looking forward to this year's Christmas Party, which will bring the departments together again.

"I've never seen a group of young men and women that are any more interested in doing a good job assembled in a Sheriff's Office, and I think I'm qualified to testify to that," said Sheriff Mason. "I've worked with a lot of them in Northeast Georgia, and the talent that we have here and the motivation that they have, the desire to serve the public is just beyond anything I've ever seen or heard of."

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