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# County to buy historic Brentsville church

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County officials hope the purchase of a historic 1870s-era church will encourage even more visitors to take a step back in time — and spend a few extra dollars at local hotels and restaurants while they're at it.

After an executive session Tuesday, the Prince William Board of County Supervisors voted to formally condemn the tiny Brentsville Union Church, 12231 Bristow Road, in hopes of adding it to a planned "Brentsville Historical Area Park" which also includes the Brentsville Courthouse and Jail and an old-fashioned schoolhouse.

"We already had a courthouse and a jail and a schoolhouse and this church all of the sudden pop-

ped up on the market," said Supervisor L. Ben Thompson, R-Brentsville. "As we worked on developing the theme of an 1840s to early 1900s historical area, we realized this would fit right in with that complex."

The church, built in 1872, was recently put on the market by owners Nagmeh Tayebe and Par-to Hadrian for \$25,000. Under the resolution approved by supervisors, county officials will try to buy the church for \$25,000.

But if that offer is rejected, the county will seize the property in legal condemnation proceedings. At that point, the county would be required to compensate the owners at a fair price as determined by the court.

Thompson said the purchase was necessary because officials

feared the structure could be demolished if it fell into the hands of new owners.

"This is a pretty original building and opportunities like this are pretty hard to come by," he said. "It's part of the living history of Prince William County."

Area history buffs said they were pleased with the board's decision to purchase and restore the dilapidating building.

"I'm thrilled to have a county executive and board of supervisors who appreciate the historic value of this great church," said Jan Cunard, chairwoman of the Friends of the Brentsville Courthouse Center, which is charged with raising money for the historic complex and guiding its

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restoration. "There aren't that many old wooden churches of this type still standing."

Over the next decade, county officials hope to transform the aging church and other buildings into a living history village that will draw tourists and tie in with the region's rich historic and cultural history.

"This is a place where people

can see what life was like in the time frame," Thompson said.

"It ties in well with the [Manassas] Battlefield Park and maybe it will encourage people to spend a little more time in Prince William County — staying over night, buying breakfast the next morning and buying souvenirs."

Thompson said county officials had not yet determined how much restoration of the church would cost and planned to begin consulting with architects.