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County sets guidelines for tax office

The Perquimans County Board of Commissioners adopted a set of guidelines to be used by the tax supervisor for appraising property in a Monday morning meeting.

The guidelines were proposed by board member Charles H. Ward immediately after he was sworn in as a newly elected commissioner.

They will require that the tax supervisor:

- maintain a list of property to be appraised;

- give written notice to the property owner two weeks prior to a visitation for appraisal purposes, and;

- give the taxpayer written notice whenever a tax listing (valuation) is altered.

The list of guidelines was brought about by complaints about the tax supervisor's visiting property without the owner's permission for the purpose of making appraisals, according to board chairman Joe Nowell.

In particular, Nowell said, action was prompted following a complaint by Hertford resident Carl Skinner that required an opinion from the North Carolina Attorney General's office.

Ward's proposal was coupled with another list of guidelines that would

restructure the building inspections process in the county.

The guidelines would:

- require that a joint town-county inspector issue only one permit whether work is done in the Town of Hertford or in Perquimans County;

- require that the inspector forward a copy of the permit to the county tax office and to the town tax office where applicable;

- establish a minimum permit fee of \$10 with an additional fee of \$1 per thousand for building expense in excess of \$10,000 (trailers and modular homes based on cost);

- require that the building inspector inspect all building projects and notify the appropriate tax offices when projects are completed, and;

- place the responsibility for insuring that all builders have permits on the building inspector.

County building permits are currently issued through the tax office, but Ward said that requests for permits could be made at the Hertford Municipal Building and visits to property made on the following work day.

He said the builder should be allowed to begin work after the request is made.

Ward compiled his proposal after

checking with surrounding counties to see how they handle inspection-appraisal.

Board members asked county attorney to present an ordinance based on the inspection guidelines at the next board meeting.

The only portion of the building inspection guidelines that came into question was the permit fee. Presently, the fee is only \$1 for any building permit.

Ward, however, said the proposed fee would be less than the permit fees of other counties he had contacted on the matter. "It's way under just about everybody," he said.

But commissioner Lester Simpson said the fee still may come as a shock to permit-seekers. "I know that (the fee would be lower than that charged by surrounding counties) but it's a lot more than what people around here are used to paying," he said.

Commissioner Welly White suggested a flat fee for a building permit.

In another tax-related matter, a schedule of personal property values for 1981 was adopted as presented by the Perquimans County tax supervisor, Keith Haskett.

Haskett also informed the board that a full time employee from the tax office would be paid through water department funds and a part-time temporary tax office employee boosted to full-time status.

The tax office already handles water department billings and some water system administration and the effect is an additional employee for the tax office.

The addition increases the tax office staff from four to five and was approved at a prior meeting of the board. But that didn't stop commissioner White from registering his opposition.

"My personal opinion is we don't need

an additional employee right now," said White.

County finance officer D.F. Reed Jr. agreed that there may be fluctuations in the work-load in the tax office but maintained that the additional employee is justified. "They may not always be needed but you've got to have the personnel when you do need them," said Reed.

Haskett concurred, saying that the office has faced an ever increasing number of property transfers and has absorbed the water operation with no additional staff, but that the work load has now become entirely too taxing.

The board also decided to widen the scope of a discussion on water quality problems in the Perquimans River. Invitations will be extended to three experts who have done work on area rivers to address the board at their Dec. 15 meeting.

At the Nov. 17 meeting of the board it was announced that an unspecified amount of money is available for a study to determine water quality in county rivers.

Dr. Bob Sniffen and Dr. Charles Oreor of East Carolina University and Dr. Maurice Powers of Elizabeth City State University will help the board determine what they want the study to show, what the study will cost, and the amount of time required to complete it.

The board had requested grant money for a study after complaints from area residents that county waters are not as clean as they should be.

Finally, the board decided after consulting with engineer Wayne Floyd of Rivers and Associates that the county water system should be flushed out every day in an attempt to correct persistent occurrences of iron-laden water entering the homes of county water customers.

Annual banquet slated Dec. 8

The Perquimans County Chamber of Commerce will hold their annual banquet on Monday, Dec. 8, at Angler's Cove, in Bethel.

Highlighting this year's banquet will be guest speaker Marc Basnight, Board Member of the North Carolina Department of Transportation.

A social hour, beginning at 6:30 p.m., will precede dinner, which will be served at 7:30 p.m.

Tickets are \$8, in advance only, and may be purchased at the Chamber of Commerce Office, located in the Municipal Building, on Grubb Street in Hertford.

The Chamber Office is open from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m., Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, and from 9 a.m. until 12 noon on Wednesday and Saturday. The office is closed each day from noon until 1 p.m. for lunch.



Commissioners Charles H. Ward, Lester Simpson and Joe Nowell (left to right) are sworn in by clerk of courts Jarvis

Ward at the Monday morning meeting of the Perquimans County Board of Commissioners. Also sworn in on

Monday were register of deeds Jeanne C. White, and school board member Cliff Towe. All were endorsed by the voters of

Perquimans County in the November election.

Sworn in

Farm-City Week

Bold, catchy headlines are often misleading

Getting past the headlines to the fine print of farming was the theme of a speech presented by Peoples Bank senior vice-president Charles A. Harvey at Perquimans County's Farm-City Week banquet last Monday night.

Addressing some 50 civic and agricultural leaders at Gabby's Restaurant, Harvey charged that the public is bombarded by catch-phrases and slogans that prevent them from getting to the meat of the issues.

"Too often we find that we know a whole lot about many things and not much about anything, because following all of the headlines there is the fine print — and with all the headlines we just don't have time for the fine print," Harvey said.

"This is where we get 'taken,' because headlines are by design meant to get your attention — not give you the facts," he said.

Harvey confined examples of his theory to agriculture. "Less than 4 per

cent of the population in America are farmers — now that's a nice headline," Harvey said.

But our total society not only consumes, but for the most part contributes to the production of agricultural goods, Harvey reasoned. Because of our interdependence on farm production, agriculture should be the first priority of government, he said.

Harvey said that the American consumer must realize that the producer must make a profit through a normal spread in prices relative to production costs, or he must be subsidized.

Government subsidies are primarily through supplying credit, rather than enhancing profits through more effort in the market place, Harvey said. The real beneficiary of this policy is the American consumer, rather than the farmer, he said.

"The American consumer who is concerned about his tax dollars supporting credit for agriculture needs to

realize that land values (cost) are not singularly related to production values, that basic unit size of farm operations are necessary for efficient production of products and risks imposed by nature are risks that we all should share if we want a degree of stability that keeps our farmer in business," Harvey said.

Competition through free enterprise, however, has always been the incentive that brings about the best and most long lasting results, Harvey said.

"No, I'm not saying we don't need government forms of agricultural credit — I'm simply saying, 'Let's keep in perspective why we need it,'" he added.

Other key points in Harvey's address were:

- that land ownership is a trusteeship, rather than a license for abuse;

- that the producer only benefits from investment for expansion to efficient unit size, not from investment to enjoy land value appreciation;

- that the complexities of American

agriculture today negate the possibility of a totally free market largely because of the need for consumer price stability, the fact that 30 to 50 percent of our farm production is exported to countries without free markets, and the need to protect agricultural credit suppliers;

- that much of farm profits in the 70's had to be invested in order to expand, mechanize, and raise operating capital, and;

- that scientific breakthroughs enhance profits for only a short period of time and that research must be accelerated in order for food to maintain the same cost in relation to income for the American public (currently about 20 per cent).

Harvey also predicted that because of greater demand and escalating land prices, net profits will be greater in the 80's than in the 70's.

In closing, Harvey focused on the agricultural wealth of the Albemarle area. "An area," he said, "where we find the most desirable, most productive,

most beautiful agricultural area, not only in North Carolina, but in the world."

Harvey said that Albemarle farmers must find a way to improve production while at the same time conserving the land.

"We have enjoyed surpluses to share around the world — but today those surpluses grow smaller and smaller and it is an area like this that must meet the needs of food production in the future.

"Here our greatest heritage is our land and our agriculture. We as a society have two options — do we spoil it all or do we collectively find the ways to protect it for generations to follow?"

Following Harvey's well received speech, R.L. Stevenson of Peoples Bank in Hertford presented the Wilson native with a bag of Perquimans County peanuts contributed by an area merchant.

"I hope you took it off his credit bill," quipped Harvey in reference to the current hard times in agriculture.

Other highlights of the Farm-City Week banquet were the recognition of all Perquimans County Agricultural Extension Service employees, and the announcement of farm-city poster contest winners.

The basic objective of the contest was to, "develop the child's concept of farm and city interdependence and cooperation."

Some 55 entries were judged on clarity of theme, neatness, and creativity, and the winners were: grades one and two-Nathan Straughn, first, Toby Wilder, second; grades three and four-Connie Thatch, first, Francis Jester, second, and; grades five and six-Bruce White, first, and Donna Winslow, second.

Sponsors of the banquet were: Albemarle Chemical; Bank of N.C.; Belvidere Farmers Exchange; Farmers Feed and Seed; Hertford Motor Company; Hertford Supply Company; Hollowell Oil Company; Peoples Bank and Trust, and Winslow Oil Company.

Town leader expires

Vivian Norfleet Darden, 88, of 309 N. Front Street, Hertford, died Sunday afternoon in Chowan Hospital.

A native of Drivers, Va., he was the husband of Mrs. Sue Porter Darden. He was the retired owner-operator of Darden's Department Store and was a former mayor of Hertford. Mr. Darden also served as Hertford Fire Chief and as City Manager for 29 years. He was an active member of Hertford United Methodist Church, a member of the Hertford ABC Board, the American Legion and was presently serving as chairman of the Hertford Savings and Loan Board of Directors. He was also a charter member of the Hertford Rotary Club.



Darden

Besides his wife he is survived by a daughter, Mrs. Chris (Florence) Christenson of Hertford; a stepdaughter, Mrs. Glenn (Ann) Elkins of Dayton, Ohio; a sister, Mrs. Henry O'Sullivan of Norfolk, Va.; six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Funeral services were held Tuesday at 2:30 p.m. in the Chapel of Swindell Funeral Home by Rev. Irvin Cook. Burial followed in Cedarwood Cemetery.

Competency test scores reported

Perquimans County high school students taking the competency test for the first time performed well in comparison with state and regional averages, according to Perquimans County Schools superintendent Pat Harrell.

Figures presented to the board of education Monday night show that of juniors taking the test for the first time, 91 per cent passed the reading portion of the test and 91.9 per cent passed the math portion of the test.

In the Northeastern region, only 88.4 per cent of first-time takers passed the reading portion of the test, and 85 per cent passed the math portion.

Statewide, the passing rate was 92.5 for reading and 89.4 for math.

"A number of things can be drawn from the test results," said Harrell. "It shows that the remedial programs in the high school do work and it speaks well of the teachers. They are preparing the

students well for skills measured in the test."

The superintendent said that no students at the high school are discouraged from taking the test no matter what programs they are enrolled in at the high school.

When seniors who had failed last year were included in the test results, however, the passing percentages declined to an 85.6 rate in reading and 87.7 in math.

In order to receive a high school diploma in North Carolina, students must now pass a competency test measuring skills in reading and math.

In another matter, the board elected to go ahead with springing the football-baseball field at the high school following this year's baseball season.

The Perquimans County Recreation Department will not be allowed to use the field for Babe Ruth baseball this summer as that time will be needed to allow the springs to take hold.

The board also authorized Harrell to go before the county commissioners and reiterate space needs for the schools' central office. Harrell noted that the Farm-Home Administration office had been promised an addition to its office space and said it might be appropriate to remind the county of its obligation to provide adequate office space for the schools.

"I'm not critical of Farm-Home but we do have some needs here," said Harrell.

The board will apparently again take up discussion on a family life education curriculum that was finalized more than a year ago and includes in-put from instructors and community members.

A preview of a film on teenage pregnancies resurrected discussion on the curriculum guide after board members agreed that the film would not be appropriate unless incorporated in a more comprehensive course of studies.

In another matter, Artist-in-the-schools Frans Van Baars addressed the

board on his one semester of work with students in drawing.

Van Baars said studies show that art courses for elementary students improve their academic performances and urged the board to continue supporting such creative activities for students.

He also told the board that a painting of a Perquimans County subject had been donated to the school band program to be used in a fund raising project.

A list of school band and choral Christmas activities was included on the board agenda which read:

Dec. 5, Christmas parade, and; Dec. 9, "The Littlest Angel" presented by a New Bern little theater group at Perquimans High School along with performances by the sixth and seventh grade bands.

Also listed were: a Perquimans Union choral program on Dec. 10; a Hertford Grammar PTA Christmas program on Dec. 11; a Perquimans High School choral program on Dec. 15, and; a Central Grammar program on Dec. 16.