

# THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY



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"News from Next Door"

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50 cents

## County elections director selected

BY PETER WILLIAMS  
News Editor

A 20-year-old Perquimans County native who has never voted has been nominated for the county's first new elections director in 20 years.



BAKER

The local three-member elections board made the selection of Sydni Baker on Thursday.

It must be ratified by the State Board of Elections. Baker will turn 21 years old in August and could be the youngest elections director ever in North Carolina.

If approved, Baker will replace Eula Mae Forbes. Forbes is stepping down from the position after 20 years.

Baker graduated among the top of her high school class in 2011 — 19th in her class of 121 students at Perquimans County High School in 2011. She was an honor student for all four years and was active in clubs, the community and her church, Up River Friends meeting.

But she's never voted before. She regrets that.

"I thought about that before I went into the interview, but they (the elections board) never asked. I think now and it would have been nice if I had," Baker said.

Baker said she got encouragement to apply for the job from Reid's part-time assistant, Kelli Price. Price recently left for a job in Pasquotank County and is now the elections director there. Price is 24.

"She told me 'you took my title'" Baker laughed. "You took my title as the

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STAFF PHOTO BY PETER WILLIAMS  
Jessie Needham gets a boost from supporters on the ground and a lift from teens at the top last week while climbing a wall at Camp Cale.

## Campers learn independence

BY PETER WILLIAMS  
News Editor

For six days Camp Cale visitors can kayak, play games, learn new skills and make new friends.

One thing they can't do at is text their friends on their smart phone. Same goes for tweeting, posting pictures and playing video

games.

As in the past, the hundreds of teens that attended the Baptist-sponsored facility in near New Hope are required to leave their technology at home.

That doesn't mean the camp doesn't have Internet access. Last week the teens viewed a live Skype video session with a missionary in India. The

policy just means campers have to learn to live without it for the six days they are at Cale.

For a generation that thrives on texting, it can be a challenge, admits Matt Thomas, the director of the camp.

"We've had some that decided not to come because of it," he said.

Those that do cut the

cord — at least temporarily — learn to adjust he said.

The teens aren't the only ones that have to break free. Some parents who are used to picking up their phone and calling their child day or night.

Thomas said it helps that Cale posts photos on its

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## Duke power deal put forth

BY PETER WILLIAMS  
News Editor

Hertford customers could see a drop in their electric rates based on an offer released this week.

The boards of both Duke Energy Progress and the N.C. Eastern Municipal Power Agency approved a deal that would allow municipal utilities like Hertford to sell back most their shares in Duke power plants.

The debt on those shares keeps utility rates higher in the 32 members of the NCEMPA than the rates in other areas.

Hertford Town Manager Brandon Shoaf said he is still bound by a confidentiality agreement because of his role in the deal. He couldn't speak in detail about the offer.

He did say Hertford's current wholesale rate is about 10.6 cents per kilowatt-hour and the debt makes up close to four cents of that. That doesn't mean Hertford customers can expect to see a huge decrease in their bills because selling the shares in the power plants would mean they'd have to buy power to replace it.

Shoaf referred to a two-page statement by Electricities released on Monday.

"I can't tell you how much it could/would lower rates in Hertford," Shoaf said. "As the release says, we don't know what the purchase price of power going forward is. Every member is different because of demand, load (and) original allocation."

The deal announced Monday allows NCEMPA members to sell about \$1.2 billion of their \$1.9 billion debt. Agency members would still be required to pay back \$480 million.

"When we entered these negotiations we knew it

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## Two of 5 solar power projects are moving forward

BY PETER WILLIAMS  
News Editor

Two of the five solar power projects approved in Perquimans County appear to be moving towards construction this year and a sixth one is moving through the pipeline.

FLS, a company based in Asheville has acquired the rights for the two from Solon Corp., the company that sought the initial approval from the county commission.

The largest project is 97-

acre tract on the north side of Highway 37 across from 949 Belvidere Road. The smaller 45-acre site is located on the west side of Two Mile Desert Road directly across for an existing electrical substation and about 1,100 feet north of Main Street in Winfall.

Donna Godfrey, Perquimans County's planning director, confirmed that zoning permits have been issued for both FLS parcels. The next step will be building permits and the Town of Winfall will also play a role because one of the projects is in its extra-

territorial district.

Perquimans County Manager Frank Heath said last week he thinks the two projects will move forward.

"I think those will be built," Heath said of the two FLS projects.

The solar projects are not going to be a bonanza in terms of property tax revenue and once they're built, they won't employ a lot of people. Heath has said in the past the difference between pure farmland and a solar farm on the tax rolls for a typical project is about

\$2,000 or so. The only employment once they're built would be for someone to maintain them and the property for the next 30 years.

Frank Marshall, a spokesman for FLS, said the projects should start construction in the fourth quarter of this year and run through early 2015. Both are designed to be under the 5 megawatt threshold. The power purchase rates for projects larger than that must be negotiated with the utility that buys the power. Smaller projects are paid for based on a rate

set by the state called the "avoided cost rate."

The rate is determined once the utility, like Duke Progress Energy, estimates what it would cost to produce a set amount of power. Utilities and the state are in discussions now about setting a new rate.

The power produced in Perquimans County goes into the grid network. Once electricity is in the system it goes anywhere in the pipeline, not just Perquimans County. Dominion has a substation nearby.

The 5 megawatt cap means utilities like Dominion and Progress would not face an undue burden in incorporating them into their power plans. FLS Energy has closed financing and begun construction on 38 megawatts of utility-scale solar farms across eight locations in the state, based on a company press release in June.

The solar energy plants will produce approximately 56 million kilowatt hours

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## The story of Hertford, Columbia town bridges similar

BY PETER WILLIAMS  
News Editor

In some ways Hertford is going through what the Town of Columbia went through a dozen years ago.

Columbia once had an aging bridge.

Like Hertford, Columbia has a historic district. With a population of 891, Columbia is less than half the size of Hertford and Tyrrell County is a third the size of Perquimans County.

But when it came time to replace the U.S. 64 bridge through Columbia, things were done to make it more attractive according to Town Manager Rhett White. White started work there 10 years ago as the bridge project was wrapping up.

The new U.S. 64 bridge in Columbia is four lanes wide and features a six-foot raised sidewalk, a special metal railing, lights and places where the town can mount flags. The one in Hertford is two lanes.

"If you look at it is has a metal railing, not the standard concrete railing that you see on most bridges," White said. "DOT also gave us permission to mount

See BRIDGES, 2



PHOTO COURTESY THE TOWN OF COLUMBIA

A photograph shows the four-lane U.S. 64 bridge as it enters Columbia. The proposed bridge in Hertford is two lane.

