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"News from

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## Students walk out, remember others

BY PETER WILLIAMS  
 News Editor

The 175 students who walked out of class were from Perquimans County.

The 17 names read aloud last week were not.

Perquimans County High School Class President James Rennie read aloud the names of the people killed a month before in Parkland, Fla., by a school shooter.

"Scott Beigel was a geography teacher. The last student to



RENNIE

Alyssa Alhadeff, a 14-year-old with a bright heart. Alaina Petty who did cleanup work after Hurricane Irma. She was a member of the J.R.O.T.C and 14-years-old.

enter his classroom was a kid named Matthew. If Scott would have closed his door, Matthew's life would have been taken instead."

And after each name, Rennie paused and you could hear a pin drop.

Rennie clearly wanted to make sure students who walked out of class for 17 minutes were there for the right reason.

"This is not just a get out of class card, this is serious. So if you feel like you cannot be a mature adult, please leave now."

When a few students made some noise, Rennie showed he was serious and asked deputies



STAFF PHOTO BY PETER WILLIAMS

Perquimans County High School students attend a service Wednesday for those killed last month at a school in Florida.

See WALKOUT, 2

## Ground broken on athletic complex

BY PETER WILLIAMS  
 News Editor

Saturday's groundbreaking on the first phase of the new \$1.2 million Perquimans County High School Athletic Complex was just that, said the man who donated the land.

It's just the first phase. Dr. William Nixon Jr. called on local elected leaders and donors to make the project complete.

"I would ask the county commissioners to complete the funding gap," Nixon said.

The land is across the street from the high school on Edenton Road Street. The first phase will include a lighted football field, bleachers, press box, field house and concession stand. The complete project would include practice fields, a soccer field, running track and enough tennis courts where Perquimans could field a team in that sport. The site is about 32 acres.

The total cost of the project was projected at \$6.2 million, but that was more than seven years ago.

For now moving the football field will take pressure off the outfield of the baseball field. It also does double duty as part of the football field, and Dr. Nixon said that doesn't work well. Nixon is a PCHS graduate from 1960.

The first phase is being made possible through Nixon's land donation, a \$600,000 cash gift from the late Charles Ward and an anonymous donor who agreed to build the field house.

The school system is also tapping more than \$200,000 in lot-



STAFF PHOTO BY PETER WILLIAMS

Wayne Price, Amy Spaugh, Dr. William Nixon Jr., Mary Lee Willis, Dr. Anne White and Matthew Cheeseman prepare to break ground on the new athletic complex on Saturday.

tery money that can only be used for capital projects.

The complex has been named in honor of Nixon and the football field will be named for Ward.

Mary Lee Willis, Ward's sister, said her brother could be "frugal" with taxpayer money, but if he found a project that was worthy of it, he would argue hard for that as well.

"If he saw a need, he would do everything to make it happen," Willis said. "He wanted a complex he could be proud of."

Ward died in 2014 at the age of 76.

Also speaking for the Ward family, Michelle Hurdle Winslow, said Charles Ward, said when Dr. Nixon made the offer of the land, Ward said he would help.

Dr. Nixon said he thought about withdrawing his offer of the land when some county officials were critical of the idea of the athletic complex. But he credited Superintendent Matthew Cheeseman for winning back his support and pushing the project forward.

Nixon said without the pres-

See COMPLEX, 2

## Future of auditorium questioned

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the first of two stories on funding requests for schools this year.)

BY PETER WILLIAMS  
 News Editor

Perquimans County school officials requested more than \$830,000 in building improvement projects plus more money for teachers, a fourth School Resource Officer, and other things this week.

However it was a \$60,000 request for the high school auditorium that raised the question of if it's time to just replace it.

At a joint meeting with the Perquimans County School Board and the Perquimans County Commissioner, it wasn't a commissioner who questioned the auditorium expense. Commissioners are the ones who will have to face taxpayers if tax increase is required. School board members can simply ask for county funds.

The future of the auditorium was raised by Russell Lassiter, a member of the school board.

"We've been spending money on it my entire life," Lassiter said. "It seems at some point we would look at replacing it. We have been putting good money after bad for a while."

Maintenance Director Jim Davison had asked for the \$60,000 to remodel parts of the 94-year-old building. In the past few years the school has used funds to fix the roof and seal the brickwork that could allow water to get in. Money was also used to upgrade the stage lighting.

Superintendent Matthew Cheeseman has never raised the idea of replacing the auditorium before. Monday he called it the centerpiece of the school in part it was part of the original school and other things have been built around it.

Cheeseman did say in the future more money would be required to bring the auditorium into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

For his part, Davison said the \$60,000 request for trying to get the "bones" of the auditorium in good shape. He said in some areas of the dressing room, you could take a car key and easily poke it through the

See AUDITORIUM, 2

## Library open house set for Thursday

BY PETER WILLIAMS  
 News Editor

The new Perquimans County Library will host an open house Thursday from 4:30 p.m. until 7:30 p.m.

The library reopened earlier this month after being closed for the better part of two months for the transition.

Not only did tons of books have to be moved and restacked, the new library features technology it didn't have before, said Michelle Lawrence, the librarian.

"Getting all the computers up

caused a little delay," Lawrence said. "We have triple the amount of computer technology."

Computers are used not only for research, but for actually checking out a book.

In the future, the library will act more as a hub for people looking for work. The state's job listing service, NC Works, is on-line service.

"It (using NC Works) is always something we had the potential to do, and now we can do it."

A career assistant from NC Works will be at the library on March 26, April 9 and April 23

from 10 a.m. until noon each day. They can help with resumes and job searches. At other times, some of the library staff can also help residents, Lawrence said.

A Career Café and Kickoff is scheduled for March 28 from 3:30 p.m. until 5 p.m. It's geared toward people between the ages of 16 and 24.

Since the move to 514 S. Church St., Lawrence says she's see a number of new faces. The new location is on a more heavily traveled road and there is off-street parking. The old library was tucked away on Academy

Street off Grubb Street.

"I think maybe some people didn't realize Hertford had a library," she said. "It's been awesome."

The library is open Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 9:30 a.m. until 7 p.m., Wednesday and Friday from 9:30 a.m. until 5 p.m. and Saturdays from 9:30 a.m. until noon.

While the new library is larger, the staff is not. Counting Lawrence here are four full-time employees and one part-timer.

See LIBRARY, 2

## Members named to seafood authority

BY PETER WILLIAMS  
 News Editor

Gov. Roy Cooper recently appointed four new members to the N.C. Seafood Industrial Park Authority.

The authority controls the Perquimans County Marine Industrial Park prop-

erty as well as facilities in Wanchese and Engelhard.

Cooper's new appointments to the board are:

■ Stuart Bell of Kitty Hawk. Bell is the Outer Banks Area-Market President at First National Bank. He previously served on the Roanoke Island Historical Association board of directors.

■ Edward Lee Mann of Wanchese. Mann recently retired as the Director of Public Works for Dare County. He previously served on the

N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission.

■ Michael Meekins of Engelhard. Meekins has been the owner and operator of Engelhard Seafood, Inc. for more than 30 years. He also operates Hyde County Lodges in Engelhard.

■ Edith Meads of Wanchese. Meads is a Deputy Clerk at the Office of the Dare County Clerk of Superior Court. She was the owner-operator of Jeanette's

See MEMBERS, 2

## EXPO



STAFF PHOTO BY PETER WILLIAMS

People browse the Perquimans County Chamber of Commerce Expo Saturday at the Perquimans County Recreation Center.