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Police officer reinstated after hearing

By KATHY M. NEWBERN
News Editor

HERTFORD — A decision by Hertford Police Chief Marshall Merritt to resign following the outcome of a hearing involving another officer has been reversed.

Officer James R. Logan requested a hearing before the Town Council after he was suspended without pay by Chief Merritt. The rules and regulations of the department, as adopted by the Town Council, allows a suspended officer the right to call for such a hearing.

That hearing was held May 11 in a special called meeting of the Hertford Town Council and was held in executive session. Both Officer

Logan and Chief Merritt were represented by counsel.

When asked for details concerning the charges originally brought against Officer Logan and discussed at the hearing, Hertford Mayor Bill Cox replied, "I've been advised by counsel that at this time, the charges are not available for print." Cox further explained that the action concerned a personnel matter and that the hearing was held in closed session.

However, the outcome of the hearing was announced and Cox said, "We heard the evidence presented, heard the arguments, and the Council made the decision that according to the evidence presented at the

hearing; that Officer Logan be reinstated with one provision — that he be put on probation for 12 months following the date of the hearing."

When the Town Council's decision was reached Thursday night, the result was the resignations of Chief Marshall Merritt and Officer M.G. Harrington. Both of these resignations were presented in written form on Friday morning. However, the Town Council has not taken action on either resignation.

Concerning his decision to resign, Officer Harrington gave no comment as to his reason but added that his decision was final. When questioned as to the reason for the resignation, Mayor Cox said, "The

reasons for Officer Harrington's resignation are personal reasons and I don't feel I can comment on it." Chief Marshall Merritt also turned in his resignation Friday morning, but reconsidered and made the following comment, "I tendered my resignation Friday, May 12 in a disagreement with the Town Council over their refusal to uphold my suspension of Patrolman J.R. Logan. This suspension was based on several incidents which I felt were detrimental to the smooth running of our department and the high standards which I have set for our police force."

"In subsequent discussions with Council members in which we each

had the opportunity to explain the reasons for our actions, I realized again that we all had the same goal — that of making Hertford Police Department the best possible. Our only difference lay in how to achieve this goal."

Merritt continued, "I appreciate the expressions of continued support from every individual Council member and the Mayor as well as from the many local citizens who have contacted me urging me to reconsider my decision."

"After having given this matter much thought, I have decided to withdraw my resignation. I feel we have all learned much during the past few days and that we will be

able to work together in a joint effort to provide the people of Hertford the best law enforcement program possible," Merritt concluded.

Hertford Mayor Cox made the following reaction statement, "I'm real pleased that Chief Merritt has withdrawn his resignation. I say again that I'm real pleased with his performance as Chief of Police over the last 12 months. He's done an excellent job. The police department is certainly a better department due to his efforts. I feel very strongly that with this incident behind us and by a better understanding, our police department cannot help but continue to improve and be a department we can be proud of."

Parents voice complaints on education

By KATHY M. NEWBERN

Several grievances were aired by a group of about 15 concerned parents when the Perquimans County Board of Education met in regular session Monday night.

Leading the group was Mrs. Steve Perry who presented several complaints including the lack of cooperation by school officials in letting her view work done by her son. She also expressed a feeling that a lack of communication exists between teachers and parents. She said, "There is very definitely a breakdown between parents and school. Parents are very much shut out."

At one point, Mrs. Perry said,

"I'm a good honest mad." And she added, "I don't know if I'm going to be madder if they pass him or madder if they fail him (her son). He's not failing material but he's not competent to go ahead."

Several other parents present agreed with Mrs. Perry's statement, "I'm not up here fighting for my kid tonight. I'm fighting for those to come."

She also voiced opposition to teachers experimenting with grading and grouping of students. She commented, "You're shaming those in the lower groups so they don't want to do any better."

Mrs. Perry closed her comments by saying, "I for one resent it when I'm told my child is getting the best

education in the history of this country." She also called for a cooperative effort by school personnel and parents to "make things better."

Other parents also spoke out. Clifford "Pete" Perry, a parent attending the meeting, said, "My daughter today doesn't know how to read and I blame you gentlemen for it."

Another parent, Mrs. Joan Mansfield, expressed dissatisfaction among parents at the abolition of PTA's explaining that some felt the organizations had been "sabotaged" since no one could explain why meetings had ceased despite good attendance by parents.

In response to that statement, Board Chairman Clifford Winslow

said, "This Board certainly encourages PTA activities. We can't mandate any school to form a PTA. If we could, we would. We can encourage and we've done this. But that has to come from you, as parents, working with principals and teachers."

Concerning the right for a parent to view his or her child's school work, Superintendent Pat Harrell explained that teachers have been asked to maintain a file at school and that file is open to parents. He added that there is no policy which says parents must go to school to view such files and in the past papers have been sent home with students.

Discussion then turned to accountability of teachers. Mrs. Becky Perry, a parent, said, "I feel that we need to evaluate the teacher first of all. Do they really know what they are teaching? Are they teaching in their field or are they there just to draw the salary?" Several other parents agreed with the need to keep qualified teachers and "get rid of the unqualified."

Following all comments from the parents present, Winslow said, "It's only through meetings likenthis that we as a Board can know these details that some of you have pointed out. I would encourage you to let us know when there are things in the school system you don't understand." He closed by saying, "We'll certainly take these comments under advisement."

Following comments from the parent group, the Board took action on several matters.

The Board authorized Harrell to draw up a policy for action at the next meeting regarding employee payment of hospitalization during summer months.

Teacher allocations for 1978-79 were discussed and it was revealed that the local system will lose from six to eight positions.

A motion to approve a \$256,195 budget for next year's Title I program passed. This is comparable to last year's program budget.

Also approved was the proposed summer migrant program which will work with about 80 students in the areas of math, reading, language arts, music, and physical education June 26 through Aug. 1.

In other action, the Board awarded the audit contract to R.E. Aiden Jr., CPA of Elizabeth City. It was also announced that bids on the PCHS field house project would be opened at 3 p.m. on May 23.

The board heard several status reports in such areas as budget, construction and renovation at the high school, annual testing results, career center project, and the breakfast program.

Before adjourning, the Board went into executive session on a personnel matter.



OFF MONTH WORK — Travelways on much of the Bear Swamp main channel have been smoothed and seeded during April and May since biologists agreed that excavation during those months would have been detrimental to wildlife there.

Carlton discusses state's efforts to reduce crime

NAGS HEAD — From July through October, citizens in North Carolina will have the opportunity to speak out on laws they feel are needed in the state.

That news came from J. Phil Carlton, Secretary of the N.C. Department of Crime Control and Public Safety, when he addressed the spring dinner meeting of the Albemarle Law and Order Association held here Friday night.

Guest speaker Carlton explained that beginning in July and starting in Charlotte, his department would be scheduling public hearings all across the state for citizen input in law-making. One such hearing will be held in each judicial district.

Concerning the outcome of such hearings, Carlton said, "Then we're going to prepare from them, the legislative packet to present to the General Assembly."

In his remarks, Carlton outlined the three main areas he sees as needing work in order to minimize and control crime in North Carolina.

First, he said, there is a need to "continue to beef up law enforcement." Here, he emphasized the need to continue to provide adequate manpower, training, and equipment for law enforcement officers.

Secondly he called for a reduction in juvenile delinquency. Carlton cited several statistics in support of this statement. He explained that of the 35,000 arrests reported to the police information network in the state during 1977, 57 percent of those involved persons 29 years of age and younger. And 28 percent were 21 years of age and younger. Carlton further explained that historically, the most severe sentences have been given to those with records while

young people have been treated with leniency and compassion. But, 80 percent of those committing crime in the state have less than three offenses on their record, Carlton said. He added, "The old notion that we've had of rehabilitation is not necessarily consistent with crime control."

The third area Carlton discussed was the effectiveness and need for expanding community crime watch programs. He appealed to the audience to support such programs and emphasized the need for a watch program in each community in the state.

Along the same lines, Secretary Carlton added, "We are asking every county in North Carolina to form a community task force to sit in general courts and see what type of crime occurs in that community." He said such programs would "get people to understand what kind of crime takes place in North Carolina."

In discussing law enforcement in general, Carlton said, "Crime is a very sophisticated business today and the truth is, law enforcement is always a step behind. We have to play catch up."

Carlton then re-emphasized his belief in public cooperation to reduce crime and closed by saying, "Together, we can develop a program to reduce crime to a great extent."

Prior to the speaker's remarks, the association held a brief business session.

Melvin E. Bunch, Director of the Albemarle Law and Order Association, presented an updated financial report explaining that the association provided support last year to each municipality in the 10-county area and that \$200,000 was filtered into the area with federal, state and matching funds.

Raleigh Carver reported on activities of the nominating committee. The following were nominated to serve on the policy board: Jerry Allen, Oscar Meigs, Albert Bradley, B.G. Price, John Stone, and Henry Dick.

The following officers for the coming year were also nominated: W.C. Owens, president; Charles Evans, first vice president; Troy Toppin, second vice president; Frank Cahoon, secretary; Cleveland Paller, treasurer. The five board members nominated were: Charles Cahoon, Norman Newbern, William Eurs, Robert Berry, and Delmar Owens.



ON THE SERIOUS SIDE — While Secretary J. Phil Carlton entertained the audience prior to his remarks with several humorous stories, here he is pictured in a more serious light as he talks with

reporters following his address to the Friday night meeting of the Albemarle Law and Order Association. (Staff photo by Kathy M. Newbern)

Construction to resume June 1

Construction will resume June 1 on the Bear Swamp Watershed. A provision in the original contract provided that no excavation would be done in the channels in the months of April and May. Wildlife biologists felt that excavation during this time would have been detrimental to herring and other fish which use Bear Swamp canal as a spawning area during these months. While

the channels could not be excavated, other items such as smoothing and seeding right-of-ways and installing private road crossings have been done. Sixty to 70 percent of the project has been completed.

When properly constructed and maintained, the Bear Swamp Watershed project should provide adequate drainage for cropland in the watershed for many years.



GRAND OPENING — Participating in Tuesday morning's ribbon cutting ceremony at Nectar's Restaurant were: (l. to r.) Nan Reynolds and Mary Sue Roach of the Perquimans County Chamber of Commerce, Mayor Bill Cox, Rick Gardner, Chamber president Douglas Layden, and Commissioner Joe Nowell. (Staff photo by Ray Ward)

Opens on schedule despite break-in

HERTFORD — Nectar's Restaurant on U.S. 17 by-pass nearly had an early grand opening Monday morning and the order was three large sodas.

Three young Perquimans men were arrested following a break-in at the site at 2:30 a.m. Monday. Hertford Police Officer M.G. Harrington was patrolling the area, saw "suspicious" activity and arrested Brian S. Brown, 16, of 1820 Mulberry St., Harrisburg, Pa. on the scene. He then called Chief Marshall Merritt for assistance.

Merritt in turn arrested the two other youths, located on foot about 300 yards south of Nectar's. They were identified as Clifford C. Fenstermared, 16, and Anthony Joseph Lopreste, 16, both of the same Harrisburg, Pa. address.

The three allegedly broke into the yet-to-be opened facility through a drive-in window and crawled inside. According to Chief Merritt, there were no other damages and all that was taken were two Sprite drinks and one Coke, each the large size. Merritt said the three explained that

they were thirsty and had no money. Each was booked on charges of breaking and entering and larceny. Each offense is a felony and maximum would be a 10-year sentence, five years on each count.

Magistrate B.T. Dail set bond for each at \$2,000 and they were taken to Tri-County Jail. They refused to call anyone.

Following the nearly pre-mature opening, Nectar's did open on schedule Tuesday in a ribbon-cutting ceremony with the broken window intact.