

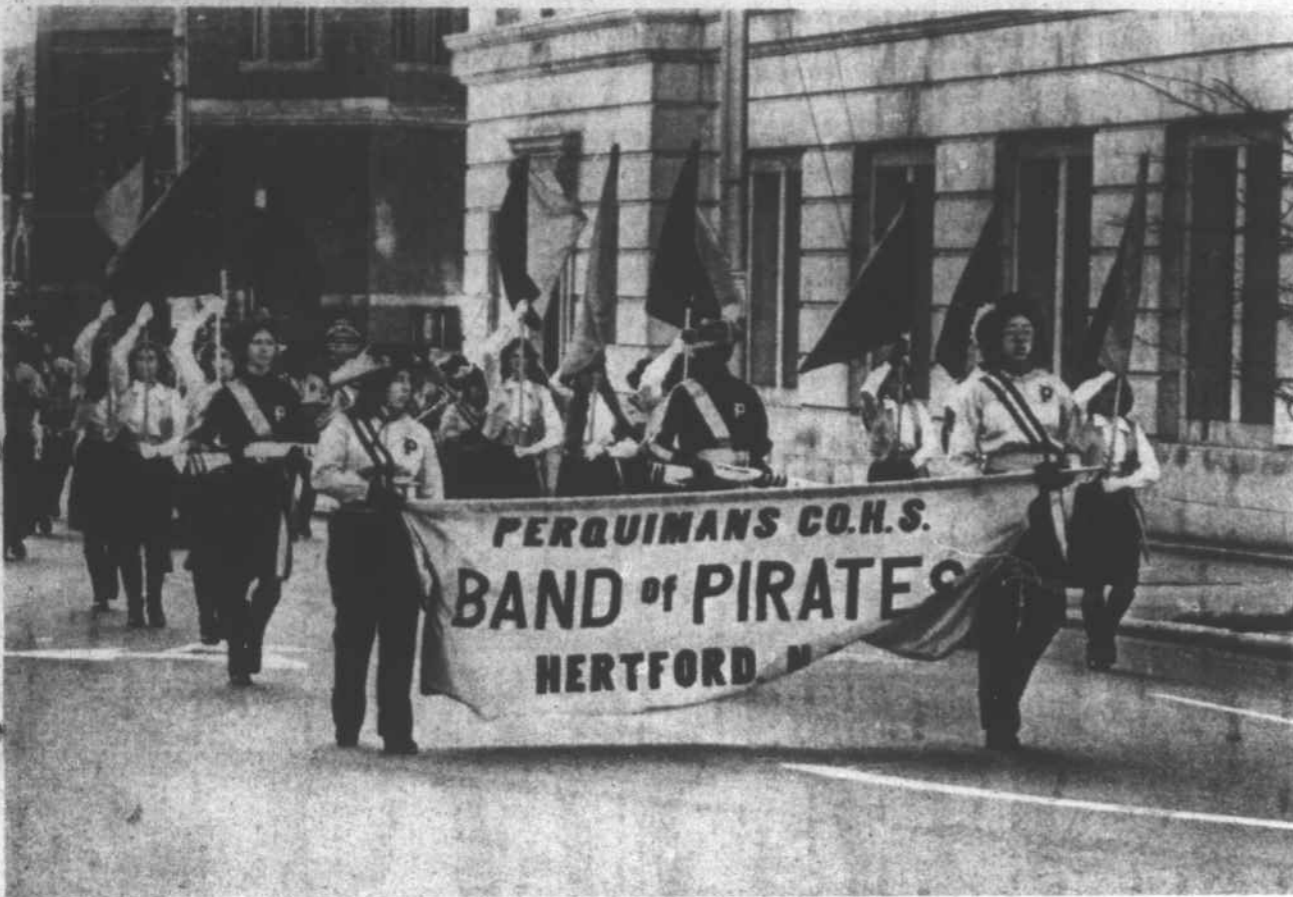
THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

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Inaugural march

The Perquimans County High School Marching Band paraded in downtown Raleigh Saturday as part of inaugural

ceremonies for Gov. James B. Hunt, Jr. The Perquimans band was one of 50 high

school bands invited to perform for state officials. (Photo by JIM REID)

Recreation meeting hasn't happened yet

A special meeting thought to have been scheduled this past Monday on the subject of the Perquimans County Recreation Department never took place.

Joe Nowell, chairman of the county board of commissioners, had called for the meeting to discuss the possibility of the town of Winfall's taking over a share of the cost of the program.

The Hertford Town Council has resolved to drop its 50 per cent share of the recreation department's budget in the coming year, and the commissioners are hopeful that Winfall will pick up part of that share.

Winfall Mayor Lloyd Ray Morgan, however, said the meeting had not come about because the Winfall Town Council had not even discussed the subject when Nowell scheduled the meeting.

At a regularly scheduled Monday meeting, Morgan told the Winfall council that the county commissioners "do want to meet with us. I'm supposed to let them know tomorrow."

In raising the subject, Morgan said he didn't know whether Winfall would

derive any benefit from recreation or not. He said, "We need to decide whether we want to get involved with it at all. What it's going to mean, I don't know."

After some discussion, the council decided to attend next Monday night's meeting of the county commissioners in a body and hear what proposals might be offered by the county. After this meeting, they intend to reconvene their own meeting to discuss any possible Winfall participation in the program.

In other business the councilmen heard from a representative of the Clean Sweep Co. from Pasquotank County on the proposed sale of a used company trash compacter truck to the town. The town's current trash truck, an open dump truck, has had maintenance problems.

The council agreed to accept the truck on a trial basis. The truck, demonstrated for councilmen, is a 1966 model International with a 16 cubic yard compressing capacity. If accepted by the town, the purchase price would be \$2,500. Morgan noted that the town's present truck could be used for emergency backup.

In other matters the council:

- Approved a request by Seymour Chappell for a street light near his home on Nixon Street;

- Discussed plans for tonight's dinner honoring the Winfall Fire Department;

- Agreed to investigate various possibilities to alleviate stale water and water pressure problems experienced at the home of Joel Hollowell, Jr.;

- Asked Councilman Jake Chesson to look into costs of closing in an unused portion of the fire house as a meeting room for the fire department and town use;

- And heard the minutes of their special meeting on Jan. 8. At this meeting, the council approved submission of pre-application for grants to the Department of Housing and Urban Development for Community Development Housing and a recreation center in the King Street "target area" of Winfall.

The town of Winfall is still short one councilman for a full board. When asked if the council had anyone in mind for the seat, Morgan replied, "Nobody has applied yet."

Data indicates some crime down in Hertford

Figures recently released by the Hertford Police Department indicate that incidences of violent crime occurring in the town of Hertford during 1980 did not increase over 1979, and in some cases, actually dropped.

However, crimes the department terms as "general," have increased, but figures showing the extent of the increase are presently incomplete, according to Hertford Police Corporal Robert Morris.

"I would say that general crimes increased this year," said Morris, who listed offenses falling under that category as drug-related, forgery, trespassing, disorderly conduct, and "accomplice-type crimes, like receiving stolen goods."

Although data shows that violent crimes such as robbery and aggravated assault have not risen, larceny increased by some 10 percent over incidences reported in 1979, while the value of property stolen in 1980 more than doubled over the previous year.

Morris attributed some of the increase

in stolen property value to "inflation," and said that the economy could have also played a role in the increase of larceny-related offenses.

In 1980, the police department received 42 reports of larceny, and solved 20 of those cases, yielding a 48 percent recovery.

In 1979, 33 offenses of larceny were reported and 23 of those cases were solved, which resulted in a 70 percent recovery.

The 1979 national average of recovery for larceny was 19 percent.

Property regained in 1980 was valued at \$14,289.15, with some \$18,450 not recovered, resulting in a 44 percent recovery.

Property returned by the department in 1979 totaled \$10,363.87, with only \$4,181.33 still at large, and resulted in a 71 percent recovery, according to Morris.

Incidences of robbery in the town of Hertford have remained fairly low. In 1980, the department received 5 reports of robbery, and solved all 5 cases, yielding a 100 percent recovery. 1979

figures were similar with 4 cases of robbery reported and solved, also yielding a 100 percent recovery. The national percentage of recovery of robbery in 1979 was 25 percent.

Aggravated assault decreased in town during 1980, with 41 cases reported, and 41 cases resolved. In 1979, 53 cases of assault were reported, with 53 arrests as well. Both the 1979 and '80 percentage of recovery for assault was 100 percent in Hertford. The 1979 national percentage of assault cases solved was 59 percent.

The police received 26 reports of burglary or breaking and entering during 1980, and solved 13 of those cases, yielding a 50 percent recovery.

In 1979, 36 offenses of burglary were reported, with 23 clearances, giving the department a 70 percent recovery. National averages of recovery for burglary in 1979 were 15 percent.

Morris said that the Hertford force was pleased with their record of solving crimes, and also with how the town stacked up against national averages.

"If you can maintain a 50 percent rate

of solving (crime), it usually decreases," said Morris.

He added that the force was optimistic that the decrease in some crime was related to the number of their convictions. "We're pretty happy with our results," said Morris.

The department also released figures pertaining to the number of arrests issued in 1980 as compared to 1979.

In 1980, the Hertford Police Department issued 637 arrests and citations — in 1979, a total of 334 arrests and citations were given.

Morris attributed much of the jump in 1980's total arrests to an added emphasis on traffic offenses within the city limits.

Comparative data also compiled by the department breaks down the number of arrests for both the years 1980 and '79. Percentages reported indicate only the number of arrests, not the number of crimes reported.

There was a 47 percent decrease in public inebriates arrested in 1980 as compared to 1979; a 28 percent increase in disorderly conduct; a 48 percent in-

crease in speeding; a 12 percent decrease in assault; and a 70 percent increase in those arrested in 1980 for operating a vehicle while intoxicated.

Those arrested for careless and reckless driving increased by 22 percent in 1980; miscellaneous traffic arrests increased by 46 percent; larceny arrests were down by 7 percent; whiskey violations were up by 21 percent; miscellaneous arrests increased by 30 percent; breaking and entering decreased by 26 percent; and runaways arrested decreased 100 percent.

The number of arrests and citations exceeded 1979 by 32 percent in 1980, according to Morris' figures.

A summary breaking down Hertford police officers' activity during 1980 was also released.

Arrests made during 1980 totaled 637, with Police Chief Marshall Merritt making 52, Morris contributing 241, Patrolman Robert Harvey — 13, Patrolman Mike Jasielum — 48, Patrolman V.B. Hart — 115, and Patrolman Eugene McLawhorn (no longer with the force) — 168.

While Morris said that the number of arrests per officer was not "predictable," he conceded that the number of arrests made by all officers should be "fairly close" in range.

He added that Merritt's duties as the department's chief were largely administrative in nature, but because of the lack of manpower on the force, the chief was often forced to work "the beat."

Maintaining and compiling information on crime occurring in the town over the years has been beneficial to the police force, according to Morris.

As an example, he cited the few cases of breaking and entering solved within the town during 1977. "In '77, there were 33 offenses of breaking and entering, but we only solved 8 of those cases, giving us a clearance of only 24 percent," said Morris.

Breaking and entering then became the force's "target," according to Morris, who cited the 50 percent clearance achieved during 1980.

"Keeping records like this just helps us to plan what our focus needs to be on," said Morris.

Interest rates a crusher to small businessman

By MIKE McLAUGHLIN

When interest rates go soaring with government efforts to take the wind out of inflation, it stands to reason that the fellow who has to borrow money to stay in business is going to suffer.

Most small businessmen fall in that category, and the small businessman is the only kind in Perquimans County.

With a prime rate hovering around 20 per cent, many Perquimans County merchants are feeling the pinch.

So why not just wait until the rate comes down to borrow? After all, the prime has been prodded to dizzying heights by government meddling, and it's sure to drop, right?

Well it doesn't exactly work that way. There are three reasons the small businessman needs to borrow, according to T. Eerie Haste, Jr., owner and proprietor of Hertford Hardware. Two of those reasons, replacing stock and financing customer accounts, cannot be postponed because of swollen interest rates.

The third reason is expansion, which can, of course, be put off.

Haste said the cost of replacing his stock has increased 150 per cent in the past five years. That makes replacing it without borrowing next to impossible.

When the best rate a merchant can find for a loan is 18 per cent, and that's with "blue chip" securities, it becomes difficult to make a profit.

And then there is the interest on big ticket items like major appliances. "Appliances are generally purchased on a floor plan," said Haste. "The distributor pays the interest for the first 90 days and after that it reverts back to the dealer — usually at a rate tied to the prime."

The trick is to get the piece of merchandise sold before the interest reverts back, because if a dealer gets stuck with

a model that no-one wants, the profits evaporate rapidly.

For instance, Haste said that a \$600 refrigerator kept on the floor for a year would cost the dealer \$132. "That's more than the average profit," he said.

He said it reaches a point where keeping appliances stocked is so expensive that the merchant is "better off to sell out, close up, and keep all his money in the bank."

Allen Lassiter, of Lassiter's Domestic Appliances, did not take such a drastic step. But he came close.

Lassiter moved his business from Harris Shopping Center to a shop out back of his home on South Church Street. The repair service is still good, and if the customer wants to buy a refrigerator or range or some such, he simply orders it.

Overhead is cut back to a minimum that way, and Lassiter's becomes immune to the interest rates.

Lassiter said that not having the stock has hurt his sales but not necessarily his profits. "I don't sell as much but I end up making about the same thing because a lot of dealers have to give the stuff away just to get it off the floor," he said.

Lassiter said the appliance business has been further hurt by a change in consumer shopping habits. Customers are buying less deluxe models that carry less profit.

But for an appliance dealer can carry from eight to ten stoves and refrigerators for the price of just one new car, and Lassiter speculated that automobile dealers may have been hit hardest by the surge in interest rates.

Robert Hollowell, Sr. of Hollowell Chevrolet, provided confirmation. The auto dealer gets hit from two directions, Hollowell said. First, there is the "floor planning" of stock and second, potential customers are frightened away by the rates.

To floor plan an automobile, the dealer can count on paying three quarters of a per cent more than prime, Hollowell said, and the interest free period in which a dealer may sell a new car is only 15 days. When the prime interest rate soared to 21.5 per cent recently, Hollowell Chevrolet was paying 22.25 per cent per annum to keep new cars in the show room.

With an average car selling for \$8,000, the dealer would pay \$120 a month or \$1,400 per year to stock a new car.

"That's more mark-up than the car even carries," said Hollowell. "It's so expensive to stock that everyone's going in the direction of cutting inventory."

Hollowell, for instance, has cut back on new car stock by about two thirds. But when inventories are cut, sales suffer, Hollowell said.

It's also getting more difficult for customers to get financing. Though retail financing rates are not high as wholesale, they can still be prohibitive at a range of from 14 to 29 per cent. "That adds a great big hurdle to monthly payments and slows sales," Hollowell said.

"It's forced a lot of new car people to good, clean used cars," he said.

The auto industry is, however, making efforts to rebound from its current state of ill health.

The national dealers' association is pressing for government legislation to aid car dealers, such as a \$1000 tax credit with the purchase of a new domestic auto, and stricter import duties to slow the tide of foreign cars.

Manufacturers are also initiating programs to take some of the interest costs off the backs of dealers so they will stock more units.

Chevrolet, for instance, is offering an interest subsidy plan that brings the floor plan rate down to a palatable 12 per cent.

"Still, it bounces back up if they don't move in this many days," said Hollowell.

Like automobile dealers, a great many small businessmen appear to be hoping to ride the current hard times into a brighter future. That translates into lower interest rates down the road.

Haste compares efforts to halt inflation through interest to a mechanic who attempts to make a repair with the wrong

tool.

When it doesn't do the job, he reaches into his bag and grabs the same tool again, and that doesn't make sense to Haste. He is confident that under the administration of president-elect Ronald Reagan, the climate for the small businessman will improve.

Lassiter isn't so sure. "If I'd thought things were going to turn around and

come back in a short while I'd of stayed in the shopping center," he said.

Haste maintains that if the picture doesn't get better, many merchants and small businessmen will be cutting back services or closing up shop entirely.

"If the picture doesn't change in six to twelve months you're going to see small businessmen dropping out in hordes," he said.



James Wilder (left) checks out a purchase for Donald Stallings at Hertford Hardware. Soaring inventory costs and the need to finance customer accounts

are forcing small businessmen to borrow at back-breaking interest rates, according to store owner T. Eerie Haste, Jr.,

and if there isn't some relief soon, business owners may be checking out themselves — for good.