

## Expert proposes monitoring tributaries of sound

A state expert, heading up water monitoring on the Chowan River recommended an Albemarle-wide approach to area water quality problems at a Monday night meeting of the Perquimans County Board of Commissioners.

Getting several counties involved would give a more complete picture of problems affecting the Albemarle Sound and its tributaries, and might also provide the political "umph" to get the necessary government funding, said Dr. Robert Holman, of the state's division of environmental management.

Holman said he would need additional manpower for the program, but that he would be willing to head it up.

"I might be diving off the deep end, but I've done it before," Holman said.

He and Harrell B. Johnson of the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries had been

invited to address the meeting as part of the county's continued search for a suitable water monitoring plan.

Both men said that higher ups in their departments were extremely receptive to local governments getting involved in combating water quality problems.

They offered assistance in designing and implementing a monitoring plan for the county, whether or not it could get other counties involved.

Bill Phillips, planner for the Albemarle Regional Planning and Development Commission, said his organization would provide assistance in initiating a joint effort.

Holman estimated that it might take as long as four to five years to precisely pinpoint water quality problems in the Perquimans and area rivers and begin addressing them.

In another matter, a few county

residents turned out for a public information meeting on the Coastal Area Management Act land use plan up-date, but because of crossed signals, John Ferren, lead planner on the project, did not.

There was little discussion of the plan, but commissioner Marshall Caddy again stated his objections.

"I'm sure he used the best information he had, but I'm not sure it was good enough," he said. Caddy has taken exception to the designation of much of the New Hope Township as flood-prone. He also maintains that a land classification map is inaccurate and could cause trouble for potential developers because it labels some high and dry pieces of property as wetlands or conservation areas.

"What you're saying is don't accept the plan until we have a better un-

derstanding of it," said Nowell in interpreting Caddy's remarks.

In defense of the plan, Ferren had said at a prior meeting that the map was on too small a scale to be entirely accurate.

He said the commissioners could look at development proposals in conservation areas on a case-by-case basis.

The flood-prone designation of land in New Hope Township was based on work done by another agency, the Agricultural Soil Conservation office, he said.

It is uncertain whether another public information meeting will be scheduled on the matter.

The commissioners did, however, opt on a 3-1 vote (Caddy opposed) to conduct a public hearing on another matter, whether or not to ban spotlighting in the county from 11 p.m. until a half hour before sunrise.

While it is illegal to use a spotlight to

hunt deer at any time, many persons use spotlights just to observe the animals.

Commissioner Charles Ward has maintained that recreational spotlighting has caused a problem in some areas of the county with spotlights shining through windows at all hours of the night.

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission will conduct the hearing at an as yet unspecified time.

In another matter, the commissioners discussed the particulars of a purchase by Dr. Robert Lane of Edenton of the equipment in Hertford Medical Center.

Lane is establishing a full-time private practice in the town of Hertford.

The county also distributed its revenue sharing money, most of it previously committed. The only new commitment was \$5,000 to be divided evenly among the county's five rural fire departments, including the newly formed Durants

Neck Volunteer Fire Department.

Prior to adjournment, the board called an executive session to discuss with the Winfall Town Council, the possibility of that town's picking up a share of the county recreation program.

Nowell labeled the discussion a personnel matter in excusing the press and public from the meeting.

Following the meeting, he said that he considered the discussion to be a personnel matter because jobs are at stake if additional funding isn't found for the program.

The county has agreed to continue its \$20,000 share of the program in the coming year, but the town of Hertford, which is presently providing about half of the recreation budget, has said it can provide only administrative services in the coming year.

No action was taken following the executive session.

## A close call at Union

Smoke billowed up over the town of Winfall as the fire alarm went off for an oil fire at Perquimans Union School Wednesday morning.

The fire, however, turned out to be less serious than it looked from the Hertford side of the Perquimans River.

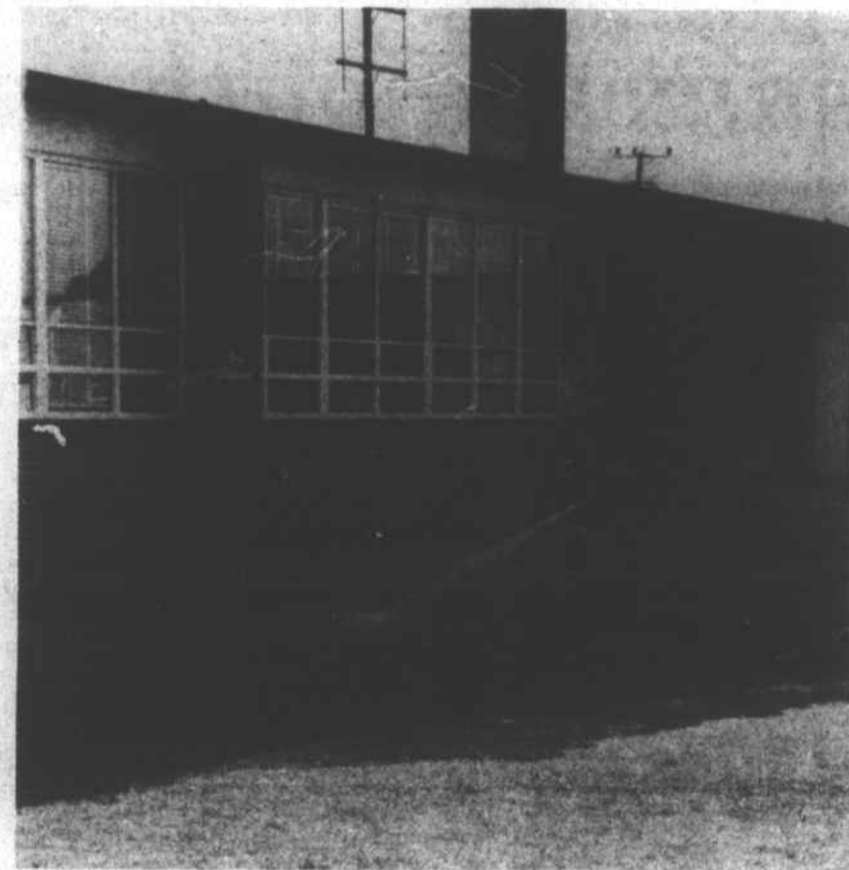
It was confined to a small patch of grass estimated at 15 by 50 feet by Winfall Volunteer Fire Department Chief Wayne Winslow.

The fire was ignited after oil spilled near an underground tank located adjacent to a building housing classrooms.

The tank had been filled that morning and ignited a short-time afterward, according to Winslow. He said it is not known what caused the spill to ignite.

Students filed out of the school and watched from a practice football field as firemen quickly doused the blaze.

Though the building never actually ignited, damages from windows cracked by the heat totaled some \$2,000, Winslow said.



Winfall fireman Floyd Long sprays extra water on an oil fire that occurred at Perquimans Union School last Wednesday. Though the building itself wasn't burnt, the blaze caused a few cracked windowpanes.

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## Special session

# Town will not absorb latest Vepeco rate hike

The Hertford Town Council agreed absolutely that Virginia Power and Electric Company's recently instituted 9.6 percent increase will have to be passed on to Hertford utility customers.

The board met at a specially-called meeting Monday afternoon to discuss among other things, the Vepeco wholesale rate increase, which went into effect Jan. 14.

Hertford customers will not feel the increase until the March 1 billing, according to Hertford Mayor and Town Manager Bill Cox. "The increase will not be reflected with this month's bill, which will go out Feb. 1," said Cox.

The 9.6 percent increase will generate some \$6,548,000 a year from Vepeco's municipal wholesale customers alone. An increase of 10.3 percent has also been passed on to Vepeco co-ops, a hike which will generate an additional \$11.9 million.

Cox said that Electricities was in the process of seeking legal action against Vepeco. Electricities, of which Hertford is a member, is an organization comprised of Vepeco-served municipalities seeking to oust the Virginia utility company from Eastern North Carolina.

In another matter, Cox announced that the town had received \$8,015 in grant monies which will allow for a fulltime senior center director through the month of June.

The matchless grant, funded through the Division of Aging, will not only fund the salary for the 5-month position, but foot the bill for travel expenses, fringe benefits, and office expenditures as well.

The town began advertising for the position this week and Cox said that he hopes to hire a director by the first of February.

Although the grant will only fund the position through June, Cox said that the General Assembly could possibly award additional money to extend the position "at least another 6 months."

"We've been assured by the aging council that if the money is available we'll get it," said Cox.

The council also moved to accept the \$15,000 grant intended to help foot the bill of the some \$208,000 waterfront park project.

The town was notified of the State Community Development grant at the end of December, but formal acceptance is required.

The town is expected to use the grant as part of its match requirement, which is 50 percent, according to Cox.

# Crime rate remains steady in rural areas of county

The crime rate in Perquimans County remained fairly constant during 1980, according to Perquimans County Deputy Sheriff Joe Lothian, who described the number of "lesser crimes" as remaining constant, and occurrences of violent crime in the county as down.

"I think, for the most part, on a nationwide and statewide level that crime is escalating, but here in the

county I believe we've held our own," said Lothian, who attributed the constancy of the crime rate to the rural nature of the community.

"In a rural area you'll find that the crime rate is pretty steady and that it doesn't fluctuate a whole lot because we don't have the influx of people that you do in the urban areas," he added.

Crime prevention awareness is

another factor responsible for the low crime rate in the county, according to Lothian.

"People in this county are more aware of programs like Community Watch," pointed out Lothian, who cited the Snug Harbor community as one area utilizing the crime preventive program. He added that the Durants Neck area was also in

the process of organizing a Neighborhood Community Watch.

Lothian said that the Perquimans County Sheriff's Department has also sought to increase crime prevention awareness through the public schools. The department is willing to speak to any grade level on crime prevention.

"It's important to familiarize students

with law enforcement officials and show them we're not the boogie men," said Lothian, who added that the sheriff's department was also willing to speak to local civic groups.

Lothian said that the sheriff's department did not keep records on the number of crimes reported in the county, choosing instead to send that information

directly to the state, where statistics are compiled for each county.

"In a small county like Perquimans, we don't need to keep statistics locally," said Lothian.

He said that the state's summary of crime occurring in Perquimans County during 1980 would be completed sometime after February.

# After brief truce, gas prices on the march again

If gas prices continue to go up the way they have recently, it won't be long before it will take a fistful of dollars to make the gas gauge indicator on your car move just a little bit.

"It's just gone wild," said Joel Hollowell of rapid fire increases that saw prices jump about a nickel at the pumps in the early part of January.

And fuel oil prices are marching up right along with gasoline.

Area oil-jobbers receive notification of the price increases from their suppliers and pass them on to their customers, the retail service stations.

Prices had stabilized over the summer, and for several months, motorists had the unaccustomed luxury of knowing what the price was going to be when they drove up to the pump. But the honeymoon appears to be over.

"It started up in December," said D.F. Reed, Jr. of Reed Oil Company in Hertford. "In fact, we had another price rise this morning."

Winslow Oil Company has also been deluged with price increases, and nobody is certain where it will stop. "How high is up?" asked owner Julian Winslow, when queried on when the latest round of price increases might level off.

Reed maintained that the culprit is the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries' recent decision to raise prices. "I would assume that as long as OPEC continues to raise crude prices, they will continue to raise prices here," said Reed.

Still, Reed was taken aback by the

rapid string of increases. "It's hard for me to understand. It's right discouraging," he said.

Reed said that there is no shortage of oil supplies at present and that the increases reflect the increased costs of production and crude.

But Hollowell didn't think the blame could be laid entirely on OPEC. "I'm sure this is what they (the major oil companies) would say but OPEC isn't going up that fast," he said.

"There is no way I can see that the cost of crude is going up that fast," Hollowell said.

He agreed that the latest round is like a pricing war in reverse, with each company racing to boost prices first. "They want to see who can be the top man," Hollowell said.

He said that two of the companies he purchases fuel oil and gasoline from went up twice in 24 hours in early January.

Winslow said that rising prices had been attributed to the cold winter that is increasing consumption of fuel oil, but labeled that justification a "poor excuse."

"Frankly, the company never tells us why they do things. They just get on the phone and call us and tell us that as of midnight tonight the price is up two cents. Usually if one goes up they all go up," Winslow said.

And there appears to be no relief in sight. "From what we understand prices are going to continue to go up for a while," said Winslow.

Reed said he was hopeful that the price would stabilize in the spring, and all three men agreed that impending deregulation will create more competition in the oil business.

Currently, it's a sellers market, with oil-jobbers locked in to the suppliers they purchased from in January of 1979 because of government regulations, Hollowell said.

Still, it appears unlikely that gas prices will stay at one level for very long.

"They say it's supposed to be up to \$2.25 or \$2.50 by 1982 and they've got a good start on it in 1981," said Hollowell.

Realizing prices aren't getting any cheaper, Hollowell is making a move that he thinks will make it more convenient for customers to buy gasoline at his self-service pumps. He's installing machines that take both five and one dollar bills.

"Everybody's got to have so many one dollar bills to get any gasoline," he said. Customers have been draining the country stores around the pumps of their ones, he said.

And the move is probably prophetic of the future.

Before long it's likely that a dollar's worth of gas won't get you out of the parking lot of the gas station, much less on down the road.



## Pumping precious petrol

Elizabeth Woodard pumps high priced petrol at a self-service pump in Winfall. The disturbing but not surprising message from area oil distributors is that gas and fuel oil prices aren't going to get any cheaper.