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35 Cents

County is pinching pennies to pay bills

By TRACY E. GERLACH
Staff writer

A dangerously low fund balance and slower receipt of revenues kept Perquimans County from investing any money in September and may mean holding off on some unnecessary purchases, County Manager N. Paul Gregory told the board Monday.

Gregory explained the county's situation in a financial update to the board.

"We're not out of money, but there's not enough money to make an investment," Gregory told the board, pointing to the only month where money was not invested. "We want to be sure we have enough revenue to pay the bills."

For the first time in at least five years, Perquimans County was unable to invest any money during a month in order to ensure that there would be enough cash to pay day-to-day bills.

The county may also withhold a payment of \$100,000 to the school district for two months as a precautionary measure until revenue receipts pick up.

An agreement between the county and the school system would allow the county to make its October payment in December if necessary, Gregory said.

Gregory's report documents a decrease in the total funds available in the general fund over a three year period. In July of 1990, the county had \$904,824 available compared to this year's \$476,865.

Tax collections are also down about \$100,000 from usual September collections, Gregory said.

The county will continue to pay its bills, but will try to keep other expenses at a minimum, Gregory explained.

"We're not in bad shape, but we're not in good shape either."

The county's dwindling fund balance has been an area of concern for some time. It has reached a point where it is no longer available to the board of commissioners as either a safety cushion or for investment purposes, Gregory said.

"The fund balance used to run the county prior to ad valorem taxes being collected," Gregory said. "We're still in fairly good shape for cash flow, but when an emergency arises or an opportunity arises, we won't have money. In an emergency we'd have to do some scrambling."

Chairman of the Board Mack E. Nixon said the county, like any good business is "foolish" to operate without a sufficient fund balance.

Board member Thomas Nixon, said Perquimans County's situation is not unique.

"I think you've joined the rest of the governments," he said. "They're all broke."

Boards make no election plan decision

By TRACY E. GERLACH
Staff writer

Perquimans County's board of commissioners and board of education watched presentations of three different redistricting plans Monday, but opted not to act until they have further reviewed the proposals.

Voters who have waited more than five years for a decision on how elections will be conducted in the future will wait at least two weeks longer. The Board of Education and Board of Commissioners will hold their next regular meetings Oct. 19.

Both boards left the meeting with a more difficult choice than they had before entering the room.

Three different plans were presented: one by the Perquimans County NAACP, another by the county's Republican party and a third by the Electoral Study Committee — formed for the purpose of coming up with the new election system.

Even NAACP president Fred Yates, who presented his group's five-district plan, was intrigued by the other proposals.

"All three are good plans," Yates said following the hearing. "All three probably accomplish the same mission but in different forms. We have to be very careful to see that it's the best plan for the people."

The mission of all three plans was to establish a voting system that better represents minorities in the county.

Of Perquimans County's 10,447 residents, 3,426 are black, according to the 1990 census. About one third of the registered voters are black.

Perquimans County's electoral system was first questioned in 1988 by the NAACP after the board of commissioners overlooked two black candidates vying for a position on the board and appointed a white candidate.

Redistricting plans submitted by both the NAACP and the Republican party established two majority black districts. The Electoral Study Committee plan does away with all districts, but establishes an at large limited voting system designed to elect the three top vote getters each

term.

H.R. Bobby Jones called for the board's to accept the Republican's six-district, township voting plan, which he said allows for "each voter to have a close association with his elected official."

"It keeps the elected official closer to his constituency," Jones said.

The plan would add one member to both boards.

There were few differences between the layout of the Republican and NAACP plans. John Jennings, who serves on the Board of Elections, said the Republican plan would be "easier to implement since the boundaries were clear cut."

"There's less gerrymandering," he said.

Michael Crowell, a Raleigh attorney representing the Electoral Study Committee, said the at large, limited voting plan adopted by the committee is intended to give black voters additional opportunity to elect a candidate.

Limited voting is relatively new in North Carolina, he said. Several counties and towns have already switched to the system, he said.

Under the limited voting plan, there would be six instead of five members on both the board of commissioners and board of education. Three seats would be decided each term and voters would only be able to choose one candidate. The three top candidates would be elected.

"It keeps white voters from having enough votes to elect all the candidates," Crowell said. "What we all hope and assume is people would vote for a candidate regardless of their race. If the vote is along racial lines, it allows black voters to elect a candidate of their choice."

School board member Benjamin Hobbs questioned the plan as the best measure of a candidate's support.

"It bothers me that a couple of people could possibly be elected with a few votes," he said.

Once both the board of commissioners and the board of education vote on a plan, the choice will be sent to the state legislature for approval. The U.S. Justice Department will give final approval to the plan. With approval, a new system could be in place for the 1994 election.

The options



Mike Crowell

• The Electoral Study Committee has proposed an at large, limited voting system that would increase each board from five to six members with three seats elected each term. There would be no district or precinct lines under the plan. Voters could choose only one candidate and the top three vote getters would be elected. It is argued that limited voting would keep white voters from having enough votes to elect all the candidates.

Disadvantages: All candidates could come from one area. If one candidate gets an overwhelming majority of the votes, the other two could be elected with very few votes.



Fred Yates

• The NAACP plan would divide the county into five districts, each having approximately 2,100 residents. Two districts would have a majority of black voters. District one would be a 53 percent black majority and district two would be a 61 percent black majority. The NAACP plan is designed to offer fair representation to all county residents. The group also believes a district plan has a better chance of being approved by the U.S. Justice Department.

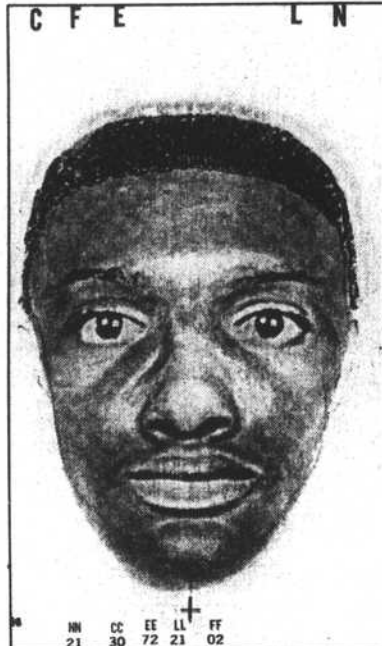
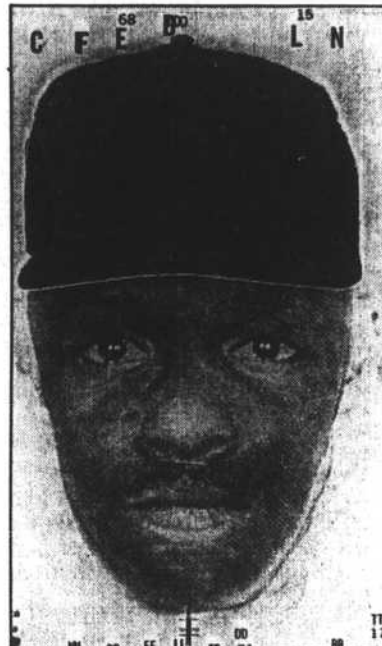
Disadvantages: Irregularly drawn districts would be difficult to implement administratively for the Board of Elections. One district crosses the Perquimans River.



Bobby Jones

• The Republican plan would split the county into six districts, add one member to each of the five-member boards and would also include two minority districts. District one would have a 58.03 black majority and district two, a 59.37 black majority. Each district has about 1,741 residents. The plan favors community representation and one man one vote system. Supporters of the plan argue that each voter should have a close association with his or her elected official, that it keeps elected officials closer to their constituency.

Disadvantages: Like the NAACP plan, one district crosses the river. Would also be more difficult to administer that at large, limited voting.



Two black men are wanted for questioning by Hertford police officers in connection with an Oct. 2 sexual assault in the North Church Street area. Anyone with information on the suspects, pictured above, is asked to call the Hertford Police Department. (Composites courtesy Hertford Police Department.)

Police seek suspects

Identity of two alleged sex offenders unknown to officers

Hertford Police officers are looking for two men wanted for questioning in connection with a sexual assault.

According to Chief Aubrey Sample, officers are seeking assistance in identifying two black males who allegedly assaulted a female in the North Church Street vicinity in the early morning hours of Oct. 2. Sample declined to release the name of the victim or details of the assault.

The victim was able to give investigators enough information about her attackers to draw com-

posite sketches. One suspect was described as a black male, approximately 5'10"-6 feet. He was wearing a hat at the time of the incident. The second suspect was a black male, approximately 5'8"-5'11" tall and had a light spot or blemish about the size of a dime on his face, possibly under his right eye or over his cheek.

Anyone with information that could lead to the identity of either suspect is asked to call the Hertford Police Department at 426-5887.

Recreation director fired

From Staff Reports

HERTFORD — The Perquimans County Board of Commissioners voted Monday to terminate the employment of the county's recreation director of six years, but offered little explanation for the decision.

County Manager N. Paul Gregory was directed to write a letter to recreation director Anthony Downing notifying him of the decision.

Gregory would say only that Downing did not follow county

policy.

Several spoken warnings and at least two written notices were given to Downing prior to his being fired, Gregory said.

Chairman of the Board Mack E. Nixon declined to comment on the reasons for Downing's dismissal, claiming it would be inappropriate. Board members set policy and don't administrate, he said.

The county will advertise this week to fill the position.

2020 committee moves towards incorporating

By TRACY E. GERLACH
The Daily Advance

What started out as a group of citizens concerned about the future of Perquimans County could become a full fledged corporation with the permission of the state and the Internal Revenue Service.

Applications for incorporation and non-profit status for the Perquimans 2020 Visions Consortium have been sent to the state of North Carolina and the IRS for approval. The executive committee has also submit a proposal to the N.C. Healthy Start Foundation to seek partial support for a paid coordinator.

Bylaws have been prepared for the consortium and a nominating committee will propose a slate of directors to serve for one year.

"It's all organizational and planning. The rubber hasn't yet touched the road," said Philip S. McMullen, consortium co-chairman and secretary.

Subcommittees, however, have continued to meet since the initial group formed this summer to carry out some of the ideas proposed, he said.

"A lot is happening within the committees in planning," he said.

Also since the group last met as a whole, Superintendent of Schools Randall L. Henion suggested the Perquimans 2020 Vision Consortium team up with the Perquimans 2000 project to work towards common goals.

"I think what they're planning to do will dovetail very well with the goals of the 2020 Vision Consortium," McMullen said.

Original Perquimans 2020 Vision participants — now directors of the consortium — will meet again in October to discuss continuing efforts and go over a report put together by Jim Folgum of the Eastern N.C. Chamber of Commerce, who moderated the strategic planning sessions this summer.

Money to cover the cost of incorporation and applications for non-profit status, was donated by Perquimans 2020 participants and Hertford Attorney J.C. Cole volunteered to prepare and submit the documents.

Football CONTEST

SEE
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