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THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

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35 Cents

Poll shows support for tax group on land use

Citizens who responded to the Perquimans Weekly's question about land use values applied to farmland were overwhelmingly against applying the values.

Seventy percent of the 20 people who called in said they are not in favor of land use. Of the 14 people who oppose land use values, three own qualifying farmland in Perquimans County. One caller said he owns farmland in Chowan County.

Five of the six callers who support the land use values own farmland. The sixth caller said he is for the values, and would like to see them extended to building lots bought that will not pass state tests to have a septic tank installed.

Not only did the callers who voiced opposition to the land use values say they were unfair, most applauded the efforts of the Perquimans County Tax Committee to fight the measure.

Several callers said it is not the land use valuations they dislike, but the across-the-board break given to all farmland owners.

The general statute calling for land use values was originally intended to hold down the values of farmland bordering commercial and residential development properties. Revaluation generally pushed the values of that land to unrealistic levels. In order to reverse that trend, farm groups lobbied the general assembly for relief. The statutes have been amended to include all farmland, using complicated profit ratios to determine land values.

As applied in Perquimans County in accordance with state statutes, land use values brought the tax value of farmland from around \$1100-1300 per acre to \$700 per acre. The reduction resulted in a loss of about \$54 million in property values, and a corresponding \$388,000 loss in tax revenues.

The Tax Committee does not argue with the original intent of the statutes. Committee members said last week they understand that farmland values were once too high on some properties whose value was driven by development. But they don't think all farmers should be allowed to take advantage of a tax break, which places more tax burden on non-farmland property owners.

In an information packet sent to the tax committee, County Manager N. Paul Gregory said that in order not to use the values recommended by the North Carolina Use-Value Advisory Board, the county must make an extensive study to prove the use of other "use-values." The recently-completed property valuation cost Perquimans taxpayers \$130,128. Gregory said the county cannot afford to have another revaluation, and therefore, must continue to utilize the present land use values at least until the next revaluation process.

At a meeting on Jan. 24 requested by the Tax Committee, legislators and state ad valorem tax representatives said the county commissioners have properly applied state statutes.

Citizens fight high-tech landfill

At last...a win!



The Perquimans High School Lady Pirates celebrated their first victory of the season, a 42-31 romp over visiting Weldon, Friday night on their home court. The win came on the heels of some close games for the team. For game highlights, please see page 8. (Photo by Susan Harris)

Other solutions sought

By SUSAN R. HARRIS and JULIAN EURE
Reporters

Perquimans County residents have banded together to fight playing host to a high-tech landfill which would be used by eight counties.

Solid waste management mandates and filling landfills in the surrounding area sparked a move, including Perquimans, to form the Albemarle Regional Landfill Authority. The authority is looking for the least expensive, most convenient way to dispose of garbage from the eight counties.

One option the authority is considering is placing a high-tech landfill adjacent to the present Tri-county landfill in the Belvidere township. Tri-county is operated by Perquimans, Gates and Chowan counties.

And residents say one landfill is enough.

"We're already becoming known as a trash dump," said Doug Layden last Wednesday evening at meeting organized by those fighting the landfill. "We don't want to be known five years down the road as a 'high-tech landfillville.'"

While fighting the landfill is undoubtedly an emotional issue, the 14-member citizens committee plans to fight with facts, not feelings. Lu Ann Riddick, another member of the citizens group, said the game plan is to investigate the waste disposal options currently before the authority, discuss alternatives, then present a plan to the county commissioners.

"We want to know (as much as the authority does) so we can ask the questions we need to ask to get all the answers," Riddick said.

Judging from the turn-out at the citizens' meeting Wednesday, Layden and Riddick are not alone in their concern. About 100 people filled the courtroom looking for answers and options to hosting the landfill.

Another option the authority is considering is selling garbage to Addingdon Environmental Inc., an Ashland, Ky. firm proposing to build a privately-owned landfill in Bertie County. Addingdon has invited the authority to join the three counties already committed to using its services (Bertie, Washington and Hertford).

Jerry Parks, the authority's executive director, and Chowan County commissioner Wayne Goodwin are supposed to tour Addingdon's waste facilities soon.

"We promised the people of Perquimans County that we would investigate all options before we decide to do anything," Parks said.

Parks said one of the main questions that must be answered before deciding to sell to Addingdon is: Will it be cheaper than building a landfill?

Perquimans County commissioner Charles Skinner applauded the efforts of the group, and patted Layden and Riddick on the back for spearheading the citizens group.

"Before you start shooting anybody down, get your facts and figures together," Skinner said. "I'm learning a great deal just listening here. This is the way to get things done."

Commissioners chairman Leo Higgins said the group did a good job bringing people together and searching for alternatives. "I thought it was well-presented," Higgins said of the information dispensed at the meeting. "It was well done and I think we should recognize that it was well done."

Results of the Perquimans Weekly call-in survey appear on page 3.

Yates takes wife's seat on town council

By SUSAN R. HARRIS
Editor

A familiar name will appear once again in Winfall Town Council minutes.

Fred Yates was appointed by the council last month to serve the unexpired term of his wife, Shirley. Mrs. Yates resigned from the post to run for a Perquimans County commissioner's seat. She won her bid, and was sworn in this past December. Now Mr. Yates will get his first taste of politics as a member of an elected government board.

Mr. Yates said he brings diversity and leadership ability within the community to the board. His priorities are finding ways to fund infrastructure needs, providing recreation for youth and promoting cooperation between the governments of the county and its two municipalities.

Winfall's infrastructure problems include an outdated water system and no sewer system. With state and federal funds for these types of projects drying up, Mr. Yates said small towns like Winfall are facing fiscal crisis.

"Taxes is not going to do it alone," he said.

Mr. Yates said Winfall's best chance at providing sewer services would be to reach an agreement with the town of Hertford to tie into its system.

The new councilman would like to see officials from Hertford, Winfall and Perquimans County sit down together to tackle problems facing the community. Pooling resources and ideas and establishing better communication could help all three governments, Mr. Yates said.

A retired Marine, MR. Yates moved to his wife's hometown in 1972. He has been immersed in the community for 21 years. He is president of the Perquimans County Chapter of the NAACP, chairman of the Perquimans County Recreation Advisory Board, a trustee at Melton Grove Baptist Church and a member of Meridian Lodge No. 18, the Winfall VFW, the American Legion, the J.W. Hood Consistory, the Viet Nam Veterans of America and Shriners.

With flying colors...



A group of Perquimans Middle School students submitted artwork to an aviation art contest recently. Shown with their colorful entries are (back to front, left to right) Dan Overman, Tiffany Baker, Brad Winslow, Melvin Privott, Phillip Jenkins, Kisha White, Ta'Aisha Wilson, Amanda Christensen, Kregan Winslow, Nicole Hollowell, Bobby Fennell, Matt Leicester, Isaac Turner, Nilian Chobot, Ryan Memolo, Nicola Jackson, Nick Kahl, Justin Beamon, Tommy Stokley and Cara Coates. (Photo by Susan Harris)

D.A.R.E. program may be back

By SUSAN R. HARRIS
Editor

Sheriff Joe Lothian may have found a way to hire an extra deputy and bring back an expanded D.A.R.E. program to the Perquimans County Schools, without adding another tax burden to the county.

Lothian told county commissioners Monday afternoon that he has applied for a state grant that would cover the salary of a full-time D.A.R.E. officer and materials for the program. If the grant comes through, the drug abuse resistance program would be implemented in kindergarten through grade six.

"I'm really excited about this," Lothian said. "There's a real good chance we're going to get this."

When asked by commissioners about the effectiveness of the

D.A.R.E. program, Lothian said it is difficult to provide statistical proof of the program's success. But Lothian said both he and deputy Ralph Robinson, formerly the county's D.A.R.E. officer, believe from their observations that the program is working. He said former students always speak to Robinson when they see him, and feel free to talk to him.

Lothian asked for support for the program and the grant application from the commissioners.

"I'm really for this thing," said councilwoman Shirley Yates. "I've been in favor of the D.A.R.E. program all along."

Yates said she has worked with youth who have been involved with the program, and she believes the program can be effective in reaching youth and deterring drug use.

If the grant is approved, Lothian will request another deputy

in his next fiscal budget. With the state providing funds for a full-time officer, Lothian said he feels he can add a sixth deputy.

Commissioner Charles Skinner said if adding a deputy will increase the visibility and patrol opportunities for the department, he is in favor of adding a deputy. Lothian replied that he believes visibility is a deterrent to crime, when asked by Skinner.

County Manager N. Paul Gregory Jr. said the grant application has his full support.

Lothian also thanked the commissioners for expanding his office space.

The Sheriff's Department has been enlarged to include the three offices formerly used by the Building Inspection Department.

ATTENTION!

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