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THE PERQUIMANS COUNTY LIBRARY WEEKLY

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35 Cents

Justice Department preclears electoral plan

New plan effective immediately

By SUSAN R. HARRIS
Editor

Perquimans County voters will cast ballots in the May primary and November general election for members of both the board of county commissioners and school board a little differently than in the past.

The county's new electoral plan was precleared by the U.S. Justice Department last week, changing the methods of election for both boards. The legislation changing the election methods will be implemented with the 1994 elections.

The new plan expands both

boards from five to six members, and eliminates residency requirements for candidates. Formerly, county commissioners were chosen to represent one of three districts, and school board members to represent one of the county's five townships. Candidates could only file for available seats within the district or township where they lived. At election time, all voters could choose candidates from each district and township.

Under the new plan, any qualified resident can file for a seat on either board, regardless of where they live.

Also changed was the number of candidates for whom voters can vote. The new plan calls for limited voting, which means that each voter can choose only one candidate on the ballot. The three candidates with the most votes will be declared the winners.

Because school board elec-

tions are non-partisan, the top three finishers in the May primaries will be elected with no run-offs.

County commissioners races are partisan. In those elections, the top three vote-takers on both the Democratic and Republican tickets in the primary will be declared party nominees with no second primary. Those party candidates will then face off in the November general elections. The top three finishers in November races will take office in December.

Three seats will come up for election every two years on both six-member boards. Winners will serve four-year terms.

The commissioners and school board will appoint members to fill the new slots created by the electoral change in their memberships early next month, as required by the Justice Department. The two appointed should be representative of the

black citizens of Perquimans County. The appointees will serve until December when those elected in November take the oath of office. The local NAACP will make recommendations to both boards regarding appointees they feel will best represent the black community.

An NAACP member, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said that the NAACP met Monday after the Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebration to discuss appointees to both boards. The source said the NAACP will recommend David Bines for the commissioners seat and the Rev. D.S. Whitehurst for the school board. Bines, the source said, will file to run for the seat in May. Whitehurst may wait until 1996 to seek election because he would have to run against a black incumbent, Walter Leigh, if he filed in 1994.

The source did say that the NAACP will not try to keep other

black candidates from seeking election.

County manager Paul Gregory said Tuesday that Shirley Yates and Archie Miller were appointed by the commissioners to serve as a review committee for appointee nominations to that board. The committee will make a recommendation to the full board on Feb. 7, and the seat will be filled on that date.

Schools superintendent Randall L. Henion said the school board has also appointed a review committee for nominations to its board. Henion said applications for appointment are available at the school board office, and the review committee, composed of Ben Hobbs and Walter Leigh, will make a recommendation to the full board at a special meeting to be called before the Justice Department's Feb. 10 deadline to fill the seat.

The filing period for the May primary opened Jan. 3. Michael

Crowell, the Raleigh attorney who has represented the county during the process of changing its electoral system, advised Perquimans County Board of Elections Supervisor Ginger O'Neal that the filing period will not have to be extended past the scheduled Feb. 7 closing date due to the changes.

O'Neal did have to contact Leo Higgins, the only candidate to file for either board prior to Justice Department preclearance of the electoral plan. Higgins, a county commissioners candidate, was required to re-file under the new plan. Since that time, Mack Nixon has also filed for re-election.

Charles C. Cheezum became the first candidate to file for the school board Tuesday. Cathy Terranova also filed Tuesday.

Apricot to expand operations

By SUSAN R. HARRIS
Editor

An empty manufacturing plant will be filled and at least 30 jobs created when the planned expansion of a local business is complete.

The Town of Hertford and Centura Bank recently teamed up to make \$650,000 in loan funds available to Apricot, Inc., a manufacturer of ladies apparel. The funds will be used for the acquisition and renovation of the building formerly occupied by Don Juan Manufacturing. Apricot's present location is within site of the new plant.

The loan is a combination of a \$325,000 in bank funds and \$325,000 awarded to the town through a state Community Development Block Grant. In return for the loan, Apricot, Inc. has committed to move its operation to the new location and create at least 30 additional jobs. The company presently has a work force of about 185.

Apricot, Inc., formerly DiJop, moved its operation from New Jersey to Hertford in 1982. Owned by the Terranova family, the manufacturer first occupied a rented plant. In November 1987, Apricot, Inc. moved into a new facility on Don Juan Road. The construction of that plant was also made possible through a public-private partnership.

The Town of Hertford plans to annex the Don Juan building, according to town manager John Christensen. The annexation will bring about \$7,000 per year to

the town in ad valorem taxes.

Hartigan Management has been retained by the town to administer the project. Funding for administration was provided by the CDBG program, Christensen said. There will be no cost to the town resulting from the loan, he added. Centura Bank will service the loan.



Perquimans County NAACP Chapter president Fred Yates presented Ronald Penny with a plaque of appreciation for speaking during the 8th annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebration at Saunders Grove Baptist Church Monday.

Penny impressed upon those who gathered the need to re-establish and uphold moral and family values in his passionate speech. (Photo by Susan Harris)

Penny: King's example is call to action

By SUSAN R. HARRIS
Editor

North Carolina State Personnel Director Ronald Penny stirred a full house at Saunders Grove Baptist Church Monday at the 8th annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day observance sponsored by the Perquimans County Chapter of the NAACP.

Penny, an Elizabeth City attorney before his appointment by Governor Jim Hunt, said the King holiday should be more than a time to rejoice over accomplishments and reflect on the past.

"We must learn from our past, we must prepare in our present and we must plan for our future," Penny said.

Penny said the community seems to be crumbling. The majority of African-American children are born out of wedlock, he said, and grow up in homes without a male role model. These children are often touched by violence, poverty and failure in education.

"We must reclaim our community," Penny said.

He referred to a Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation study conducted in North Carolina

which he said cited serious racial problems in the state's communities and schools. The study is troubling, he said, because it shows that people are growing apart.

Penny also talked about the problems of crime in society.

"Crime is alive and well and thriving, even in Perquimans County."

Penny said the Reynolds study indicated that whites fear young black males due to the rise in crime. He said part of the fear may be justified when crime statistics are reviewed. A murder occurs in the state every 12 hours and 22 minutes. The most frequent murderer and victim are black males, ages 20-24. A rape occurs in the state every 3 hours and 47 minutes. The most frequent rapists are black males, ages 21-25.

"We seem to be coming apart at the seams," Penny said.

Penny said involvement is the key to restoring values, and that the example for action was set by Dr. King and Jesus Christ. Lip service will not change things, Penny said.

"We must re-establish the moral fiber of our community," Penny said. "What was moral in the beginning is moral in the end. What was immoral in the beginning is immoral in the end."

Penny said young people must be taught that violence, stealing, promiscuity, hatred, prejudice, drugs and disrespect are wrong. He called on those present to take a special interest in young men to help them stay on track.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we can't depend on the government to do everything," Penny said.

The community and the family must reach out to provide a good start in life and positive role models for all children, he said.

"We must bring this community together."

Penny advocated working against racial ignorance and stereotypes and "realize that there is more that brings us together than separates us...We (Americans) have a common bond."

Too often differences are magnified, rather than similarities, he said.

"Today should be a starting point, so we should extend an olive branch out there."

Penny said he believes by working together, the community can move forward, rebuilding itself and restoring hope, faith and opportunity.

"Together we can insure that this nation is 'one nation, under God, with liberty and justice for all.'"

Also on the celebration program were Estelle Felton, the Rev. Willie Moore, the Rev. D.S. Whitehurst, Vera Murrill, the Rev. J.H. London, Fred L. Yates and the Rev. Hearlen Trotman. Music was provided by the Perquimans Community Choir and Anita Tillett. Greetings were brought from Perquimans County by commissioners chairman Mack Nixon, the town of Hertford by mayor John Beers and the town of Winfall by councilman Willie Moore.

Please turn to page 3 for more on Penny's speech.

Plan okay ends years of work

By SUSAN R. HARRIS
Editor

U.S. Justice Department preclearance of Perquimans County's new electoral plan ends years of work spent hammering out a new plan conducive to electing minority candidates.

The move to change the electoral plan was sparked in 1987, when the Perquimans County Chapter of the NAACP threatened to file a lawsuit against the county after the county commissioners appointed a white to fill a seat on the county board created by the resignation of an elected member. The NAACP pushed for a minority appointee. At that time, there were no minority members of either board.

In an effort to avoid a lawsuit, the commissioners appointed a biracial Electoral Study Committee. The committee and the county enlisted the assistance of attorneys and consultants, and studied the issue, trying to design a plan that would increase the possibility of minority representation on both boards.

The committee initially attempted to divide the county into districts in a manner that would create at least one or two districts with a majority of black residents. Because the county's population dispersment made drawing new districts to include the minority districts virtually impossible, the committee looked for alternatives.

In 1989, the electoral committee submitted a plan to the state legislature for passage. That plan increased the membership of both boards from five to seven members and eliminated residency requirements for candidacy. Voters could vote for as many candidates as there were positions to be filled. Two new members were to be appointed to each board to serve until the seats came up for election.

Although the NAACP, study committee and members of both boards felt the plan was a good one, the U.S. Justice Department ripped it to shreds in April 1990.

Going back to square one, the electoral committee began meeting again, ultimately authoring the plan precleared by the Justice Department last week.

In the meantime, Perquimans voters elected black representatives to both boards under the old electoral plan. Walter Leigh was elected to the school board from the New Hope Township in 1990. He ran against a white candidate, Shirley Yates was elected in 1992 to serve as a county commissioner representing the 2nd District. Yates was one of three candidates, including two whites, to seek election for two available seats.

THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY DEADLINES

- News Release Monday - 3:00 p.m.
- Advertising Monday - 3:00 p.m.