

# The Perquimans Weekly 35¢

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Hertford, North Carolina 27944

## Couple pleads guilty to state tax charges

A Hertford couple entered guilty pleas to state tax charges in Wake County Superior Court on Sept. 21.

Barbara Ann Davenport, 64, of Box 5423, Lot 18A, Holiday Island, pleaded guilty to six felony counts of embezzling state and Perquimans County sales tax.

Superior Court Judge Donald W. Stephens gave Davenport a 20-year suspended sentence on the conditions that she be on five years supervised probation, pay \$29,902 in restitution to the Department of Revenue, pay a \$6,500 criminal fine, perform 350 hours of community service, and file returns and pay, within 90 days, all taxes due for the years 1991, 1992 and 1993.

A Revenue special agent testified that Davenport and her husband, Stencil Van Davenport, 67, owned and operated Stencil's Bi-Rite Market at 226 Dobbs Street. The agent also testified that Mrs. Davenport collected \$29,902 in state and Perquimans County sales tax from November 1991-July 1993, but failed to remit the tax to the Department of Revenue.

Her husband also pleaded guilty to a lesser tax charge.

Stephens gave Mr. Davenport a two-year suspended sentence on the conditions that he be on five years supervised probation, pay a \$3,000 fine, perform 100 hours of community service, and file returns and pay, within 90 days, all taxes due for the years 1991, 1992 and 1993.

The Davenports were arrested on April 6. Both were released on bond.

Attempts to reach the Davenports for comment were unsuccessful.

## SHERIFF CUTS DOWN POT PLANT



PHOTO BY SUSAN HARRIS

Perquimans County Sheriff David Lane cut into a drug dealer's take when he chopped down this marijuana plant in the Belvidere community last Friday. The 8-9 foot tall plant has an estimated street value of

\$1,600, Lane said. Its location was revealed to Lane after an informant tipped off the Pasquotank County Sheriff's Department. The sheriff took the plant back to the sheriff's department for disposal.

## Hertford officer charged with stealing evidence

Smith charged with felony; dismissed from department

By GINGER LIVINGSTON  
The Daily Advance and  
SUSAN R. HARRIS  
Editor

A Hertford Police officer was charged by the State Bureau of Investigation with stealing evidence of criminal conduct.

Patrick Smith, 26, was charged with the felony on Sept. 22 after a month-long SBI investigation. He was dismissed from the Hertford Police Department on Sept. 25.

"It was as bad a thing as I've had to do since I've been a chief of police," said Hertford Police Chief Bennie Murphy.

The investigation by the SBI was done at the request of the town of Hertford and District Attorney Frank Parrish.

"It's a very disappointing thing to happen," said Murphy. "You keep hoping there is some mistake. It's like losing part of your family."

Murphy said the investigation was requested in August after an officer maintaining the evidence noticed an undisclosed amount of money was missing. The chief was notified, and the investigation requested.

SBI special agent Bill Godley confirmed that an investigation took place, but provided no details.

Smith's first appearance in court was Sept. 27. A probable cause hearing is scheduled for Oct. 11. Smith has been released on his own recognizance.

The stolen money was evidence in a 1993 case, but

Murphy declined to give details about the specifics of the case and if the theft will impact on the case.

Smith was hired by the police department in June 1994. It was his first law enforcement job.

"I feel sorry for Patrick and his family," Murphy said. "I hope he learns from his mistake and can move forward from here."

Parrish said if Smith is convicted, he can lose his law enforcement certification. If lost, Parrish said it is likely the revocation will be permanent.

The district attorney said that no one else was charged in the matter.

"He was the only person implicated in this at all," Parrish said.

Parrish said it is unlikely under the structured sentencing law that Smith will receive an active sentence, in particular because he has no prior convictions.

"It's not because he is a police officer," Parrish said. "It would be the same thing if he was a plumber or electrician."

The police department is currently reviewing its procedures for handling and storing evidence in light of the incident, Murphy said. At the time the theft occurred, officers had individual lockers and they were responsible for maintaining their own evidence.

The arrest ended a time of tension in the Hertford Department, when officers did not know who stole the money, but knew it had to be someone among their ranks.

"I think everyone's relieved that everything is over with," Murphy said.

"It's a sad day when a police officer does something like this."

## Energy assistance applications taken

The Perquimans County Department of Social Services will begin accepting applications for the Low Income Energy Assistance Program on Oct. 9.

The LIEAP provides a one-time payment in February 1996 to low income households to help eligible families pay

their heating bills. Most households who receive food stamps for October will receive an application in the mail. These households do not need to go to the county Department of Social Services to apply. Households who do not receive food stamps for October and some food stamp households must apply at the Social Services office. An elderly or handicapped person may apply by telephone. He or she may also send a representative to the Social Services office to apply for him/her.

The LIEAP is not a first come/first served program. Any eligible household that applies between Oct. 9 and Nov. 22 will receive a payment. There is also a Crisis Intervention Program that provides financial assistance to eligible households that are in a heating- or cooling-related emergency. A household may receive benefits more than once a year up to \$200.

Call the Perquimans County Department of Social Services at 426-1806, Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. for information.

## USDA reorganization continues here

Another phase of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's reorganization efforts under the Clinton Administration took place Monday.

The farm lending programs of the former North Carolina Farmers

Home Administration (FmHA) were transferred to the North Carolina Consolidated Farm Service Agency, according to Thomas L. Riddick, County Executive Director of the Consolidated Farm Service Agency, and William T. Winslow, Director of the Rural Economic and Community Development. The Consolidated Farm Service Agency was formerly the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service.

Winslow explained what the changes will mean to clients.

The office locations and staff in both the former FmHA and ASCS offices will remain the same, Winslow said. There is insufficient space in the suites occupied by both agencies to allow for the physical consolidation of operations.

Michelle Winslow and Kent Sawyer are now employees of the Farm Service Agency. They will be responsible for processing farm loans.

Those making payments to

RECD can continue to make payments at that office, Winslow said.

Winslow, Barbara Scaff and Vickie Winslow will continue working with the home loan program. In addition, the RECD office will begin picking up some of the community facilities, fire, rescue and water loans formerly handled through FmHA's district office.

Nationwide, USDA is in the process of closing or consolidating nearly one-third of its 3,700 field locations and establishing 2,535 USDA service centers where USDA customers will receive one-stop service. The largest reorganization in USDA's history began last year when USDA reduced the number of agencies from 43 to 29, and began cutting staff by 13,000 employees. These reorganization initiatives are expected to save U.S. taxpayers over \$4 billion.

Winslow said that this phase of the reorganization will involve no office closing or staff lay-offs locally.

The transfer of the farm lending program reflects efforts to streamline government. For more than 50 years, farmers obtained loans through the former FmHA pro-

gram, while the former ASCS administered the farm programs. Now all farm programs will be administered by one agency, Consolidated Farm Service Agency.

"These reorganization efforts have been made to streamline the way USDA does business, to cut out needless paperwork, to improve service to North Carolina farmers, and to save taxpayers money," said Riddick. "Ultimately, when a farmer steps into our USDA service centers, all of their needs will be taken care of quickly, and they will be able to get back to what they enjoy doing the most, and that

is farming."

Changes in programs to date have consolidated the Perquimans/Chowan and Pasquotank/Camden/Currituck offices of FmHA. The Pasquotank office is now open only one day per week. Farmers in that service area are now handled through the office in Hertford.

Winslow said those with questions about housing or facilities needs may call RECD at 426-5733. For farm loan or program information, call FSA at 426-5802. Either office will be happy to assist customers in understanding the changes, Winslow added.

## Sports

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JVs outnumbered at Edgecombe...Page 7

## Outside

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
High: 80s Low: 50s CHANCE OF RAIN	High: 80s Low: 50s CHANCE OF RAIN	High: 80s Low: 50s CHANCE OF RAIN