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Schools need \$17M for capital improvements

No. 1 need is replacing Central Grammar School

By SUSAN R. HARRIS
Editor

Needed: \$20 million, give or take a million.

That's how much the North Carolina School Capital Construction Study Commission estimates it would take over the next 10 years to meet the facility needs in the Perquimans County Schools.

Looking at student enrollment, current facilities and

projected needs, the state put a \$17,133,839 price tag on its projections for Perquimans County. That number rises to \$18,434,809 with inflation factored into the equation. And schools superintendent Randall L. Henion told board members Monday night that those numbers do not include the \$500,000 needed to replace the transportation garage, nor the \$500,000 for technology infrastructure.

The largest facility need is replacing Central School. Long-range plans call for tearing down the existing structure, which does not meet state building codes, and replacing it. Including demolition costs,

furnishings and equipment, the project would cost over \$7 million.

If Central School could be replaced, it would become Perquimans Primary School, a facility designed to house pre-kindergarten through second grade students.

The new facility would replace the present mobile units with permanent facilities, ease current crowding and accommodate projected enrollment.

Priority number 2 is the renovation of Hertford Grammar School, called Perquimans Elementary School on the report. With a current capacity of 378 stu-

dents, Hertford Grammar is serving 450 pupils.

The proposed renovations would up the school's capacity to 473 with four new regular classrooms and four new small group/resource rooms. The plan also calls for a new media center, a multipurpose area and administrative areas.

The price tag at Hertford Grammar School is over \$3.6 million.

Currently, storage closets are being used as classrooms at the site, as well as mobile units.

Perquimans High School also has needs, according to the study. The single most costly project on the high

school list is a new gymnasium, the cost of which is projected to approach \$1 million. Classrooms, administrative space, demolition of the King Street Annex, site development and computer infrastructure were also listed as needs.

It would cost over \$6 million to complete the proposals.

Having received a \$2.6 million facelift two years ago, Perquimans Middle School has few needs. The study lists the purchase of 10 acres of land at a projected cost of \$200,000 and \$10,000 in site development as the facility's only needs.

The needs listed on the assessment were provided to the state by the local school

system. Information was based on a previous assessment performed by architect Mike Ross. The information was checked by the staff of the state School Planning Department.

The board accepted the report and authorized Henion to set up a time when school board members can meet with county commissioners to review the document. The commissioners must approve the survey for submission to the School Capital Construction Study Commission, or the county must submit its own survey to the state commission.

FA-LA-LA-LA-LA/KINDER-CAROLERS



PHOTO BY GINGER LIVINGSTON, THE DAILY ADVANCE

Kindergartners in Mrs. Ward's and Mrs. Lothian's classes enjoyed a holiday outing last Wednesday, when they walked

around downtown Hertford spreading Christmas cheer as they sang songs of the season.

Schools report card arrives

By SUSAN R. HARRIS
Editor

Perquimans County Schools received their annual report card from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

In reading, 62.6 percent of Perquimans County students in grades 3-8 tested at proficient levels on the state end of course tests. The number rose to 63.6 percent on the math tests.

Less than 30 percent of high school students tested on the core curriculum scored at proficient levels. In 1993, 36.3 percent scored at proficient levels. In 1994, the number dropped to 26.9. It did show a slight gain to 28.3 in 1995.

Schools superintendent Randall L. Henion said department chairman at the high school are looking at ways to try to raise the scores on the tests.

"Perquimans performed pretty well," Henion said.

Next year, individual school report cards will be issued with an emphasis being placed by the state on accountability.

Henion also told the board that Perquimans has the third best dropout rate in the state at 1.20 percent. The system has held that rank for two years.

Assistant superintendent Jake Boyce addressed board members' questions about students in one class at Perquimans High School receiving pass/fail grades rather than the traditional number grades.

Boyce said eight students signed up for statistics, a class offered on the distance learning network through the N.C. School of Science and Mathematics. Two dropped out soon after school began. Toward the end of the first nine weeks, several others wanted to drop the class because they were concerned about their grades and more particularly, what a poor grade might do in terms of

their class rank.

In an effort to keep the students in the advanced class, high school principal Elaine Pritchard offered the students a pass/fail grade in the class.

When the grades came out for the first nine weeks, the students actually did well, and school administrators "thought everything was okay," Boyce said. But as the end of the next nine weeks approached, students - and parents - again expressed concern over grades and class rank.

Pritchard, Boyce and media specialist Victor Eure set up an on-line meeting with the statistics teacher. The teacher told the Perquimans staff that the course is challenging. The local staff asked that he provide more feedback and slow down to allow the local students to catch up.

Boyce said the parents of four girls in the class were quite concerned, saying that their daughters "were on the verge of nervous breakdowns" because of the stress of the class.

The decision was made to go back to pass/fail because it was offered in the beginning and administrators wanted the students to stay in the class.

Boyce said one of the ironies of the situation is that some of the parents concerned about the grades and class rank have requested that more challenging courses be taught.

Because of the situation, any senior having a problem in a class may request a pass/fail grade in one class. The pass/fail option will be allowed only this year, Boyce said. He added that the system is in transition with the Information Highway and distance learning. Plans call for drafting policies to deal with these courses in the future.

At least three board members said they were aware of the situation, but did not know the whole story until Boyce addressed it Monday night.

Howell said schools in good shape on his recent visit

School board member Wayne Howell gave a positive report on his recent visit to all the schools Monday night.

Howell said all the schools were quiet and orderly. Hertford Grammar School was exceptionally clean, he noted. There was also no water standing between the main building and the back building, although it was raining on the day of the visit. Howell said the drainage project at the school has had a positive impact on the schools' former drainage problems.

Howell also said he was pleased with the improvements being made in the high school gym.

Howell then addressed the attire of boys high school basketball players at a recent away game. He said some players were not dressed in compliance with the athletic policy dress code.

Board member Walter Leigh said his main concern is that it is the responsibility of the coach and the athletic director to make sure that the players know the rules and are prepared to play. Part of preparation to play means learning to follow the rules, Leigh said.

Howell said that athletic director Harrell Thach was taking names for possible suspension for rules violations.

Another board member, Wallace Nelson, said he was concerned with a weekend newspaper article that mentioned several technical fouls called against one varsity player already this season.

Howell said he was not asking for board action, but thought board members should be aware of how the players were dressed because it is a reflection on the school system. He said he knew from past experience that when a concern was taken to the superintendent by a board member, Dr. Randall Henion would address the issue.

The board also reviewed a sample contract for non-faculty head coaches. Although the system hires no non-faculty coaches at present, Henion said he wanted the board to review the sample contract in the event that the system needed to hire someone not on staff to serve as a head coach.

Henion said that a non-faculty head coach would be hired only if no faculty member could be contracted.

The board reviewed five policies dealing with long-term suspension/expulsion for weapons violations, disruption of meetings, and public comment. The second reading of the proposed policies is scheduled for the January meeting.

BAH, HUMBUG!



PHOTO BY SUSAN HARRIS

The Perquimans Middle School Fine Arts Department celebrated Christmas with its presentation of "A Christmas Carol", and concerts by the school chorus and bands.

Outside

THURSDAY		FRIDAY		SATURDAY	
High: 40s	Low: 20s	High: 40s	Low: 20s	High: 40s	Low: 20s
PARTLY CLOUDY		PARTLY CLOUDY		CLOUDY, COLD	