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Speaker says Dr. King's struggle continues

By SUSAN R. HARRIS
Editor

He didn't always embrace the idea of a holiday to honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., but William Dudley has come to understand over the years why King is so important.

"I came to know that the greatness of King's message made it great," Dudley, the state assistant secretary of Crime Control and Public Safety, told a packed house at Bay Branch A.M.E. Zion Church Monday afternoon.

Dudley said many African Americans contributed to this country's history, but King's message and appeal made him great.

The speaker encouraged those gathered to "look back in order to chart our course." He said people should remember the suffering and hardship slaves must have endured years ago and remember that "we got here on somebody else's path." Dudley said the prayers of those slaves for freedom and respect have been answered through the present generation.

"The hands that picked cotton...are the hands that now pick elected officials," he

"And when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every hamlet, from every state and city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children - black men and white men, Jews and gentile, Catholics and Protestants - will be able to join hands and to sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual -

'Free at last, free at last; thank God Almighty, we are free at last.'"

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

said.

Dudley said respect for others, the family, the church and the community must come to the forefront of today's society in order to make the world better. People should be judged not by color, but by character, he said.

The assistant secretary said some of today's youth have no respect for the consequences of their actions and place no value on life or property. He called churches, schools, communities and extended families to act to stem the tide of juvenile violence and crime.

"I ain't meddling, y'all, I'm challenging you to action," he said.

Dudley said Smart Start and Support Our Students programs funded by the state can help young people and should be supported by the community.

"If one child falls, we all suffer," he said.

Dudley advocated moving troubled children out of regular classroom and into an environment where they can get the help they need to become productive citizens.

Statistics show that only 1 out of every 4,000 black males will earn a doctorate in a math or science field, while one in five will become an alcoholic. One in 24 will quit school.

These trends must be reversed, he said. "Too much has been given to stop," Dudley said.

Also on Monday's program were area ministers, Virgie Whitehurst, local government and law enforcement officials, Virginia Whitehurst, Gavin Miller, Rodney Q. Lyons, N.A.A.C.P. president Estelle Felton, and the Bay Branch Adult Choir.



State Assistant Secretary of Crime Control and Public Safety William Dudley was guest speaker at the Dr. Martin Luther King Day program sponsored by the N.A.A.C.P. Monday.

CHAMBER BANQUET

Baker asks for Chamber support for park

By SUSAN R. HARRIS
Editor

Perquimans County Planning and Economic Development Director Robert Baker Jr. asked for input from Chamber of Commerce members at the Chamber's annual banquet last Thursday evening at Pavo's Restaurant.

"You are the backbone of the county," Baker told those gathered. He asked that the group establish a partnership with him and the county to work together for economic development.

Baker, hired in October as the county's first economic developer/planner, updated the group of the Perquimans Commerce Centre, a 400-acre tract of land just off of U.S. Highway 17 Bypass on Harvey Point Road purchased by the county as the site for a commerce center. Baker said the project is in its preliminary design stage.

"This is an open book and it's up to us - all of us - to write the chapters to put in this book," Baker said. "In a few years this will be a tremendous asset to this county and to the surrounding counties as a matter of fact."

Baker said his vision is to fill the park with an attractive mix of businesses, possibly including clean, dry industry, offices, a convention center or a marina. Businesses that will not negatively impact the river will be sought.

The developer said

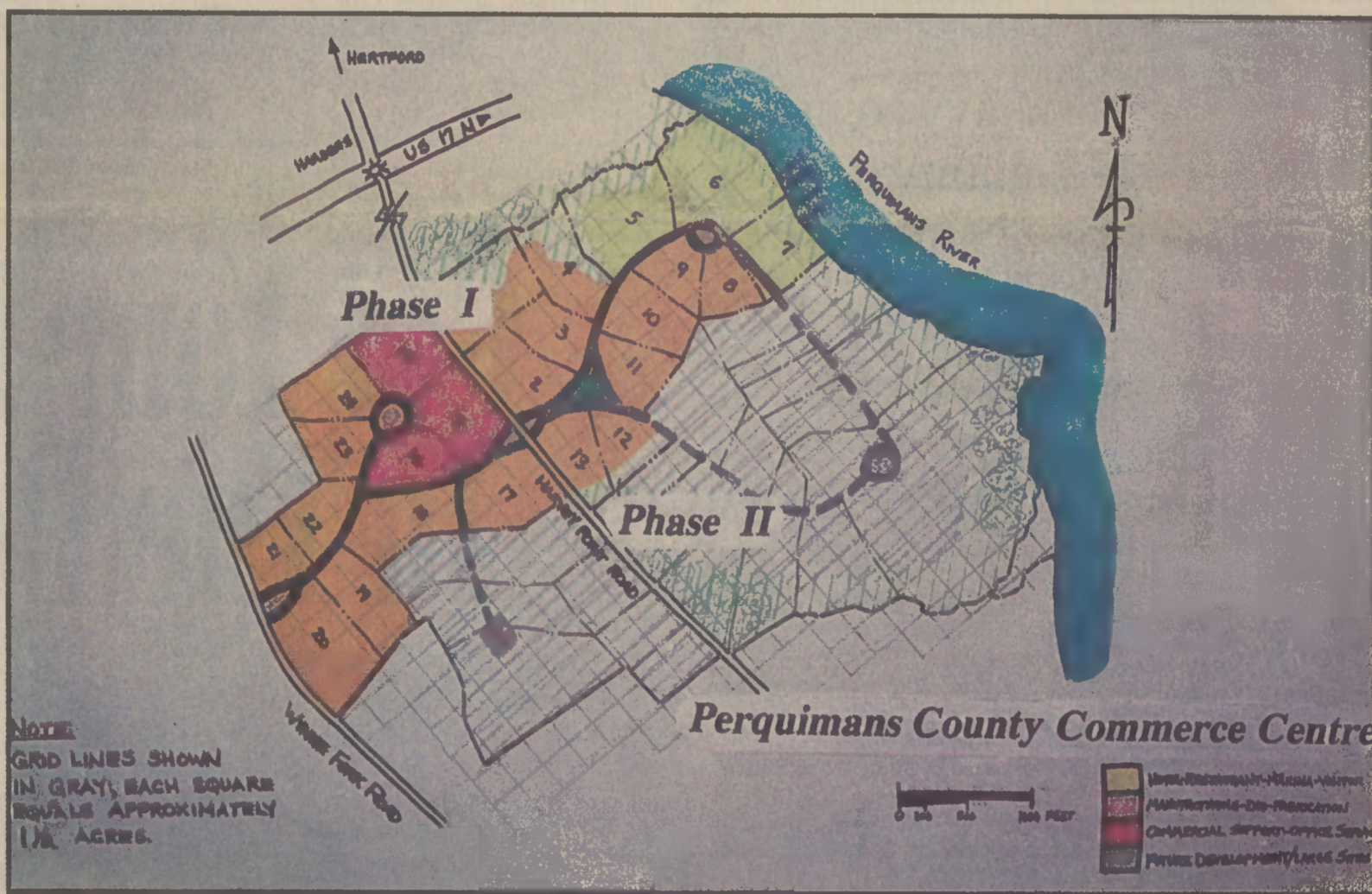


PHOTO BY SUSAN HARRIS

Perquimans County's Planning and Economic Development Director Robert Baker Jr. used aerial photographs and this preliminary drawing of the Perquimans Commerce Centre as he enlisted the support of those attending the annual

Chamber of Commerce banquet last Thursday evening at Pavo's Restaurant. The information is available for review in Baker's office in the Perquimans County courthouse. He welcomes input from community residents.

Perquimans must develop its strengths.

"We do have strengths in this county. I would ask that we work with our strengths to eliminate our weaknesses."

Baker said the park can offer the county employment, an expanded tax base and better job opportunities for youth. He used aerial photographs and preliminary sketches of the site plan during

his presentation.

Former Chamber executive director Mary Harrell was honored for her 13 years of service during the evening. Harrell could not attend the banquet, but a plaque acknowledging her dedication and service to the Chamber and a Perquimans County afghan will be presented to her. Harrell did much of the preliminary work on the afghan project,

which has been very successful. Over 350 afghans have been sold to date.

Outgoing president A.O. Roberts thanked members for their support during the year before handing the gavel to incoming president Larry Swindell. Serving on the board of directors with Swindell during the coming year will be Paige Eure, Gail Godwin, Diane Stallings, Leo Higgins, Anna W. Smith,

Alice J. Winslow, Douglas Layden, Lawrence Chappell and Billy Nixon. Directors whose terms of service ended in 1995 were Tony Lane, Annette Gregory, Edgar Roberson, Rick Stecker and Roberts.

Vocalist Jamie Lassister, a junior at Perquimans High School, provided entertainment for the evening. She was joined in one song by her mother, Lynn.

Farm survey underway

From staff reports

Virginia Holmes of Hertford will contact several local agricultural producers over the next few weeks asking them to participate in a survey conducted each year - the Farm Costs and Returns Survey (FCRS).

Policy makers and analysts at every level depend on the FCRS figures when making the decisions that affect Perquimans farm operators. Now some local producers will have input into those decisions. By participating in the Farm Costs and Returns Survey, several Perquimans agricultural producers will help show how agriculture is doing as a whole, how the various types of enterprises within agriculture are performing, and whether some sectors are more financially vulnerable than others. Information gathered by the North Carolina Agricultural Statistics Division of the Department of Agriculture is used to develop data about U.S. agricultural finances. Producers' information is merged with others and the surveys are destroyed, ensuring total confidentiality.

Perquimans farm operators reap many benefits, for instance, the data are used to: Develop and adjust farm programs delivered by local county offices of USDA; help university and extension personnel design education programs for farm operators; and allow input suppliers to plan in order to meet farm operators' needs.

Producers selected will soon be notified by letter. Interviewers will visit them to conduct the survey at the producer's convenience.

Candidates file for local offices

It's hunting season in Perquimans - hunting for new public officials, that is.

Three seats on the both the Perquimans County Board of Commissioners and the school board are up.

Neither school board chairman Ben Hobbs nor former chairman Wayne Howell will seek re-election. Present member Wallace Nelson said he has not filed yet, but probably will run.

Two people who have filed for the seats are Helen Shaw, who

was appointed to the seat created when the county's new electoral plan was approved, and Thomas L. Riddick.

Riddick, Perquimans County Farm Service Agency county executive director, wants to return to education's grassroots - the classroom.

Shaw said she would like to return to the board to assist with various projects, namely facilities, personnel and student discipline.

While county commissioner

Charles Skinner will not run, vice chairman Archie Miller and incumbent Shirley Yates will. Miller has already filed. Yates said last week she plans to file.

Joining them will be former commissioner Leo Higgins. Higgins was first elected to the board of commissioners in 1990. He lost his re-election bid in 1994 when Perquimans County switched to single shot voting.

"I feel I have the capability and expertise to serve the county. I have the time and the energy and

I'm available," he said.

The school board election is non-partisan and May winners will take office in July. Commissioners' candidates will run in May and in the general election in November.

Deborah S. Reed has filed to keep her job as Register of Deeds. Reed, a former deputy register of deeds, was appointed to fulfill the unexpired term of Jeanne C. White who retired.

The filing period for the May election closed on Feb. 5 at noon.

Outside

