

The Perquimans Weekly

35¢

Vol. 64, No. 32

The only newspaper for and about Perquimans County people

Hertford, North Carolina 27944

County asked to tame loose dogs

Family seeks relief from roaming canines

By SUSAN R. HARRIS
Editor

The Davenport family wants relief from the dogs that hound them, especially during hunting season.

Shirley Davenport of Harvey Point Road in the Bethel community and her daughter Christy told the Perquimans County Board of Commissioners Monday that they have been injured and sustained property damage from dogs whose owners allow them to roam.

Worse still, both women said, are the threats they have received from dog owners. Christy Davenport, her voice shaking, said she and other members of her family have been threatened with poisoning of their own animals, had objects thrown at them and received threatening telephone calls, all as a result of trying to get other dog owners to keep their animals off the Davenports' property.

Shirley Davenport said there had even been threats of serious property damage, such as, "Your house could burn down in the middle of the night."

Mrs Davenport said the worst time of year is just prior to hunting season when some hunters allow dogs to run in preparation for the season, and during the season itself.

"We have it (dogs congregating in her yard) every day during hunting season," she said. Her frustration led her to tie some dogs to a sign post near her home on one occasion.

The Davenports have dogs, but Mrs. Davenport said they stay on her property. When other dogs come onto the property, the Davenports' dogs rebel. In one instance, the Davenports' own dogs tore out screens in the house trying to run the other dogs off the property.

Some dogs won't let the Davenports get close enough to check their tags for the owner's name and telephone number. When she has called other dog owners, especially late at night when the dogs are disruptive, the owners sometimes refuse to come and get the animals until the next day or even days later. In the meantime, the Davenports are left to lose sleep and incur property damage.

The county does have an ordinance which states that it is unlawful for an animal to be at large and not under the control of a competent person. What Davenport asked of the commissioners is that a fine be attached to the ordinance to make dog owners sit up and take notice of the ordinance.

"Maybe this board might need to look at some avenues like that," commissioners chairman Mack Nixon told Davenport. "It's not a dead issue. It will be discussed."

No action was taken.

HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

Inmates reap benefits of garden

By GINGER LIVINGSTON
The Daily Advance

Prisoners at the Gates County Correctional Center are learning you reap what you sow.

The prisoners, who are serving time for everything from driving while impaired to murder, are being shown the bad seeds they have planted in their communities will not be tolerated. But a project designed to put inmates to work is showing them how other seeds can literally overwhelm them with surprising benefits.

A 1 1/4-acre garden started to supplement the prison's canned staples has yielded thousands of pounds of corn, tomatoes, melons, beans, cucumbers, and other produce.

The garden has produced so much food the prison is shipping it to prisons in Washington, Martin, Currituck and Pasquotank counties. The prison is also freezing several thousand pounds of vegetables for its own use later on.

Superintendent Stephen D. Muller estimates approximately 10,000 pounds of produce has been harvested from the garden.

"And that's not counting the tomatoes we have coming in," he said during a tour of the garden last week.



PHOTO BY GINGER LIVINGSTON, THE DAILY ADVANCE

Amos Vaughan (left) and Andre Blanchard, inmates serving time at the Gates Correctional Center, harvest field peas from the prison garden. Due to the work of

Vaughan, Blanchard and other prisoners, the garden has produced so much food the prison is shipping its excess to correctional facilities in surrounding counties.

"Or the beans or the cantaloupes," Assistant Superintendent Austin Weeks said.

Earlier this year Gov. Jim Hunt directed Department of Corrections officials to start programs that would put state prisoners to work in the system and community. Secretary of Corrections Franklin Freeman met with prison superintendents to suggest different work programs, including gardening.

The Gates County center already had a strong road gang program, so Muller decided to try a garden.

When the garden was started, Muller said he would have been happy if the prison could have recouped the \$3,000 in start-up costs — which included buying a new walk-in freezer and building a small greenhouse. So far

the garden has saved the prison \$6,000 in food purchases and Muller expects those savings to double by year's end.

Plans are already under way to start a fall garden. Muller and Weeks predict the garden will be active 10 out of 12 months a year.

Muller said neither he nor Weeks knew anything about gardening so they chose a prisoner they thought could be trusted to supervise the work and let him choose the other inmate workers.

Amos Vaughan, a Cofield resident who is serving a 33-year sentence for breaking and entering and second degree murder, was chosen for the job.

"By holding him responsible for getting the work done, he's chosen people he knows will do the work," Weeks

said. Vaughan, who is quick to smile about the success of the garden, said he was not too sure about the project when Weeks approached him.

"I didn't want to get involved because I knew it would be a lot of hard work," Vaughan said while picking through the garden's water-melons.

"But it was a challenge and something different so I gave it a shot. Now I sorta like working in the garden because it's something to do every day."

Vaughan said having good workers helps. Andre Blanchard of Hertford, who is serving 20 years for drug possession and possession with intent to sell and deliver drugs, is one of the workers.

"My favorite part is eating, knowing it comes out right,"

Blanchard said.

Weeks said prisoners are now lining up to work in the garden.

"They are proud of what they do," Muller said. He is glad they have the opportunity to do something they can be proud of.

"They've done wrong, they need to be punished but they are human beings and they are proud," he said.

"They are known in Martin, Washington and Currituck," Weeks said. "And they are enjoying the food. How often do you get to enjoy fresh cantaloupe for breakfast in the morning?"

Approximately 23 prisons started gardens this year. The success of the Gates County program has inspired several other superintendents to try the program next year, Muller said. He and Weeks are also planning to double their garden space.

"We knew we were going to get a good garden but we never knew it was going to produce like this," Muller said.

In addition to the garden program, inmates from Gates County have provided thousands of hours of service to municipalities in the area like Hertford.

Both Town Manager John Christensen and Maintenance Supervisor Parker Newbern have applauded the work performed by inmate crews for the town of Hertford. Roadside clean-up and maintenance projects, like fixing the drainage problem on the Holy Trinity Episcopal Church property, have been completed at a huge savings to taxpayers with inmate labor.

The program is so popular, in fact, that Muller said he has work crews assigned right into 1997.

Commissioners question DSS employee's salary

By SUSAN R. HARRIS
Editor

County Manager Paul Gregory was directed by the board of commissioners to obtain clarification on the salary and job description of a Department of Social Services employee Monday.

Gregory told the commissioners that Melissa Stokely had resigned her fulltime position as a social worker with the department and subsequently accepted a parttime job. Gregory said Stokely was being paid the same hourly rate she earned as a fulltime employee, minus benefits.

While Gregory was told that Stokely now fills the position formerly held by Connie Brothers, he said he under-

stood part of her job duties are different.

Commissioners Shirley Yates said if Stokely is doing the same job Brothers did, she should get the same salary Brothers got for the job, regardless of Stokely's education and experience. Yates added that if Stokely is not doing the same job, the position should be "redefined."

When commissioners began questioning the position and salary, Gregory told them he became aware of the move after the fact. Under state statute, the Social Services Director Chrystal Towe is not answerable to the county manager. Towe has the power to hire and fire. The commissioners set the local budget and individual salaries.

County to hire property appraiser/compliance officer

Only to be offered new position first

By SUSAN R. HARRIS
Editor

The county commissioners moved to fill a new position in county government Monday.

County Manager Paul Gregory was authorized to offer the property appraiser/county compliance officer position to present building inspector Aubrey Onley Jr. The job duties of the position will include appraising properties, handling CAMA permits, condemnation, safety inspections, the junk ordinance, the mobile home park and mobile home ordinances, and working with the firm hired to perform revaluations.

The position will not fall under the supervision of the tax department, but will stand alone. The employee hired will be answerable to the county manager.

"I don't need somebody else out there who's not answerable to me," Gregory told the commissioners.

The employee will work closely with the tax department on the appraisal portion of the job, however.

The position was created during the fiscal 1996-97 budget process.

The biggest issue facing the commissioners seemed to be what to call the new position. "Assessor" was the first job title to be suggested; however, county attorney John Matthews said that tax admin-

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istrator Cheryl Phillips had been appointed tax assessor and tax collector by the board per state statute. State law gives the board the authority to appoint assistant tax assessors, but that title might have put the job under the control of the tax department.

"Tax assessor is the main job of the tax office," Matthews said.

A review of the general statutes prompted Matthews' opinion that the job title "property appraiser" would cause no statutory problems.

Gregory was authorized to offer Onley the job at his present salary and job grade (grade 60, step 10), with an automatic raise after three months or on Jan. 1 to grade 67, step 4.

Whoever accepts the position will be sent to the Institute of Government to take the assessor's course.

If Onley accepts the new position, the county also authorized Gregory to advertise for a building inspector to fill the position Onley would vacate.

Next, commissioner Shirley Yates questioned where the employee would be located.

Gregory said that with the planned relocation of the dispatch department to the Carolina Telephone building, private office space should be available soon.

The county has reached an agreement with Carolina Telephone to rent space in the company's building on Grubb Street for \$3,850 per year. Drawings on renovations to be completed at the county's expense are almost finished, Gregory said. After completion, they will be submitted to Carolina Telephone for approval.

The county manager said he hopes dispatch will be able to move by Christmas.

Outside

THURSDAY		FRIDAY		SATURDAY	
High: 90s	Low: 70s	High: 90s	Low: 70s	High: 80s	Low: 70s
SUNNY		PARTLY SUNNY		PARTLY SUNNY	