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Pirates, Lady Pirates are 1-A Sectional Champions; Advance to 1-A Regional Semi-Finals in Pitt County this week.... Pages 6,7

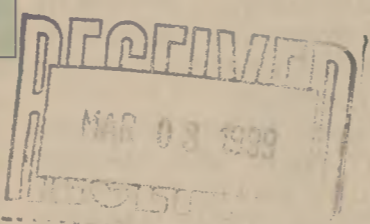
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Baker resigns

County looks for developer/planner/assistant manager

By SUSAN R. HARRIS
 Editor

The county commissioners know they are looking for an economic developer/planner/assistant county manager — but they're not really sure to whom they want that employee to be answerable.

After accepting the resignation of the county's first economic development director Robert Baker Jr., who resigned effective Feb. 19, County Manager Paul Gregory presented the commissioners with a recommended job description for his replacement. Gregory said he wrote the job description with the help of county attorney John Matthews and Perquimans County Economic Development Commission Chairman Mack Nixon. He said he also "touched base with" commissioners chairman Charles Ward.

The job description calls for the employee to be primarily an economic developer involved in planning. The employee would be cross-trained as time permits to be able to step in for the county manager should the need arise. The employee would serve at the pleasure of the county commissioners and be under the direct supervision of the county manager and indirectly supervised by the PCEDC. Gregory said Baker's job description called for supervision by PCEDC.

"There is no way a board can direct and supervise an employee," Gregory said.

Gregory said there had been problems with Baker's chain of command.

"There were problems in the way it was set up last time...Everybody's answerable to somebody...I wouldn't recommend that you hire anybody and just give them free reign," Gregory commented during the supervision discussion.

While commissioner Ben Hobbs agreed that it is difficult for board to supervise employees, commissioner Bert Hayes said the county should look for the best individual it can hire and should not "hamstring" him or her. He said hiring a strong person could cause problems.

Commissioner Shirley Yates said an experienced person might find it difficult to work under someone else.

Gregory said that all department heads should be somewhat independent, but that one of their functions is to keep the county manager informed of what's going on in his or her department so that the manager will always know what is going on and can give commissioners pertinent information.

The commissioners approved the job description so that advertising for an employee can begin, but said they will make changes if they need to. Hayes voted against accepting the document.

THE WALLS CAME DOWN



It took months to build the new Perquimans Central School in Winfall, but only a few days to demolish the old one that served thousands of county youth well for many years. The school's PTA is making preliminary plans to sell bricks from the building as mementos for those people who fondly remember their days at Central School. Details will be released as soon as plans are complete.



Grants to help with commerce centre infrastructure needs

All three local government officials are celebrating the receipt of supplemental water and sewer grants totalling \$250,000 from the N.C. Rural Economic Development Center.

The Center announced on Feb. 22 that Perquimans County and the town of Hertford would each receive \$100,000 and Winfall will get \$50,000.

Funds received by the county and town of Hertford will be used to extend infrastructure into the Perquimans Commerce Centre. The county's funds are earmarked for the extension of water, sewer and roads. Hertford's share will help install a 300 gallon-per-minute well, improve the water treatment facility, clean storage tanks and extend distribution lines to the commerce centre.

The funds will help defray the costs of over \$5.7 million in infrastructure investment. Work planned by the county will total over \$730,000, while the town is on the brink of spending over \$5 million for sorely needed water and sanitary sewer system upgrades and expansions.

Hertford will provide water, sewer and electricity to commerce centre businesses.

Winfall's \$50,000 will be used to extend sewer connections for 50 residential customers, mainly elderly and low income residents, when the town's new sanitary sewer system is in place. The new sewer system will serve 315 residents plus two of the county's schools. Winfall will pipe its sewage to Hertford for treatment. The total investment in the sewer system is over \$4.2 million. Winfall

Mayor Fred Yates was able through numerous telephone calls, trips to Raleigh and a major lobbying campaign to get most of those funds through grants because of the economic status of the town's residents.

The work at the commerce centre will allow the sale and development of the first lot in the park. A marine repair facility plans to locate in the park, bringing with it over \$2 million in private investment and 30 jobs.

The county will pool its share of the money with \$597,000 in federal grant money from the EDA.

The grants are part of an \$8.9 million statewide project to help 98 rural governments that typically don't have the ability to match grants or attain bond ratings for private capital.

County may pay all costs of inspections

Towns say paying share of communications, inspections is double taxation for residents

By SUSAN R. HARRIS
 Editor

It was difficult to tell from the discussion by county commissioners Monday whether or not they will ultimately vote to absorb the entire cost of operating the county's inspections and communications departments.

However, two commissioners — both of them former members of the Winfall Town Council — made it clear that they are in favor of the county paying for the entire cost of the inspections department.

Bert Hayes made a motion that the county absorb the cost of the building inspection department, saying that neither entity has much money, the local government bodies should work together cooperatively and the move would show friendliness towards the neighboring governments. Yates immediately seconded the motion.

But Ben Hobbs put a halt to voting on the issue, offering a motion to table the vote until the next meeting.

"I have feelings both ways...I'm not quite ready to vote this week," Hobbs said before making the motion. He added that if a vote were called for Monday, he would vote against the move. He said he wanted time to check the numbers of inspections for both towns before voting.

The issue came before the commissioners as a result of a joint meeting of county and municipal officials last month at Albemarle Commission. County Manager Paul Gregory was directed to put the item on the commissioners' agenda after councilmen from both municipalities said they felt residents already paid for these services through their county taxes.

Winfall Mayor Fred Yates said Monday that of 10 counties surveyed as officials have looked at the issue, six absorb the cost of the services in question. Gregory interjected that two of those counties have the highest tax rates in the area.

"I think the people in Winfall are paying for the services twice," Fred Yates said.

But Gregory said that an Institute of Government specialist said the county—town ventures do not represent double taxation.

Yates responded that the services Winfall receives do not justify the amount they pay each year.

According to information from Sharon Ward, Perquimans County Finance Officer, the audit for fiscal 1997-98 showed total operating costs for the communications department of \$139,303. The cost of operating the inspections department was \$89,363. Using population figures from the 1990 census, the county calculated the share due from both Winfall and Hertford. Of a total county population of 10,447, 75 percent, or 7,841 people, do not live in the limits of their municipality. In Hertford, there are 2,105 residents, or 20 percent of the total. Winfall's population of 501 comprises 5 percent of the total county population.

Based on the costs and population figures, the county paid \$104,227.25 for communications services, while Hertford paid \$27,860.60 and Winfall, \$6,965.14. For inspections, the county deducted the \$57,392 received from fees from the operating cost of \$89,363, leaving a balance of \$31,971 not covered by fees. Using the same formula, the county paid \$23,978.25; Hertford, \$6,394.20; and Winfall, \$1,598.55.

When the Recreation Department was first formed in the 1970s, both the county and town of Hertford agreed to share the cost for that enterprise. Soon, however, Hertford asked that the county absorb the entire cost, citing their double taxation argument.

The most recent service the county agreed to perform for the towns was tax collection. The municipalities determined that it would be more efficient to pay the county a fee to collect taxes rather than continue to incur the cost of billing and collection.

The towns are required by law to provide a building inspector. They use communication services for law enforcement and fire department dispatch. Yates said if forced to provide its own independent communication service, Winfall would have to close down its police department.

"I think it's time that we resolve this..." Shirley Yates said. "Let's try to do what's best for the citizens of Perquimans County."

Weekend Weather

Thursday	Friday	Saturday
High 50s	High 60s	High 60s
Low 40s	Low 30s	Low 50s
Partly Cloudy	Partly Clear	Chance Rain