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THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

35 cents

Courthouse renovations under consideration

Commissioners okay next steps in construction planning process

LEAH ALLEN
Correspondent

The Perquimans Board of Commissioners voted to move forward with steps necessary to enlarge and renovate the county courthouse in regular session on Oct. 4.

After review of a proposed

schematic layout for the renovation, the board voted to continue with the next planning step, which will include designing development drawings, creating construction documents, and developing a budget.

The proposed additions and renovations add 3,000 square feet at a cost of about \$150 per square foot. Cost is estimated to be within 20 percent of \$500,000, plus additional costs of renovating the existing building.

A schematic layout "defines all that you feel that you need in terms of space and size,"

said Gerald P. Traub, A.I.A.

The new design will provide more working space for the clerk of court.

"We started out initially talking about relieving the pressure on the clerk of court's office," stated Traub. To do so, new office space is being added. The vault will no longer be used as office space, while the older vault will be saved because of its historic significance. There will be a new office for a visiting attorney and judge, both of which will have private restrooms.

The jury room will also be moved and enlarged to accom-

modate the grand jury. The new jury room will have a restroom and space for a kitchenette. The district attorney will use the old visiting judge's office, also freeing up more room for the clerk of court. The changes will simplify the maze of hallways present in the courthouse's current design.

In addition to needing more space for the clerk of court, the courthouse needed renovation in order to comply with current handicap accessibility standards. An elevator will be added in a tower on the back on one side of the courthouse. A

matching tower has been suggested for the other side to provide symmetry and to be used for storage. Two new handicap accessible restrooms will be added as well. A covered walkway is also proposed to link the courthouse handicap access and the courthouse annex.

Chairman Charles Ward suggested adaptations to include public restrooms for downtown special events in the plans as well.

In spite of all the changes, the courthouse will appear much the same from the front.

"We thought one of the prime design criteria was not

to change the elevation of the courthouse from the street," said Traub. "The addition is exactly in line with the existing building. It goes back basically utilizing the same kind of roof profile," he said.

In addition to the proposed cost of the addition the board foresees greater expenses at the time of construction for the re-shingling of the roof. The current shingles were put on in 1954.

The need for additional courthouse space and meeting ADA guidelines has been discussed for several years by the commissioners.

Holiday parade dedicated to Hunter

Family to serve as Christmas parade grand marshalls

From Staff Reports

The family of Jim "Catfish" Hunter will serve as grand marshalls for the 1999 Perquimans County Christmas parade. The parade was dedicated to Hunter's memory by unanimous vote of the Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors earlier this month.

With the parade dedicated to the late Hunter, the theme should center around baseball, organizers said. The Chamber is sponsoring a theme contest to allow the community to share in selecting the parade theme. Proposed themes should be submitted to the Perquimans County Chamber of Commerce, Hall of Fame Square, Hertford, NC 27944 by Oct. 22 at 5 p.m. The person submitting the theme chosen by the board as the parade theme will receive a \$25 cash award.

The holiday kick-off event is set for Saturday, Dec. 4 at 1:30 p.m.

The chamber is working to bring more entries to this year's parade. Contacts are being made with area high school bands. The chamber is also asking that all churches, school groups and civic organizations consider entering the parade.

Steve Lane of Inteliport will serve as line-up chairman, Gay Murray of chimney Masters, food court chairman, and Brenda Lassiter of Carolina Trophy, band chairman. An overall chairman and judging chairman, as well as committee members, are being sought. To volunteer, call the named chairperson or the Chamber at 426-5657.

A food court will be set up on the courthouse square. Churches, businesses and civic organizations interested in renting space should contact Murray at 4276-1426. There will be no booths allowed on the streets and sidewalks to allow sufficient room for the parade.

For more parade information, call Carol LeRoy at the Chamber.

Belvidere added to National Register

SUSAN R. HARRIS
Editor

Heritage tourism development in Perquimans County got a boost recently when the village of Belvidere was added to the National Register of Historic Places.

It becomes one of very few rural historic districts to appear in the Register, and joins Perquimans' other rural district, Old Neck, as well as Hertford. In addition, there are several individual properties on the register.

The district extends from Belvidere, the plantation from which the village eventually took its name, to the Elihu A White house and farm on the south side of NC 37 and the Nicholson-Riddick-Lamb Farm on the north side of NC 37.

On Belvidere's National Register nomination form was written: "With the encroachment of new residential, industrial, and commercial developments throughout eastern North Carolina, the rural landscape and its accompanying crossroads and villages are quickly being minimized and, in places, destroyed. The Belvidere Historic District, however, is an exception to this trend. It still embodies an agricultural village with a unique blend of historic structures, cultivated fields, and forests. These buildings are connected to one another by a transportation network of roads and waterways that has changed little in nearly 200 years. Highway 37, for example, has followed its present route since the early nineteenth century. Field patterns also cover nearly the same expanse of land that they did in the nineteenth



PHOTO BY SUSAN HARRIS

The Elihu A. White House, ca. 1895, is one of the contributing properties in the Belvidere Historic District, which was recently placed in the National Register of Historic Places. The Queen Anne-style dwelling is remains in the family of its original owner.

century."

Today's quiet Belvidere gives only architectural hints of its bustling past. It grew during the second half of the 18th century as a result of the development by Thomas Newby of an important mercantile center at Newby's Bridge and near his Belvidere Plantation. Newby's home is owned today by the family of the late Robert "Wolfman Jack" Smith. In 1833, the Eastern Quarterly Meeting Friends Boarding School,

locally known as Belvidere Academy, opened. Initially called Newby's Bridge, the post office name was changed to Belvidere in 1861.

The river provided important transportation for both commerce and people. The river was navigable for commercial vessels of the time, and helped mills and stores thrive in the village settled mostly by Quakers. Several general stores, a ginning company, saw mill, grain mill, undertaker, barber, wheel-

wright, blacksmith, millwright, all these establishments and artisans did business in Belvidere. A member of Elihu White's family wrote in a 1895 letter, "Belvidere is booming."

Though it is not the center of commerce and education it once was, Belvidere offers an important glimpse into Perquimans' past.

For more on the district, see *The Historic Architecture of Perquimans County, North Carolina* in the county library.

Hertford gets tough on public nuisances

LEAH ALLEN
Correspondent

The Hertford Town Council unanimously voted to toughen up on public nuisances at their regular meeting on Oct. 11.

A new ordinance providing for the prevention and abatement of public nuisances, such as overgrown grass and weeds, and accumulation of refuse, is streamlined to expedite the enforcement process. It also attaches hefty fine for continuous neglect.

The old ordinance required the town to send a letter to the owner of the subject property, then schedule a hearing 15

days later. The property would then be inspected and a second letter sent if the problem was not relieved. If the nuisance was not taken care of within 10 days after the second letter was sent, a work order would be issued for the town to fix the problem, such as mow grass, and bill the owner for expenses. This process meant that more than a month could pass before a problem could be fixed by the town.

The new ordinance will require the town to notify the owner of a property deemed a nuisance by letter. The owner may request a hearing within 10 days. If the nuisance is not

removed in that 10 days, the town manager will issue a work order to remove or fix the nuisance. The first offence requiring the town to remove or fix the nuisance will result in the owner being billed for the cost of removing or fixing the nuisance. The owner will be charged a \$150 fee plus costs for the second offence in a given season. The third offence will result in a \$250 fee plus cost. The owner will be charged a fee increasing in increments of \$250 plus the cost of removing or fixing the nuisance for any further offences in the same season.

This new policy is meant to

encourage property owners to take care of their own maintenance problems.

"For the most part, it is the same people over and over," said John Christensen, Hertford Town Manager. Most repeat offenders are absentee owners, people who do not live in the area, he said.

Various conditions can lead to an offence. These include weed or grass growth over 10 inches high, accumulation of trash, animal or vegetable matter, open storage of appliances such as refrigerators, or any other condition deemed detrimental to public health by the county health department.

Prayer ministry on TRAC

From Staff Reports

They're on TRAC.

According to Perquimans County TRAC — Touching and Reaching All our Children — team organizer Keith Vaughan, the prayer on each school campus and at the central office each Monday morning is having an impact in the community.

"I have been extremely encouraged by the initial response to this idea," Vaughan said. "Since we began praying on September 27, I have received calls from teachers and administrators who thanked me for bringing these people together. They have already begun to see a difference in their schools. That is exactly what I expected — prayer changes things — and we are excited about the possibilities in this ministry."

About 60 people have shown up to pray at 7:30 a.m. for the last three Mondays. In addition, people are volunteering for the second component of the TRAC program, becoming a lunch buddy or reading buddy for a child. Vaughan said that part of the program will be implemented in the next few weeks as volunteers are called by the individual schools.

The prayer time is open to anyone concerned about schools and the safety of those within their walls. It lasts about 15 minutes.

For more information, call Vaughan at The Hertford Baptist Church at 426-7460.

WEEKEND WEATHER

THURSDAY
High: 70s
Low: 50s
Mostly Sunny

FRIDAY
High: 70s
Low: 50s
Mostly Sunny

SATURDAY
High: 70s
Low: 50s
Mostly Sunny