

**Lady Pirates are  
East Regional champs,  
Play at Dean Dome  
Saturday for state crown**

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# THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

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## Snug Harbor wants compensation for tax collection

SUSAN R. HARRIS

The Snug Harbor Property Owners Association is trying to clean up the subdivision. In the process, they are collecting county taxes and putting non-income-producing property back on county tax books. And they'd like to get some compensation for their efforts.

Two property owners association representatives told commissioners Monday that the association is trying to clean up abandoned and delapidated properties in Snug Harbor. The foreclosure process is time-consuming and

involves legal fees and often other expenses. Because the county gets its back taxes out of these foreclosures, but the association bears all the expense and sometimes loses money, association officers want compensation.

"It occurs to me that ya'll are doing some of the county's work," commissioner Ben Hobbs said.

"That's what our attorney said," one representative answered.

One example cited was a foreclosure involving a delapidated house and lot. The association got its foreclosure, but actually lost money after paying county taxes and tearing down the

structure on the property.

Last year, the association filed foreclosures on six properties, collecting about \$3,000 in taxes. This year, they said, they are moving to smaller properties, which will mean they will probably lose money on the foreclosures.

The first suggestion from association representative James Greer was that the county agree to accept 25 cents on the dollar for all taxes collected. But Tax Administrator Cheryl Phillips and county attorney John Matthews said the measure was unlawful.

"There has to be some way to get around it,"

Greer said.

Commissioners Chairman Charles Ward said perhaps the county could consider paying a commission or contingency fee on taxes collected by Snug Harbor.

Commissioner Wallace Nelson said he thought the county ought to work with any group trying to collect taxes.

While others were looking at Snug Harbor's collection efforts, commissioner Mack Nixon was more focused on the county's collection efforts.

"We need to be more aggressive in our tax collection," Nixon said several times during the discus-

sion. "If you have to contract it out, contract it out."

Nixon said in 1996 the county hired an employee and sent another to school so that tax collections could be improved.

Phillips said her office is working on some collections. Now they are working on some larger tracts.

Matthews said some of the delinquent taxes are due on heired property, which can be more time-consuming to take through the foreclosure process. It can also take 12-18 months to actually sell a foreclosed property by the time all the legal work is complete.

The attorney also told

commissioners that they must consider throwing "good money after bad." In some cases, he said, the county could actually lose money on a foreclosure.

The topic will likely be discussed when the commissioners meet for a work session on Monday, March 19 at 7 p.m. Hobbs requested a session to allow commissioners to more fully discuss issues.

Ward agreed that the meeting was needed. Topics suggested for discussion at the meeting included hunting, the recreation grant, taxes, radio towers, and the mobile home ordinance.

## FUN FUND RAISERS



Participants enjoyed fund raisers held in February by Perquimans Heritage, Inc. and the Antique Dealers Association of Perquimans County. Perquimans Heritage sponsored a Sweethearts Dance Cruise (above), while ADAPC chose a silent auction and champagne brunch. Proceeds went to Perquimans Restoration and the Main Street Program.



## February fund raisers net funds, fun

Perquimans Heritage, Inc. and the Antique Dealers Association of Perquimans were real sweethearts in February. Both groups held fund raisers to benefit county non-profit organizations.

Perquimans Heritage, Inc., a group committed to preserving and enhancing Hertford and Perquimans County by responsibly utilizing the community's abundant water resources, sponsored a Sweethearts Dance Cruise. The American Legion Building was turned into a cruise ship for an evening of fun. Proceeds from the

evening were donated to the Perquimans County Restoration Association for their use in promoting and developing heritage tourism, including support for and operation of the Newbold-White House.

A two-day silent auction, complete with Sunday champagne brunch, kept Hertfordshire Antiques busy for a weekend. Antique dealers donated items for the auction and organized the brunch to benefit the Main Street Program.

"The antique dealers have been

my largest contributors to the program," said Main Street Program Manager Belinda Washlesky.

Hertford earned its Main Street designation last spring. The non-profit organization is overseen by a board. Its purpose is to revitalize the downtown area.

At present, Main Street and the Chamber of Commerce share a building at 118 W. Market St. which is undergoing renovations to make it a visitors center. The building was donated to serve as a visitors center by Dr. and Mrs. Robert Earl Lane.

## Cooke tapped as chamber director

SUSAN R. HARRIS

The Perquimans Chamber of Commerce once again has a part-time executive director.

Larry Cooke, 55, a New Hope resident, signed on to help lead the chamber in January.

Cooke comes to the position with chamber experience. In the 1970s, he served as director of public affairs and membership for the Chesapeake, Va., chamber. He worked as a committee member with chambers of commerce in Atlanta, Ga., Columbia, S.C., and Raleigh. He is also a founding member of the Currituck Chamber of Commerce.

In addition, Cooke's bachelor's degree in journalism and communications and master's degree in urban studies and economics give him an understanding of business and economic development. He focused on the impacts of growth in geographic areas in his master's work.

That, he said, "...laid the academic foundation for understanding, assessment and implementing economic development, job creation and planned growth in an area," Cooke said.

He has also done doctoral work in higher education administration.

He is presently also an instructor at COA, where he teaches developmental English writing, basic skills and in the learning lab.

Cooke sees tremendous benefits for businesses in a community with an active chamber.

"I think most importantly, (the chamber) provides continuity for the business community to have a voice in the future decisions of their area with the intentions of each individual member prospering from the organized efforts of a chamber of commerce," Cooke said.

His first focus will be on providing the membership with the types of services that will provide a return on their investment in the chamber. He said he is committed to strengthening and expanding the existing membership base, which

includes some second- and third-generation businesses. And it's not just growing the chamber he wants: Cooke also wants to support the growth of existing businesses, as well as pulling in new ones.

He said it is important for a chamber to play an active role in local and regional decision-making processes, particularly in the areas of economic development and tourism.

"Perquimans County Chamber of Commerce is in a position that we must engage ourselves as an active participant in Northeastern North Carolina," he said. "We have to actively participate in the information exchange and ideas that our neighboring chambers of commerce currently participate in. We haven't been heard from and it's up to us to attend, participate and be a player."

He said the chamber has a forward-thinking board poised to development strength from the inside out, and become partners in the areas of economic development and tourism.

Board members are Becky Winslow, president; Jack Taylor, vice president; Margie Nixon, treasurer; Susan Harris, secretary; Gay Murray, immediate past president; Brenda Lassiter; Carson White; Douglas Layden; Randy Park and LuAnne Pendergraft.

## WEEKEND WEATHER

THURSDAY  
HIGH: 54  
LOW: 38  
PARTLY CLOUDY

FRIDAY  
HIGH: 56  
LOW: 38  
RAIN

SATURDAY  
HIGH: 55  
LOW: 36  
PARTLY CLOUDY