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Lady Pirates 2nd in state

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Matthews pictures Perquimans
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THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

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Gun reported on PCHS bus Thursday

No gun found, but student arrested on weapons charges

SUSAN R. HARRIS

A Perquimans County High School student was arrested on weapons charges Sunday after several students reported that he had a gun on a school bus Thursday morning.

Emanuel Coston, 16, of 480 Pender Road, Hertford, was arrested at his home Sunday by Hertford Police

and charged with possessing a gun on educational property. He was granted a pretrial release by magistrate Todd Tilley, which according to police officials, means there are strict guidelines he must follow. His first appearance in court is set for April 4.

The charge is a Class I felony and carries a sentence of up to 15 months,

depending on prior arrest record. Coston's record includes a minor charge of property damage, according to Hertford Police Chief Dale Vanscoy.

Coston had already been suspended by the school for 10 days pending investigation, per school board policy. The policy calls for a 365-day suspension for taking firearms to school. The school could not release his name per state law, but law enforcement officials released his name because arrests of those 16 and over are subject to state open records laws and are con-

sidered public information. Although no weapon was recovered, Vanscoy said the arrest was made based on the strength and detail of the witness statements.

Reportedly, when the bus arrived at the high school, Coston walked off the bus, entered the school, walked down a hallway, then left the school. Police believe he then disposed of the weapon.

"One of the students claimed they saw the end of a rifle barrel and the front sight," Vanscoy told The Daily Advance. "... He was walking stiff-legged, like

something was stuck down in his pants leg, when he walked through the school."

Assistant District Attorney Mike Johnson said a case can be built against Coston based entirely on witnesses.

"They can prove it other ways," Johnson said. "They can make out a case — even if they don't find the gun — if they have witnesses."

PCHS principal Dwayne Stallings issued a news release early Thursday afternoon stating that several students had reported seeing a male student with

a gun on the school bus that morning. Students said that a gun of an undetermined classification was seen below the bottom of his pants leg.

The incident was not reported to the driver, but witnesses did report the incident to school office personnel upon arrival at school.

"Immediate steps were taken to search the student, his belongings, his locker, and the school bus on which he was riding," Stallings stated in the release. "No weapon was found."

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North Carolina Main Street Program Director Rodney Swink facilitated the "Picture Downtown" forum last Tuesday evening.

Hertford residents 'picture downtown'

MARIEL BETANCORT
 The Daily Advance

Just as town and county officials did Monday night, citizens gathered Tuesday at Hertford Baptist Church to talk about a shared vision.

But this time, the group of almost 60 residents and elected officials alike gathered to discuss Hertford's downtown area.

Hertford's Main Street Program Manager Belinda Washlesky organized the Downtown Vision Forum, which was facilitated by the state's Main Street Program Director, Rodney L. Swink. Swink asked participants to first discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the downtown area, then craft a vision for downtown in 2006.

In small groups, the participants took turns sharing personal visions:

"I travel into Hertford from Highway 17 South and as I approach the bridge, I see beautiful flowers on each side," began one.

"We stop by the 1950s gas station for a fill-up and then drop off the young'uns at a theater," continued another.

"It's nice to be able to spend time in your own hometown and have something for everyone."

"How enjoyable to walk from my house to downtown Hertford," added another. "Where the clean and beautiful streets and buildings are aesthetically pleasing."

Swink encouraged the groups to talk about any ideas that might revitalize downtown, no matter how silly or unlikely.

"If there are dreams you have, this is the time to reveal them," Swink said.

By the end of the meeting, participants created eight group vision statements, which described a downtown with a rooftop restaurant, a movie theater, art galleries and a "Turtle Walk" with embedded turtle markers, among other things.

The Hertford Main Street Program Board of Directors will meet today to create one vision statement and compile results from the Tuesday meeting.

As Swink pointed out during the meeting, residents must then work together to decide what to do next.

"It's your community, it's your work to be done," said Swink. "And your successes will be your successes."

Although Hertford joined only last year, the Main Street Program is not new to the state. Established by the non-profit National Trust for Historic Preservation, the program currently includes 48 communities in North Carolina and as many as 1,500 throughout the United States.

The Main Street Program does not award grants or outline strict requirements for members.

As Swink said, it simply helps communities revitalize a downtown area.

At the forum, residents also had a chance to examine the photographic exhibit "Picture Downtown."

During the week of Feb. 19, 36 persons walked through the downtown area, snapping pictures of both likes and dislikes.

STATE BASKETBALL RUNNERS-UP



Daily Advance photo

A storybook season came to an end for the Lady Pirates Saturday, as they fell to East Surry, 69-65 in the hard-fought state 1-A title game. The team made history with its 30-1 record, and championships in the

Holiday Basketball Classic, regular season, conference tournament, sectional and regional competitions. Perquimans was represented well all season by the squad. For game highlights, please turn to page 7.

County groups eye long-range plan

MARIEL BETANCORT
 The Daily Advance

More jobs. More downtown parking. New or improved school facilities. Affordable housing. More youth programs.

In the next 10 years, Perquimans County will need all these and more, according to the 65 county officials who met Monday night to discuss the area's future.

Representatives of the county commissioners, the school board, the planning board, the town council and almost every county office met at the Albemarle Commission auditorium for the first in a series of

meetings dubbed "Planning for Tomorrow in Perquimans County."

Charles H. Ward, chairman of the Board of Commissioners, and Pat Harrell, interim superintendent for Perquimans County Schools, organized the meeting to initiate discussion about the area's common vision.

"Perquimans County needs to develop some kind of long-range plan," said Ward, as he welcomed those in attendance. "We want to see if we can't reach some kind of consensus."

In small groups, the participants - including mayors Fred Yates and Sid Eley, Hertford manager John

Christensen and Board of Education chairman Walter Leigh - brainstormed about recent county successes, existing concerns and problems the area may face in coming years.

"Think about what the county looked like when you were in high school, and think about what the county looks like now," Ward said, starting the discussion. "Think about 50 years into the future," he added.

After discussion in small groups, the participants reconvened to share ideas. Several issues concerned many: lack of jobs, entertainment and shopping options, responsible

growth, the hiring and retaining of quality educators and the medical needs of a growing population of retirees.

Specific needs for the county, participants said, include everything from more swimming lessons, to a hotel and large restaurant, to better access to the river, to more cemeteries.

Town approves fines for civil ordinances

SUSAN R. HARRIS

Breaking the rules in Hertford got more expensive Monday night when the town board voted to impose a civil fine of \$25 per offense for violating its ordinances.

The measure was dis-

cussed at the town's last meeting, but was tabled until Monday night when town attorney Walter Edwards had reviewed the measure and said it met state guidelines.

Town ordinances cover issues such as parking in designated areas.

Council also approved the alarm system ordinance discussed at the February meeting. The town will impose a fine of \$50 for the second and \$100 for the third false alarm answered by fire or police within a calendar month, and is effective June 1.

WEEKEND WEATHER

THURSDAY
 High: 67
 Low: 52
 RAIN

FRIDAY
 High: 68
 Low: 47
 RAIN

SATURDAY
 High: 63
 Low: 42
 PARTLY CLOUDY