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Track team tops in conference;
PCMS hunter safety state champs

Page 9

Health group gets grant

Page 4

PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

May 8, 2002

Vol. 70, No. 19 Hertford, North Carolina 27944

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Fight against OLF ongoing

SUSAN R. HARRIS

County Commissioner Charles Ward isn't as hopeful as he once was that Perquimans County can avoid becoming home to a military outlying landing field.

Ward said during Monday's regular session of the county board that after his first trip to lobby officials in the nation's capital, he felt that Perquimans might be spared. But his latest talks and information have made him think county residents had better prepare for noise.

The problem, Ward said, is that Virginia Senator John Warner, a powerful legislator, is lobbying to get the entire squadron of superjets stationed at NAS Oceana in Virginia Beach — along with the positive economic impact it will have on the area.

Unfortunately for those who oppose the landing site proposed in the Whiteston community, local officials have learned that Perquimans will be the top choice for the site if the entire squadron is stationed in Virginia.

The problem facing county commissioners, who have gone on record against the site being here, is the balance of power in Washington. Warner is a well-connected, veteran legislator. The North Carolina delegation, on the other hand, faces some concerns. Sen. Jesse Helms, whose influence in D.C. is also great, will not seek another term and is in failing health. Rep. Eva Clayton is likewise not seeking re-election. That leaves Sen. John Edwards and Rep. Walter Jones to lead the fight on behalf of the county. Someone at Monday's meeting compared the situation to David vs. Goliath.

Ward said if the planes are stationed at Cherry Point, Craven County will get the landing strip. Craven County officials have gone on record supporting its location in their county. That county would also see economic benefits to the site, unlike other Northeastern counties.

There is also talk, according to Commissioners Chair Ben Hobbs, of splitting the squadron. In that case, Washington, Bertie and Hyde counties become the prime locations.

Ward said he is more concerned than ever about the noise from the planes. He said Whiteston is only 37 air miles from Oceana, meaning planes will not be able to rise over 1,500 feet before reaching the site. The low-flying planes will definitely bring significant noise, he said.

County Manager Paul Gregory said residents against the landing strip should continue to contact legislators, preferably by email or fax as mail service is still slow in Washington.

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER



PHOTOS BY ALICE BREWIN

About 75 people attended the National Day of Prayer service on the courthouse lawn last Thursday. The event was organized by the Perquimans County Schools Ministers' Council.

Sun shines on prayer service

ALICE BREWIN
Staff writer

The sun shone down during lunch hour for many on May 2.

About 75 people showed up on the Perquimans County Courthouse lawn to hear government, religious, family and student leaders pray for the nation, its leaders, community, families and youth.

Speakers included Brenda Lassiter, Hertford Mayor Sid Eley, Judge J.C. Cole, Pastor Willie Vaughan, Winfall Mayor Fred Yates, Pastor Kenneth McNeill, Superintendent Kenneth Wells, Pastor Tom McClaren, Sharon Riddick, Minister Gail Hill, Melissa Williams, Pastor Alan Gibson and Pastor Steve Formo. Caroline Wright was pianist.



Prayer leaders bow as they await their turns to lead the community gathering.

Town office gets new old lights

SUSAN R. HARRIS

A found treasures prove that everything old is new again.

One of the old-style fixtures that used to brighten the streets of Hertford was found, in disrepair, but found. Town Manager John Christensen restored the fixture.

In the meantime, Department of Transportation representatives realized that they had some matching fixtures and four cement poles in storage. They brought them out of storage, and now the municipal building has new period lights on its front lawn. Main Street Program Manager Belinda Washlesky said Christensen restored a second fixture for the front lawn, and will repair the other two for the rear of the building.

Ironically, the fixtures and poles are the same style that will be installed on the S-bridge and along the



PHOTO BY ALICE BREWIN

Belinda Washlesky admires the new lights on the municipal building lawn.

main business district on Church Street next spring through the TEA-21 grant.

County hits the books

Budget
meetings set

SUSAN R. HARRIS

It's the time of year local government officials dread: It's budget time.

County commissioners will get an in-depth look at the needs and wants of its departments and the school system this week as budget talks get underway in earnest. Meetings were set for May 7, 9, 22, 28 and 30.

With state reimbursements being held, the county has already performed a juggling act to meet the current fiscal budget. News from the state on anticipated revenues for next budget year are not promising.

Two of the largest budget requests are generally submitted by the Department of Social Services and the school system.

Over the past two years, the DSS budget has been stressed by rising Medicaid costs. The county is required to pay these costs, whether or not they

are placed in the original budget. Estimating what will be spent is a daunting task.

The schools will no doubt be hit with cutbacks from the state as officials in Raleigh deal with revenue shortfalls in the billions of dollars. The state pays most teacher and administrative salaries, and there are talks about cutting some of those funds in order to balance the state budget. The schools will take their budget requests to commissioners Thursday at 8 p.m.

The only positive on the revenue side may be a recommendation made in Monday's regular meeting regarding raising building permit/inspection fees. Chief Building Inspector Izell Jackson told commissioners that overall, the county's fees lag behind surrounding counties' fees significantly.

The county is required to pass a budget by July 1. The county manager generally presents his budget recommendations in June. A public hearing is required by law, and is usually held in June.

Main Street designer speaks downtown

Downtown property owners and merchants got some one-on-one and group consultation last month when North Carolina Main Street Designer Lauren Malinoff presented a design workshop in Hertford.

Malinoff, the Main Street Designer for 17 years, presented examples of good and bad design issues and discussed code requirements during her presentation, sponsored by the Hertford Main Street Program. The veteran designer has provided services for all 45 of the state's Main Street communities.

In addition, Malinoff has written a book titled, "Downtown Building Rehab, Rescue and Repair."

After the presentation property owners and merchants were able to meet with Malinoff to discuss design issues relevant to their particular building.

Twenty-two people attended the morning meeting.

The event was one of many organized and sponsored by Main Street to help local business property owners and merchants increase their revenues. The goal of the Main Street Program is to revitalize the downtown, making it a destination for shoppers and visitors. A multitude of services to help businesses are available through the program.

For more information on obtaining design assistance for properties located in the Main Street Project Area of the downtown Historic District, please contact Belinda Washlesky, Main Street Program Manager at 426-1425.

The Chamber of Commerce is also working cooperatively with Main Street to provide \$1,000 matching facade grants to help downtown business property owners defray the costs of improving the exteriors of their buildings. Applications are available at the Main Street office in the Visitors' Center.

WEEKEND WEATHER

THURSDAY
HIGH: 85
LOW: 62
STRONG STORMS

FRIDAY
HIGH: 79
LOW: 53
PARTLY CLOUDY

SATURDAY
HIGH: 75
LOW: 53
MOSTLY CLOUDY