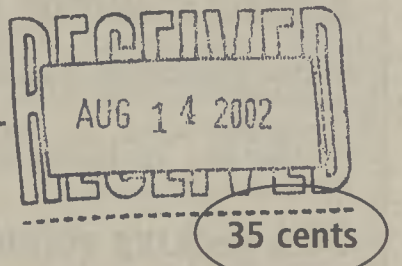


PERQUIMANS WEEKLY



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August 14, 2002

Vol. 71, No. 33 Hertford, North Carolina 27944

School year gets off to smooth start

SUSAN R. HARRIS

The sounds of youth filled scrubbed-down classrooms as the 2002-03 school year got underway in Perquimans last Thursday.

"I thought we had a very good opening those first two days," Superintendent Kenneth Wells said Monday. "We had the usual small glitches with getting a few schedules redone at the last minute and that kind of thing, but basically, we had a very smooth opening."

First-day attendance was 1,654, 94 percent of the 1,751

students enrolled. Numbers of students registered at each site are: Central, 344; Hertford Grammar, 397; middle, 423; and high, 587.

Wells said the school system has traditionally continued to enroll students during the first 10 days of class.

A pared-down force of 30 yellow buses picked up and dropped off students. Last year, 34 buses ran. Wells said the decrease is designed to increase efficiency and reduce costs.

While there were a few adjustments to make to the

bus schedules, Wells said that all routes ran on time, according to Transportation Director Richard O'Neal.

"Richard said this morning that everything in transportation is going smoothly," Wells said Monday.

Bus numbers are not the only thing down from last year. State budget cuts meant reducing the workforce, also. Systemwide, four teacher and four teacher assistant positions were not filled due to budget constraints.

"Due to budget cuts were

unable to fill several teaching, teacher assistant, central office, cafeteria and bus driver positions," said Personnel Director Brenda Dail. "However, our principals have done a nice job reassigning staff members to be sure that all students will continue to get a quality education."

Dail said the system brought aboard 26 new employees during the summer.

"We hired a very highly qualified staff this summer," Dail said. "Each year gets more challenging in finding highly qualified

teachers, but with the help of a great administrative team, we interviewed many applicants and made some excellent decisions."

Dail said as soon as positions came available, she and administrators immediately began looking for replacements. Most openings were created by retirement and teachers relocating, she said.

At present, all teaching and certified positions have been filled, with two teaching positions still requiring board approval. A 21st Century Site Coordinator at Central School and a cen-

tral office receptionist are the only open jobs.

The system employs 156 certified personnel, 35 at Central, 30 at Hertford Grammar, 41 at Perquimans Middle, and 50 at Perquimans High.

Students seem to be adjusting to the new block schedule at the high school, Wells said, as well as to the new principal, John Dublin, at the middle school.

"I said just this morning that if the next 178 (school) days go as smoothly as the first two, we're off to a good year," Wells said.

Town hall construction begins in Winfall

SUSAN R. HARRIS

If smiles were dollar bills, the town of Winfall wouldn't need the \$513,000 grant/loan combination from USDA Rural Development to build its new town hall.

Everyone was smiling and jovial at Monday's groundbreaking ceremony for the new Winfall Town Hall. The building is adjacent to the Winfall Town Park overlooking the Perquimans River just off Major Street.

The foundation is poured for the 3,116 square foot facility which will house the town's administrative offices and police department.

The building will feature a meeting room designed to allow for town and community functions.

The present town hall is just off Winfall Boulevard. Winfall Mayor Fred Yates said the facility is no longer adequate to serve the town's needs and is in need of major repair.

As town officials looked at long-term needs for Winfall several years ago, they realized the need for a

new building. But with only 554 residents — 312 households, Yates said the town council could not raise funds locally to pay for a new building.

Yates, always on the lookout for grant money, found out as he sought additional funding for the town's wastewater collection system that Rural Development might be able to help the town.

In addition to construction money, the town needed a lot upon which to build. Yates went back to John Harris, a Virginia businessman who had several years earlier donated three acres of waterfront property plus a \$10,000 grant match to allow the town to build its park. Harris again helped.

"John Harris has been good to the town," Yates said. "People really don't know it. I talked to him and he gave us the land. He's interested in the town and doesn't even live there."

Yates said Harris purchased the waterfront acreage out of bankruptcy. The owner of a communications company, Harris had initially intended to



Daily Advance photo

Winfall Mayor Fred Yates (left) reacts to a member of the audience as he countersigns a \$513,000 "check" from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development during a ground-breaking ceremony for Winfall's new town hall Monday. Joining Yates are Susan Sorrell, a rural development specialist based in Williamston, and John Cooper, USDA Rural Development's state director.

put a tower on the property. That was before Yates cajoled him into donating the land for a park.

The town had a place to build, and got a \$338,000 grant and a \$175,000 loan at a 4 percent interest rate.

Construction on the facility has begun, and Yates said it should be complete by January. A.R. Chesson Construction Company, Inc. is the general contractor.

Once the new building is complete and in use, Yates said the present facility

will become a public works headquarters.

The town hall was built by the Winfall Volunteer Fire Department and also served as its headquarters until a couple of years ago, Yates said. At that time, the county gave Winfall a parcel of land across from the county softball fields and a new fire station was built.

When the fire department moved, the town renovated that space to expand its extremely small offices.

On hand for the groundbreaking were USDA Rural

Development State Director John J. Cooper with several members of the Rural Development staff from the state and local offices; Joyce Mitchell, area representative for Sen. John Edwards; Charles Worth, district manager for Congresswoman

Eva Clayton; Dr. Albert Walker, vice chancellor for academic affairs at Elizabeth City State University; Sen. Frank Ballance; and representatives from Winfall, Hertford and the county.

Byrum leads school board

SUSAN R. HARRIS

William Byrum has held a lot of positions in education, and last month he was elected to a new one. Byrum was elected chairman of the board of education by fellow school board members.

Byrum, 64, was elected to the board in May 2000, collecting the highest number of votes in a five-way race for three seats. The Perquimans County native garnered 806 of the 2,065 votes cast.

The veteran educator retired from Perquimans County Schools after a career that spanned four decades. His first position was teacher, but he was named principal just a few years later, a position he held for over 30 years. He left that slot to become a special assistant to the superintendent. He was a very popular administrator with students and parents.

Elected vice chair was Helen Shaw. Shaw was appointed to the board eight years ago to fill a vacancy created by a new electoral system. She was elected to 4-year terms in 1996 and 2000.

Credit union expands services through grant

SUSAN R. HARRIS

The Perquimans Credit Union is expanding its services.

The credit union recently received a \$43,840 grant from the U.S. Treasury Department's Community Development Financial Institutions Program. The program was created to expand the availability of credit, investment capital and financial services in distressed urban and rural communities.

Credit Union Manager Tracy Bowser said the funds, coupled with other grants, will allow the finan-

cial institution to install computers and offer customers ATM and checking services. She said plans call for the new equipment and services to be in place by the end of the year.

Bowser said the expansion will allow the financial institution to be more competitive and improve customer service.

At present, the credit union offers savings accounts and personal, mortgage and automobile loans to its 842 customers. Services are available to anyone who lives in Perquimans County. To join, prospective members must put \$25 in a savings,

or share, account and pay a \$1 fee. The \$25 must stay in the savings account at all times.

Guidelines for ATM use and checking services are being discussed by the credit union's board of directors.

The credit union opened in 1945 with a mission to serve low-income county residents. Although its customer base at present is composed mostly of African-Americans, Bowser said the credit union is inclusive and its mission is to serve all those who need financial services. With a growing Latino population in the

county, Bowser is working with other credit unions that serve the Hispanic community to get ideas on how better to serve that segment of the county's residents.

The credit union's broadest goal is to make sure there are banking services in the community that low-income residents can afford and to remain an institution that offers personal service while growing in its financial offerings.

Because of its status as an institution serving the low-income community and its low fees, Bowser said she is constantly writ-

ing grants to pay for salaries, expanded services and equipment upgrades. In fact, she said, her own salary is paid for with grant funds.

In addition to Bowser, Linda Billups is a credit union employee and they are currently seeking a third employee.

The credit union is located at 306 Dobbs Street, and hours are Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday, 9 a.m.—5 p.m., and Friday, 9 a.m.—6 p.m.. Once computers are installed, the credit union will be open half-days on Wednesdays.

Call 426-5131 for more information.

WEEKEND WEATHER

THURSDAY
 High: 98
 Low: 73
 MOSTLY SUNNY

FRIDAY
 High: 92
 Low: 71
 SCATTERED T'STORMS

SATURDAY
 High: 92
 Low: 70
 PARTLY CLOUDY