

# PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

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## Crawford takes PAL honors

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## PCHS opens doors to parents

"When I attended school, things were much different."

"Students are more disruptive today."

"Parents aren't as involved with the educational process today."

"Our children are being tested too much."

These comments are often heard by parents and others regarding education

The community had a chance to see first-hand if some of these statements were true last Tuesday when they were invited to attend the first Community Visitation Day at Perquimans County High School.

"I am committed to building and maintaining positive relationships with parents and the community and actively seek ways to involve our parents in projects, such as the "State of the School" meeting, cul-



Parents returned to school last week when Perquimans County High School hosted a Community Visitation Day on Tuesday, attending classes and eating breakfast and lunch with students.

tural and historical presentations and programs and campus visitations," said PCHS Principal Hans Lassiter.

In keeping with the desire to involve parents and the community in the affairs of the school, PCHS opened its doors for parents to attend the first-ever Community Visitation Day. From the opening bell until about noon, guests walked

about campus and hallways during the instructional day to see first-hand the ob faculty, staff and students are doing. Guests were also encouraged to eat breakfast and lunch with students.

Lassiter said numerous parents took advantage of the opportunity to attend school with their children.

"It is my goal to offer a visitation day for parents every year," Lassiter said.

"It is imperative that parents are involved in their child's education."

During a recent board meeting, Lassiter credited teachers for working like never before to ensure the success of every student. He said administrators recognize that success for every child can be realized if parents and the community assume active roles in the educational arena.

## County to sell property

### Proceeds to pay taxes owed

SUSAN R. HARRIS

Tax Supervisor Frank Heath said the sale of two properties at the courthouse door next Tuesday to collect unpaid taxes is a matter of fairness.

Heath, who took the tax supervisor position in November, said if every possible means to collect real estate taxes is exhausted with no success, the county will move to foreclose on the property.

"When I was hired, it was made clear to me that the commissioners were serious regarding equity to taxpayers," Heath said last week.

The county property tax rate is based on the amount of taxable property in the county, Heath said. If some property owners don't pay, the tax rate for the rest rises to cover the cost of running the local government. That rise in the tax rate is unfair to those who do pay taxes, Heath said.

Heath said that tax department employees make every effort to collect taxes through a variety of methods before resorting to a tax sale. Those who owe taxes get notices in late summer or early fall, with taxes due by Jan. 6 of the following year. If taxes are not paid by Jan. 6, the property owner receives a second notice in the mail.

Taxpayers who can not pay the full tax amount by the Jan. 6 date may apply to set up payment plans with the tax office.

"We try to help taxpayers as much as we can," Heath said.

In late winter, the tax department advertises in The Perquimans Weekly that it will begin enforced tax collections. In March, per state mandate, those taxpayers who owe amounts due in the previous tax year are published in the newspaper.

The tax department requests employee lists from companies and agencies in the county. If a delinquent taxpayer is one of those employees, the county garnishes wages, taking 10 percent per pay period.

Bank accounts are also attached.

In addition, the county may file to have state tax refunds sent to the county to help offset taxes.

Letters, telephone calls and visits from Heath are measures used to try to collect taxes.

The ultimate goal is to collect taxes by June 30, the end of the county's fiscal year.

After all other avenues of collection are exhausted, the county may opt to begin foreclosure proceedings, which ultimately results in the county selling the property at the courthouse door. The county then keeps

from the sale price the amount of taxes owed and expenses incurred to collect the taxes.

At present, the county turns its foreclosure files over to an attorney. After notifying the taxpayer in writing of its intent, the county submits the file to the attorney's office.

A complaint is filed with the clerk of court, and after the time required by state law, a judgement is entered for foreclosure.

A sale date is set, a notice is published in the newspaper, and the sale takes place. Per state law, the sale can not be finalized until an upset bid period has passed. After that, the final buyer is determined and the legal documents are executed to transfer the property.

Heath said the process takes less than a year.

While the county can foreclose on real estate, Heath said often trying to collect taxes on personal property such as automobiles and recreational vehicles, can be more difficult.

Heath said a list of about 50 taxpayers had already been turned over for foreclosure prior to him coming to Perquimans. About 20 of those remain unresolved. The two properties that will be sold next week are among the original 50.

A list of 40 more delinquent tax accounts was approved by the county commissioners for submission to an attorney in January.

Heath said properties placed on the list are prioritized by how many years of taxes are owed and the highest tax amounts owed in each township.

"We are trying our best to collect taxes," Heath said.

While collection work takes a lot of time for tax department employees, Heath said other parts of his job are more enjoyable.

"I have really enjoyed the part of this job where I get to go out in the field and meet taxpayers," Heath said. "I sure have enjoyed being here. Everybody I've met has been really nice."

Another priority for Heath is upgrading and expanding computer and internet capabilities in the tax office.

Heath is married to Perquimans County native Roberta Chappell Heath. The couple have a young son. They moved to Perquimans to be near family and enjoy a slower pace of life.

Prior to coming to Perquimans, he managed a law firm in Raleigh, where he gained experience in personnel management and real estate law.

At age 17, Heath began working as a paralegal in Greenville, and years later would earn his masters in public administration from East Carolina University. His studies were concentrated on state and local government management.

He has experience in real estate and the operation of tax offices.

## New head football coach named

### Swafford now at PCHS

SUSAN R. HARRIS

James Swafford doesn't want to wait until the first day of practice to meet next fall's prospective Pirate football players.

So the Tennessee native, named the new head football coach here Monday night by the school board, planned to spend some time at PCHS Tuesday afternoon, informally meeting students and staff and taking in a baseball game.

Swafford said PCHS Principal Hans Lassiter will set a more formal meet-and-greet session for players, parents and the press, probably sometime in late April or early May. The date will be determined not by Swafford or Lassiter, but rather by the anticipated birth of Swafford's daughter in Tennessee in three weeks.

Swafford said he is anxious to take over the football program at Perquimans. His philosophy on the game is that football is about commitment, dedication and teamwork. He believes football is an extension of the classroom and the team directly reflects the school and community.

The tall, physically imposing Swafford has 12 years of coaching experience in football, serving the past seven years as a head coach, and also as a defensive coordinator, special teams coordinator and assistant coach. His last assignment was as head coach at South-Doyle High School in Knoxville, Tenn.

In addition to his coaching duties, which also included a stint as a softball coach, Swafford is certified to teach both health and physical education and special education.

Swafford said after Monday night's board meeting that he will hold summer work-outs for foot-



James Swafford

ball players at PCHS. He is looking for players who are coachable and willing to do what is right both on and off the field, he said.

In his previous posts, Swafford greatly increased the numbers of players on his football teams, as well as improving the win-loss record.

Swafford's wife, Nicole, likes this part of the country, and found the opening in Perquimans County on a North Carolina website.

"My wife likes this

area," Swafford said. "We're real excited about coming here."

Mrs. Swafford is a certified math teacher, and the couple has a 20-month-old son.

In references provided by Swafford to the school board, Mrs. Swafford is described as very supportive of her husband's teams. Swafford said Monday night that she likes to get students motivated to support the football team.

The Swaffords' school year ends in Tennessee on May 21, and the couple hope to move as soon as possible after fulfilling their commitments there. In fact, Swafford spent part of Tuesday looking for a place to live in Perquimans County.

Swafford is taking the coaching position vacated when former head coach Harrell Thach resigned in November.

Both Lassiter and Athletic Director Susan Cox said Swafford is a good fit for Perquimans High.

## Facility plans move forward

A former PCHS athlete will play a key role in improved athletic facilities for future Pirates.

Dr. Billy Nixon recently met with Superintendent Ken Wells regarding the proposed athletic facility improvements for the high school.

Nixon has agreed to donate property he owns across the street from the school as the county moves forward with renovations and improvements for the local school system.



Superintendent Ken Wells and Dr. Billy Nixon look over plans for a new PCHS athletic complex.

The school board and commissioners will meet on Monday at 7 p.m. to discuss HVAC and roofing

needs at Hertford Grammar and the middle school, as well as PCHS athletic facilities.

## HOLIDAY WEATHER

THURSDAY  
High: 73  
Low: 51  
Mostly Cloudy

FRIDAY  
High: 71  
Low: 52  
Partly Cloudy

SATURDAY  
High: 71  
Low: 47  
Scattered T'STORMS