

FIREWORKS

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PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

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35 cents

Gregory to retire

County
manager will
leave Sept. 30

SUSAN R. HARRIS

After two heart attacks, County Manager Paul Gregory is going to take life a little easier.

Gregory submitted his letter of resignation to county commissioners, which was read in a called meeting Monday night. He will step down on Sept. 30.



Paul Gregory

"After you've had two heart attacks, you start looking around and thinking what you should do," Gregory said. "I'm going to slow down. I'm going to work on some projects at home and maybe find a part-time job."

Assistant County Manager Bobby Darden will move into the top administrative slot, Gregory said Tuesday, and a planner will be brought on board.

Darden was hired in September 2002, and Gregory said he has been groomed since his appointment to assume the county manager duties.

Gregory started his career in 1969 as a seventh and eighth grade teacher at King Street School. When the school system consolidated King Street and Hertford Grammar schools in 1970, Gregory taught at HGS.

In 1977, he left teaching to become the director of social services, a position he held for 10 years. Then, he became Perquimans' second county manager in 1987. All totalled, he has 35 years of service under his belt.

"I was considering retirement anyway, but then with the two heart attacks, I definitely have to go," Gregory said.

"I've enjoyed my tenure with the county," he continued. "I've had fun doing it. It is beginning to be quite a job, though. I was getting older and it was time (to step down)."

Gregory said he's enjoyed all his working years.

"I enjoyed teaching, I enjoyed social services, the people we had there, and I hope I've been able to help some people in this job," he said. "That's all I've ever wanted to do was try to help folks."

A deacon and Sunday school teacher at Hertford Baptist Church, Gregory is a member of the local Masonic Lodge, a Lion and a former Jaycee. He is past president of the Perquimans Youth League and was involved in school activities while his sons were attending Perquimans County Schools.

MARCHING TOWARD PERFECTION



Students from across eastern North Carolina and southeastern Virginia came to Perquimans County High School last week to participate in a day of instruction for marching, horns, percussion and color guard with the Crossmen Drum and Bugle Corp of Bergenfield, N.J.

Crossmen Corp instructs at PCHS

Approximately 80 students from across eastern North Carolina and southeastern Virginia traveled to Perquimans County High School last week to participate in a rare music education event. Students partnered with members of the Crossmen and their staff to receive instruction for marching, horns, percussion and color guard.

The clinic, only one of seven in the entire country this summer, was held by the Crossmen Drum and Bugle Corp of Bergenfield,

N.J. The group consists of students from all over the United States, practicing 12-14 hours a day in preparation of their 2004 competitive show. Drum and bugle corps is an intense, competitive, choreographed musical experience staged on a football field by young people achieving high levels of excellence.

Through the drum and bugle corps experience, young people develop life skills including discipline, teamwork and leadership.

"I commend our band

program leaders, Chris Whitehurst and Lynn Dale, for their diligent efforts in hosting this renowned group in Perquimans County," said Dr. Kenneth Wells, schools superintendent. "It provided a unique opportunity for our students to have first-hand knowledge in the life-enhancing, character-building experiences, including the pure joy of learning and playing music, that the group displays."

"The exhilaration of achievement which the

drum and bugle corps demonstrates in each performance comes with a lifetime of memories for our local students," said PCHS Band Director Chris Whitehurst.

"It is my desire that our students embrace the concept of working hard, struggling long hours and achieving much during the upcoming performances during Friday night football games and competitions throughout 2004-05 school year."

County passes \$10.5 mil. budget with 4-2 vote

SUSAN R. HARRIS

The county passed its \$10.5 million budget Monday night just after a public hearing on the budget.

Commissioners voted to raise property taxes by 2 cents per \$100 valuation in order to meet its operational needs and keep its fund balance at what commissioners consider a healthy level. Even with the tax increase, the budget requires a net draw of \$126,400 from the fund balance.

Leo Higgins, a former county commissioner, was the only county resident to speak at the hearing, which drew less than 40 people.

Higgins encouraged the commissioners to consider an additional 2 cents tax increase. He said the budget over the past several years has been underfunded and the increase is warranted.

The county took \$100,000 in capital reserve funds this year, Higgins said, which is legal, but was money traditionally ear-

marked for schools, plus money from the fund balance.

Higgins congratulated commissioners for their work to keep capital funds in tact over the years.

Then the former commissioner apologized for his neglect several years ago for not properly funding the HVAC system at the middle school during his tenure on the board. Higgins said another commissioner had tried to explain to the board at that time that the rooftop HVAC units were too heavy for the PCMS roof system to support. But the board "went cheap," Higgins said, and as a result the units and the roof are now having to be replaced.

"I apologize, Mack," Higgins said.

Higgins said he would like to see "better long-range vision for the county."

Higgins said that adding the 2 cents for most county residents would be about the same as the cost of a soft drink or sandwich each week.

Commissioner Wallace

Nelson tried once more to get support for more fully implementing the county salary schedule. He suggested looking at new and vacant positions, and holding off on hiring to free up funds for raises and for \$7,500 that was cut from the school system's request to fund Communities in Schools.

Nelson said he had figured out how to fund both with no additional tax increase.

Commissioner Tammy Miller-White also supported funding Communities in Schools.

"I think it's crucial," she said. "I think it would be a serious mistake not to fund it."

Commissioners Chairman Mack Nixon said he has grave concerns about the county's financial condition. He said the fund balance was dangerously low in the early 1990s, when it dropped to 8-10 percent of the county budget. The state requires 8 percent, but most counties the size of Perquimans try to keep a 25 percent fund balance.

"We have to keep our fund balance," Nixon said.

He said that when the county bought into the animal control shelter in Chowan County, it cost \$25,000 more than initial estimates and medical fees at the jail exceeded budget by \$13,000, all in one fiscal year. Nixon said the county must be careful in budgeting because of that kind of unanticipated expenses.

Nixon added that the commissioners agreed to pay the \$1.8 million for the roofing and HVAC repairs at the middle school this year, with a promise to fund the same work at Hertford Grammar School in two years. The county is also looking at needs at the high school, Nixon said.

"I thought the schools were pretty much in agreement with what we worked out," said Commissioner Charles Ward.

Nelson and Miller-White voted not to approve the budget, while Shirley Wiggins, Ben Hobbs, Nixon and Ward voted to accept the budget. It is effective July 1.

PCRA gets grants

The Perquimans County Restoration Association has been awarded two grants to be used for the study of the 1730 Newbold-White House: A Colonial Quaker Homestead.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation has awarded a \$3,200 grant to help support the cost associated with a Historic Structures Report for the 1730 Newbold-White House. The report will include all the information about the significant structure, from its 1730 construction, later alterations, the substantial restoration in the 1970s and recent repairs and modifications. The report will also provide recommendations for future restoration and interpretation.

Peter Sandbeck, architectural historian with the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, will be the principle investigator and author of the report.

This grant was made possible by the establishment of the Terence L. Mills Memorial Endowed Preservation Services Fund for North and South Carolina. Funds ranging from \$500 to \$5,000 are awarded to nonprofit groups and public agencies and must be matched dollar for dollar with public or private funds.

The Trustees of the Marion Stedman Covington Foundation have awarded the Association a grant of \$5,000 to address the ground moisture issue in the Newbold-White House. It was discovered in 2003 that that house was experiencing extremely high levels of moisture, resulting in damage to the house. The funds from the Covington Foundation enable PCRA to identify the cause of the moisture and develop a plan to address the issues.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, chartered by Congress in 1949, is a non-profit organization with more than 250,000 members. As the leader of the national preservation movement, it is committed to saving America's diverse historic environments and to preserving and revitalizing the livability of communities nationwide.

For more information call 426-7567.

WEEKEND WEATHER

THURSDAY
HIGH: 83
LOW: 72
ISOLATED T'STORMS

FRIDAY
HIGH: 84
LOW: 73
THUNDERSTORMS

SATURDAY
HIGH: 85
LOW: 74
THUNDERSTORMS