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APWC gives grants

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PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

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35 cents

SBI probes Mayor Yates travel payments

ROBERT KELLY-GOSS
The Daily Aadvance

The State Bureau of Investigation is investigating allegations that Winfall Mayor Fred Yates fraudulently received double payments for expenses he incurred while traveling on government business.

The allegations were first reported by the state

Auditor's Office, which investigated Yates' reimbursement by two state agencies after he had already been paid for those expenses by the Town of Winfall.

State Auditor Leslie W. Merritt Jr.'s review of Yates' travel expenses was initiated after Winfall resident and former planning board member Fred Tanner reported the allegations of

"double-dipping" earlier this year.

According to Merritt's report dated March 2005, Yates — who has been Winfall mayor since the early 1990s — was reimbursed \$572 in state funds between July 2001 and March 2002 for travel he made to government meetings in Raleigh. Yates received those funds from the Rural Economic

Development Center and the Governor's Crime Commission.

According to Merritt's report, Yates also received advance payment for those same expenses from the Town of Winfall.

Duplicate reimbursement of state funds is illegal and can lead to a number of criminal charges, including obtaining property by false pretenses and

embezzlement of state property, according to Merritt's report.

The auditor's office also found that between December 2001 and March 2002 Yates "received \$166.18 for lodging expenses ... for which no supporting receipts were on file with the Town of Winfall."

A spokesman for the state Attorney General's Office said officials at the

auditor's office have turned the matter over to the SBI.

"The matter has been referred to the SBI by the auditor's office and the SBI is reviewing the matter per the auditor's request," said William McKinney, a spokesman for state Attorney General Roy Cooper.

When asked what the SBI was specifically investigating, McKinney said. **Continued on page 8**

Board okays Winfall housing

MARGARET FISHER

Winfall Town Council members approved a rezoning of 13.69 acres from commercial to residential to allow for a gated community development.

The parcel, belonging to John Harris & Associates, is located behind Winfall Landing Park, which was donated to the town by Harris.

Winfall Landing is an 18.5-acre community that is planned to include 41 single-family and 42 town-house residences that convey a small town feel, said Winfall's Mayor Fred Yates. **Continued on page 8**

AT THE SWIMMIN' HOLE



SUBMITTED PHOTO COURTESY JOHN MATTHEWS

Weekend rains left a shallow pond in the front lawn of Russell and Mary Banks on U.S. Highway 17 Saturday. Ashley Hall, 7, (left) and Aelxis Hall, 9, enjoyed an afternoon frolic in the water. By Sunday, the Banks no longer owned waterfront property.

Winfall mulls safety issues

MARGARET FISHER

Winfall Police Department has been awarded a \$10,000 Governor's Highway Safety grant to upgrade their traffic control.

"We're waiting for the check," Chief David Shaffer told Winfall Town Council members Monday night, "but we've received official notification that we were awarded the grant."

Shaffer, currently the only police officer in Winfall, said the money will be used to upgrade his radar system and purchase a display board that shows drivers how fast they are going and portable breath testing devices.

If funds are still available, Shaffer said he hopes to purchase a camcorder for his patrol car and child safety seats. He also hopes to offer workshops to teach

parents how to use the car seats and, additionally, give some away to needy parents.

Council members told Shaffer that he needs to get three bids as soon as possible so the town can purchase another vehicle for a second police officer.

"They're contemplating getting an Explorer because of the potential for flooding in bad weather," Shaffer said. But a car would be cheaper to upgrade, he said.

Yates said that the town is negotiating with Rural Development for a grant which they will have to reapply for once they have bids in hand. The town may have to borrow money, as well, he said.

The town has begun advertising the position of another full time officer. Currently, the Perquimans **Continued on page 8**

Slow economy hampers business

MARGARET FISHER

Since April 2000, the Perquimans Business Center has been nurturing new businesses with the goal of them hopefully flying out of the nest and surviving on their own.

With a \$263,000 grant from the North Carolina Technological Development Authority and land at the Commerce Center provided with restrictions by Perquimans County, the business incubator was built.



PHOTO BY MARGARET FISHER

Carol Hammer ices gingerbread cookies to be shipped to customers throughout the country. Her business, The Lovin' Oven, changed its focus from a retail bake shop in Edenton to wholesale baking and shipping factory at the Perquimans Business Center.

Perquimans 2020 Vision Coalition, under the direction of former county commissioner Leo Higgins, became the non-profit agency responsible for

managing the business center.

"The aim was to create jobs and give people an opportunity to start a business. **Continued on page 2**

Local support hurricane relief

MARGARET FISHER

Area residents are not forgetting those people who've lost everything in the hurricane-stricken Gulf Coast.

A high school student was so compelled to help victims of Hurricane Katrina after hearing about the "\$1.4 Million from 1.4 Million Students" fundraising campaign that she decided to take action.

Heather Perry, a student at Perquimans County High School, spearheaded a relief campaign called Desperate for Dollars that drew in more than \$4,300 for students and educators in the gulf region.

"As I listened to the devastating news regarding the loss of life, homes, possessions and businesses, I just kept saying to



PHOTO BY MARGARET FISHER

T.G. Weeks of Galloway Auto Auction prepares to drive donated vans and a truck filled with food to Gulfport, Miss. The items were donated by used car dealerships in Hampton, Va. and Moyock to Katrina victims.

myself...somebody has to do something," Perry said in a press release. "Then, I realized that somebody could be me." **Continued on page 2**

Merchants meet to discuss promoting downtown

Merchants meet to discuss promoting downtown **MARGARET FISHER**

In an effort to promote the downtown retail businesses, Historic Hertford, Inc. has asked retail merchants to partner with the organization.

"The purpose is to reenergize Downtown Historic Hertford," Murielle

Harmon, co-chairwoman of the promotions committee of HHI, told eight merchants, HHI members, Mayor Sid Eley and Wendy Jewett, director of HHI, that were gathered at a meeting held at Intelipoint on Sept. 29.

HHI is willing to support the downtown retail market with dollars with merchants' input as to how the

money should be spent, Harmon said.

Harmon related retail statistics found in a Virginia newspaper article. Advertising using newspaper inserts and holding in-store promotions in collaboration with other merchants were some of the better ways of bringing in business, she said.

The surprise was that it

isn't only retired people who are moving into the area, she said. With an increase of students in the area, parents are also noteworthy additions, so merchants have an opportunity to cater to people ages 45 and up, she said.

Harmon strongly recommended that merchants make efforts to keep sidewalks in front of their

stores clean.

"Believe it or not, consumers notice that," she said. "It tells whether you care."

Eley said that the town of Hertford should be sweeping the streets at least three times a week. The merchants didn't think the sweeping was being done that often. **Continued on page 2**

WEEKEND WEATHER

THURSDAY
HIGH: 75, Low: 64
FEW SHOWERS

FRIDAY
HIGH: 81, Low: 60
MOSTLY SHOWERS

SATURDAY
HIGH: 82, Low: 57
SHOWERS