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THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

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Marijuana uprooted in New Hope



PHOTO BY MARGARET FISHER

The Sheriff's Office located eight pot plants, some as high as eight feet tall during a flyover done in conjunction with the SBI and the National Guard.

MARGARET FISHER

A stand of marijuana plants were found growing in New Hope during a routine fly-over in a Marijuana Eradication effort.

The fly-over was conducted jointly last Wednesday by Perquimans County Sheriff's Office, the State Bureau of Investigation and the Army Air National Guard.

Seven plants were spotted by one of two National Guard helicopters and ground support moved in and located them off of Deep Creek Road, said

Sheriff Eric Tilley.

The plants were located behind an old hog operation about a quarter mile from the nearest residence.

"A couple of (the plants) probably reached about eight feet tall," Tilley said.

There was evidence of fertilizer sprinkled around them where the weeds had been cut back in about a 4-foot circle to allow sun to reach them. There were also jugs nearby of bluish water that looked like liquid fertilizer, Tilley said.

"It's obvious somebody had been there and planted them," he said. Tire impressions were found in

the grass where someone parked and likely walked into the wooded area.

Another marijuana plant was found near the Perquimans/Chowan county line off of Highway 37.

While residents were questioned about traffic in the area and no suspects have been found, the fly-over is basically a seizure program, Tilley said.

"It's not the first time we've found marijuana off Deep Creek Road," he said. Last year, young plants were found growing in plastic cups.

The marijuana plants were destroyed, Tilley said.

Tourism rising

MARGARET FISHER

While Perquimans County ranked 93rd in travel impact among the 100 counties in the state, its economic impact increased 5.1 percent from 2004 to 2005.

Tourism drew about 64 million people into the state, while visitors spent about \$14 billion in 2005 - a 7.3 percent increase over 2004.

Information about tourism was released in The 2005 Economic Impact of Travel on North Carolina Counties, prepared for the North Carolina Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development by the Travel Industry Association of America.

Economic impact within the county of more than 12,000 people was \$7.83 million. More than 50 jobs in Perquimans were directly attributable to travel and tourism, while travel generated a \$1.08 million payroll.

State and local tax revenues from travel to the county came to \$1.27 million, representing a \$105 tax saving to each resident.

"(The figures) are going up, and it mirrors what's happening in other areas," Hertford Mayor and Perquimans County Chamber Director Sid Eley said. "If we had hotels here, they'd be much higher. I think we're doing very well for what we have in place now."

In comparison, Chowan County had an economic impact of \$16.61 million, an increase of 8.6 percent. Gates County's impact was \$4.88 - an increase of 8.9 percent. Pasquotank County increased by just 6.9 percent, while its impact was \$40.9 million. Camden County's economic impact was \$1.53 million at an increase of 6 percent.

Gates and Camden counties' payroll and revenues were well below Perquimans, while Pasquotank far exceeded it. Chowan County, with a population of about 14,500, had a payroll impact of \$2.81 million and revenues totaled \$1.94 million.

Perquimans County is one of the few counties that doesn't have an occupancy tax, Eley said.

GUILTY AS CHARGED

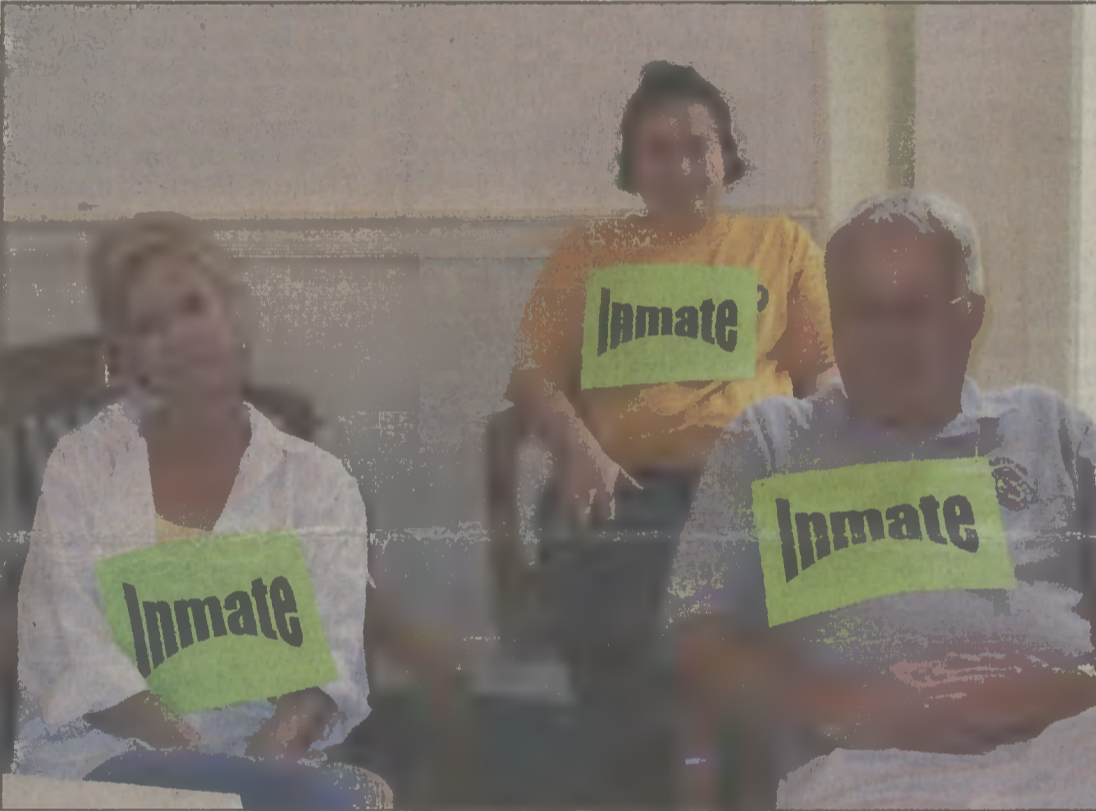


PHOTO BY MARGARET FISHER

Three petty "criminals," Judy Bateman, Heather Byrum and Mayor Sid Eley, wait for their bail to be paid after they were locked-up in the courthouse Friday. Funds raised went to support the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.

Police 'arrest' town residents

MARGARET FISHER

A number of residents, including the mayor, postmaster and downtown employees, were 'arrested' and 'locked up' for dubious charges until they could get themselves bailed out. The event last Friday was the Hertford Police Department's first lock-up fundraiser designed to raise money for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation Telethon.

A total of \$537 was raised after 24 people were served with warrants and taken to the courthouse, said Hertford Police Chief Dale Vanscoy.

Vanscoy wrote up a number of warrants, but citizens could have their friends and family arrested, as well. Officer Kevin Worster served the warrants.

When Michael Cartwright, owner of Carolina Trophy, got arrested, the employees of Nickalena's Deli solicited donations for his bail on a chalkboard set up on the downtown sidewalk with a cup placed in front.

When Cartwright's employee, Beth Rountree, took the money to the courthouse to bail him out, he had her arrested for incompetent work by aggravating the boss. Rountree had Cartwright

arrested in the first place.

The sign was updated throughout the day as different employees had each other arrested.

Town Manager John Christensen avoided the police sweep entirely as he took the day off of work. But Pam Modlin, the town's executive assistant, didn't escape arrest.

"It was a bad experience," Modlin said, as she wore a bright green sign that said "inmate" on it, and she called for help from her cell phone in the courtroom. She was arrested for filling out counterfeit forms and eating lunch too late.

"She's the one that creates the nuisance forms," Vanscoy said.

Judy Bateman, a N.C. Department of Motor Vehicles clerk, was arrested for changing her hair color too many times and opening her mouth and inserting foot.

Dorothy Owens, a retired DMV police officer who works at the Country Kettle, was arrested for speeding - talking at a speed that is hazardous to the public's health.

Heather Byrum's mother, Sarah Cox, had her daughter arrested for harassing her mother.

Postmaster Dan Moody was arrested for licking stamps and failure to deliv-

er mail at the proper time.

Hertford Mayor Sid Eley was glued to his cell phone in an effort to be released.

"Tell them no checks will be signed until I get out of here," he was overheard telling a town employee. Later, his wife bailed him out. "He's lucky I was home today," she said.

Worster arrested himself for "keeping the office so cold you can hang meat." Kristy Manning, administrative support specialist at the police department, was arrested by Vanscoy for impeding the flow of traffic.

"You're always in the way," Worster told her.

The new public works director, Chris Wharton, was arrested for impersonating a public works officer. He didn't have to appear in court because he paid his bail.

A local reporter was arrested for stalking the police chief.

Vanscoy was so pleased with the success of the lock-up that he hopes to hold two events a year that will benefit the local community.

The department is in the process of creating a CrimeLine, similar to the one in Pasquotank County, Vanscoy said. Money raised by lock-up and other events could fund the CrimeLine, as well as the fireworks fund, he said.

Town to hire P/T police officer

MARGARET FISHER

Hertford town councilors on Monday night voted to use more than \$12,600 that was budgeted for the Main Street Program to pay the salary for a part-time police officer.

The money was the salary that would have been paid to the Historic Hertford Inc. director for the months of July through September. The former director, Wendy Jewett, left the position at the end of June and the town is currently seeking a replacement.

Concerns by citizens about crime activity throughout the town led councilors to say, last month, that they would look into whether the police department needs another officer.

At this month's meeting, Sid Eley read a proposal he drafted that would use money that the town had already allocated for the director position to pay for another officer. The salary would pay a part-time officer to work a maximum of two 12-hour shifts per week at \$13 an hour or the hourly rate paid to a beginning police officer - whichever is lower - for 10 months.

Hertford Police Chief Dale Vanscoy said that he would utilize the officer at peak times, such as at night.

"Any help we can get from the county at this stage is welcomed," he told the council.

Horace Reid, JoAnne Morris and Anne White approved the decision. Carlton Davenport, who voted against the decision, said that seven police officers in a small town should be sufficient.

"I'd like to see the police department used efficiently," he said. In addition, he indicated that the 10-month trial basis would show whether the department is utilizing their officers efficiently or not.

"If they show that they have a big improvement, that's good," Davenport said, adding that the opposite would show inefficiencies.

Hertford Mayor Sid Eley said that the money is already on the budget, no benefits would have to be paid out and the salary could be budgeted into next fiscal year if it is successful this year.

"It would give us a chance to see if (hiring an officer) is really beneficial," Eley said.

White, although not supportive of raising taxes, expressed concerns about hiring an officer that would only be available during two shifts a week versus hiring a full-time officer.

"I'm wondering if we aren't just putting on a Band-Aid," White said.

Setback restrictions relaxed

MARGARET FISHER

The county has amended the protective covenants for the Commerce Centre to allow setbacks to be less restrictive.

When the Centre was planned 10 years ago, lots for light industry and manufacturing spanned about five or more acres, said County Manager Bobby Darden. But the trend has been for smaller businesses to locate on about two acres.

Setbacks that worked well on large lots where noise and other buffers may be needed are not appropriate for smaller lots

with service and retail businesses.

"It allows the property owner to have more usable property," Darden said.

One 5-acre corner lot that sold recently would have had one and a half usable acres under the original covenants because it fronts two roads, he said.

Building sites on Harvey Point and Wynn Fork roads must now be situated from 100 feet to 125 feet, instead of 150 feet, from the main road, depending on where the property is located. Setbacks are now 30 feet, rather than 75 feet, from the side and rear property lines.