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PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

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35 cents

County reviews court security

MARGARET FISHER

Recent rashes of criminal activities and signs of gangs in and around the county have induced officials to take steps to improve security at the courthouse and its newer annex building.

Court and law enforcement officials have formed a committee, which met last week, to review the facilities based on the Governor's Crime Commission state court security guidelines.

Members include Judges J.C. Cole, Richard Parker and Grafton Beamon; Sheriff Eric Tilley; Clerk of Court Todd Tilley; District Attorney Frank Parrish; County Manager Bobby Darden; attorney Janice Cole; Chief Magistrate William Winslow; probation officer George Long; county commissioners Tammy Miller-White and Sue Weimar; and a citizen, Brad Kime.

Because it is historic, the old courthouse poses unique problems regarding security. There are about eight entrances located around the building with halls leading to the courtroom and clerk's office. Particular areas of concern include the area around the holding cell for inmates, the hallway from the lockup to the courtroom, the area around the judge's seat and the clerk's office.

In his seven years as sheriff, Eric Tilley said he's not seen any major incidents occur in the courtroom as of yet. But criminal, child custody and domestic sessions have the potential to explode into

serious situations, as they have across the country.

"We've had a potential for problems, but we haven't had any to escalate to a serious problem," he said. "We've been able to diffuse it, or it just didn't arise."

They have had people attempt to escape. One inmate was able to run outside where he was caught. Now, inmates are shackled in the courtroom, unless the judge doesn't want that, Eric Tilley said.

A major obstacle to improving courthouse security is preserving its history.

Kime was a military intelligence analyst for the U.S. Navy for 22 years and currently works in security for the federal government at the Navy and Marine Corp Intelligence Training Center, Damneck, Va.

Kime said that the committee will have to decide what the county would be willing to change to make the courthouse more secure and how much money they will be able to spend on those changes.

The Belvidere resident said the simplest fix that he can see would be to install cipher locks on the doors. The electronic coded locks would require employees to use a card to access the building. The public could only enter through the main entrance at the front.

Certain areas could be accessed only by specific people during certain times and patterns of who is going where could be tracked, Kime said. "It's relatively inexpensive," he said.

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Glimpses of The King

He looked, sang and had stage presence like Elvis Saturday night at the high school auditorium, but it was Keith Henderson who performed "A Tribute to the King."

Henderson wowed a packed house with his talent and showmanship. Lacey Reames of Belvidere, a stage veteran at 17, opened the show. The event was a scholarship fund raiser for the Hertford Rotary.



Show nets \$3,500 for Rotary Club

MARGARET FISHER

While some may ponder on whether or not Elvis is dead, about 450 people knew his music was alive when they heard Keith Henderson perform "Illusions of the King" at Perquimans

County High School on Saturday night.

The performance netted about \$3,500 for the Rotary Club of Hertford to provide college scholarships to high school students in the county. Brad Furr, Rotary president, said he was impressed with

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Resident scammed

MARGARET FISHER

The check's in the mail, so the saying goes. But beware of people sending checks and then asking for money back or telling you that you have won a lottery.

Scams are ever present, but there is a rash of them out there now, said Perquimans County Sheriff Eric Tilley.

He's received numerous complaints from citizens throughout the county about telephone and mail scams telling residents they've won \$5,000. One scam cost an elderly resident \$7,150, he said.

The perpetrators are usually located outside the country, often in Canada or Jamaica, so they can't be prosecuted, Tilley said. Often, the elderly are prey, he said.

It often goes like this: A large check arrives in the mail with a phone number to call. Or someone calls and says that you've won a large sum of money. The recipient is then asked to deposit the check. But, in order to receive the money, the recipient has to pay fees for such things as shipping and processing. Those fees supposedly come out of the check.

In actuality, the check is no good. So the recipient ends up sending his or her own money and ends up with a bounced check, possibly with a returned check fee, in the bank. There's no way to track the perpetrator down. And secrecy is often part of the scam.

"They'll tell you not to tell anyone else, not even your family members," Tilley said.

Fortunately, the local woman who lost a sum of money through a scam did not lose more than she did because her local bank notified a relative of the unusual activity in her account, Tilley said.

"One part of living in a small rural town is that the people at the bank can contact you if they see something happen on your account," he said.

But don't let it get that far. Keep the old adage in mind that if it's too good to be true, it probably isn't true. If you receive a scam in the mail, report it to the U.S. postal inspector in Wilmington that handles this region at (910) 762-5545.

Alleged crack house closed for business by cops

MARGARET FISHER

In a team effort involving police, town workers and animal control, a house commonly known as a crack house was boarded up, and animals on the property were rescued.

"The whole situation stems from years of drug activity," said Police Chief Dale Vanscoy.

The event occurred at 329 Market Street last Friday at about 3:45 p.m. When officers arrived, Shelma Miller Jr. told police he is a resident of the house, Vanscoy said. Miller then received a letter signed by the homeowner, Elizabeth City resident and attorney William T. Davis, giving officials permission to board up the house, post no trespassing signs and arrest anyone found on the property. He was also given one hour to remove his belongings.

Earlier in the week, officials posted no trespassing signs at the former funeral home next door to the house and the old J&L Store across the street on Edenton Road and Market streets.

"All of this was the



result of public complaints and council concerns," Vanscoy said.

A group of residents watched on Friday as animal control officers

removed nine pit bulls, 31 pigeons and three box turtles from the premises. The yard was littered with devices used to train dogs to fight, including fighting hides and biting sticks and springs.

Tri-County Animal Shelter officials removed the dogs.

"The majority are in poor condition, as far as weight goes," said Mary Bass, shelter manager and Chowan County animal control supervisor. In addition, all but one exhibit battle scars on them, she said.

The people-friendly canines might not be taken by a rescue group because

they will not tolerate other dogs, Bass said. The dogs had been chained up with what looked like logging chains — illegal to use for dogs — in various areas of the yard. One was confined in a makeshift plywood pen. A puppy was chained with links the size of those used on ships.

The pigeons were confined in a wooden hutch with about two cups of water laden with bird feces. There was no evidence of food in the outbuilding. Feces were as deep as four inches in some places, said Elizabeth Hanrahan, a licensed wildlife rescuer.

"They were really hungry and thirsty when they got here," Hanrahan said. But they were looking better on Monday afternoon, she added.

Their future is unknown as there are no pigeon rescue groups in the state and they can't technically be transported across state lines. Hanrahan is watching them for signs of parasites and fungus of the lungs — two common illnesses among pigeons.

She is also rehabilitating the box turtles, whose numbers are dwindling across

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WEATHER

THURSDAY
HIGH: 63, LOW: 42
SHOWERS

FRIDAY
HIGH: 58, LOW: 35
SUNNY

SATURDAY
HIGH: 57, LOW: 39
MOSTLY SUNNY