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# THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

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## PCHS gym construction begins Sweet events

MARGARET FISHER

About 70 people watched or participated as shovels hit the ground at the site of the new Perquimans County High School gymnasium on Monday morning.

In the background, construction noise could be heard as Superintendent Dr. Kenneth Wells explained to the group clustered in front of two school buses that he had told crew workers not to stop working on the long-awaited new facility. Not even the cold temperatures were going to stop the work from beginning.

The groundbreaking event was attended by school board members, including chairwoman Gloria Mason, who gave the welcome speech, town mayors, and town and county managers. Also present were representatives from A.R. Chesson Construction, Boney architectural firm and N.C. Rural Development and RBC Centura, both of which provided funding, and faculty, administrators and students from Perquimans County Schools.

Building the new facility is more than simply replacing a building, said James Bunch, high school principal.

"It's a future learning



PHOTO BY MARGARET FISHER

School and government officials and students broke ground on Monday for the new Perquimans County High School gymnasium. About 70 officials, school staff and students attended the long-awaited event. The \$13 million facility will seat 950 people.

environment for our students," Bunch said.

After mentioning how the state faces challenges in providing funds to meet current school needs,

County Manager Bobby Darden said that the local school and county boards have worked hard to get this project off the ground. Wells also commended the

town for moving Jimmy Hunter Drive so the gymnasium and renovation project could begin.

The work is expected to be completed in 18 months.

"A lot of great things are going to happen in this building," said Larry Teary, assistant principal and athletic director at the high school.

Hertford's own version of the popular TV offering "Antiques Roadshow" will arrive in town on Saturday, Feb. 17 during the third annual Sweetheart Weekend. The Antique Appraisal Fair will be from 10 a.m. — 4 p.m. at the Hertford United Methodist Church at 200 Dobbs Street.

Textiles, guns, gems and furniture will be among the many items accepted for appraisal. Tickets are \$10 per item.

Experienced appraisers such as Edward and Henry King from Suffolk, Va.; Ed Fearing; Thomas Hampton and Ed and Virginia Perva will be among those on hand to help owners value items.

Also during the day, the annual silent auction will be held at Hertfordshire Antiques from 10 a.m. — 5 p.m. Located at 134 N. Church Street, Hertfordshire is one of the most highly acclaimed antique shops in the northeast.

Proceeds from the events will benefit Historic Hertford, Inc., Hertford's Main Street Program.

At 6 p.m., the Friends of the Vineyard from the Newbold-White House will present an International Wine Tasting and Food Pairing. Six wines from France, Italy and Chile will be offered along with international foods which compliment the wines.

The historic George E. Major House, 131 West Market Street, will be the site of the wine tasting. The extraordinary Colonial Revival, built over 100 years ago, is a romantic residence with a double-pile center hall.

Albemarle Chamber Players, led by Nancy and Charles Jones of Hertford, will charm attendees with string music from the seven-member group. A silent auction and raffle will also be held during the candle-lit affair.

Tickets are \$15. Proceeds will go toward the planting of the vineyard at the Newbold-White House.

Advance tickets are suggested and available for all events. They are available at the Perquimans Chamber of Commerce at the Visitors' Center or by calling 426-5657 or 426-3700.

## Occupancy tax sought

MARGARET FISHER

Perquimans County is proposing a tourism development board to administer an occupancy tax from hotels and motels should any be constructed in the county.

Commissioners voted 3-2 to make a request to legislators to collect an occupancy tax. Ben Hobbs and Charles Ward did not approve of the request. Hobbs and his wife own and operate a bed and breakfast. Ward was a member of a group that considered building a motel in Hertford several years ago, but opted not to build it when Hertford Town Council refused to set aside its water and sewer impact fee for the business.

The proposal includes a 6 percent occupancy tax, 3 percent of which would be used by the county to offset the collection costs. Two-thirds of the proceeds must be used to promote travel and tourism and the remainder must be used for tourism-related purposes.

If approved by the General Assembly, a resolution will have to be passed, said County Manager Bobby Darden.

Perquimans is one of the few counties in the state that does not currently impose an occupancy tax.

The 6-member tourism board will include representatives from the county, towns and businesses and they must reside or work within the county.

## School drop-out rate rises here

MARGARET FISHER

The number of dropouts at Perquimans County High School increased for the 2005-2006 fiscal year.

A total of 47 students, 27 male and 20 female, dropped out of school by the end of the school year, taking the dropout rate to 5.23 percent. That's up from 4.18 the year before.

In five previous years, the highest rate was 5.18 or 46 students in 2003-2004.

Out of the 47 students who dropped out last year, 28 are white, 18 are black and one is Asian.

Of six surrounding counties, the highest rate is Pasquotank County at 3.94 percent. In descending order is Camden at 3.36, Currituck at 3.18, Gates at 3.02, Chowan at 2.38 and Dare at 2.22 percent

Some students drop out to take care of pressing family, financial or personal matters and later return, said Brenda Lassiter, school public information officer. PCHS principal James Bunch encourages his staff to keep lines of communication open so they are aware of what's occurring in students' lives away from school, Lassiter said. Officials are also testing ways to keep students in school, she said.

The state dropout rate is 5.04 percent for 2005-2006. A year earlier, it was 4.74 percent. Most of the state increases occurred in five of the largest school districts. Statewide, the majority of students are black males, between the ages of 16 and 18 and drop out in the ninth grade.

The numbers of students who dropout to enroll in community college have increased rapidly. Attendance is also another common reason reported.

"The fact that we see a significant increase in students dropping out to enroll in community colleges shows that they understand education will be important to their future," said Howard Lee, State Board of Education chairman.

New this year is a cohort graduation rate which follows students who entered as freshmen and determines how many of them graduated four years later.

"This takes a better picture of the graduation rates," Lassiter said.

Out of 167 students, 119

of them graduated in four years, giving PCHS a cohort graduation rate of 71.25 percent.

These students entered the freshmen class at PCHS in 2002-2003 and graduated there in 2005-2006. It includes those students who graduated in summer 2006.

The cohort dropout number of students is 44, including 19 males and 25 females, 28 whites, 14 blacks, one Asian and one American Indian.

The highest number of dropouts through the four years of the class of 2006 occurred in junior year when 22 students dropped out. The least amount of dropouts (two) occurred during senior year.

Dwayne Stallings, assistant superintendent, broke

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## Rose Pointe rezoning thorny issue

MARGARET FISHER

County commissioners tabled a proposal for a planned unit development in Old Neck on Monday night. About 70 people filled the upstairs courtroom during the hearing.

The developer, R.A. Management located near Charlotte, has proposed a 962-lot PUD on 591 acres off Bundy Road. The subdivision, Rose Pointe, would be situated at the mouth of the Perquimans River and Suttons Creek in property zoned historic agriculture.

David Luddy of R.A. Management asked commissioners for a conditional use permit to rezone the property for a PUD. He compared it to

Phase 2 of Albemarle Plantation.

After residents gave their input, commissioners stated their concerns.

"I'd like to secure a consultant to analyze and review what's been presented to us," said commissioner Tammy Miller-White. "That would make everyone feel more comfortable with the project."

The concern wasn't as much the residential subdivision, itself, but an issue about two hoists planned at the mouth of the creek that would take boats to and from Suttons Creek and the development's planned lake.

Resident Dick Todd expressed concerns that if 50 percent of the residents owned boats and 10 percent

of them decided to go boating one day, there would be a congested line-up of boats in the creek waiting to be hoisted. In a storm, he stated, there could be a potential for damaged boats. He suggested that the hoists be placed away from the mouth.

Luddy answered by saying the matter could be looked into but there would likely be environmental concerns with wetlands further up the creek.

After the hearing, Michael Smith, who lives at the mouth of the creek, said that it takes about 15 to 20 minutes for each boat to be hoisted and, therefore, hoisting boats could be an all-day endeavor.

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## WEEKEND WEATHER

THURSDAY  
HIGH: 46, LOW: 27  
PARTLY CLOUDY

FRIDAY  
HIGH: 41, LOW: 28  
PARTLY CLOUDY

SATURDAY  
HIGH: 46, LOW: 29  
PARTLY CLOUDY