

# Happy New Year!

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Subscriber of the Week:  
Ronald Moorman

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## THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

January 2, 2008

Vol. 76, No. 1 Hertford, North Carolina 27944

"News from Next Door"

35 cents

### TIDINGS OF Comfort AND Joy



JUNE MANKE PRESENTS A quilt to William Caneup made by the Colonial Quilters Guild of Elizabeth City.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

### County looks back at 2007, ahead to 2008

Darden reviews what's been done, looks to upcoming issues

CATHY WILSON  
Staff Writer

With the calendar year coming to a close, it's a time when folks begin to evaluate what was accomplished during the year, what didn't get done, and what projects are planned for the future.

While the county's fiscal year doesn't end until June 30, 2008, County Manager Bobby Darden was asked to reflect on what he feels the county has accomplished in 2007.

"Perquimans County ranked second in the state in local capital dollars spent per student for our school system," Darden said. "We funded some much needed improvements for our school system, and we were able to fund a good share of this out of pocket."

The county provided funding, which allowed for the start of construction on the high school gym and renovation project at a total cost of \$14 million, Darden said. In addition, the county also completed the HVAC and roof repairs at Perquimans Middle School totaling \$2.8 million.

Darden pointed out that Perquimans County is one of six counties in the state that has had a land transfer tax in place since 1990. The tax revenue generated from the transfer of real estate has helped county commissioners keep the property tax rate down, and has helped the county fund about \$20 million in school projects in just a few years, he noted.

Another positive accomplishment for the county this year has been the phasing out of the county paying the non-federal share of Medicaid expenses.

"This has been the number one legislative goal for North Carolina counties for years," said Darden. "Perquimans County had budgeted \$800,000 this year for our local share of Medicaid, which is 6.25 percent of our total operating budget. Over the next four years, the state will continue the phase-out to where they are paying 100 percent of the non-federal Medicaid cost."

The third accomplishment might sound trivial, but is one that has a long-term impact on both the county and county water customers alike. The county's water department progressed from a customer-read billing method to monthly readings contracted out to a private company.

"We now account for and bill 90 percent of the water produced as opposed to 65 percent previously," Darden

pointed out.

While much has been accomplished this year, Darden feels two goals weren't met in 2007. The county's CAMA land use plan is nearly developed with county officials planning to submit the plan to the state by the end of the year for their comment. Darden hopes the CAMA land use plan will be approved in 2008.

The county also started design plans for a new emergency medical services building this year, but had to place those plans on hold in order to explore other options.

One of the biggest issues facing county residents in 2008 will be the continuing battle against any outlying landing field (OLF) siting in the area.

"2008 will be the seventh year of some Perquimans County residents living with the threat of losing their homes and land to the Navy," Darden said.

Three other major issues coming down the pike deal with water.

The county will face issues next year concerning constructing a water line from the proposed Pasquotank County Reverse Osmosis Water Plant on Forman Bundy Road, as well as make enhancements to the county's Winfall water plant to improve water quality.

Darden also sees the county working towards developing a plan to attract marine-related businesses to locate in the county's waterfront Commerce Centre.

"This strategy has been worked on for several months and we'll be taking more steps next year in making that happen," he said.

The last major issue facing county government in 2008 is the tax revaluation, which was last performed in Perquimans County in 2000.

"It's always a challenge to inform the public about how there are two parts to the equation: the value and the tax rate, which will be set in June," said Darden.

### Sheriff: Beware potential scammers

SUSAN HARRIS  
Editor & Publisher

Scam artists using a different means of contact but the same type of ruse got their messages into Perquimans County homes during the holidays.

Sheriff Eric Tilley said last week that one resident brought him information on a scheme to cash traveller's checks and another local turned in a check in connection with a sweepstakes. Fortunately, neither resident tried to cash any checks.

The traveler's check scam began with an e-mail. The writer claimed to be a British artist and told all about his credentials. The problem, he wrote, is that he faced serious difficulties getting his cash when he sold artwork to Americans who pay with a U.S. Postal money order or traveller's check.

The writer said he was looking for a representative in the United States willing to work part-time cashing his money orders and traveler's checks for a 10 percent commission. He said finding someone he could trust was a problem, but he had "my way of getting anyone that gets away with our money, I mean the FBI branch in Washington gets involved."

The U.S. representative would have money orders sent to them from the writer's business partners. The representative would cash the money orders, keep the 10 percent plus transfer fees, then wire the rest of the funds to the writer.

The writer asked the local resident to respond if willing to work for him.

When the resident showed interest, the resident was asked to send the scam artist a direct cell phone number, and was asked to check the U.S. mail every day for payments and



was also asked how often he/she went online.

The resident was told that a shipment of traveler's checks was due to be delivered a couple of weeks from the initial contact. He/she was told how to process the checks once they arrived, including making the checks payable to the resident. After cashing the checks and deducting expenses, the remaining funds were to be wired to two different people, both in Nigeria, purportedly company employees there to purchase supplies for the artist.

The resident did get the traveler's checks, but did not fall for the scam. Rather, the checks were taken to Tilley.

The checks, of course, are fake.

The scam artists hope that the checks will be accepted as real by a bank and cashed. When it is determined that the checks are not real, the person who got the checks cashed will be responsible for coming up with the money to pay the bank back. The scam artist, however, will have been wired cash funds from the local resident, receiving money for fake checks.

The "sweepstakes" winner was told she had won third prize of \$50,000 in the American Sweepstakes Club prize pool on Nov. 18, but that the company could not reach her by phone. The letter states that the sweepstakes is affiliated with

several well-known sweepstakes organizations.

A check in the amount of \$2,987.73 was issued to the resident, who was told that it would cover handling fees and other costs. Due to "confidentiality agreements," the letter states, very little information could be released about the sweepstakes prize, so the winner should call to find out how to collect.

Generally, Tilley said, when checks are issued in a scam, they are not valid. The recipient is asked to take the check to their bank and either cash it and send the cash or a money order to the original sender, or to deposit it in their account and in turn, write the company a check. Either way, the "winner" ends up losing the money, and in most cases, paying bank fees.

This type of letter, plus e-mails or phone calls that state they are from a recipient's bank or other financial institution, should be handled with suspicion, Tilley said.

If you think someone may be trying to scam you, speak with a trusted financial advisor or call law enforcement. Never cash a check, traveler's check or money order for someone who asks you to do so then wire or send them your own check, money order or cash.

Also, Tilley said you should call your bank or other financial institution if you receive an e-mail from

them unless you have an established e-mail relationship with the institution.

Generally, if you do not go on the institution's web site to conduct business, they are not going to contact you by e-mail. Do not click on a link to a web site in an email. If you think your bank may be trying to contact you via e-mail, log onto the web site as you usually do, not with the link.

Never give any caller your password, bank account number, social security number, credit card number or any other information they seek. If you are contacted by e-mail or phone, call the number you have for the financial institution and speak with someone there. Do not use the number you are given by a caller.

Tilley also advises against allowing anyone you do not know to come into your home. He said there have been cases where people who seemed legitimate have been invited into homes and they either were looking for valuables to come back and steal or distracted the resident and stole things while they were in the home. Tilley said the ploy is especially successful if there are two people. One distracts a resident, while the other looks for items easy to steal.

Anyone with questions, who needs information, or would like to report a possible scam may contact the sheriff's office at 426-5615.

**WEEKEND WEATHER**

THURSDAY  
HIGH: 38 LOW: 26  
MOSTLY SUNNY

FRIDAY  
HIGH: 44 LOW: 30  
MOSTLY SUNNY

SATURDAY  
HIGH: 54 LOW: 41  
PARTLY CLOUDY