

THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

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Flowers removed from graves

CATHY WILSON
Staff Writer

An independent contractor hired by the town not only removed unsightly and unseasonable flowers from the town's cemeteries recently, but apparently Easter flowers as well.

Some whose flowers disappeared a few days before the Easter holiday were upset. Others were upset that seasonal flowers were removed without advance notice so they could pick up artificial arrangements that could have been reused.

Town Manager John Christensen said the town hires a contractor to remove the flowers each year just before Easter in order to cut the grass around the graves. A notice advising such is usually printed in the newspaper giving residents advanced warning. However, no such ad ran this year. Residents were surprised when they visited the cemeteries and found their flower arrangements gone.

"I checked the grave just the day before and the arrangement was in perfect shape," said Shirley Coon of Hertford who looks after a gravesite for Betty Place of Winfall. Place, Coon says, can't get out much, and depends on Coon to put flowers on her parents' graves.

"I went to the grave the very next day and the flowers were gone," Coon said. "It was a \$50 Christmas basket that she put on the grave new this year. It was in perfect shape, and I was going to keep it to reuse next year. I knew it was close to the time for taking flowers off the grave and I kept watching the paper to see when the deadline was, but I never saw it."

Town cemeteries affected are Cedarwood and the Roadside Cemetery.

"Usually, if cemetery flowers are missing, it's either because of the wind, they're stolen, or the contractor," Christensen said. "We tell the contractor if the flowers are on top of the stone and they look good, just leave them alone. Unfortunately, this year the contractor was not as discretionary as he should have been. Several Easter flowers were picked up, too."

When he found out that Easter flowers had been removed, Christensen says the contractor was instructed to bring the flowers back to the edge of the cemetery where, hopefully, owners can pick through, find their flowers, and place them back on the rightful gravesites.

Some flowers may have blown into nearby woods as well, he pointed out.

"I told one lady who wasn't able to recover her flowers to bring us the bill and I'll turn it over to the contractor," Christensen said. "But, I've seen saddles blown all the way back into the woods from all of the wind we've had this month. I can't say that the contractor is responsible for all the flowers that are missing."

WELCOME HOME, PIRATES



Perquimans Weekly photo by CATHY WILSON

PLAY BALL! OFFICIALS CUT the ribbon at the new gym at Perquimans County High School following a dedication ceremony. The new state-of-the-art facility seats 950 and includes a laundry room, weight room, concessions room, ticket booth, and plenty of parking.

New PCHS gym dedicated

CATHY WILSON
Staff Writer

The shine on the black and gold floor in the new gym was as bright as the future facing county athletes playing in this new facility.

Last week, national, state and local leaders dedicated and held a ribbon cutting for the new state-of-the-art gym at Perquimans County High School. The 27,105 sq. ft. building seats 950 and includes laundry room, weight room, concessions room, ticket booth, and plenty of parking.

"This place is gorgeous. I'm speechless!" said former superintendent Dr. Kenneth W. Wells, who was instrumental in getting the project off the ground several years ago. "It surpasses my most vivid expectations...This is a first class facility."

Wells commended the county board of commissioners who "stepped up and took on the debt" associated with the facility which is part of a \$14 million school improvement project that also includes renovation of the school's historic auditorium, converting the old gym into a state-of-the-art media center, and renovating the old media center into administrative offices.

"It takes a lot of hands and a lot of effort from a lot of agencies to make something like this happen," he pointed out.

Mack Nixon, chairman of the county commissioners, called building a new gym for the school system a once in a lifetime event.

"All of us pay taxes, and we want to make sure our citizens have nice facilities to enjoy," he said.

Nixon explained that the county funded \$3 million out of savings for the school improvement project with the remaining \$11 million supplied by a low-interest loan through USDA Rural Development.

Over 30 years, that amounts to an investment of approximately \$55 per citizen per year in the county schools, he noted.

"We are pleased that USDARD has been able to assist Perquimans County High School with their expansion and renovations," said Eddie Miller, a county native who is the assistant to the state director. "USDARD is committed to ensuring that every student graduates with the skills needed to succeed in a globally competitive workforce."

PCHS Principal James Bunch described the black and gold gym as a gateway through which local students can energize their lives and work towards turning their dreams into realities.

"Our athletic programs here have grown tremendously, making life better for our students and our community," he added.

Hertford's Mayor Sid Eley, a former coach at the school, talked a little about the history of the gym.

"This is actually our third gym at our school," said Eley. "The first was on the stage, the second, the real gym, was built in 1950, and now this new one today. This is amazing. Years ago, we had to wash the uni-

forms and hang them on the fence outside around the football field to let them dry. Now, we have this state-of-the-art facility."

Wallace Nelson, chairman of the county board of education, thanked the school staff who he termed more valuable than any building.

"They are the ones who sacrifice every day to meet the needs of the kids," he said. "We appreciate what you do."

He also said athletics is an integral part of a child's education. Looking beyond the test scores, a child also needs to learn how to get along with others, work with each other, to respect each other.

"Athletics is a great classroom in which to learn respect and commitment," Nelson added.

Superintendent Dwayne K. Stallings wrapped up the dedication ceremony by looking to the future.

"Think of the countless number of children...who will be impacted by this building in a positive way as they learn, play, and grow in Perquimans County," he said.

A special touch to the dedication was the welcome offered to visitors by the school's senior athletes who stood at the gym entrance and greeted visitors as they entered the door. The athletes also provided tours of the facility after the ceremony.

The project/design team for the gym project included LS3P Associates, A.R. Chesson Construction, Co., Inc., Andrew Consulting Engineers, PC, Cheatham & Associates, PA, and Hyman & Robey, PC.

Sewage spills into creek

Town may be fined by state

CATHY WILSON
Staff Writer

Approximately 4,000 gallons of untreated sewage from the town of Hertford spilled into the Raccoon Creek tributary of the Perquimans River last week after a blockage occurred in a collection line.

Town Manager John Christensen said the small spill was discovered March 17 and the state Division of Water Quality has been notified. There was no sign that the untreated sewage actually made it into the river, he added.

A mop head was found in the area of the blockage, but other foreign matter such as grease was found as well.

"The mop head could have caused the blockage, or it could have been the grease or other foreign matter," Christensen said. "Please ask the residents not to pour grease down their kitchen sinks because it can cause serious problems."

Christensen said there are no food-processing businesses on that system, so the blockage probably came from homes in the area. While grease is liquid when it is hot, once it cools, it forms into hardened clumps that can block the lines and cause overflows, cause problems at the pumping station, and even clog the homeowner's plumbing.

"It was pretty ironical," he added. "We just spent thousands of dollars replacing the pumping station at that site because of problems in the past and because of added growth. This time, the problem was in the line before it got to the pumping station."

The eight-inch sewer main was cleaned out, and lime is usually added to the ground affected by the spillage.

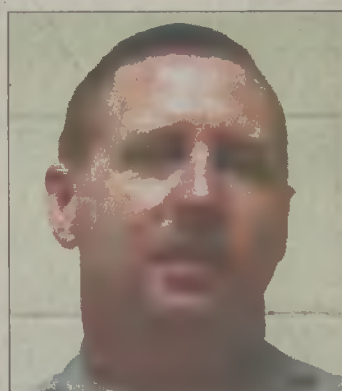
"We'll probably get a notice of violation from the DWQ," he added. "Whether or not it's a fine is up to them."

Riddick sworn in as interim police chief

CATHY WILSON
Staff Writer

Brian Riddick has been named interim chief of the Hertford Police Department.

Riddick assumed the responsibilities last week after former chief Dale Vanscoy resigned to accept employment elsewhere. Vanscoy had indicated he would work until April 16, but Town Manager John Christensen said Riddick was able to assume the po-



sition last Tuesday. He was sworn in by Clerk of Court

Perquimans Weekly photo by CATHY WILSON

INTERIM CHIEF BRIAN RIDDICK was sworn in last week by Superior Court Clerk Todd Tilley. Riddick leads the Hertford Police Department following the recent resignation of former chief Dale Vanscoy.

Todd Tilley.

Riddick, a nine-year law enforcement veteran, worked with the Elizabeth

City Police Department for six years before joining Hertford nearly three years ago. In Elizabeth City, Riddick gained experience as a narcotics officer, member of the SWAT team, and is specially trained in both interrogation and crime scene photography.

A native of Camden County, he moved to Perquimans County in 1996. He is a graduate of Camden High School and basic law enforcement at College of the Albemarle.

WEEKEND WEATHER

THURSDAY
HIGH: 76 LOW: 57
PARTLY CLOUDY

FRIDAY
HIGH: 81 LOW: 59
SUNNY

SATURDAY
HIGH: 81 LOW: 52
SCATTERED T'STORMS