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THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

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"News from Next Door"

35 cents

County to lower effective tax rate

Proposed budget almost \$14 million

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Staff Writer

County taxpayers can breathe a sigh of relief.

County commissioners are considering adopting a tax rate of 41 cents for the next fiscal year. While last year's tax rate was 67 cents, the proposed rate is actually a decrease in the tax rate of 2 cents per \$100 of assessed value because of the property revaluation which went into effect Jan. 1.

"There would only be 10 counties out of 100 in North Carolina with a lower property tax rate than Perquimans County," said County Manager Bobby Darden in presenting the proposed budget. "Counties with lower tax rates are typically in tourist areas and second home markets such as at the coast or mountains. A tax rate of 41 cents would be the lowest tax rate in Eastern North Carolina in a county with no ocean-front beaches...this budget still provides adequate funding for customary services, enhances some services, and provides benefits for the county employees."

Will your taxes go up? Basically, it depends on how much your property increased in value, how much personal or business property you own, and whether or not your farm and timber land qualifies for land use values.

Since the county's revaluation of real property increased the county's tax base by approximately 85 percent since the last revaluation in 2000, state law requires counties to define their revenue-neutral tax rate, or the rate that is estimated to produce the same amount of revenue for the current fiscal year if no reappraisal had occurred.

The revenue-neutral tax rate is 43 cents. County commissioners, however, chose to reduce that figure to 41 cents per \$100 of assessed value.

The proposed tax rate, however, should make personal property tax bills considerably smaller if a vehicle is valued the same or less than the year before. Land use value land should also see a decrease in taxes as well as open agricultural and forest land.

County department heads didn't receive everything they requested. Out of \$14.3 million in budget requests, county commissioners included \$13.7 million of their requests in the proposed budget.

"While all requests have their own merits, past budgets have made similar adjustments," said Darden. "The tax rate would have to be 45 cents to fully fund all requests of Perquimans County for the next year."

The proposed budget funds substantial capital projects for the county school system. In addition to funding 100 percent of their normal annual capital outlay requests, the budget will also include funds to complete the \$1.77 million Hertford Grammar School

HVAC upgrades as well as complete the \$14 million high school addition and renovation project.

In addition, the proposed county budget funds the schools \$2,061,540 from the general fund for operational costs, up 12 percent from last year.

"The largest increase in school current expense the last 10 years prior has been 8.7 percent and the average annual increase for the same time period is 4.3 percent," Darden pointed out. "This will significantly improve the local funding per student, where Perquimans County currently ranks in the bottom third of North Carolina counties for local current expense funding per student."

The budget for the county's social services department was reduced from \$2.8 to \$2.5 million due to the reduction in Medicaid costs since the state will assume 50 percent of the local cost beginning July 1.

The sheriff's department was fully funded by commissioners at \$885,000, an increase of only 4 percent over last year's budget. Capital outlay requests in the budget include the replacement of two vehicles and live-scan fingerprint equipment which is 100 percent grant funded.

The budget also creates two new sergeant positions that will serve as shift leaders for deputies on duty and will be filled by current deputies through restructuring from within the department.

County employees are set to receive a 4 percent cost of living raise, continued coverage of full health and dental insurance, and no increase for optional spouse and dependent coverage which is fully paid by employees.

County employees will receive increased mileage reimbursement of 50.5 cents per mile if the proposed budget is passed.

The proposed figures also include funding for two additional positions in the telecommunications office, an administrative assistant's position for the county manager's department, and a part-time position for the recreation department.

Other funding noted in the proposed budget includes:

*\$729,100 for the Albemarle District Jail, an increase of 11 percent from last year.

*An increase of \$15,000 for Albemarle Regional Health Services.

*Each county fire department will receive \$55,000.

*An increase of \$5,000 for the College of The Albemarle, bringing the county's funding to \$30,000.

*A 5 percent increase to the Pettigrew Regional Library System for the operations of the Perquimans County Library.

The proposed budget also calls for an increase in the solid waste fee from \$108 to \$120 per year. No increase in water fees is anticipated.

County commissioners will hold a public hearing on the proposed budget on June 23, and will consider adopting it afterwards. If adopted, the proposed budget will go into effect July 1.



PHOTOS BY PHIL HARRIS

BATS ARE SWINGING, GLOVES are scooping, arms are pitching and guys are just hanging out at ball parks across Perquimans.



Graduation set for June 14

SUSAN HARRIS

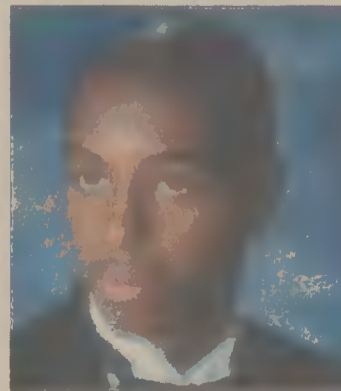
They're counting down the days at PCHS, as the class of 2008 looks to close the book on high school and turn to the next chapter in their lives.

Graduation is set for Saturday, June 14 at 10 a.m. at Memorial Field. Valedictorian Tamara Gregory and Salutatorian Michael Ross will present the addresses, while fellow honor students Eric Rountree, Candice Nixon and Mary Allen Guthrie will also take part in the ceremony.

Graduation tickets have been distributed to seniors, with each receiving white tickets and gold tickets. All tickets will be accepted for



Tamara Gregory



Michael Ross

seating in Memorial Field. However, in the event the ceremony must be moved into the gym, only white tickets will be honored. All guests must have tickets in order to be seated.

School officials ask that

guests arrive in time to be seated by 9:40. No one will be allowed to stand along the fence. Guests should park across from Memorial Field. There will be security personnel to assist with parking.

WEEKEND WEATHER

THURSDAY
HIGH: 93 LOW: 72
SCATTERED STORMS

FRIDAY
HIGH: 92 LOW: 73
PARTLY CLOUDY

SATURDAY
HIGH: 90 LOW: 72
MOSTLY SUNNY



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