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PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

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"News from Next Door"

35 cents

UNC group draws river plan

CATHY WILSON
Staff Writer

Imagine a bustling riverfront area along Grubb Street complete with marina, boat slips, restaurant, shops, and even a bed and breakfast or a small hotel.

Out of the question?

Not according to students attending the Kenan-Flagler Business School at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. They recently completed a study to determine if it would be feasible to develop a public marina and associated businesses in the area from where the Hertford town office now stands to Missing Mill Park.

Nick Didow, professor at the school, presented the team's findings recently to members of Hertford Town Council.

"This is an initial concept plan," said Didow. "Where you want to take it is up to you. You have a long list of advantages with this riverfront."

It could take up to 10 years to develop the area, he added, but it would lead Hertford into its next 250 years.

Council members took no action on the study.

"It is a great plan," said Mayor Sid Eley. "If you don't start planning for the future at some point, you won't have anything."

The challenge of the project, Didow said, is to weave development of the riverfront area with the existing downtown business district, which fronts the courthouse rather than the riverfront off Grubb Street. Didow also said that it is remarkable that the town's occupancy rate for the downtown business district is much higher than found in most small downtown areas in America.

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Strike up the band



Band photos courtesy of DAVE SILVA

SUMMER MAY BE SIZZLING, but folks in Perquimans know fall is on the way when the sounds of music fill the air at PCHS during Marching Pirates Band Camp. After a week of red-hot drills, the band gave a preview of the 2008 show on Saturday afternoon.



Cutting back

Schools look for ways to save money

CATHY WILSON
Staff Writer
and
SUSAN HARRIS

The tough economy isn't just hitting taxpayers and consumers. It's causing the school system to look for ways to save money as well.

So far, no downsizing of overall staff has occurred. However, some employees have been transferred. Also, as grants expire, positions funded by those grants are being absorbed by other funding sources, or the employee is offered another position.

The system cut back this summer with no summer school or daycare offered.

"For the past six years, programs for after school activities and daycare had been funded through the 21st Century grant," explained Lassiter. "The local school system applied for and received the 21st Century grant (a three-year grant) for two consecutive terms. Those funds are no longer available for the school system."

A new assistant principal position has actually been created this year to serve both Central and Hertford Grammar schools. That position will focus on discipline of students, evaluation of teachers and curriculum.

School officials also plan to save money by consolidating bus routes.

In response to problems on buses and scheduling about 10 years ago, the system assigned a fleet of buses to each school to transport only the students in that school. At that time, officials said the cost of providing site-based transportation was not significantly higher than a more traditional approach.

But that was before the system's fuel costs surged to \$4.40 per gallon.

"With fuel allocation by the state at \$3.23 per gallon, schools will have to be creative when it comes to transporting students daily," Lassiter said. "Practices and procedures for field trips and athletic events will also be considered with the rising cost of fuel."

Transportation Director Donald Hurdle led an efficiency study of bus transportation. Based on that information, officials have decided to transport students at Central and Hertford Grammar schools on the same buses this coming school year.

Benefits include shorter bus routes, savings on fuel, older children on the bus caring for younger children and fewer buses traveling the same roads.

At this time, the system will not combine middle and high school students.

The system will host an information session on Monday, Aug. 11 at 5 p.m. at the central office to discuss parental questions and concerns about buses. Bus assignments and pick-up and drop-off times will also be available at the meeting.

Dallas guilty of stealing, scrapping cars

CATHY WILSON
Staff Writer

A Holiday Island man was convicted last week of stealing vehicles around the county and selling them in Chesapeake for scrap metal.

A Perquimans County jury found Christopher Allen Dallas, 47, guilty of three felony larcenies and one misdemeanor larceny in superior court. Because of his extensive criminal record, Dallas was also determined to be a habitual felon by Superior Court Judge Thomas Haigwood, thereby increasing the minimum prison sentence on each felony conviction.

Haigwood sentenced Dallas to a minimum of 107 months and no more than 138 months on each of the three felony convictions. Two of the sentences will run consecutively, and the third is to run concurrently.

Haigwood also sentenced Dallas to an additional 120 days on the Class I misdemeanor conviction.

Dallas was ordered to make restitution for the vehicles that were scrapped, and be assessed for psychological problems and receive the appropriate counseling while incarcerated.

Assistant District Attorney Linda Shields, who led the prosecution, called Dallas a "con artist who just keeps breaking the law" during her opening state-

ment to the jury. Dallas, she said, would wait for the victims to leave home, then haul the vehicles away and sell them for scrap metal.

Representing Dallas was Public Defender Thomas Wood, who called the evidence in the case circumstantial. He also questioned whether the charges against Dallas were actually felonies if the vehicles' values were each under \$1,000.

Testimony in the case showed Dallas would attempt to contact most owners of what he believed to be broken down or inoperable vehicles and offer to buy the vehicle without a contract or payment for the vehicle ever being made. Testimony also showed each vehicle owner declined his offer.

Because he has no driver's license, drivers with wreckers or dollies would drive for him and help him transport and sell the vehicles in Chesapeake. Once at the scrap yard, the licensed driver accompanying Dallas would sign the receipt for junking the vehicle and receive payment at approximately 10 cents per pound.

A Holiday Island man testified his 1993 Honda Accord was parked in his driveway Nov. 8 when he left for work that morning. When he returned after work, the car was missing.

His neighbor testified he saw Dallas that day standing beside a flat bed truck parked in Maclenan's driveway while another man op-

erated the gears pulling the Honda up on the flatbed trailer. The wheels on the Honda, he said, had been removed.

Harry Clubb, who hauls cars and junk for a living, said he has worked with Dallas for the past four to five years.

"Chris told me he had bought a Honda, paid \$50 for it," Clubb testified.

He accompanied Dallas to the scene around 8 a.m. where they stripped the car and hauled it onto the trailer, he said. They took the Honda to the recycler in Chesapeake, Clubb said, where he saw it chipped up during the crushing process. They were paid 10 cents per pound for the car.

"It averages between \$300-\$500 per vehicle, depending on the weight," Clubb testified. "I always take two cars on the trailer when I go to save on gas."

Others had similar stories, including a woman who returned from a trip to find two vans stolen from her yard.

A New Hope woman said not only did she believe Dallas had taken her car, but he had threatened her after she called the sheriff's department about her missing vehicle.

Dallas took the witness stand against the advice of his attorney. He testified that he is on disability due to a mental condition. He also testified that he has worked in tree service, and

now buys and sells cars for junk or car parts.

"I do 100-200 transactions a year," he testified. "I work together with Clubb to save gas. I can only haul one car with a dolly where Clubb could haul two on his trailer."

He said he and his wife would knock on doors, seeking to buy cars seen out in the yard. Sometimes he would get a receipt for buying and selling a car, sometimes he would not. Whatever he made selling the vehicles, he would split with Clubb, he said.

James Rushing worked with him as well.

Dallas said he pulled a groin muscle on Oct. 28, just a few days before the cars in question were reportedly stolen. Because of his injury, he could not work, or even stand or sit for any period of time without being in pain. He couldn't work for two weeks, he added.

He said Clubb and Rushing were the ones who connected the vehicles to the trailer or dolly, that he never had any association with it, and that their trailers never came on his property.

On cross examination, Shields pointed out that Dallas's prior criminal record included convictions of forgery, multiple counts of obtaining property by false pretense, larceny, communicating threats, possession of drug paraphernalia, and driving while impaired.

WEEKEND WEATHER

THURSDAY
HIGH: 91 LOW: 74
ISOLATED STORMS

FRIDAY
HIGH: 92 LOW: 72
PARTLY CLOUDY

SATURDAY
HIGH: 91 LOW: 71
PARTLY CLOUDY

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