

THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

"News from Next Door"

MAY 6 - MAY 12, 2009

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Wiggins claims race a factor in recreation

By Cathy Wilson
Staff Writer

One county commissioner believes black children in the county are being short-changed when it comes to running track.

Last week, Commissioner Shirley Wiggins renewed her one-woman fight to get a track built for local students while attending a joint work session by members of both the county's board of education (BOE) and commissioners.

"I'm asking you for the last time on behalf of black kids in the county," Wiggins told the group.

"Why can't you build a track? These kids run all over the state competing, but they can't run here. They can't bring anyone here. They do well and win when they compete. But, when it comes to their needs here, they come in last place.

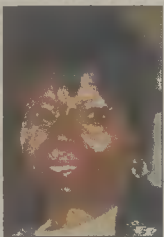
"Black kids are interested in football, basketball and track," Wiggins pointed out. "White kids are interested in baseball, softball and soccer."

Students in Perquimans County Schools have access to a football field, a new basketball gym, and baseball and softball fields. The school system does not have a track. Boys' and girls' track team members practice on the grassy band practice field and have to travel to other schools for all track meets.

Wiggins said she has asked the county to build a track for several years, but to no avail.

"Eight or nine years asking for a track is long enough," Wiggins said. "And, don't tell me there's no funding. I asked back when there was plenty of funding. I asked before things got tight."

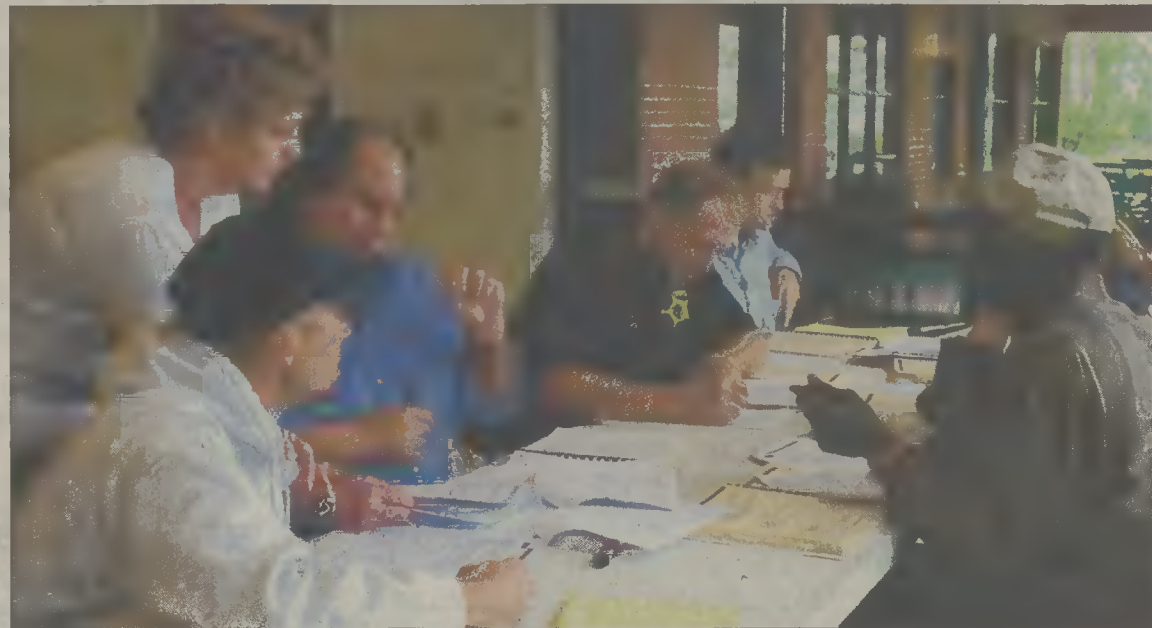
Commissioner Chairman Mack Nixon disagreed with Wiggins, saying he doesn't feel one group of students has been shortchanged.



Wiggins

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TRAINING DAY Officials, emergency personnel join together for incident training



PERQUIMANS WEEKLY PHOTO BY CATHY WILSON

Christy Saunders, emergency management director for Pasquotank County, explains the situation to Joe Bunch, psychologist with Perquimans Schools as others begin work on preparing their action plans during National Incident Management System training last week.

By Cathy Wilson
Staff Writer

A low pressure system has stalled over Northeastern North Carolina for several days, pouring drenching rains into already full rivers and creeks surrounding the town of Hertford.

The river is predicted to crest 12 feet above flood level, area bridges are becoming weak due to debris pileups, and scared residents are starting to file out of the town in an attempt to evacuate.

The American Red Cross has opened two shelters in the area, and the local nursing home is trying to move 55 patients out of the area. Additional firefighters and rescuers are needed to help, and buses to help transport the elderly are needed from the school system.

The chemical company at water's edge reports their bottom floor is already flooding, but officials are monitoring the possibility of any chemical release.

Resources like sand, front end loaders, and additional security forces to help local leaders deal with the impending disaster are arriving. News crews with satellite trucks clog the streets and reporters are scampering throughout the town attempting to get the story.

Is Perquimans County ready to handle such a situation?

Emergency Management Coordinator Jarvis Winslow wants to make sure.

Anyone in the county who might have to respond to such

an incident took part in the 18-hour National Incident Management System course taught recently by Christy Saunders, emergency management director for Pasquotank County, and former Elizabeth City fire chief Billy Pritchard.

Officials and responders from Perquimans and Pasquotank

Goal is to create a unified command; first year government officials required to attend

counties took part in the course. They graduated April 30 after presenting team incident action plans in response to the above flood scenario.

The course is required in order for Perquimans County to receive any federal preparedness funding. This is third level of NIMS training received in the past year.

"Basically, we're learning how to create a unified command," explained Pritchard. "They are working together in groups, learning how to work with multi agencies, and multi-jurisdictional."

Participants practiced filling out the necessary forms, and worked together to create incident action plans in teams grouped around six tables.

Individual tables of participants created plans dealing with such incident issues as residen-

tial evacuation, nursing home, sandbagging, shelters, control, and security.

Those attending represented town and county agencies, governmental and school officials, fire departments, EMS, law enforcement, 911 communications, county and town public works, animal control, public and mental health, nursing homes, extension service, forestry, and volunteers.

This is the first year local government officials were required to attend.

"I learned about best practices in managing emergency situations," said Frank Heath, county tax administrator. "The NIMS training focused on the I.C.S. or incident command system. The ICS is a standardized management tool for meeting the demands of small or large emergency situations."

"The traits of ICS include a manageable span of control, common terminology, modular organization, chain of command, and accountability in handling these situations," he continued.

"The interesting aspect of all of this is that this knowledge can also be applied to non-emergency events. You can use these principles in planning a family event, or a fire department fund raiser. It was a good class."

For Brenda Lassiter, public information officer for Perquimans County Schools, the training gave her a greater overview

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Town gets approval for loan/grant deal

Hertford must look at finances to see if they can afford package

By Cathy Wilson
Staff Writer

The town of Hertford can receive \$854,187 in economic stimulus funds through a combination grant and loan package to rehabilitate sewer lines and manholes in town.

The Hertford project was the only local project funded during the first round distribution of stimulus funding through the North Carolina Clean Water State Revolving Fund.

According to the state, funds will be awarded as a 50 percent zero-interest loan and 50 percent grant. While Hertford's project was selected for funding, the town may not opt to receive the funds. Council has to vote to accept the funding package.

"When we applied, we did not know if the money was grant, loan, or a combination," said Town Manager John Christensen. "Since there is a loan combination, it will mean additional debt for the water and sewer fund. And, with our already high cost of water and sewer, the council will really have to look at this hard."

Hertford's application was submitted to rehabilitate part of the town's aging collection system. The town rehabilitated part of the system back in 2004 at a cost of \$352,054 but not all critical areas were improved due to limited funds.

Priority for funding by the state was given to projects that can proceed quickly, already have any required permits, and have additional funding committed, if needed. In addition, project awards are not final until the Local Government Commission approves the recipient's financial qualifications.

The Hertford project is estimated to cost \$871,620. The amount awarded to the town was cost of the project minus closing costs.

The project calls for replacing 14,835 feet of 6-10 inch sewer lines as well as 420 vertical feet of manhole repairs.

"Aging wastewater infrastructure from one end of the state to the other will now begin to see the benefit of the economic recovery funds," said Gov. Perdue in announcing the awards. "Not only will these projects help improve public health and the environment, but they'll create jobs and boost the local economy."

The funds are part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

Project calls for replacing 14,835 feet of sewer lines as well as 420 feet of manhole repairs for an estimated cost of \$871,620

New restaurant, gift shop opens in Hertford

By Cathy Wilson
Staff Writer

Tea anyone? The Carriage House Tea Cafe' and Gift Shop provides

a unique setting for a leisurely brunch, quick business lunch, little girl's tea party, or a relaxing afternoon tea.

Located at 108 Dobbs Street, Hertford's newest restaurant and gift shop hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony last Thursday by members of the Perquimans Chamber of Commerce.

Mother-daughter owners, Ruth and Susan Benjaminson, have transformed the former antique shop into a colorful restaurant that can seat 25 downstairs and features a second private dining facility upstairs as well as a child's bright yellow party room. A quaint gift shop welcomes visitors into the circa 1900 carriage house that features heart pine mouldings, original wood flooring, a curved stairway to the second floor, and stained-glass windows in the stairwell.

Bright colorful wooden rockers offer a place to relax on the front porch, and the outdoor courtyard features brick pathways leading to iron tables, chairs, benches and umbrellas situated among flower gardens and ev-



PERQUIMANS WEEKLY PHOTO BY CATHY WILSON

The Perquimans Chamber of Commerce hosted a ribbon cutting last Thursday at Hertford's newest restaurant and gift shop. The Carriage House Tea Cafe' and Gift Shop is located at 108 Dobbs Street. Mother-daughter owners, Ruth and Susan Benjaminson, have transformed the former antique shop into a colorful restaurant and gift shop.

everything a bird could want including feeders, houses and baths.

Tablecloths, the good china and a variety of colored teapots highlight the dining room area that's found just behind the small gift shop that offers everything from candles to loose-leaf tea to Webkins to greet-

ing cards.

While they have remodeled the inside of the house to accommodate a restaurant, the new owners have preserved the historic nature of the slice of local history that was part of the George Major estate and

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Highway projects get federal funding

Two highway projects in Perquimans County will be funded by federal economic stimulus funds through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

According to the the North Carolina Department of Transportation, a little over seven miles of U.S. 17 between SR 1302 and SR 1101 is slated to be strengthened at a cost of \$4 million.

In addition, an additional \$500,000 will be spent to replace a bridge on NC Highway 37 with aluminum box culvert.

The U.S. 17 project is scheduled to be let in July with the bridge project on NC 37 slated to be let in August.

The Perquimans projects were two of several announced by Gov. Bev Perdue. Statewide, an additional 64 highway and bridge projects totaling about \$209 million will be funded. The projects identified to date total \$679 million, more than 90 percent of the \$735 million in recovery money North Carolina has received for highway and bridge improvements.

"North Carolina is leading the nation in efforts to expedite the selection of projects and get them under way as quickly as possible to get our people to work," Perdue said. "Given our current economy, it is critical that we are using our recovery money to help put people to work and create much-needed economic growth for our communities."

According to the Federal Highway Adminis-

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WEEKEND WEATHER

THURSDAY
HIGH: 81 LOW: 65
SCATTERED T-STORMS

FRIDAY
HIGH: 85 LOW: 67
ISOLATED T-STORMS

SATURDAY
HIGH: 85 LOW: 62
ISOLATED T-STORMS

