

THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY



"News from Next Door"

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35 cents

Tax increase may be on horizon

By CATHY WILSON
Staff Writer

County taxpayers may face a 1 cent tax increase to help fund what's been termed as a very challenging budget for the next fiscal year.

During a budget work session Monday night, commissioners instructed County Manager Bobby

Darden to prepare a budget based on an ad valorem tax rate of 42 cents. The rate is currently 41 cents and has been that rate since property revaluation in 2008.

The 1 cent increase would allow commissioners to increase school operating funds by 3.7 percent or \$2,137,040, give schools \$200,000 for capital projects, provide debt service pay-

ments of nearly \$750,000, give county employees a 1.5 increase in pay, and fund a drainage study to help area farmers and land owners. Any remaining funds generated would help build the county's fund balance.

In addition, \$35,000 to fund engineering costs to plan a new athletic complex at the high school would be paid out of left over school

construction funds, Darden pointed out.

Darden said budget requests for 2010-2011 exceeded projected revenues by nearly \$1 million. Expenses or requests from all county departments (including schools) were up over \$400,000 from the current year's budget while revenues are projected to run almost \$600,000 less than

this year.

"The budget requests are not too far out of line," Darden explained, "but the revenue decrease just pushed those requests farther away."

Budget requests from agency and county departments have already been trimmed by \$220,000. One of the cost-cutting measures includes having the

county inspection department perform fire inspections rather than hiring a fire marshal.

Without enacting a tax increase, the county would not be able to increase any school funding, and would not be able to give county employees a salary increase for the second year in a row.

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Town to fix walks

Council spending up to \$10K in repairs

By CATHY WILSON
Staff Writer

Hertford Town Council will spend nearly \$10,000 to make sidewalks safer in the immediate business district of the town.

Sections of sidewalks in the Church, Grubb, Market, and Front street areas will be fixed to the tune of \$9,874.

Trip hazards on those sidewalks will be eliminated by slicing the elevated area out of the sidewalk.

There is no grinding, no jack hammering, no pouring additional cement during the repair process. The raised trip hazard is simply sliced away by a contractor.

In past years, the town repaired sidewalks on an annual basis by replacing a complete section.

The damaged section would be broken up, removed, with new concrete poured at a cost of about \$200-\$250 per panel. This new technology allows the remaining section of the sidewalk to stand.

In the five years between 2002-2006, the town spent nearly \$100,000 replacing damaged sidewalks throughout town including \$85,443 to fix sidewalks damaged by Hurricane Isabelle in 2003.

The town has only spent a little over \$3,500 to repair sidewalks since then.

Town Manager John

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A family tradition



STAFF PHOTOS BY CATHY WILSON

Ten-year-old Mariah James has attended the Garden Party each year since she was born. Her parents, Melanie and Derrick James, first met at the Garden Party 13 years ago, fell in love and married. They have attended the social gathering each year since, sharing it with their daughter.

Love blossoms at Garden Party

By CATHY WILSON
Staff Writer

Ten-year-old Mariah James is most grateful for the Garden Party held annually for the past 19 years by the Perquimans County Restoration Association (PCRA).

Her parents, Derrick and Melanie James of Hertford, met at the Garden Party in 1997, fell in love, married, and young Mariah was born three years later.

The James family attends the Garden Party each year not only to enjoy the spring social event, but to celebrate the family's beginnings as well.

"It's like an extra anniversary for us each year," grinned the former Melanie Morris before her marriage. "We have brought Mariah with us to the Garden Party each

year since she was born."

In past years, Melanie always attended the party but Derrick's mother, the late Hilda James, pushed Derrick to attend the event 13 years ago just to meet the Morris girl.

Luckily, Derrick listened to his mom, and the rest is history.

It's understandable how a couple could meet and fall in love at the Garden Party. Held on the beautiful river-front in a garden lush with greenery and adornments, relaxing music from a stringed harp flows over the waterfront breeze as guests enjoy such mouth-watering foods as herb-infused turkey breast, shrimp with dill in cream puffs, peach chutney with pumpernickel, marinated mushrooms, springtime mini-cupcakes and pecan tarts, among other items.

See PARTY, 9



Eldon Winslow looks dapper in his summer best as he greets others at the Garden Party held Saturday afternoon as a fundraiser by the Perquimans County Restoration Association.

Cole in running for seat

By CATHY WILSON
Staff Writer

After reviewing four applications, county commissioners expect to appoint a former federal prosecutor to fill the unexpired term of Shirley Wiggins who died last month.

In a budget work session Monday night, commissioners unanimously agreed that Janice McKenzie Cole, a local attorney is, by far, the best qualified applicant to fill the seat. Wiggins died April 18 following a brief stay in a local hospital.

See COLE, 9

School lunch prices to go up

By CATHY WILSON
Staff Writer

The price of student lunches will go up by 10 cents next school year.

Members of the Perquimans Board of Education (BOE) recently approved raising the cost of student lunches to \$2 for grades Pre-K to second and \$2.25 for other grades. Prices for supplemental sales items will increase as well.

Donna B. Harris, child nutrition director for the Perquimans County Schools, said the increase is needed because of the hike in the cost of health and retirement benefits for child nutrition workers in the school system.

"Since the only source of revenue for the program is a result of the number of meals sold and the revenue received from those sales, the proposal seems to be a fair solution," she told BOE members.

No additional funds from the state or local government support the program. Federal reimbursement and the sale of meals and supplemental items completely fund the program.

After keeping the cost of lunches steady for several years, schools increased the cost of lunches two years ago when they upped the price by a quarter.

"I expect a decrease in participation when the increase goes into effect," she added. "It did last time."

Harris explained that the rising costs of food and

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WEEKEND WEATHER

FRIDAY

HIGH: 81 LOW: 63
ISOLATED T-STORMS

SATURDAY

HIGH: 84 LOW: 64
SCATTERED T-STORMS

SUNDAY

HIGH: 82 LOW: 65
ISOLATED T-STORMS

Grand opening set for market

By CATHY WILSON
Staff Writer

A grand opening ceremony will be held next Wednesday afternoon (May 26) kicking off the start of the new Perquimans Farmers Market.

Local leaders will gather at 2 p.m. at Missing Mill Park to celebrate the opening of the open-air market that will feature fresh foods and products, plants, and home-made baked goods.

Market Director Denise Richards says several vendors have already committed to take part in the market, with even more expected once the local growing season hits its peak later this summer.

So far, vendors are slated to offer homemade sausage, cheese, produce, other meats, plants, organic produce and other foods, homemade jams, jellies, pickles, and home-baked items like cakes and pies.

The market will open in the park each Wednesday afternoon from 2-6 p.m.

One vendor is well known for her piled-high cakes that can double as table centerpieces and for her unique coconut pie that beats the rest hands down.

Ronda Griffin with All Occasion Cakes in Elizabeth City won last year's Market Impossible competition at the Downtown Waterfront Market in Elizabeth City when her

coconut pie was a judges' favorite, all by itself.

Layden's of Belvidere will bring his savory sausages and hoop cheese to town, while Sunshine Nursery will spruce up the park with plants, flowers, and fresh produce. Essentially Organic 2, an online buying club representing more than 40 North Carolina farms, will offer 100 percent certified organic produce and foods. Brother's Farm Market will bring in produce from the Elizabeth City farm, and Providence Preserves, offering homemade jams, jellies, and pickles, may be there as well.

Nickalena's in Hertford will offer

See MARKET, 9

