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THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

"News from Next Door"

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50 cents



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Jedele pleads guilty to '07 killing

From staff reports

A former Hertford police officer pleaded guilty last week to first degree murder in connection with the 2007 kidnapping and murder of Donald B. Smithwick of Ahoskie.

According to the Roanoke-Chowan News Herald (RCNH), Raymond Christian Jedele of Kill Devil Hills accepted a plea agreement last Tuesday

during a Winton court session that was expected to only include pre-trial motions

Jedele's accomplice, Janet Denise Harrell of Edenton, plead guilty to second degree murder.

Published reports indicate Superior Court Judge Cy Grant sentenced Jedele to life in prison without the possibility of parole while Harrell received 157-198 months in prison.

Jedele was charged with capital murder and was facing the death penalty if convicted. He was expected to stand trial next month in Hertford County.

According to the RCNH, Smithwick, then 33, was kidnapped from his Ahoskie home during the early morning hours of Oct. 4, 2007 as he left for work.

His body was discovered

five days later in a wooded area near Edenton by a North Carolina Wildlife officer.

Law enforcement officers believed Smithwick was tazed, bound and kidnapped after finding blood both in his driveway and in his pick-up truck which was found abandoned a few blocks away from his home.

After Smithwick was reported missing, various

law enforcement agencies and search and rescue personnel searched the area surrounding the U.S. 17 bridge over the Chowan River between Bertie and Chowan counties.

Investigation revealed that Jedele was involved in a vehicle accident on that bridge around 7 a.m. the morning of Smithwick's disappearance.

Earlier court appearances revealed that Har-

rell and Smithwick were involved in a custody battle over their two children. Jedele, who was employed at the time as a police officer with the town of Kitty Hawk, and Harrell were friends.

According to the RCNH, Smithwick apparently won the custody fight and was scheduled to sign custody paperwork in the Chowan County Courthouse on Oct. 5.

Employee firing info must be released

From staff reports

Recent changes to North Carolina's open records law require school districts and other public agencies to disclose more information to the press and public about the firing of public employees, an attorney advised the Perquimans Board of Education last week.

John Leidy, attorney for the Perquimans school board, said that under the changes, public agencies must now release a public worker's employment history, including salaries and promotions, demotions, suspensions or dismissals.

If an employee is fired, then a statement of the former employee's acts or errors must also be made a matter of public record, Leidy said.

"And it really changes the landscape quite a lot," he said.

In the past, when citizens or reporters asked about the firing of a public employee, the public agency was prohibited from saying why the worker had been dismissed.

Leidy noted that in the past, a governing body like a school board might not have issued a termination letter to an employee because the board was only verbally upholding an administrative decision.

But based on a recent opinion by the state Attorney General's Office, Leidy believes governing boards now have to keep termination letters on file, and have had to do since Oct. 1.

"That's the good news," Leidy said. "The bad news is, if (the letter) exists, it's

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Christmas time in the city



FILE PHOTO

Bells will be ringing and children will be singing during Hertford's annual Christmas Parade, which is slated to begin at 2 p.m., Saturday.

Illumination and parade usher in the holiday

By CATHY WILSON
Staff Writer

The town kicks off the upcoming holiday season Thursday night with the annual Grand Illumination following by the annual Christmas Parade on Saturday.

A flipping of the switch Thursday evening will transform Hertford into a festive celebration of lights during the Grand Illumination beginning on the historic courthouse green at 6 p.m.

Entertainment will be provided by members of the Perquimans County High School band, Senior Citizens Choir, and First Baptist Church Mass Choir of Hyde Park as they offer Christmas carols. Officials will flip the switch illuminating the official 18 ft. town Christmas tree, courthouse trees and shrubs, and downtown buildings at 6:30 p.m.

Also shining this year will be River Trees, 24 illuminated Christmas trees that light up the river shoreline on Front and

Church streets.

Luminaries will again line the sidewalk leading to the Perquimans County Courthouse. Luminaries may be purchased in memory, honor, or in celebration of loved ones for \$5 each. Luminaries can be purchased at the Perquimans Chamber of Commerce, or the Perquimans Weekly office.

Many of the downtown merchants and restaurants will remain open late for holiday shopping and good eating!

Thursday's Christmas cele-

bration is sponsored by Historic Hertford, Inc.

Saturday's Perquimans Chamber of Commerce Annual Christmas Parade gets underway at 2 p.m. and will feature the special theme "Christmas Blessings" this year. Grand marshal for the event is non other than Superior Court Judge J.C. Cole who will be accompanied by his wife, Janice, a county commissioner.

Frank Roberts will provide

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WEEKEND WEATHER

FRIDAY
HIGH: 49 LOW: 32
MOSTLY SUNNY

SATURDAY
HIGH: 53 LOW: 39
MOSTLY SUNNY

SUNDAY
HIGH: 45 LOW: 36
SHOWERS

AEMC: Furr resigns, Bray steps in

Bray is named as interim manager

From staff reports

The general manager of Albemarle Electric Membership Corp. (AEMC) resigned last week and an interim manager has been named.

AEMC spokesman Chris Powell said Brad Furr's resignation took effect immediately following his abrupt resignation last Tuesday morning.

On Nov. 29, Gerald "Zach" Bray, 45, was named

interim general manager by the AEMC Board of Directors.

Powell called Furr's decision to resign a personnel matter. He declined to elaborate further.

Efforts to reach Furr for comment were unsuccessful.

L.A. Harris Jr., president of the AEMC board, said he has complete confidence in Bray's ability to run the co-op while a search for a full-time general manager is conducted.

Harris said the search for a full-time general manager could take as much as



Furr

Bray

six months.

"Zach Bray has extensive knowledge of Albemarle EMC's computer network and has taken a lead role in overseeing construction of the new office building," Harris said.

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Food Bank envelopes are inside

The Albemarle Food Bank fund-raising appeal was published in error in last week's Perquimans Weekly, and the envelopes were not inserted in the paper.

You will find the envelope in today's edition. If you choose to contribute, you can mail the donation or drop your envelope off at the Perquimans Weekly office at 111 W. Market St., Hertford or at local First Citizen Bank locations.

