

**BOAT RAMP**

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Instead of 20-foot wide, like a normal ramp, the proposal calls for one twice as big. The project also includes dredging the area in the river to make it deeper because larger boats would require that. What Perquimans is proposing is a ramp as large as the one in Wanchese, where the catamaran maker Gunboat has a plant.

While funding to create the \$22 million over-all park has failed to materialize, the boat ramp would be a good first step, according to Richard Bunch, the regional marketing director for the Northeast Commission.

"When you get that to the next level, you'll see some serious activity," Bunch said.

The county, Northeast

Commission and Electricities have been marketing the Perquimans park for the past three years at a trade show for workboat buyers in New Orleans. The issue was brought up at an Economic Development Council meeting in December.

Perquimans County Commissioner Ben Hobbs asked Bunch how many jobs the county would be looking at from the prospects they've spoken to. The answer was "at least 500."

Building the boat ramp alone wouldn't be enough to attract that many jobs, officials were told. The 500-job estimate was based on the full proposal with the boat basin. With the ramp alone the county could be looking at 20 to 40 jobs, Bunch said.

Bunch said when work



BUNCH

moves forward on the park, things will start to happen. The hurdle comes from a chicken or the egg situation. Federal and state officials won't seriously consider spending \$22 million to dig a boat basin at the park without a strong promise that an industry will bring in jobs. Without the boat basin, industry hasn't been quick at making that decision.

The state only has three sites set aside as marine industrial sites. The main one is in Wanchese, but it's built to capacity. There is a small one in Engelhard that has one tenant but not much room to grow. Then there is Hertford.

The Perquimans site has the room. The basin, as proposed, would use about 16 of the 72 acres. But surrounding the site

are 300 acres of county property that also could be developed.

Peele said he's seen boat building activity pick up in Wanchese, although the industry hasn't totally recovered.

"The industry is doing better than it was three years ago. Things were awful then. Speaking about Wanchese, every boat builder in town has a boat to build this winter."

That hasn't been the case recently.

He estimates that nearly 300 people are working. That's up from a low of 200 at the worst of recession but not yet to the 400 figure during the peak in 2005-06.

"Is this a (statistical) blip? Nobody really knows. We still have a ways to go from here."

Peele counts 27 boats longer than 50 feet in construction at this point. That includes six being

built Gunboat, a maker of high-end ocean-going catamarans. At the worst, about 15 boats were under construction and at the peak the number was between 25 and 30.

"I'm hoping we've seen the worst."

Peele said the Perquimans site is well suited for building workboats that don't require more than 10 feet of water to navigate. Hertford's distance from the ocean isn't a big factor.

"It's very close to the Intercoastal (waterway) and when you're talking five miles in boat, that's not very far. There are boat companies all over the country that are not even on water and some travel further than that. And the further you move up that way, the better protected you are from hurricanes and that kind of weather."

The ramp alone is a big

step, Peele said.

"By building a ramp that wide you really expand the types of boats that can use it, and it also can be used for small boats. It will help us with our marketing effort if that ramp is funded."

Peele will be able to go to clients and show them the ramp and say, "this is there now" as well as show them the plans of what the boat basin can look like in the future.

"By having the ramp it shows them we're serious."

"I expect things are going to grow, I'm feeling good and the boat ramp is just what we need right now. I think something is going to happen on that site, and I want to thank the board of commissioners and the EDC for being such wonderful partners. We all knew this going in that it was going to take time."

**BRIDGE**

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native B — which would veer off Church Street and more or less parallel the current bridge and then follow a fixed span bridge to the same spot as the other two. Option B was also the most expensive by far at an estimated \$55.6 million. The favored option is more like \$21 million and wouldn't require a bridge tender.

Joseph Miller, a project planning engineer for DOT insists the final decision can't come until after the Jan. 16 meeting.

"If these agencies concur on NCDOT's preferred alternative, a newsletter

announcing the selected alternative will be sent to property owners and posted on the project website," Miller said in response to a letter to the editor written to the Perquimans Weekly by a property owner who will lose her home if D-Mod is approved.

Miller called the report from the Nov. 18 meeting "minutes" and not a final report.

"The recommendation made at the post-hearing meeting is an internal, interim decision and may not reflect the final decision regarding the selected alternative. NCDOT does not normally announce alternative selections until after DOT's preferred alternative is presented to

the agencies I mentioned earlier."

Jay McInnis, the project engineer, said it's unlikely that the decision from the Jan. 16 meeting will run counter to the recommendation of Nov. 18, but said it is possible.

McInnis also agreed funding remains a question.

"Now like every project that is going to be let (for bid) after July 2015, it is in limbo," McInnis said Tuesday.

DOT is working under the assumption that right of way acquisition will still take place sometime in the 2016 fiscal year and construction can start in 2018.

"We'll know more by the end of this year," he said.

Years of public hearings narrowed the choices but it didn't develop an overwhelming consensus of which version was the best. Alternatives D-Mod and E each had about the same number of people supporting them based on input last fall to DOT. The swing span got the least amount of support.

DOT's preference for D-Mod did please town officials and many in the business community.

Town Manager Brandon Shoaf said the town was happy with the recommendation.

"I think D-Mod most closely matches the town's wishes," he said.

Sid Eley, the executive director of the Perquimans

County Chamber of Commerce, perhaps captured the feelings of a lot of downtown merchants.

"I'm happy they kept it downtown, I'm just sorry we had to lose the S-Bridge."

But DOT says the S-Bridge has to go.

Simply rehabilitating the 85-year-old structure was considered and rejected by DOT. It's not wide enough to bring it up to current road standards and would have to be reduced to one-way traffic.

Eley would like to see it saved and moved to Missing Mill Park and used somehow in the waterfront plans. That was done in Greenville with the Greene Street Bridge, but

the cost was over \$500,000 and took years to complete.

There remains more work to be done by state and federal officials.

Rep. Bob Steinburg, who represents Perquimans County, has supported replacement plans, wasn't sure when funding for the new bridge would be available but he considers it a priority.

"We're not going to have the environmental issues like with the Bonner Bridge. There is no question it (the replacement) is needed. If we don't have that access we're in trouble across the board."

The new bridge is expected to have a 75-year lifespan.

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**TOWN OF HERTFORD BOARD VACANCY NOTICE**

The Hertford Town Council is seeking residents of the Town of Hertford interested in serving on the Hertford Planning and Zoning Board of Adjustments. This Board acts as an advisory board for land use planning issues, decides on conditional use permits and variances, and hears appeals of the Town's Zoning Ordinance. Interested parties must be legal residents of the Town of Hertford. Interested parties are asked to send in a letter of interest to Brandon Shoaf, the Town Manager at PO Box 32, Hertford, NC 27944. For further information, please call (252) 426-1969. Letter of interest will be accepted post marked no later than January 17, 2014.



**TV PROJECT**

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Board. At age 45, Hollowell never saw himself being a part of a TV program, much less one involving fitness models.

"I've always enjoyed doing things outdoors, hunting and fishing," Hollowell said last week. "To be honest when I started I was involved in just helping out and then it turned out they wanted me more involved and actually be a part of it. They wanted me for the risky parts."



PHOTO BY MELINDA LAMM

Brian Nixon (left) films fitness model Cara Christensen on Church Street recently.

en Eleven — in the editing phase and worked on the HBO series "East Bound and Down." He also works now at Food Lion in Hertford and with his father at Belvidere Farmer's Exchange.

"It's been a rocky road," Nixon said of film project thus far. But things are starting to fall into place. They are beautiful ladies and both of them are real sweethearts. They are both passionate about this."

The target audience for the program is men between the ages of 39 and 54.

Nixon admits it was an

**POLICY**

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(from work) so I can attend."

The problem could be a spur of the moment meeting called for an emergency session.

How the policy is crafted could limit what a board member could do if he or she isn't in the room.

The board reviewed a draft amendment that ad-

dressed some of the things members might want. For example a member who isn't physically there may not be counted as being part of a quorum. The board has six members and at least four need to be present in order to form a quorum so they can take official action. Having three people in the room and one participating remotely wouldn't count as a quorum.

The absent board member also may or may not vote or participate in a quasi-judicial proceeding. They also can't be a part of a closed-door meeting used to discuss pending litigation, property issues or personnel.

The last policy listed on the list of 10 approved in December would also

limit the number of times a board member can use the policy.

At present the attendance policy reads "a board member is discouraged from participating remotely in regular board meetings in a 12-month period."

School spokesman Brenda Lassiter said the board plans to meet with its attorney — John Leidy — on Jan. 13 to determine a limit. The number could be placed in the sentence between the words "meetings" and "in."

The Perquimans County Commission does not have a formal policy to address the situation, according to County Manager Frank Heath.

"A commissioner could in theory call in to listen,

but they couldn't vote because they aren't physically present," Heath said in December.

Magaro doesn't have a problem with a board member participating in a closed-door meeting via telephone. But with that right the responsibility to make sure they do it from a private place.

Because Magaro deals with some sensitive information with FEMA, he knows there are places — like public transit — where he doesn't use technology because someone could overhear him.

"I had to take an oath of office (from someone in D.C.) and I did it from here (Hertford). There has to be some application of prudence. You don't want somebody calling in for a closed door meeting and doing it from McDonalds."

Magaro insists there need to be limits on what the board can do in a virtual setting.

"The N.C. open meetings law provides for the public to see and interact with you. If you had a 100 percent virtual board meeting a question could be raised about that. The public's intention is to come to the meetings and see live people."

**NOTICE**

**Perquimans County TAX LISTING DATES**

All persons who own property subject to taxation must list during the month of January. Any persons who fail to do so will be subject to penalties prescribed by law.

Due to legislation, real property and licensed vehicles do not require listing by the taxpayer. However, if you have made any improvements to your real property, you must list that with the Tax Department. All other personal property such as boats, jet skis, unlicensed vehicles, farm equipment, businesses, etc. can be listed with the lister in the county Assessor's Office between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Monday thru Friday starting January 2 through January 31, 2014. You may also list on the abstract that was mailed to you. If you have personal property or made improvements to your real property and did not receive an abstract, please contact our office. These abstracts must be returned to our office by January 31, 2014.

If you are a business and you need an extension, our office needs a letter requesting an extension by January 31, 2014.

If you are 65 years old or older, or totally and permanently disabled, and your income is less than \$28,600, you may qualify for a tax reduction.

Persons owning real property under cultivation, in forest management or horticulture land may qualify for a tax-reduced valuation (land use). If you are not already in the land use program and you feel you qualify, please contact The Tax Office for qualification.

The Tax Office is located at 107 N. Front Street (in the back of the courthouse) Hertford, NC. Our telephone number is 252-426-7010 or 252-426-5564.

Bill Jennings, Perquimans County, Tax Administrator

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