

# THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY



See this week's Pirates Roundup, 6A

"News from Next Door"

JANUARY 22, 2014 - JANUARY 28, 2014

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## Schools seeking more money for safety work

BY PETER WILLIAMS  
News Editor

The cost of securing Hertford Grammar School from an armed intruder will be nearly twice the original estimate, but school officials have agreed to move forward.

School officials expect

to pay \$338,559 to move the entry point to the school and relocate offices. The new figure is \$163,000 more than the original estimate of \$175,000 and almost five times the combined cost of the safety improvements at the other three schools.

Still the school board agreed last week to move

forward on the request.

"The board recognizes that the amount is a high amount, but if we don't do everything we can to protect our children and staff we could be liable," said Brenda Lassiter, a spokesman for the school system. "There is no price tag we can put on a child's head."

The need to better secure the schools was driven home by the December 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School. Twenty students and six staff members were killed.

The money will come from the N.C. Education Lottery. Each county has a portion of the lottery pro-

ceeds deposited into an account specifically for brick-and-mortar improvements. The money can't be used to pay teachers or buy technology.

The Perquimans County School Board used \$70,800 in lottery money last year to make similar improvements at the other three schools.

The county hasn't made a major withdrawal since 2011. At that time Perquimans County Manager Bobby Darden recommended withdrawing \$400,000 from the lottery account and using the money to make part of a debt payment on work

See SAFETY, 7

## Rain puts damper on activities

BY PETER WILLIAMS  
News Editor

Farmers are having troubles and even avid golfers are finding it hard to practice their sport because of unusually wet weather.

Typically December brings about three inches of rain. Last month the Town of Hertford water treatment plant reported getting 5.37 inches. A normal January gets about 4.16 inches. Just two weeks into this month, the water plant reported 2.3 inches.

The State Climate Office, an operation of N.C. State University, has data that shows some areas of Perquimans County have received between 25 to 50 percent of normal rainfall over the past 60 days. The rest of the county falls to within 5 to 25 percent.

Some areas of western North Carolina are even wetter. A few mountain areas have had up to 12 more inches of rain in the same 60-day period.

It's more than a mere nuisance to farmers and livestock producers, according to Jared Harrell, an agriculture extension agent in Hertford.

Winter wheat has already been planted, but the wet weather is taking a toll.

"With the amount of rainfall we've had, wheat is not doing well," Harrell said. "The rain is keeping it inundated which is keeping it stunted and can cause some disease in the plant if it just sits there."

Where you are in Perquimans County has a lot to do with how wet you are.

"There is sandy soil in some areas but in a lot of the eastern part of the county it's a clay base and once it gets really wet, it takes a long time to dry out."

Unless things begin to dry out, the soggy ground could delay some farmers.

"In a couple of weeks or a month, they're going to be spraying

See RAIN, 7

## MLK AUDIENCE URGED TO LOOK FORWARD



STAFF PHOTO BY PETER WILLIAMS

Members of the Melton Grove Missionary Baptist Mass Choir perform Monday at the church.

## Iraq war veteran speaks

BY PETER WILLIAMS  
News Editor

People can and should look back on the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. but they need to spend more time looking at the future, the keynote speaker told an audience Monday.

A Winfall church hosted a program to celebrate the man who helped shaped civil rights in the 1950s and 1960s and beyond.

Lora Aples compared a story she heard during her Air Force career. The Perquimans County native served for 26 years and did three tours in Iraq. She used the analogy of a car windshield, which is large and a rear view mirror which is tiny.

"Keep your eyes focused on what's ahead," she urged. "That rear view mirror is just a reference to where you came from."

She used a similar reference to people's lives.

See MLK DAY, 7



STAFF PHOTO BY PETER WILLIAMS

Lora Aples speaks to the crowd Monday at Melton Grove Missionary Baptist in Winfall.

## Plantation to host pro tour in June

BY PETER WILLIAMS  
News Editor

The Sound Links at Albemarle Plantation is scheduled to host a weeklong pro golf tournament June 23-29.

The NGA pro tour, formerly the NGA Hooters Tour, features the future stars of the PGA. Alumni of the NGA include 2012 Masters champion Bubba Watson, 2011 PGA Champion Keegan Bradley, 2010 PGA Player of the Year and 2003 U.S. Open champion and Jim Furyk and 2009 British Open champion Stewart Cink.

The Perquimans County event will raise money for the Food Bank of the Albemarle.

Kenny Saunders, the golf pro at the course, said they started looking into bringing the tournament here when he heard that Scotch Hall, a course in Merry Hill in Bertie County, was looking at dropping the event.

Saunders said he quickly found support from within Albemarle Plantation and from the NGA organization. The 23-year-old course has hosted charity events before, but nothing on this scale.

"We've got housing for the kids (golfers) and we've already got nine committees formed," Saunders said. "We want to make it an event, not just a golf tournament."

Saunders was concerned that NGA officials might think the 6,400-yard course was too short for a pro event. Turns out that wasn't a problem.

"If you look at it on paper, it looks short but when you get out there it's tight. You hit a bad shot and you're off the course and in a swamp."

The course should be in good condition. The greens were replaced last year and there has been plenty of rainfall.

Liz Reasoner, the director of the

See PRO TOUR, 7

## DOT to seek input on road work at Thursday meeting

BY PETER WILLIAMS  
News Editor

The state road funding formula has changed and the amount of money available for secondary road projects is expected to be just a fraction of previous spending.

On Thursday N.C. Department of Transportation officials will meet in Washington County to talk about the change and listen to county officials to find out what projects are important to them.

The open house is set for 4 to 7 p.m. at the Vernon G. James Research and Extension Center, located at 207 Research Station Road in Plymouth.

In 2013, DOT spent \$2.2 million on projects in Per-

## Corps wants another look at bridge option

BY PETER WILLIAMS  
News Editor

The final decision on the location for a replacement to the S-Bridge in Hertford is coming but it may be a few more weeks.

State and federal officials met last week to discuss the selection of a route that would run off Church Street across the Perquimans River and link up with existing roads near Larry's Drive In.

That remains the favored route, but officials of the

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers want to look once more at navigational issues.

The favored route — known as Alternative D-Mod — is the least expensive of the three finalists and the shortest in length.

Joseph Miller, the project planning engineer for the project also said it's the least environmentally damaging. He said the DOT webpage on the project will be soon be updated and a newsletter will be mailed

out. Jay McInnis, the project engineer, said he doesn't believe the decision will be delayed much longer.

"We don't believe any dredging will be required, but the agencies were wanting assurances that is the case," McInnis said Tuesday. "The Corps of Engineers rep was also wanting to confirm that the Corps doesn't have a dredging project in the area."

Nancy Theodore, the homeowner who will lose her

house if D-Mod is selected, said Miller is confident that option will be the one selected.

"Joe didn't think that it will change the decision," Theodore said Monday. "It's just something that needs to be resolved before sign-off."

There is no firm estimate on when right of way purchases will start or when construction might commence.

The D-Mod option will cost about \$22 million.

We're going to get very little. I don't know if it's going to be in thousands (of dollars) or tens of thousands."

County Manager Frank Heath believes if Perquimans wants a specific project funded, it will have to throw its full weight behind

it. Local officials have some say on certain projects through their local planning organization. The Albemarle Rural Planning Organization (ARPO) serves Camden, Chowan, Currituck, Dare, Gates, Hyde, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Tyrrell and Washington counties.

State officials worked with local officials and the existing network of regional development organizations to create 19 RPOs that serve all counties outside of the existing 17

metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs).

RPOs serve nearly four million North Carolinians, or almost half the population of the state.

And Byrum doesn't have an answer to how the replacement for Hertford's S-Bridge will be handled. It's not because she hasn't asked the question.

"I can't get a clear answer," she said.

