

PEELER

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seat. It will be Leigh's second four-year term. She's a Democrat. Nelson returned to the Perquimans commission board in 2014 after serving a couple of four-year terms on the Perquimans

Board of Education. Nelson previously served as a Perquimans commissioner from 2000-04. He's a Republican. Sheriff Shelby White is trying to win his first election against Republican challenger Jim Bray. White is a Democrat. Todd Tilley is running unopposed for Clerk of Superior Court.

SAFETY

Continued from 1

death or life." He said sometimes teens just need to talk with somebody his or her own age. "Be that friend," Price said.

McCleney told the students to find way to deal with anxiety, saying "fear comes from Satan." Price said the meeting last week doesn't have to be the last one. "If you want to do this more often, we can do it weekly," Price said.

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Pasquotank prison remains on lockdown

BY JON HAWLEY
The Daily Advance

Pasquotank Correctional Institution remains on lockdown but continues getting on better footing, the state director of prisons said in an interview last week. Kenneth Lassiter spoke with a reporter on Wednesday to give an update on PCI, where changes continue unfolding after last year's deadly escape attempt. In October, four inmates started a fire in the prison's sewing plant in hopes of escaping during the chaos. They failed, but stand accused of killing four correctional employees in the process. Subsequent reviews of PCI found the prison was understaffed and didn't always follow security procedures — factors that likely facilitated the escape attempt.

Lassiter said PCI is "not quite ready yet" for the lockdown to be lifted, though

some religious services have resumed there. He thanked the prison's community partners who have relied on inmate labor for their patience.

Lassiter also reported that more than a fourth of PCI's 264 positions remain vacant, a number that's little changed since the escape attempt occurred. However, he reiterated that DPS has reduced the prison's population to make it more manageable. PCI's current population is 525 inmates, he said.

Lassiter also noted the closure of PCI's sewing plant solved security problems that a review by the National Institute of Corrections found at the prison.

Lassiter also explained that increased training continues at PCI, under the supervision of interim Administrator Dennis Daniels. Daniels took over at the prison last month, following the suspensions of

Administrator Felix Taylor and Assistant Administrator Colbert Respass. Daniels was previously the administrator at Maury Correctional Institution, located about 20 miles southwest of Greenville.

Lassiter said Daniels has been "well received" at PCI, where he worked before going to MCI, and is letting staff "heal" from last year's murders while also reviewing and improving operations.

Lassiter notes Daniels was the longest-serving administrator at any of the state's prisons with at least 1,000 inmates. MCI's capacity is about 1,500, according to DPS' website.

Lassiter credited him not only for running MCI well, but for helping set up a therapeutic diversionary unit for inmates with mental health needs and a veterans dorm solely for inmates who are also military veterans. Inmates who are veterans

do better together, Lassiter noted.

Though declining to release any operational assessments or security audits for MCI — which he said could contain sensitive information — Lassiter said there were no staff fatalities under Daniels' watch. He also said there were not an unusual number of assaults, given the nature and size of MCI's inmate population.

How long Daniels will continue to manage PCI is unclear. Lassiter explained Taylor is still the administrator of the prison, and decisions on whether to alter or end his employment, as well as Respass', are tied to the Department of Public Safety's ongoing investigation of PCI. Lassiter noted that both Taylor and Respass are nearing the maximum amount of time an employee can be suspended, but couldn't say Wednesday what DPS' next steps will be.

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SENATE

Continued from 1

Caucus.

"I am honored to announce my candidacy for the North Carolina Senate," Phelps states in the release. "Too often, North Carolinians east of I-95 are forgotten. Northeastern North Carolina deserves a representative who is familiar with the needs of our community and will fight for them."

Phelps' candidacy is inconsistent with a statement he gave on Nov. 8 in which he withdrew his interest in running for the seat in newly drawn House District 1.

"While I would like to broaden my reach across eastern North Carolina, it is more important right now for me to complete a few more of the projects I set out to accomplish for the residents of Washington County," he said then in not seeking that legislative office.

In the N.C. Senate Demo-

cratic Caucus press release, Phelps states he "believes the General Assembly has failed to do enough for northeastern North Carolina," and, if elected, plans to fight for economic development, small business owners, infrastructure and education.

Phelps also criticized cuts to education that he said have increased class sizes, citing his experience as an instructor at East Carolina University.

The release also notes that Phelps was "born and raised" in Creswell, and graduated from ECU in 2009 and from the N.C. Central University School of Law in 2013.

The winner of the Democratic contest will face either state Rep. Bob Steinburg, R-Chowan, or Clark Twiddy, a Republican businessman from Dare, who declared their candidacies for the seat months ahead of either Democrat. The winners of each party's May 8 primary will then face voters in the November general election.

FIRES

Continued from 1

the home was owned by Christopher Colvin.

White praised the firefighters for containing the blaze in the high winds.

"They did a real good job," White said.

White said investigators don't know what caused the blaze, but they don't suspect foul play.

On Monday a person was transported to Sentara Albemarle Medical

Center afternoon after a fire in a detached apartment in the 200 block of Hogs Neck Road.

The Inter-County Volunteer Fire Department and units from Durants Neck and Winfall responded to the fire shortly after 2:30 p.m.

Michael Cartwright, an officer with the Inter-County department, said the fire was contained in about 15 to 20 minutes.

The cause of the injuries to the person being transported was unknown as of Monday afternoon.

The fire was contained to a one-story structure next to a brick home and a carport.

Three trucks from Inter-County and two trucks each from Durants Neck and Winfall responded along with EMS personnel. About 30 people in all were involved.

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