



Pets of the Week, 7

"News from Next Door"

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Election change facing a fight

BY PETER WILLIAMS
 News Editor

Any effort to change the system by which Perquimans County elects members of the county commission that hurts minority voters will be met with a challenge, said Joe Hoffer, one of the members of the board.



HOFFLER

Commissioner Kyle Jones floated the idea at a recent board retreat. While he laid out potential pitfalls, he

called the current system "absurdly-convoluted" and outdated and a change is needed.

The current system calls for three commissioners to be elected every two years. Voters however get to cast a ballot for just one of them. Only one other county in the state has a system similar to the one in Perquimans.

Jones suggested a mix of at-large voting and voting by districts.

Hoffer is dead set against the change because of the impact it could have on minority voters.

"It (the current system) works for us, the citizens of Perquimans County. I'm not going to stand by and the NAACP is not going to stand by watching us go backwards."

Before the current plan was adopted in 1993, blacks and women weren't being elected to the commission.

Now the board consists of four white men, one Black woman and one Black male, Hoffer. From a political standpoint, there are three who are Democrats, two Republicans and one unaffiliated.

"He (Jones) could be just testing the waters to see if there would be any opposition, and I'm saying there will be opposition," Hoffer said.

Before 2013, the county would have to seek "pre-clearance" from the Justice Department to make a change. But that year the Supreme struck down that key provision of the Voting Rights Act by a 5-4 vote.

But Hoffer said just because the Justice Department won't block a change on the front end, a citizen can still challenge any change and it could still be blocked by a federal court.

"Not having to get per-

See ELECTION, 2



Historic home gets new owner

BY PETER WILLIAMS
 News Editor

Cliff Miller wasn't looking for another house.

Yet now he and his wife Pat own one of oldest ones in the Town of Hertford.

He and his wife Pat bought a home in Elizabeth City about three years ago and moved down from Virginia. Then the real estate agent called last year.

"The told us she had this listing and it was really cool and I thought what the heck," Miller said. "We weren't really interested but we saw it and we fell in love with it."

"When we looked at it, we agreed it's too nice a house not to bring it back to the way it should look," Miller said.

They are now the owners of the Isaac Hall House at 200 W. Market St. Depending where you look, it was built in 1818 or 1819. Either way, it's a lot older than their Elizabeth City home which was built in 2006.

Miller, 60, is retired now, but he's never been into buying very old homes. When he was a boy his parents bought a farmhouse that was built in the late 1800s in central Virginia.

Miller said from what he has learned the oldest house in the town was built in 1775. There is another built in 1785. The oldest surviving house in the county is the Newbold

See HOUSE, 2



Top, restoration is under way on the Isaac Hall House on West Market Street. Middle, a painter scraps off the siding of the Isaac Hall House on Market Street. Bottom, Cliff Miller stands inside one of the downtown rooms in his new house.

STAFF PHOTOS BY PETER WILLIAMS



Timing of replacing police car dash cameras debated

BY PETER WILLIAMS
 News Editor

Hertford councilmen agreed Monday they need to replace the dash cameras in police patrol cars but the question was how quickly can they do it.

The arrest of Councilman Quentin Jackson in Febru-

ary brought to light the fact that the old cameras were defective and had been since 2017. That fact came out in an internal investigation after the arrest.

At their meeting Monday night, Hertford Town Manager Brandon Shoaf said then Chief Douglas Freeman was aware of the faulty patrol car cameras, but in light of a lack of funding, he had officers rely on their body cameras for the time being.

"In his (Freeman's) de-

fense, it was a budget issue," Shoaf said.

The problem in the Jackson case is the officer didn't turn his on or didn't wear it that day. Jackson was found guilty of resisting and officer in the case from Feb. 1, but he is appealing the case to Superior Court.

Jackson has been critical of the town's police department and Monday night was critical of Shoaf as well since he oversees the police department.

"We can't say we have a

good (police) department," Jackson said. He pointed out that while there may have been a budget issue, the fact the cameras were broken wasn't brought to the town board.

Shoaf said replacement car cameras cost between \$3,000 to \$9,000 each but some state grant money is available that provides a 50/50 match. He's still looking for a third company to bid on the contract.

See CAMERAS, 2

Town conducts survey on broadcasting meetings

BY PETER WILLIAMS
 News Editor

The Town of Hertford is conducting a survey to gauge the interest in broadcasting town meetings on either the Internet or a local access cable TV channel.

Councilman Quentin

Jackson brought up the issue at a meeting earlier this year.

Some local governments do provide video of their meetings. The Perquimans County Commission does not, nor does Winfall.

See SURVEY, 2

