

Pets of the Week, 7

75 cents

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 Hoffler, one of the members of the board.



HOFFLER

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called the current system "absurdly-convoluted" and outdated and a change is needed.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

Hoffler 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, Hoffler. 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 saving there will be opposition," Hoffler said.

Before 2013, the county would have to seek "preclearance" 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 Hoffler 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

"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," Mill-

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 Vir-

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

Agency may be moving

BY PETER WILLIAMS News Editor

After 40 years in Hertford, the Albemarle Commission is considering moving outside the county, perhaps to Elizabeth City.

That was not what Executive Director Cathy Davison wanted. Last summer the commission announced it wanted to build a new building in Hertford and Perquimans County agreed to give it land on Harvey Point Road for the building.

But before they could build, the Commission wanted the 10 counties in the region to agree to pay the debt of building something new. Pasquotank County balked and since it represents the largest of the 10 counties and pays the most of the local governments, Davison and her board went back to the drawing board.

The Commission is a regional planning, adult nutrition and workforce agency for Camden, Chowan, Currituck, Dare, Gates, Hyde, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Tyrrell and Washington counties.

Now the Commission board has directed Davison to look into leasing another building elsewhere.

"The board had a long conversation and the board voted, but I can't sign a lease without their approval."

She's just exploring the options.

Davison said the Commission has simply outgrown the space it has off Church Street and the board directed her to research leasing space in another area. Davison said the move could take place in the next year.

Davison said the commission was looking to build a structure of about 17,000 square feet. The current building has about 10,000 square feet.

Elizabeth City is the obvious choice, she said. Davison said there isn't anything in Hertford big enough to house the agency. The old State Employees Credit Union in Hertford was considered, but it's actually smaller than what the Commission has now.

"It (Elizabeth City) is a commercial hub and there are not a lot of offerings in Perquimans County," she said.

Perquimans County Manager Frank Heath said he and his board want to do what they can to keep the Commission in the county.

"If they decided to stay

See AGENCY, 2

Timing of replacing police car dash cameras debated

BY PETER WILLIAMS

News Editor

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

Quentin Jackson in Febru-



ary brought to light the fact fense, it was a budget issue," that the old cameras were defective and had been councilmen since 2017. That fact came out in an internal investigation after the arrest.

At their meeting Monday night, Hertford Town Manager Brandon Shoaf said The arrest of Councilman 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

"In his (Freeman's) de-

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 body cameras for the time since he oversees the police bid on the contract. 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

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 mission does not, nor 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 Comdoes Winfall.

See SURVEY, 2