



Boys check out one of the radio controlled planes at the Riverbash festival in Hertford Saturday. STAFF PHOTOS BY PETER WILLIAMS

RIVERBASH

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larger event and make it fun for everybody.”

But as with any event, Smith said organizers could find a way to improve Riverbash moving forward.

“One issue is Winfall and Hertford are still separated. We had a water taxi but I would have promoted that more. Still it’s encouraging to see.”

She said planners intend to take the summer off and start meeting again in September.

“We’d welcome anyone who wants to get involved,” she said. “At least people now have seen it with their own eyes and they can see this is a great foundation to build on.”

Among the unrelated events last weekend were the annual unHilly Hundred Bike Ride and the annual Master



Mathis Grieve puts his head and hand through stocks at Missing Mill Park during the Riverbash festival Saturday in Hertford.

Gardener’s Garden Show. Both had solid participation. The garden show at the Perquimans County Recreation Center had 31 vendors. That’s about normal said Katy

Shook, the extension agent who handles the Master Gardener’s program. What helped draw a big crowd was last weekend was the first truly nice one this spring.

“Sometimes we’ve already had a few weeks of nice weather and people have already bought all the plants they are going to buy,” Shook said.

BOARD

Continued from 1

municipalities. Wright said he could try and find a qualified person to fill in until a permanent replacement is found. But he said given the time of year, he couldn’t promise anything. He said most people he knows are retired, and they retired for a reason, plus it’s coming up on vacation season.

Wright said it’s critical that the board goes into the process with the same idea on what they want. And he said what the board does now is very important.

“Hiring the town manager is the most important thing you will do in this term in office,” Wright said. “The town manager is the one you send out into the community to represent you.”

He said hiring a consultant to handle the screening applicants would speed up the process. He estimated it would run between \$15,000 and \$20,000.

But Wright said whatever happens, it falls on the five-member board and nobody else.

“The League’s role is to try and assist you in the process.”

Wright said the public’s participation in the hiring process would be limited. He said releasing the names and qualifications to the public before the contract is offered would violate the legal right to confidentiality unless the candidate waves that right.

Not replacing Shoaf is not an option Wright said.

“You are required to have a town manager,” Wright said.

Before he left, Jackson asked Wright if Mayor Reid could serve both roles. Wright said that is not al-

lowed. The manager or interim manager can’t be an elected official under state law.

Hertford isn’t the only town looking to hire a manager. Wright said there are 300 municipalities in North Carolina and 100 counties, and 30 of the municipalities are also in the market for a manager.

He said given the limited market it’s important that the town doesn’t put too many hard and fast qualifications in the screening process.

“The more you put on that list, the more you have to pay for that,” Wright said.

Since Hertford went with a manager/council form of government, it doesn’t have much of a history on the process of replacing a manager. Shoaf was promoted from within when John Christensen retired.

Wright recommended that when the town knows what it wants, reaching out to professional groups for city and town managers is a good step. He said spending money for advertising in a statewide paper would be “the biggest waste.”

He did recommend advertising in local newspapers in the area.

“You may have a retired manager from somewhere else and you don’t know it.”

Ultimately Wright said that no matter what the board does, it should be prepared to walk away if it’s not sure.

“The moral is it’s better to start over again,” he said.

Wright also said the board should expect to offer the new manager a contract that would protect them if they get fired for anything beyond cause.

“I love you to death, but I wouldn’t come here without a contract,” Wright said.

VOTING

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his first try running for the school board. While there are three people and three seats, voters can only cast a ballot for one of them.

Any voter can cast a ballot in the school board race, but only Republicans and unaffiliated voters can vote on the others.

There is a three-way race for U.S. Congress will be decided in May because there is no Democrat challenging them.

Republican Congressman Walter Jones is being challenged by Republicans Phil Law and Scott Dacey for the

District 3 Seat.

The GOP challengers for the House seat are Candice Hunter of Perquimans County and Eddy Goodwin of Chowan County. Hunter has never run for public office before. Goodwin held a seat on the Chowan County Commission in 2008-12 and ran unsuccessfully for N.C. Secretary of State in 2012.

In the race for N.C. Senate, Bob Steinburg and Clark Twiddy, face off in May. Steinburg, a Chowan County resident, currently holds the N.C. House seat for this district. Twiddy is a Dare County businessman.

For election information, call 426-5598.

ECSU on pace to enroll more students

BY REGGIE PONDER
The Daily Advance

Elizabeth City State University continues on pace to enroll more students this fall than it did this year. However, the university still has a ways to go before enrollment covers the campus’s needs in areas such as facility maintenance.

Althea Riddick, who leads enrollment management for ECSU, reported the ECSU Phase 2 Work Group last week the university has “confirmed applications” for the fall semester from 304 new freshmen students and 75 new transfer students.

That means 51 percent of ECSU’s projected 600 new freshmen this fall, and 20 percent of its projected 200 new transfer students this fall, have confirmed applications on file with the university. A confirmed application isn’t the same as enrollment, but it does indicate serious intent of a student to enroll.

University of North Carolina System President Mark T. Spelling, who was attending the working group

meeting by teleconference, noted the confirmation percentages are only slightly above where they were at this time last year. She asked if that suggests the NC Promise tuition discount isn’t providing the enrollment boost for ECSU that had been expected.

NC Promise is a state-subsidized tuition discount that sets per-semester tuition at three UNC campuses — ECSU, UNC-Pembroke and Western Carolina University — at \$500 for in-state students and \$2,500 for out-of-state students.

Riddick said she was hesitant to say NC Promise is not making a difference because she hears all the time from parents and students that they appreciate the discount.

Josh Lassiter, ECSU’s vice chancellor for business and finance, also pointed out the confirmation percentages Riddick referenced are based on projections that are much higher than last year’s enrollment. Therefore, the increase in the actual number of students who’ve confirmed

their applications is much higher than the slight percentage gain would show, he said.

“We’re almost doubling the class,” Riddick noted.

Riddick also said the university is working hard on financial aid packages, housing deposits and similar items to avoid having “false positives” — students who end up not actually enrolling in August.

Last fall ECSU posted its first enrollment increase in seven years. The university is eyeing an even larger uptick in enrollment this year.

As state lawmakers prepare to convene May 16 for their short session, ECSU is also working with the UNC System Office to develop a request for additional resources for the campus. ECSU officials say the extra money will help cover costs like facility maintenance until student enrollment grows enough to cover those expenses.

The draft request, which is still being reviewed by ECSU officials, includes \$1.04 million for a feasibility study on adding allied health and nursing pro-

grams, development of a campus master plan and completion of a public-private partnership demand study on student housing; \$4.7 million for a system allowing campuswide card access to buildings as well as upgrades to campus surveillance technology; and \$14 million for a new library.

ECSU has started a number of campus beautification projects with existing funding. Improvements have included landscaping and interior improvements to the Thorpe Administration Building and cafeteria.

“We’re very, very proud of the kinds of things that have been done,” said Gwen Sanders, administrative assistant to the chancellor. “The students are very pleased with the investment that has been made in their second home.”

ECSU Trustee Harold Barnes said university officials are committed to making improvements that are needed to facilities, programs and operations.

“We are going to succeed and failure is not an option,” Barnes said.

ARHS to expand governing board, budget

BY JON HAWLEY
The Daily Advance

Albemarle Regional Health Services will expand its governing board and its budget by almost \$2 million when Hertford County joins the regional health department, ARHS Director Battle said in an interview last week.

Betts reported last month that the Hertford County Public Health Authority, the state’s only remaining single-county health authority, wanted to join ARHS. The PHA’s most recent audit shows it’s been struggling with declining revenues over the years.

Betts said that the boards of commissioners in all seven of ARHS’ counties have approved allowing Hertford

to join the regional health agency, and the merger is on track for July 1. The ARHS board will be asked to reform the agency in June to add Hertford, he said.

Betts also said Hertford will, like other ARHS member counties, get to appoint two members to the ARHS Board of Health, giving it 16 members. One of those members will be a county commissioner, while the other should bring relevant occupational expertise to the board. Hertford will have flexibility about who it wants to appoint to the board, he explained.

Betts also explained that, as a new member, Hertford County will not only need to make annual contributions to ARHS — as all member counties now do — but it

will also need to “buy in” to ARHS’ fund balance. Counting funds ARHS has set aside to cover retirement benefits, Betts said the department’s fund balance is about \$10 million. Member counties who decide to leave ARHS would be able to claim part of that fund balance. That makes it fair for Hertford to contribute to the balance, he explained.

Betts also said ARHS is asking Hertford to pay about \$1.5 million over 10 years to buy into the health department.

Given the Hertford Public Health Authority is dissolving, Betts also detailed ARHS will have to rehire employees to continue its services. He said ARHS has posted 16 positions to continue services, with a strong preference

for current employees.

However, he said ARHS isn’t posting for all of the Hertford agency’s positions. The director’s position held by Ramona Bowser will not be continued, he said. One of the goals of the merger is to streamline administration, but he reiterated all the Hertford agency’s employees are welcome to apply for available postings.

In expanding its health services to Hertford, ARHS will also inherit more clients, and the revenues and expenses that come with them.

Betts estimated adding Hertford will grow ARHS’ overall budget by almost \$2 million. Betts reported to the ARHS board Tuesday that ARHS will propose a budget adjustment after July 1 to reflect Hertford’s membership.

THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

(USPS428-080)
Vol. 86 No. 18

Published each Wednesday.

A publication of Cooke Communications North Carolina, LLC

Established 1934

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Subscription Rates

In Daily Advance home delivery area..... \$26.25*
All other continental U.S..... \$32.50*
*Plus collected sales tax. Activation fee of \$1.99 will be collected with all new subscriptions. Deactivation fees may apply for early cancellation.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to
The Perquimans Weekly, Hertford, NC 27944