

ECSU's Khan Planetarium to get an upgrade

From Staff Reports

Gazing at the stars through the prism of Elizabeth City State University's Khan Planetarium is about to become a state-of-the-art experience.

According to Dr. Gloria Payne, the Khan Planetarium is undergoing a scheduled upgrade this summer that will connect it to a worldwide digital system.

"The upgrade will enhance the educational and research opportunities for faculty and students in the region," said Payne, chair of the ECSU Department of Natural Science, Pharmacy and Health Professions.

Funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Defense, the upgrade will include projection, lighting, and sound systems that

power the planetarium's big screen, full-dome experience.

"This will be the only planetarium in the state of North Carolina with a Digistar 6 Projection System, and it will have built-in cloud capability that will allow us to connect with all Digistar systems worldwide," she said.

Payne says upgrades to the planetarium will be-

gin a new era in planetary learning. Full dome digital technology has become the norm for planetariums worldwide, offering high resolution and multi-media image production.

Visitors to the Khan Planetarium will be able to experience a panoramic view of the stars and universe. The new system will automatically connect to science data reposi-

tries and update itself with the latest data about the universe so that repeat visitors will always have something new to see and learn.

Since its inception in 1990, the Khan Planetarium has served over 175,000 visitors from the region and across the state. The facility's star projector has taught a generation how to find the North Star, as

well as constellations, and motions of planets in the heavens.

The remodeling of the planetarium began early May for installation of the digital upgrades.

A grand reopening ribbon cutting ceremony is expected in early fall 2018. Payne says that during this period of upgrade, all planetarium shows are suspended.

DOT

Continued from 1

ects that are considered "under development." They include replacing a bridge on Bethany Church Road, upgrading Woodville Road from Red Banks Road to New Hope Road, converting the intersections of Harvey Point Road and New Hope Road and U.S. 17 to highway interchanges and upgrading Harvey Point Road from U.S. 17 to Churches Lane. The latter project is scheduled to be let in 2023. The highway interchanges are slated to be let in 2025 or 2026.

The interchanges are needed if U.S. 17 is going to be upgraded to Interstate standards.

In April, NCDOT released data scores for more than 2,100 transportation improvement projects across the state, in the first round of an evaluation process to determine which projects will be scheduled for construction. Also in April, NCDOT identified 77 high-score Statewide Mobility projects that will be programmed for funding over the next decade.

During Thursday's public hearing, Gretchen By-

rum, project development engineer for Division 1, answered questions about affected projects that may or may not be considered as part of the planning process.

She responded to questions about the Mid-Currituck Bridge project that would create a second crossing of the sound — north of the Wright Memorial Bridge — so as to provide easier access between the Outer Banks and Virginia, as well as other communities in northeastern North Carolina. The 7-mile toll project includes a two-lane bridge that spans the Currituck Sound and connects the Currituck County mainland to the Outer Banks.

Byrum said while bids for the \$490 million project are scheduled to be let in the fall, she cautioned that the timetable could change pending the results of environmental and traffic studies.

She gave an update on another regional project of interest, the I-87 highway, which would include development of a major traffic corridor for northeastern North Carolina. Once completed, I-87 is planned to start in Raleigh, continue northeast through Rocky Mount, Williamston, Eliza-

beth City, ending in Norfolk, Va.

"I-87 projects (along the route) are currently going through the prioritization process to determine whether they will be included in the transportation plan," Byrum said.

She also answered questions about the proposed HarborTown Project, which seeks to create a high-speed ferry system linking Elizabeth City to other towns on the Albemarle Sound, including Hertford, Edenton, Plymouth, Columbia and Kitty Hawk. The project would require purchasing five 49-passenger, catamaran-style ferries. The project is estimated to cost \$13.8 million to launch the ferry system and \$1.95 million a year to operate.

Byrum said the state ferry division is not initiating this proposal and there are no plans to incorporate it into their system, but instead the emphasis should be on private investment as well as support from local governments as advocated by the plan's author, Nick Didow, a University of North Carolina business professor.

Also, DOT is replacing three bridges on N.C.32 north of Edenton under contract C204037. The first

bridge is at Ballard's Grove Baptist Church. The second bridge is just north of Welch Road. The third bridge is at the Gates County line. Byrum said the projects may be experiencing delays as utility companies relocate affected transmission lines.

A draft list of the top-scoring Regional Impact projects is scheduled for release in August. A similar process for local input will take place in the fall for local Division Needs projects.

Once all project scores are finalized, the top-scoring projects will be programmed for construction based on available funding. Other factors may determine whether a project ultimately moves to construction, including the completion of environmental and engineering plans, corridor spending limits prescribed by law, and other federal and state funding restrictions.

This information will be used to create the next STIP for the years 2020-2029. NCDOT will release a draft STIP for public comment in January 2019. The final 2020-2029 STIP is expected to be adopted by the N.C. Board of Transportation in June 2019.

VOTING

Continued from 1

Right now Perquimans only has two days where they're open for 12 hours for early voting. Under the law, every workday will have last 12 hours. That will mean more cost to hire poll workers. The early voting is staffed with five people.

Perquimans County Elections Director Holly Hunter said Saturday is often a popular day to vote, but she couldn't say it's the most popular day. A lot depends on the election.

"No one day is really a lot more than the others," she said.

Pasquotank Elections Director Kelli Price did not support or oppose the legislation, but estimated S325 would require the county to offer another 43 hours of early voting, meaning the county would have to pay another \$2,500 for poll workers.

Price also said the final Saturday of early voting has been popular in Pasquotank. When Pasquotank has offered early voting after 5 p.m. on workdays, turnout has been light, she also noted.

Asked if S325's extended workday hours would accommodate voters, Price said she was unsure.

The last Saturday of early voting is also popular in Camden County, Camden Elections Director Elaine Best said Friday. She also said she felt the bill took flexibility away from counties to set hours.

Price and Best also noted that, if voters decide early voting hours don't fit their schedule, they may request mail-in absentee ballots. Any voter may request a mail-in ballot, which are available before early voting starts and don't have to be requested in person, they noted.

Bill proponents argue the legislation will extend early voting hours while clearing up voter confusion about where and when to vote early. Opponents, including Democratic lawmakers and progressive organizations disagree, arguing the bill deprives voters of a popular day of voting while eliminat-

ing local flexibility to set voting hours.

Sen. Bill Cook, R-Beaufort, strongly supported the bill in a statement last week.

"This bill does not reduce hours," Cook stated in an email. "In fact, this bill will have early voting sites early longer and encourage counties to offer more total voting hours."

He continued that "offering more early voting hours during the week means that North Carolinians who work weekends or have irregular schedules will have additional opportunities" to vote.

Rep. Bob Steinburg, R-Chowan, also supported the bill, explaining it creates a more uniform "template" for voting hours across the state. Voters, and sometimes even lawmakers themselves, have been unsure of where they can vote when during early voting, he said.

Steinburg also said lawmakers are extending early voting, not reducing it, and, if voters need to vote early on weekends, counties may allow them to do so.

Rep. Howard Hunter III, D-Hertford, called S325 a "sorry bill" in a phone call Friday, and suggested Republicans were altering voting hours to benefit themselves this fall.

"That last day is the most important," Hunter said. He added that many of his constituents have long commutes to work, and it's easier for them to vote on Saturday.

Hunter continued the legislation was a "burden" to elections offices that had already finished their budgets for this fall's election. Offering 12 hours of early voting during workdays will be a significant unplanned expense, he argued.

Washington County Commissioner Cole Phelps, a Democrat running against Steinburg for Senate, also opposed the bill in an email, commenting Saturday voting is especially important to "working class people" and those who have long commutes for work.

"This is just another attempt by the Republican legislature to discourage instead of encourage all citizens to vote," he wrote.

SHOOTER

Continued from 1

ty is," Nixon said.

"Overall I think it went well," White said. "It was a learning and training event and you work on things."

For the sake of the drill, time spans were sped up or slowed down, and some participants were staged on the site, when in reality they wouldn't have been. The sheriff, for example, was at the middle school dispatching his officers. In reality, he would probably have been stationed at the schools Central Office building on Edenton Road Street.

"The drill went as far as busing "students" from the school to another site and ultimately reuniting them with family.



STAFF PHOTO BY PETER WILLIAMS

A 'victim' is wheeled out of Perquimans County Middle School last week after a live shooter exercise. In the drill the shooter and four others were killed, and six people were injured.

White said he'd like to do small practice drills perhaps monthly now, and maybe another large drill about every two years.

Lisa Lane, a spokeswoman

for the school system, said the drill would help make the school system stronger.

"The training exercise was intended to help us be

proactive instead of reactive should an incident of this magnitude occur. We are thankful that this was just a drill and are currently in the process of evaluating the responses of staff so we can identify areas that need improvement."

Sam Mickey, who wrote the shooting scenario and monitored it, said he saw some things that were done wrong, but that's the point.

"There are always opportunities for improvement," he said.

In one case a "wounded" person was wheeled outside the building and left there for an hour unaccompanied.

Mickey said that shouldn't have happened, but the important point is the person was taken out of harm's way.

EVICION

Continued from 1

object and Flowers did not. She was sworn in using a Bible while Jackson simply raised his hand in a fist and "affirmed" he was telling the truth.

Before Wednesday's court hearing Jackson said he paid Catherine Flowers \$25,000 towards buying the house and two nearby lots. He promised to pay her another \$25,000 for the properties on Jan. 1 2019.

Jackson described Flowers' eviction petition against him as a family squabble.

"It's disheartening that you have to go through this

and it's worse when it's with family," Jackson said.

Jackson has filed a counter-complaint against Flowers, seeking \$100,000 from her. Jackson claims he has invested at least \$30,000 in the house. He further claims he never lived in the house, but was trying to fix it up.

In her case for eviction, Flowers claimed Jackson has been living in the house. She said she told him on March 2, he had 30 days to vacate the Brace Avenue property. However, as of June 4, he still had personal property in the home and a car in the yard, Flowers said.

Jackson, however, claims the house hasn't been occupied for more than 10 years,

not since the death of its previous owner, Louise Austin. Upon Austin's death, the property was transferred to Catherine Flowers, Austin's daughter.

Jackson said he currently lives in the 300 block of Church Street.

"Nobody can live there (the Brace Avenue house). The law says a landlord is prohibiting leasing a place without heat and air," he said.

As for the property in the house Flowers claims belongs to him, Jackson said it includes tools he was using to fix up the house.

Jackson said after the house became vacant, water leaked in, creating a bad

mold problem. He had to rip up floors and fix the leaks in the house, he said.

Ultimately Jackson said he'd like to tear down the house and use the lot and two adjacent ones to build a home costing between \$200,000 and \$300,000.

That will have to wait, he said.

"I don't have \$300,000 lying around and I have legal bills of \$35,000 to \$40,000 (for other court cases)," he said.

Catherine Flowers was advised Wednesday she has 10 days to appeal Magistrate Flowers' decision to District Court. It was not clear Wednesday if she plans to appeal the ruling.

STADIUM

Continued from 1

While the field should be ready to play on for the first game, the concession stand/restroom building and the field house aren't expected to be complete until around Sept. 25. Davison said portable toilets and a concession trailer will be brought for the first games.

One timetable that hasn't been moved back is the lighting. Davison met with the contractors and sub-

contractors last week and they all agreed that the lighting work wouldn't interfere with other parts of the project. The lighting is set to be installed the week of July 9-13.

Davison said some rain wouldn't be an issue.

"As long as it doesn't rain all day and night for three or four days, we should be fine."

With a new football field will come a new scoreboard. Superintendent Matthew Cheeseman is working on that.

The budget includes new bleachers for 1,000 people on the home side of the field. The school system

will be moving about 500 bleacher seats from the old football field for the visitor's side.

Minzies Creek Sanitary District

Monthly meeting will be held on SATURDAY, JUNE 23, 2018 AT 10:00am

The Meeting Will Be Held at 139 Treasure Lane, Hertford

FAMILY DENTISTRY
with a gentle and caring touch

YIPING FANG, DDS

Family • Cosmetic • General Dentistry
Same Day Emergency Care
Insurance Filed for your Convenience
New Patients Welcome

212 Ainsley Avenue
Hertford, NC
252-426-5585

THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

(USPS428-080)
Vol. 86 No. 25

Published each Wednesday.

A publication of Cooke Communications North Carolina, LLC
Established 1934

111 W. Market St., Hertford, NC 27944

Mike Goodman..... Publisher
Peter Williams..... News Editor
Bev Alexander..... Advertising Representative

Phone 252-426-5728 • Fax 252-426-4625
Email: perquimansweekly@ncweeklies.com

Subscription Rates

In Daily Advance home delivery area..... \$26.25*
All other continental U.S..... \$32.50*
*Plus applicable 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