



Improving dementia care, 6

"News from Next Door"

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# Report issued on local HAZMAT drill

BY PETER WILLIAMS  
News Editor

Area emergency officials did a lot of things right during a disaster drill in November but there are equipment issues that could make it better, a report shows.

A 56-page "After Action Report" looked at how area fire, EMS, law enforcement,

Albemarle Regional Health Systems and Vidant Chowan Hospital responded during the exercise. Chowan emergency officials were also involved.

The drill involved a van that ran into the side of a train in Winfall. The van was carrying "plague" and the container leaked, contaminating the area and sending

a plume through the area north of Winfall.

"With any drill, the hope is to identify things we as first responders are doing good and to note areas where we can improve," said Jonathan Nixon, Perquimans County's emergency management director. "The participation by so many of our county and partner responders is a

good reminder of the teamwork necessary to provide quality service."

The responding agencies were judged in five areas. In four of them, the report found they were able to perform the tasks "with some challenges." In the fifth area, the report said the tasks were performed with "major challenges."

The most troublesome area involved demonstrating the ability to direct, coordinate and control emergency activities using the incident command system and the Perquimans County emergency operations plan. By having major challenges in that area it meant "performance had a negative impact on the performance of

other activities; contributed to additional health and/or safety risks for the public or for emergency workers, and/or was not conducted in accordance with applicable plans, policies, procedures, regulations and laws."

The drill is part of Homeland Security program.

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# Town explores expanding district

BY PETER WILLIAMS  
News Editor

Hertford officials have decided to take the first step towards expanding the historic district.

With the expansion, more property owners could tap federal and state tax rebates if they make improvements to their property.

Tim Brinn made the proposal to the town board on Dec. 10. He estimated the cost of hiring a certified historic expert to do the report would run between \$25,000 and \$30,000, even if some local volunteers did some of the legwork.

The original study in 1998 cost about \$9,000 and included a lot of volunteers.

But Brinn said it would cost nothing to submit the paperwork to Raleigh to start the process and that's what the town board agreed to do.

The current historic district contained 154 primary historic buildings, 223 contributing buildings and 178 potentially contributing out buildings.

State historic officials made three trips to Hertford last year and believe they found 178 historic structures in the town that aren't in the first historic district.

One reason Brinn got involved was because he is troubled by the number of dilapidated buildings, mostly homes, in town. Hertford had 40 liens on property worth a total of \$261,000.

Instead of just going in and doing wholesale demolition, Brinn first wanted to make sure the town wasn't tearing down an important piece of its history.

"How do we know the next Newbold White House isn't sitting somewhere on Dobbs Street," Brinn asked.

The federal government offers a 20 percent tax credit for his-



A map shows areas in red that might qualify to be part of an expanded historic district in Hertford.

toric structures. North Carolina offers a 10 percent credit, but if the property is in a Tier 1 county, there is another 10 percent that can apply. Perquimans is a Tier 1, or economically distressed, county.

The clock is ticking in North Carolina. Some members of the General Assembly want to get rid of the historic tax credit after 2019. Brinn said the federal tax

credit would remain, "If you don't want to do anything, that is fine. I just wanted to make sure we won't be taking down the most historic house in town, but it doesn't look like we will."

Brinn said Elizabeth City has already taken action.

"They decided to hurry up and get started and Elizabeth City pulled \$29,000 out of their tour-

ism fund to do it."

Elizabeth City's existing historic zone was created in 1972, so there may be a lot more structures that are eligible now given the passage of time.

"You don't have to do this (expand the historic district) and can still bulldoze. And in some cases even if it is in a historic zone there are houses that still need to have to go," Brinn said.

# Towns facing rate hike

BY JON HAWLEY  
AND PETER WILLIAMS  
Staff Writers

Power customers in Hertford, Elizabeth City and Edenton will likely see their electrical rates rise over the next two years, as they pass on rate increases planned by a regional power agency.

Hertford Town Manager Pamela Hurdle said she's planning for a 1.3 percent increase on April 1.

The N.C. Eastern Municipal Power Agency is also planning a 3 percent rate increase on April 1, 2020, Electricities spokeswoman Michelle Vaught wrote in an email. Electricities is the management firm for NCEMPA, a power agency for more than 30 municipalities, among them Hertford, Elizabeth City and Edenton.

Vaught wrote NCEMPA would finalize the 2019 rate increase, if any, in January. In looking to raise electrical rates, she said the increases were not due to increased costs from Duke Energy Progress, the agency's power provider. Instead, she explained NCEMPA has been undercharging for electrical costs since April 2017. NCEMPA has had expenses come under budget, allowing funds to build up; NCEMPA set the rates low to draw down that funding.

"NCEMPA's wholesale rate to the members is currently set below projected costs in

See HIKE, 2



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The moving classrooms at Hertford Grammar School provide pedal desks, strider desks, collaborative standing desks workstation, swing desks and kneeling desks. A grant will fund a second round that will benefit Perquimans County Middle School.

# Grant to expand school program

BY PETER WILLIAMS  
News Editor

A grant will allow the Perquimans Schools Foundation to expand on a program that allows students to move around while they learn in the classroom.

In late 2017, the HCWGMW Fund of the Northern Albemarle Community Foundation gave the schools foundation \$40,000 to create two kinesthetic classrooms at Hertford Grammar School.

Kinesthetic is a learning style in which learning takes place by the students carrying out physical activities, rather than listening to a lecture or watching demonstrations.

Last month the community foundation gave Perquimans \$40,000 more so it can expand the program to Perquimans County Middle School. The \$40,000 made up the largest single grant out of the roughly \$100,000 funded last year. Some of the funds will be used to pay

for an outreach program to other school districts to talk about how the program works.

Brenda Lassiter, the executive director of the Perquimans foundation, said out of the 32 students who took part in the program last year, all but one of them made strides academically. The one student remained steady.

"We truly appreciate the grant from the Northern foundation," Lassiter said. "The traditional classroom

doesn't work with some kids. This helps them focus better and be less disruptive."

In addition to increase in academic growth, she said HGS saw a decrease in the number of discipline issues in the classrooms that had the kinesthetic equipment.

The gear can include pedal desks, strider desks, collaborative standing desks, swing desks and kneeling desks.

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# Year brought personnel changes

BY PETER WILLIAMS  
News Editor

Last year brought some changes to the management of several local agencies.

In April, Brandon Shoaf announced he would step down as Hertford Town

Manager to take a job as a planner for Chowan County.

"I felt I needed to spend more time outside of working," Shoaf said at the time. "The manager's job, not just in Hertford, requires a lot of hours in the week. The offer I got in Chowan doesn't require all that outside of normal working hours."

Shoaf had worked for Hertford for the past 11 years, the first four as town planner and the last seven

as manager. The town's interim police chief and public works director also left.

The town board put Pamela Hurdle in charge as interim town manager and in September, voted to give her the job. The town also hired Dennis Brown as the town's new police chief that month. A public works director has also been hired.

The town also has suf-

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# DEPUTIES PLAY SANTA



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Perquimans County Sheriff's Office Sgt. Kendall Harrell and Deputy Brian Gregory prepare to deliver Christmas presents to six area children. The gifts were possible because of an anonymous donor.