

COLE

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said they were pleased Cole could attend the ceremony in February in New York.

"It was so great. We're so happy she came knowing she's coming from North Carolina. And we're happy she'll be back for the 40th anniversary of her graduation in May."

Cole has broken a number of barriers in her life. She was the first woman, and the first black person elected as a District Court judge in the northeast region of North Carolina. A few years later, President Bill Clinton appointed her to be the first black woman U.S. Attorney for the eastern district of North Carolina.

"Since we're in the midst of the 100-year celebration, we thought it was important to highlight black women alumni and put into context the accomplishments they have made," Romain said.

In a quote used in a display of her at Fordham, Cole says "being a black woman attorney means that I have an opportunity to enrich this profession by my experiences, my perceptions and my sensibilities."

In her final year of law

school, Cole created the Ruth Whitehead Whaley Dinner, which has become an annual effort. Whaley, a native of North Carolina, graduated at the top of her class from Fordham in 1924, a year before Robert F. Kennedy and Malcolm X were born. She went on to become one of the first three black women admitted to practice law in New York. In 1933 she became the first black woman to practice law in North Carolina. She maintained a private practice in New York until 1944.

One of the women honored by Fordham this school year was Geraldine Ferraro, class of 1960. She was inducted into the School's Alumni of Distinction display, which celebrates graduates who have broken barriers in the legal profession. Ferraro, who passed away in 2011, was the first woman vice presidential candidate on a major party ticket and a lifelong advocate for women's rights. She served as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, representing New York's 9th District, as secretary of the House Democratic Caucus, and as United States ambassador to the United Nations.

my tumor it had spread to the lymph nodes."

Now she faces a different challenge, but one she is up to facing.

"It makes you think of things you used to consider as having a bad day, and they're really not bad anymore. There are people a whole lot worse off than me."

"I don't think I'm all that special, but my doctor thinks I'm a bad ass."

"There is not anything I can do to get rid of it, so I decided whatever life I have, I'm going to live it. You just take care of yourself and do what your doctor tells you to do. I don't let people treat me like a China doll."

"I had an uncle with Stage Four lung cancer they told him he had about six weeks and he lived four years."

So it's one day at a time.

"I get up every day and wonder what if this is the best I ever feel again. I am blessed to work in a county that has a job for me."

"Cancer is a bad thing, it sucks, but it has been a blessing to me. It's given me a new perspective."

CANCER

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hurts. She's not in pain.

"Bone cancer is supposed to be one of the most painful kinds, but I have been blessed."

"Cancer is not the boss of me, but sometimes I feel like taking a nap. I don't like the things cancer has taken away from me."

Woodard owns up to the fact that she is partially to blame. She knew women should get annual checkups that would catch cancer in time, but she just didn't go to the doctor. She figures it might have been 10 years since her last checkup.

"I was busy living my life. I was married. I didn't have any symptoms. I always figured I'd wait and do it in the summer when school was out, but I was always busy."

Part of the reason she put it off was she didn't appreciate what could happen.

"I thought if you got it (cancer) you'd have a hysterectomy and it would be over. By the time they found

Group looks at prison problem

BY MILES LAYTON
The Chowan Herald



STEINBURG

Consistently high staff vacancy rates and the continuing challenge of retaining experienced personnel were among the topics discussed at last week's inaugural meeting of a new Senate committee tasked with making state prisons safer.

Led by state Sen. Bob Steinburg, R-Chowan, members of the Senate Select Committee on Prison Safety spent most of their time Monday hearing a report on prison system finances.

However, the committee also held a question-and-answer session with Director of Prisons Kenneth Lassiter about prison staffing and other issues.

Lassiter suggested filling correctional officer vacancies continues to be a challenge for the state prison system.

"We've looked at a host of things and done a lot of intensive research not just on neighboring states but across the country," he said.

"This is a national epidemic going on in reference to law enforcement maintaining people in this profession. We've looked at the various tools that have worked in other places and there's a list of things we like to discuss and show the committee."

Nine state prisons — including two maximum-security facilities — had an officer vacancy rate of more than 35 percent during at least one month last year, according to a recent report in The News and Observer. That does not include positions left vacant because of leaves of absence.

Art Beeler, a retired

longtime administrator with the federal Bureau of Prisons, also attended Monday's committee meeting.

He noted that the vacant officer position rate in North Carolina's prison system may be much higher than what's reported — more than 8,000 officers — because a national standard quantifies a prison's operating capacity.

"When you look at that, you have lots more vacancies than you have on paper," Beeler said. "Now I don't think that anybody expects you to fill all those vacancies — I certainly wouldn't — but I want you to understand that if you're looking at a national standard of how many officers you needed based on your square footage, it would be significantly higher than the vacancies that you have."

Both internal and external reviews have noted that inadequate staffing and major security flaws contributed to the deaths of four prison workers at Pasquotank Correctional Institution during a failed inmate escape attempt in October 2017. The committee Steinburg chairs was formed partly in response to those deaths and that of a correctional sergeant at Bertie Correctional Institution in April 2017.

Stanley Drewery, a general instructor for the Department of Public Safety, told the committee he works with corrections staff pretty closely, and it's apparent to

him things have changed since the deadly attacks in 2017.

"I can say for myself from personal experience that I was complacent because nothing really ever happened as far as death (in a prison)," he said. "We always had assaults and we had serious assaults."

But since the slayings of officers at Bertie and PCI, correctional staff are now "in fear for their lives," Drewery said.

Addressing the retention issue, Drewery, a past president of the State Employees Association of North Carolina, noted that the staff shortages at prisons didn't happen overnight. He said salaries matter to employees who put their lives on the line every day. He said an equitable pay scale makes a difference to a captain with 15 years of experience when that officer sees how a newly hired captain is paid more.

"Something really has to be done because we are losing a lot of really good people," he said. "As soon as they get the opportunity to retire, they are heading out the door. They would stay on if they were making the money that was promised to them."

John Schwade, a retired prison psychologist, also told the committee that many inmates treated for mental illness need to be identified with those conditions earlier in their incarceration.

"We need to begin to get the jails to send mental health records with the inmates," he said.

Schwade said current screenings of inmates for intellectual developmental

disabilities does not meet the minimum standards of psychological testing. When inmates are first screened for mental illness, they may score higher after being retested — a result of the practice effect, he said.

"Many times they will go above the threshold being tested, so they are no longer eligible for developmental disability services or any other help that they might need," he said.

Ardis Watkins, director of government relations for the State Employees Association of North Carolina, praised Steinburg for pushing for reforms of the state's prison system.

"Definitely, we are hearing from the state correctional personnel that they feel like you are out there fighting for them," she said. "I was sort of surprised (this committee was formed) because not many states are actually going in and doing what you are doing right now: taking things apart and really looking at them. It means more than you will ever know to the folks working in the system."

Steinburg said he was pleased with the committee's first meeting, which he said was mostly an overview of the Division of Prisons.

"We will be meeting weekly on Mondays for the next eight weeks or so to try and determine how best to improve safety in our prisons and then report those findings along with recommendations to the Senate leadership," he said.

Salary inequities as well as the rising cost of overtime and retention of prison employees will be topics at upcoming meetings.

FIREARMS

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in the nuclear industry and telecommunication industry before retiring. He moved to Perquimans from Aiken, S.C.

He said when some laws were written, North Carolina might have been even more rural and there weren't some of the houses or subdivisions that are around now.

"I grew up hunting, but some people haven't. They go and get the most powerful rifle they can possibly get and people who are new at hunting, the mind turns off that (mental) safety."

He cited a Pasquotank County case where an out of state hunter shot at a deer, missed and hit a woman in a pickup on a public highway. The woman survived but was seriously hurt. The

hunter was standing on the ground, not in a tree stand where he should have been if using a rifle.

"Laws need to consider the most inexperienced person," Samonsky said.

He argued that if the county refused to take action, and there was an accident, the county would be responsible.

He also said that the county has enacted shooting and firearms ordinances in the past. He cites three of them dealing with Holiday Island, Albemarle Plantation and Snug Harbor.

They were adopted between 1989 and 2012 and all have nearly the identical language.

They all prohibit shooting any stone, rock, shot or other hard substance beyond the limits of your own property. They also all band the firing of any gun within those subdivisions.

of former Councilman Archie Aples, chimed in that the public has been unfair to the new board.

"My heart hurts that you (Jackson) are going to step down," Felton said.

While she admits she's only been on the job for a few months, there are past issues.

"My feet are getting wet, and there are things that are wrong that you (the public) don't know about," Felton said. "When the facts come out, you might want to say 'I'm sorry.'"

JACKSON

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agreed that some citizens have been unduly critical of the current town board and they should consider themselves responsible for any past problems an investigation uncovers.

"All of this stuff is going to come to light," Norman said. "When all of the stuff comes out, you're going to look worse than I am."

Gracie Felton, who was appointed to take the seat

PETS OF THE WEEK



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Max, a 1-year-old gray and white longhair male cat, is adjusting to the Tri-County shelter and certainly would love to be in a loving caring home.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Sandy is a gentle adult male yellow Lab mix. Sandy loves visitors, but is a little frightened to venture out of his kennel. For more information, call 221-8514.

GOP

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He said Republicans squandered a chance to do more when they held the presidency and both the House and Senate.

"We have to come together," Perry said.

Michele Nix of Kinston started her speech by supporting Trump's agenda for the country.

"I want to bring common sense back to America."

She said she was a young mother once who had to live on public assistance but worked to get out of that. She worked in the securities industry and as vice chair of the N.C. GOP Party. She said she logged 175,000 miles driving in North Carolina talking to people in the GOP role.

"I want to fight for this district," Nix said.

Mike Payment of Currituck talked about serving in the Navy and his role now as a business owner who has trouble finding qualified workers.

He too supports Trump, and the need to fight illegal immigration. He also said he would listen to the people.

"As a business owner, you are my boss."



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