

P9/C9*****CAR-RT LOT**R 008 D0017
 PERQUIMANS COUNTY LIBRARY
 514 S CHURCH ST
 HERTFORD NC 27944-1225



Dougherty, Levine earn awards, A3

"News from Next Door"

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12, 2019

75 cents



BY PETER WILLIAMS/NEWS EDITOR

Perquimans County High School grads raise their hands Friday night when asked who is going off to college, the military or trade school.

PCHS Class of 2019 honored

BY PETER WILLIAMS
 News Editor

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The full text of the valedictorian and salutatorian speeches as well as more pictures from graduation will be published in the June 19th issue of The Perquimans Weekly.)

More than 100 local teens closed what has been the longest chapter of their lives Friday night and opened another one in a graduation ceremony at Perquimans County High School.

School officials made the call to move the event inside the gym, not on the football field on Thursday based on a bad forecast. Friday afternoon put a punctuation mark on that when the skies opened up and poured rain and soaked the field.

That meant some of the guests had to settle for watching the ceremony via closed circuit TV from the high school auditorium. Each graduate was given 13 admission tickets total, seven gold and six white, and all were good for a seat at the football stadium. But moving the event inside meant only the gold ticket holders could get in to the gym where the graduation took place.

Because space was at a premium in the gym and the school system wanted to get as many parents and family members as possible, the PCHS band and chorus did not perform at graduation.

Senior Mason Rhodes did perform Bob Dylan's song "The Times They Are A-Changin'" on guitar.

As holds with tradition, Perquimans doesn't bring in an outside speaker for the event. Instead Valedictorian Lauren Winslow and Salutatorian Samantha Midgett carried a bulk of the program.

Winslow told classmates that no matter what they do, changes are coming.

"Many of us have been together since kindergarten; others moving here have made their home among the class of 2019, but one thing that has remained true is that we are a family, one big dysfunctional family as Tony Cook consistently reminds us.

"We are about to move into a new chapter of life. Whether you're going to college, trade school, the military, or

See PCHS, A2



BY PETER WILLIAMS/NEWS EDITOR

Colton Meads accepts his College of The Albemarle diploma Friday night at Perquimans County High School's graduation.

Nine graduate from COA

BY PETER WILLIAMS
 News Editor

College of The Albemarle President Dr. Robert Wynegar made an appearance, at Perquimans County High School's graduation Friday to hand out COA diplomas to the nine members of the 104-member class.

PCHS Principal Wayne Price challenged his class to take advantage of the offer to earn free college credits while at the same time

working on high school courses.

Superintendent Tanya Turner said while PCHS students have taken dual enrollment courses at COA in the past, none ever had enough credits to actually graduate from COA until now.

The nine were Cayce Copley, Jayla Hall, Brandelyn Harrell, Colton Meads, Samantha Midgett, Cala

See COA, A2

Rec center expansion considered

BY PETER WILLIAMS
 News Editor

Perquimans County officials say the proposed budget is a lean one that still requires a two-cent increase in the property tax rate, but it's not a budget that slashes everything and it looks ahead to when the economy may be better.

County Manager Frank Heath has proposed funding for a conceptual plan for the second phase of the county's recreation center.

Plans for the current center, built in 2003, included two big wings with the current entrance in the middle in the middle of the two. Only the wing on the right was built, with a large gym and meeting area included. The area for the second wing is grass near a sand volleyball court and the walking trail.

"What we'd like to get is a drawing by an architect and a floor plan design for the second phase. This is something that (County Commission) Chairman (Wallace) Nelson has been really keen on getting accomplished," Heath said.

The original concept had a swimming pool in the other wing. If it is enclosed for year-round use or an open-air seasonal one is up to what the county is willing to spend.

"The concept is the other wing would be like a wellness side where there is workout equipment and the pool, but that is all conceptual right now," Heath said.

School Superintendent Tanya Turner likes the idea of a swimming pool. Perquimans County doesn't have a swim team like Pasquotank, Camden and Chowan schools do. The Chowan team has to travel to the YMCA in Elizabeth City to use their facilities.

The proposed budget does include an increase of two cents on the tax rate. The county hasn't had one that wasn't tied to a property revaluation in nine years.

"The average property tax growth has been less than 1 percent a year, very stagnate, while inflation is at least 2 percent. The cost of government exceeds our growth."

Heath has called for the tax increase to help stem the use of reserve funds to pay for expenses. He said the money has been well spent, but using reserves can't continue at this rate.

"We've done some good things with it, we added extra deputies and the fire departments are getting more and we build a new library and the senior center opened and has been expanded but all of these things have come with a cost," Heath said.

Some homeowners might not notice the increase. "If you own a house worth \$150,000 in value, the tax increase will amount to \$30 more a year," Heath said.

Avangrid Renewables, the company that built the Amazon Wind Farm, will pay for more. Their taxes will go up to \$459,926 next year with the tax hike. That's a bump of \$50,000.

Heath said the Amazon project is not only the single largest taxpayer in the county, the wind farm bill is as

See CENTER, A2

Fields leaving Central for new post at central office

BY PETER WILLIAMS
 News Editor

Over a 27-year career in education, Melissa Fields has worked from being a fourth grade teacher to a high school principal, but she has never worked in the central office.

You can now scratch that off the list.

Fields is stepping down as principal at Perquimans Central School to be chief academic officer



FIELDS

for curriculum and instruction for the whole school system. The change becomes effective July 1.

The school system hopes to have a new principal in place by late June. "While we hate to

lose her leadership at PCS, we are looking forward to the K-12 curriculum support she will provide

our district," said Superintendent Tanya Turner.

Fields has worked her entire career in the Perquimans school system. She is a Perquimans County native.

But she said when she heard there would be an opening for the chief of curriculum and instruction, just jumped at the chance.

"Being a curriculum director has been my dream job for years. I feel that having experienced every level of education I have a per-

spective that is very unique. I love the kids and I will miss them but I will still be seeing them."

While she will work at the central office building on Edenton Road Street next to the high school, Fields said she plans on being in all four schools every week.

"I think it's important to know what's happening at all the schools," she said.

Fields is taking over the position held by Kanika Griffin. Griffin

will now be chief academic officer for student services. That puts her closer to working with exceptional children.

"Mrs. Griffin has a love for EC that is very strong and her knowledge will be valuable. She is very passionate about the social and emotional needs of students."

Fields has spent 19 years at Central. The first stint was 1993-2009 where she was at first a fourth

See FIELDS, A2

Hertford plans to tap reserves

From Staff Reports

The Town of Hertford is proposing holding the property tax rate steady next year and keep the water, sewer and electric rates the same.

Instead the town intends to spend \$878,000 of the \$1,475,750 the town

has in reserves to pay for an expansion of town hall, the replacement of inoperable equipment and funding improvements to meet state and federal regulations.

Mayor Pro Tem Quentin Jackson defended the use of that much fund balance, saying the town has suffered because past council members put off needed expenses.

"Hertford has had a

See HERTFORD, A2

Fire burns acres of wheat, woods

From Staff Reports

Up to 27 acres of woods and farmland were burned in a blaze June 4 sparked by a farm combine that caught fire.

Jonathan A. Nixon, Perquimans County Emergency Services director, said the fire was reported off Sharps Lane Tuesday about 1 p.m.

While the combine fire was extinguished by the time firefighters arrived, a wheat field was ablaze, Nixon said.

Using tractors, officials

with the N.C. Forestry Division, area fire department personnel and community residents were able to contain the fire by plowing a fire line and implementing a controlled burn, Nixon said.

Among the agencies that responded were the fire departments in Hertford, Belvidere and Winfall. The N.C. Forestry Service also provided both aerial observation of the fire and ground crews to fight it, Nixon said.

No injuries were reported.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

In all 27 acres of woods and farmland were involved in a fire that started in a wheat field on June 4.

