

BROWN

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said. "I think that's why the citizens wanted change."

A leading member of the Citizens for the Preservation and Growth of Hertford, Kay Matthews put the movement and the moment of triumph in perspective.

"With a cache of such qualified candidates, it was not difficult to pool their talents as we worked together to accomplish Mayor Brown's vision of 'Unity in the Community,'" she said. "Mayor Brown, along with Councilmen Hodges and Mimplitsch, were unified in their vision for Hertford and worked diligently going door to door giving citizens a message they were ready to hear, a message of hope, unity, and making Hertford a better place for All of its citizens, not just a few. They were working from the heart, and that made all the difference."

An organized campaign spread the message of unity for the betterment of town.

"With Connie Brothers as our group's cheerleader and Hodges' technical expertise and Mimplitsch's ingenuity, we were able to reach out to each citizen with Mayor Brown's message by going door to door, sometimes more than once, and making phone calls to encourage people to vote. We were unified and believed in our candidates," Matthews said.

Brothers added, "Every door that could be knocked on - we did it. We gave them the information, provided transportation to take you to the polls. If you were not registered, we would help



Brown's campaign wasn't just about riding in parades, but going door to door, making phone calls and doing whatever was necessary to make her message heard about accountability, integrity, transparency and unity.

you to get registered. We had a well-rounded group, very strong, who went door to door, made phone calls. We had our meetings. We had fun meetings - I wouldn't trade it for anything in the world. That helps to make it easy and make us all of one accord - unity, transparency and integrity."

Think about that for a moment - a movement of made up of many stripes; the same revolutionary spirit that founded a nation. If

only our country's leaders would to cease and desist with their ongoing civil war, but instead serve the people more than political parties.

"Washington, DC would do well to take note as to what can be accomplished when people with different political and cultural backgrounds actually work together as a team for the betterment of all people," Matthews said.

But let the Perquiman's

Weekly's step back a moment to learn more about Brown as this story unfolds.

Earlier this year, when Brown, 69, retired from a 38-year career with the federal government, she moved to the house in Belvidere where her mother was born. She later bought a house on North Front Street. Brown's career with the federal government included an embassy postings in Trinidad and Tobago.

One of Brown's key sup-

porters, Murielle Harmon, added this surprise about the mayor's background during a recent interview with the Perquiman's Weekly.

"She can do it - be a great mayor because of her previous experiences," Harmon said. "She worked for the government and was an investigator for the Internal Revenue Service internationally. She believes in two things to this day: good communication and procedure. She comes from that background, knows it works and has traveled to countries where they didn't even understand English, but she made them understand what she wanted she needed, so she is very big on procedure. Our town ... well, we have been lacking in that. She's going to get it right. We know that."

True to form, in the weeks since Brown and a new council have taken office, procedures regarding public records requests have been formalized and email addresses for public officials been added to the system. Such means speak volumes about how the Town Council views the importance of transparency.

Unlike many politicians who seek office, Brown was initially a reluctant candidate who has said publicly and privately that she had never thought about running for mayor. Fortunately, God had other plans for Brown and Hertford.

"Initially, I know Mayor Brown struggled with the decision to run for mayor," Matthews said. "She came by the house one day, and told us that after much prayer she was thinking

about running for mayor and asked what we thought. Without any reservation we said it was a great idea. Being a close neighbor, you get to know the "real" person and we knew she had the skills, integrity, and heart for the job."

Wasn't just the Hertford community who was paying close attention to Brown's bid for mayor, but her family as well.

"She loves her family - loves her grandchildren," said Connie's mother, Vanora Brothers, who is also kin to Brown. "Her election - it was a historical moment. She had her granddaughters with her at the Perquimans Board of Elections when she filed to run for mayor. They were there when she won too. That was a historical moment for her. Now, her sons were there the day of the election - very very important for her. Everyone was there celebrating together. She loves her family. She loves her family."

Vanora Brothers said Brown's election was a moment to be cherished.

"That's something that we have long been waiting for and needed," she said. "Mayor Brown will make a change. She has a lot of insight and wisdom. She's been around all over the world. She knows just we need. There will be a change. I do think she is ready to tackle the job. She sees what is lacking. She knows what we need. With her power, she's going to put it into play."

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TRIP

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ability for revenue expenditures, an action taken to help move Hertford forward for all citizens," Mayor Earnell Brown said.

According to Town Manager Pam Hurdle, Town Hall has budgeted for \$25,000 travel - a figure that exceeds the combined total of what Edenton, Chowan and Perquimans counties have set aside for travel expenses - \$14,500.

Town Council has spent \$14,000 for travel so far this fiscal year 2019/20.

Perquimans County Commission's travel budget \$6,000 for 2019/20 while Chowan County Commission's travel budget is around \$3,000. Edenton Town Council's total travel budget is \$5,500.

Jackson and Felton attended City Summit, a National League of Cities' conference that the organization's website describes as offering local leaders an opportunity to collaborate on solutions to the common challenges facing America's cities.

Keynote speakers for the conference included city council leaders from large cities and Common, a Grammy Award winning

Hip Hop artist. Conference took place between Nov. 20 and November 23 at the Henry B. Gonzalez' Convention Center.

Within hours of the Perquimans Weekly's Public Records request made Dec. 23, Town Hall provided bank statements with credit card receipts associated with the trip. To view this information, see the story on the Daily Advance's web page.

According to a bank statement with transactions posted between Nov. 9 and Nov. 26, Jackson spent \$1,997 for costs associated with the trip that did not include air fare, conference registration or hotel fees. Of that total, there is a \$1,382 purchase Nov. 9 from Apple.com that spurred an inquiry and an additional public records request from the Perquimans Weekly to uncover what Jackson bought.

If any information is released after the Perquimans Weekly's print edition was published, the answers to those questions will be added to the online version of the story posted to the Daily Advance website.

According to a bank statement with transactions posted between Nov. 4 and Nov. 26, Felton

spent \$1,882 for costs associated with the trip that includes registration and air fare.

According to Town Hall's travel package form dated Aug. 20, Jackson was the only signatory authorizing his trip to San Antonio. Two other signatures were marked out in the Town Council approval section on the form.

Jackson's travel package form lists the Marriott's Residence Inn as where he'll be staying, the price of his conference registration (\$960) and price of airfare (\$512).

Jackson purchased his plane ticket in Aug. 30, so the Perquimans Weekly filed an additional public records request seeking Town Council's minutes from August so as to uncover more about when the trip may have been approved. The newspaper has also asked for Town Council's current travel policy so as to learn more about the procedures needed to approve such trips.

According to documents dated Nov. 4 from Town Hall, Jackson not Felton was the only signature on a travel package form authorizing her to attend the conference.

Other than listing pur-

pose of the trip as the NLC City Summit conference, the form is blank when it comes to Felton's travel dates, hotel reservations and means of transportation. She purchased a plane ticket to San Antonio on Nov. 4.

A day after Felton's travel package form was signed Nov. 4, she was defeated in her bid for council and Jackson lost his bid for mayor in Hertford's municipal election.

The conference's registration total cost was \$1,635 - with Jackson's registration (\$960) and Felton's registration (\$675). Registration fees did not include hotel costs.

Felton's initial registration fee was \$475 - a rate assessed to a first-time conference attendee. She paid an additional fee of \$200 to attend a side event held during the conference - \$675 total in registration fees.

As a member of the National League of Cities, Jackson was charged the standard rate of \$760 for registration, plus an additional fee of \$200 to attend a side event held during the conference - \$960 total. Jackson did not utilize the conference's \$650 discount registration price.

Officials who attended the conference could pay more to attend additional events.

For example, Jackson and Felton each paid a \$200 activity fee to attend the National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials - \$400 total. Created in 1970 to represent the interests of African American elected officials, NBC-LEO's objectives include increasing African American participation on the NLC's steering and policy committees to ensure that policy and program recommendations reflect African American concerns and benefit their communities.

During the San Antonio conference, Jackson was recognized by the NBC-LEO for his service as Regional Director of Region 18.

On Aug. 30, Jackson purchased his plane ticket for \$512 while Felton paid \$718 when she bought her ticket Nov. 4 - total airfare for both councilors cost \$1,230 - a figure that does not include associated costs and fees. Delta Air Lines charged Jackson and Felton \$70 each any time they were assessed excess baggage fees. Felton paid \$60 for airport parking.

Jackson and Felton

stayed five nights between Nov. 19 and Nov. 23 at the Marriott's Residence Inn near Alamo Plaza. Total cost for the room was \$750 or about \$150 per night to stay at the hotel that is located less than a quarter mile away from the Alamo.

After the conference on Nov. 24, Felton purchased a HubTurbo portable charger for \$129.99 along with sport earphones - \$24.99. Jackson purchased \$140 worth of tech from the same store on Nov. 24.

A few other expenditures from Jackson's trip include a \$30.95 grilled ribeye steak, \$2 serving of macaroni and cheese, both washed down with a \$3.95 glass of lemonade from the Yard House, an upscale restaurant close to the Marriott hotel where Jackson and Felton stayed. Total meal was around \$41 with tip being about \$9 to a server named John Paul C.

Inadvertently included within the documents sent by Town Hall to the Perquimans Weekly was a \$400 bill from a 2-night stay in October when Jackson spent the night at Hyatt Place, a hotel located in Columbia, SC.

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HISTORIC

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in western North Carolina who play a foot-stomping blend of bluegrass, country,

and roots rock n' roll. Original tunes, new and old favorites, and a few surprises, served up as only The Grassabillies can do it. Tickets are \$15 and go on sale at Carolina Trophy

on January 20th. You don't want to miss this great group!

Did You Know.... That when automobiles became prevalent, filling stations sprung up on

many Hertford corners. In 1940 Bill and Viv's was on the corner of Church and Grubb Streets. Bill and Vivian Matthews were proprietors of this Esso dealership. The building,

although no longer has a business in it, still sits on that corner today!

Check out our website

at historichertfordinc.org or carolinamoontheater.org for more details!

Follow us on Facebook!

LAYTON

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on January 15. The exhibit will include paintings and photographs of houses, buildings and historic sites in our area, as well as heritage arts such as quilting and weaving.

The drop-off dates for the show are January 9, 10 and 11 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. It is open to non-members for a fee of \$15 for up to 3 pieces if you have historic pieces you would like to share with the community. The Featured Artist will be Nora Crouch. Please join



Three-month-old Lilly Anne Jackson dressed just like Santa for her photo moment at the Holiday Island Civic League's annual breakfast with the big man.

us for the opening reception on Thursday, January

16 from 5:30 to 7 p.m. For more information, call the

gallery at 252-426-3041 or visit our website at www.perquimansarts.org.

Throughout the month of March, PAL will have artists working in the gallery. You might see a demonstration of painting, quilting, jewelry making or other types of work. If you are an artist and you would be interested in sharing your talents, please contact the gallery at 252-426-3041. Once we have confirmed dates for all of the artists, a schedule of demos will be posted.

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