

PURCHASES

Continued from A1

were made.

"Improved communication was one of my top priority campaign objectives," Brown writes in the memo dated Jan. 6. "Hence, one of my first accomplishments after election, with then Mayor (Horace) Reid's approval, was to set up my office to receive citizens, potential new residents and businesses, as to conduct effective meetings in a professional inspiring environment that encourages positive dialogue with all and to aspire our youth, through example, that they too can achieve their highest potential."

List provided by Town Hall includes purchases of a desk, conference table, television, TV mount, file cabinet, bookcase, pencil drawer, carpet floor mat, dry erase board, printer, paper shredder, etc.

Biggest purchases were the Bowery Hill Executive desk for \$456 (price includes tax and shipping) and a 42-inch wooden conference table for \$227.

Photos provided by Town Hall of the mayor's office show that prior to the purchases, this work place was a very simple, Spartan place filled with the bare essentials – a desk, a trio of 70s' era chairs, a

bookshelf – space reminiscent of a junior grade army officer's staff office when serving in a far flung theater of operations.

Photos show that after the furniture and other items were purchased, the new office is more in line with modern standards – professional wooden desk complimented by technology – imagine an assistant dean's office at a small state university.

Brown's list was submitted Nov. 14 and the purchases from Walmart and Amazon were made in early December before she took the oath of office Dec. 9. After being purchased, a majority of the items weren't shipped until a few days or weeks later.

Perspective is needed to provide context to these purchases and Brown's memo that echoes what she said to council during a back and forth dialogue she was having with Councilmen Frank Norman and Quentin Jackson, who first brought the matter to the public's attention during the Jan. 6 work session.

Brown defeated Jackson's bid for mayor in the Nov. 5 municipal election.

Subsequently, there had been some question as to whether Brown would be able to take the oath as mayor and Jerry Mimlitsch along with Ashley Hodges

would be able to take their oaths as new council members.

Soon after the election, Jackson sought an injunction to halt the new council from being sworn-in so as to have more time to address his issues from November's municipal election when he lost his bid for mayor.

However, a Wake County Court dismissed Jackson's attempts to overturn the election, so the mayor and new councilmen were sworn-in Dec. 6.

During this contentious time period, Brown submitted a list of items on Nov. 14 for purchase to Town Manager Pam Hurdle, according to the mayor's memo.

Jackson, who was then serving as mayor pro-tem, tried to block the purchase. Mayor Reid intervened and approved the requisition of the furniture and office accessories.

During council's Jan. 6 work session, Jackson objected to the purchases because they were not approved by council, but by the mayor who he said is not a member of council, but the presiding officer who can only vote in the case of a tie.

The exchange between Brown and Jackson came on the heels of heated discussions about the town's travel policy as it related to Jackson's taxpayer funded

trip to attend a conference in San Antonio in November.

Norman said the purchase of furniture and other items circumvented council's authority.

"Anything spent out of the council budget, requires council consent," he said.

Citing the town's charter, Brown said because the expenditure was under a \$2,000, a budget amendment seeking council's approval was not required.

"This is all above board," she said.

During the council meeting and as part of the Jan. 6 memo, Brown elaborated her reasons for buying the furniture and office supplies.

"After my successful election Nov. 5, I learned that I could refurbish the Mayor's office. Mayor Reid was also given the opportunity to refurbish his office, but chose not to," Brown wrote in her memo. "Personally, this was very important because my work environment is conducive to my productivity, and presentation communicates credibility...The items were paid for from the council budget, which I am a member and it was not a cost overrun."

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LAYTON

Continued from A1

referred to as baseball's first big-money free agent. He was a member of five World Series championship teams.

In other news, there's no denying Hertford's mayor's office needed new furniture. Yes, for various reasons, it is a news story. Long sigh...

However, Mayor Earnell Brown is correct – a clean, well-organized office conveys a strong message for citizens, travelers, perhaps children seeking a role model, that public affairs are in order.

On a related note, knock on wood, it appears that while recent council meetings have tended to last longer than congressional debates, the personalities appear to be more respectful of each other and decorum is being observed.

On that note, the record for the longest individual speech goes to South Carolina's J. Strom Thurmond who filibustered for 24 hours and 18 minutes against the Civil Rights Act of 1957, so Hertford Town Council meetings could be worse.

In other matters, Bridget Jernigan reached out to the newspaper to promote the KEYS program and the upcoming Perquimans' First Responders Ball that will be held March 28. Sponsored by the Perquimans County Sheriff's Department, this will be a first class event at the Albemarle Plantation – a roaring 20's theme. There are 200 tickets available.

All of the profits are being donated to KEYS, Keeping Every Youth Safe. Founded in the spring of 2018, the program serves the same purpose as Safe Schools does in Elizabeth City.

The group raises money to provide school safety needs. Last spring, the group completed a \$1,500 project for the grammar school of having windows covered in 3M safety film.

As to the upcoming ball, the group hopes to raise enough money at this event to purchase a metal detector for the middle school and to cross off some other items that are in an urgent need status.

Congratulations to HPD Chief Brown who recently completed the Chief's Course at the North Carolina Association of Chiefs of Police Conference.

Also, congratulations Officer Downing who recently completed the 40-hour Use of Force Training offered through the North Carolina Criminal Justice Academy in Salem. Downing reviewed state law, completed Verbal Judo, wrote numerous reports and spent time on a simulator

which provided him de-escalation training with real world application.

Future stories the Perquimans Weekly will be pursuing include one about Perquimans' Pirate Claribel Ordaz-Rios, who I'm told has a pretty amazing story.

Per our church feature, the newspaper has reached out Piney Woods Friends Meeting church so as to learn more about Quakers, who've had a big influence in Perquimans County. Point of this series is to introduce, maybe reintroduce, these communities of faith, perhaps get more folks in the pews.

And plans are afoot to do a story about HPD Officer Castellanos and his K9 named Diesel.

Lastly, here's this nugget that the newspaper received from Ed Sanford, president of the Perquimans Arts League, who said there was a great reception Jan. 16 evening for our first show of 2020, "History & Heritage".

Exhibit runs until Feb. 26.

The featured artist is the multi-talented Nora Crouch. The quality of the work in the show is outstanding. The subject matter is very appropriate because there are many vintage buildings in the area that offer artists the opportunity to explore the presentation of architecture from many different perspectives. Of course, Nora creatively offered both paintings and photography in her featured work. Nora is currently a featured artist at the Clubhouse at Albemarle Plantation, and she is exhibiting work at the annual Nansemond Suffolk Academy show, which starts next week. Wow, how does she do it all!

Sanford's email said the exhibit's reception was especially satisfying because he had the pleasure of meeting some very interesting people. He had a good conversation with Tim and Kim Brinn, both of whom are involved in projects to document the history of the town in conjunction with the current effort to rejuvenate Hertford. Sanford met Thomas Waller is a newcomer to the area from New Orleans. He is a design professional, and he has volunteered to help us plan the design for our new gallery.

And Sanford met Elizabeth Jones, who has deep roots in Hertford and has recently moved here from Charleston South Carolina. She is currently restoring an historic home here in Hertford that has been in her family for several generations.

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MLK

Continued from A1

both King's words with themes from R&B singer Marvin Gaye's 1971 hit, "What's Going On."

Gaye wrote the song after his brother returned from Vietnam to a nation that was divided and filled with overtones of unrest; dealing with the same issues then as now.

Perhaps because "What's Going on" is such a great song, maybe the lyrics are worth revisiting particularly as Leigh used the song's refrain throughout her inspiring speech.

Father, father
We don't need to escalate

You see, war is not the answer

For only love can conquer hate

You know we've got to find a way

To bring some lovin' here today

Picket lines and picket signs

Don't punish me with brutality

Talk to me, so you can see

Oh, what's going on
What's going on

Yeah, what's going on
Ah, what's going on

Mother, mother, everybody thinks we're wrong

Oh, but who are they to judge us

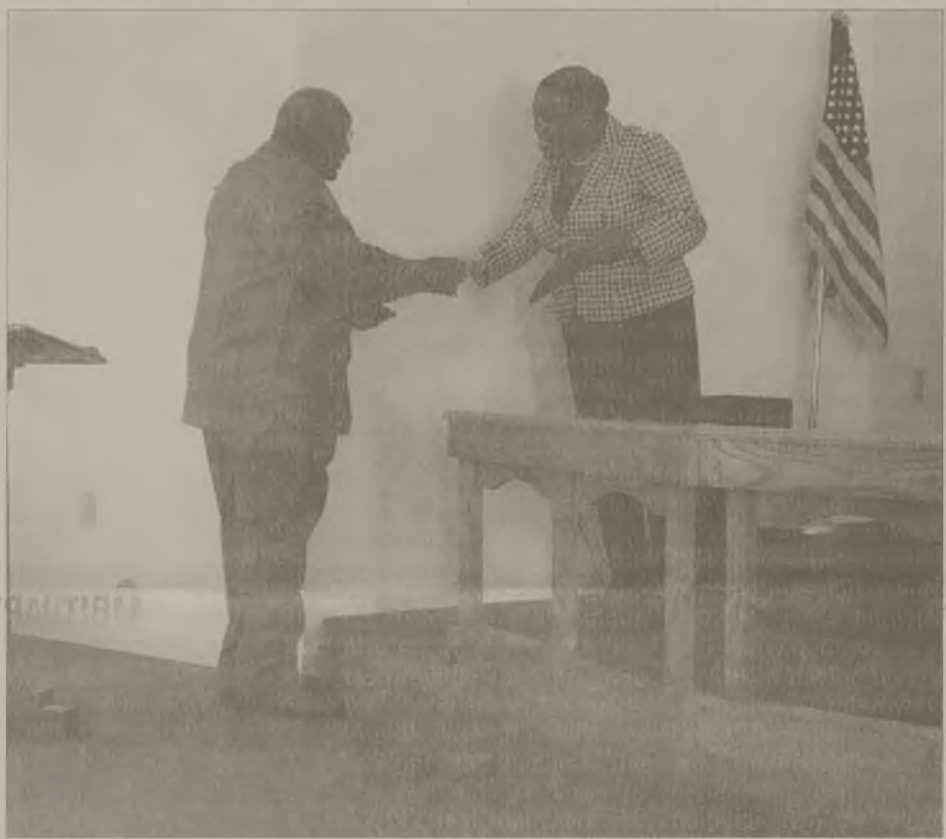
Simply because our hair is long

Oh, you know we've got to find a way

To bring some understanding here today

Now try getting that song out of your head today, but back to task at hand – Leigh's speech.

"It appears there is a growing level of hatred and growing division



Perquimans NAACP President Fred Yates presents Leigh with a plaque on behalf of the NAACP that pays tribute to her service to the community.

among us, however we celebrate the life and legacy of man who said, 'O God, help us to walk together, pray together, and live together until that day when all God's children, black, white, red and yellow will rejoice in one common band of humanity in the kingdom of our Lord,'" said Leigh, who is also presiding elder and a pastor in the Albemarle Annual Conference of the Eastern North Carolina Episcopal District.

"Are we gathered today because Mayor Yates asked us?" she continued. "Are we gathered together just because it is the right thing to do? Or are we gathered together to reach beyond the basics, step out of faith and strive

for excellence without excuse by asking God to help us to surrender his great love that covers all sins and makes us into a clean container in which he dwells in love?"

Quoting King, Leigh said, "There comes a time when a man must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but he must take it because con-

science tells him it is right."

Leigh urged her listeners to strive to "do what is right."

"This world is not our home. We are just passing through, however, while we are passing through, let us be containers of love," she said. "Let us work together, walk together and not get weary in doing what is right."

B.A.B.Y.

Continued from A1

The class takes away the stigma of 'I don't know everything' and provides the mother an opportunity to be able to make more informed decisions based on the resources and up-to-date knowledge provided in the B.A.B.Y. classes – basically another avenue of support for the mother and infant."

Wanda Stallings, Health Educator at Albemarle Regional Health Services, explained why this program is life changing for new mothers.

"Starting a new baby's life with an informed mother and community supports in place are vital for the mother and child, and can help to determine that child's health and educational success."

Sarah Williams, CPSSP Program Coordinator, added, "It has been a community effort over the years to provide this program for mothers. Albemarle Regional Health Services and our staff facilitate the classes, and are supported in their endeavor by

Albemarle Pregnancy Resource Center and Medical Clinic, Chowan Safe Kids, Triple P (Positive Parenting Program), and Vidant Chowan Pediatrics. Funded by Smart Start Funds and a grant from the Vidant Chowan Hospital Foundation, the mothers are able to receive needed items for their baby, as well as a car seat that is installed by Chowan Safe Kids upon graduation."

Here are some of the comments from mothers who have taken the class over the years:

"I loved the selected topics geared towards specific needs of pregnant/new moms and enjoyed meeting community healthcare professionals (Pediatrician and Health Department) and having time to ask candid questions in a warm, inviting atmosphere."

"I liked the resources that were provided and the explanations and examples given to ensure knowledge and safety to our babies."

"I liked having open discussions with other women going through pregnancy who understand my concerns and can help me understand better what to

expect."

"I'd say that the Labor Class was my favorite class. It helped me to obtain some knowledge of what to expect as far as your pain management options, such as epidural or natural. You can't fully prepare yourself for what you will go through, but knowing the physical changes and steps of labor makes me feel much more comfortable and knowledgeable about what to expect."

"The class was by far the best experience a new mom could hope for. It left me with plenty of tips and resources that I will continue to use as my baby develops."

To register for B.A.B.Y. class, contact Sherlton Broadnax or Sarah Wil-

liams at 252-482-3035. We also offer other parenting classes and information about available resources for children up to age five.

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