

THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

"News from Next Door"

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 2020

\$1.00

Due to Virus, Closings Likely to be Extended

BY PAUL NIELSEN

For the Perquimans Weekly

Local libraries have been closed, organized recreation activities have been suspended, and events like the N.C. Potato Festival have been canceled as local

officials take precautionary measures against the spread of the coronavirus.

President Donald Trump has issued a national declaration of emergency and Gov. Roy Cooper has issued a state declaration as well. Around 25 of the state's 100

counties have declared a local state of emergency and more are expected to follow in the coming days.

The White House advised all Americans to avoid groups of more than 10 and urged older people to stay at home in a set of new guide-

lines designed to fight a spreading coronavirus outbreak.

Tuesday, Gov. Cooper announced a new executive order in response to COVID-19 that closes restaurants and bars for dine-in customers but allows them to continue

takeout and delivery orders. The executive order also included an expansion of unemployment insurance to help North Carolina workers affected by COVID-19.

The order was effective by 5 p.m. today, Tuesday, March 17.

There are no confirmed cases of COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus in the area, Albemarle Regional Health Services Director Battle Betts told officials.

See **CLOSINGS**, A2

Leaders Prepare to Engage Threat

BY STAFF REPORTS

Monday, leaders from Albemarle Regional Health Services, Perquimans County, the Town of Hertford, the Town of Winfall, and Perquimans County Emergency Services met to coordinate our local response to COVID-19, also known as Coronavirus 2019.

Over the last few days, things in our nation have drastically changed, and we find ourselves in unprecedented territory. We are currently under a U.S. and N.C. State of Emergency.

In an effort to encourage social distancing in North Carolina, Governor Cooper's Executive Order included two major points:

■ All NC Public School Systems are closed for two weeks from March 16- March 27.

■ A prohibition of mass gatherings (100 persons).

On Sunday morning, Perquimans County Emergency Services Staff joined Pasquotank-Camden EMS, Pasquotank County, the Elizabeth City Fire Department and Sentara Albemarle Hospital to set up a Triage Tent at Sentara Albemarle Medical Center.

Even though there are no reported cases of COVID-19

See **LEADERS**, A2

Changes Ahead for Newspaper

STAFF REPORTS

You've asked and we've listened because the Perquimans Weekly wants to serve our community better.

Based on our readers' input, we are pleased to announce a few changes that we hope will enhance this newspaper.

We want to get more news in the newspaper, particularly local government meeting stories but also Monday's sports scores, should the season resume.

Because many local governments meet Monday evenings, it has been challenging for reporters and editors to provide stories in a timely manner for the upcoming edition.

Doesn't matter if you read a weekly or a daily newspaper, news is a 24/7 operation.

So as to better get this information and include any late breaking news,

See **NEWSPAPER**, A2

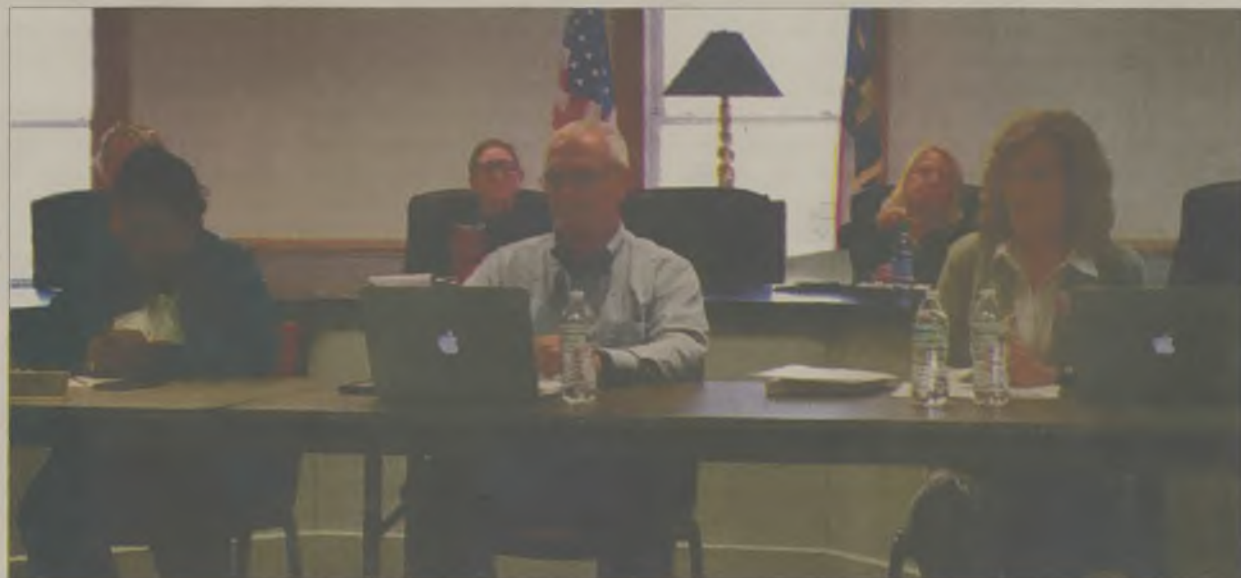


PHOTO BY MILES LAYTON

Perquimans Schools administrators met Monday to provide the Board of Education an update as to plans to provide learning access and distribute meals to students while schools are closed.

Schools Prepare to Cope with Closure

Meals to be Offered; Remote Learning Plans Created; Internet Access Made Available

BY MILES LAYTON

Editor

Perquimans Board of Education and school administrators met in a special meeting Monday to discuss a plan of action for coping with the aftershocks from closing schools due to precautions taken to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

Though schools statewide are closed until March 27, planning is underway to provide meals and access to technology that will facilitate learning for what may be a long time away from classrooms.

"As we plan for the specifics, let us remember why we closed the schools," Perquimans Board of Education Chairwoman Anne White said. "We didn't just close the schools for two weeks just to close them. We have a virus - the numbers are continuing to escalate. The deaths are continuing to escalate, so the key word should be the safety of our students, staff, faculty - everybody - in our community."

Friday afternoon, school officials statewide had a conference call with Governor Roy Cooper. Turner said afterward, school administrators did not think school systems would close.

"The state said the CDC recommended that schools stay open and that there was no research that showed that closing schools would prevent the spread of the illness," Turner said. "In fact, they said closing schools would have more negative impacts than we would have positive. We left Friday afternoon thinking that we're good, schools will stay open. Saturday afternoon, everything went totally the opposite way. So that's the way the information has been coming to us. We're trying to adjust as quickly as information is being provided to us."

Last week, Turner asked teachers and staff to prepare for the days to come.

"This has been difficult and a little bit stressful on staff, but we have a great group of people who are pulling together and doing what we need to do to serve our children," she said.

Turner was cautious but realistic as the news cycle changes day to day with the latest announcement from the White House for Americans to avoid groups of more than 10 and urged older people to stay at home in a set of new guidelines designed to fight a spreading coronavirus outbreak. Many public officials are bracing for the fact that things may not return to normal any time soon.

"Everything right now - it's changing - by the end of this meeting we might not be in school any more until August," Turner said.

White added, "That's the truth from what I've been hearing. But teachers are creative. They've been coming up with all kinds of creative ideas - all those virtual classrooms where students are calling in. As our teachers continue to plan, we'll just be amazed at what we can accomplish."

Perquimans Schools Nutrition Director Kim Cullipher said starting today (Wednesday) the school system will be able to feed students from two hubs - Hertford Grammar School and Perquimans Central School - by utilizing the drive-thru method between the hours between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Starting Thursday, plans also call for school buses to deliver meals in the community and to local churches for pick-up. Meals will be at no cost to the students.

"We want as many kids to eat as possible," Cullipher said. "Families can come and pick meals up for the children for students attending the schools. Service is first-come, first-served."

Cullipher said the school district will be reimbursed from the national school lunch program for the costs associated with the meals.

"More kids we feed, the more reim-

bursement rates we can get back - we want to make sure the kids eat and that there is no cost to students," she said.

Cullipher cautioned that because a lot of parents are still working, school planners have no idea what the meal participation rate will be, so they are aiming high at first and then adjusting to fill the need.

"I'm hoping that once we get out into the community, we'll have better participation so we can feed more students," she said.

Meal distribution is based on the honor system, so school administrators are placing folks who are familiar with the various communities being served at the hubs and churches so as to better assist with recognizing the families who are being served.

Board member Leary Winslow was concerned that "if this thing takes a dramatic turn for the worse, there might be a free-for-all that would clean us out so that we wouldn't be able to feed anybody" if this program is not closely monitored with accountability as to who is picking up meals.

Cullipher said school officials will be asking each person which kids they are providing meals for. People that retrieve the meals should be parents, siblings or family members.

"That family has to have one child in our school system to receive a meal," she said.

Chairwoman White added, "I think it is great that you are asking for names - probably going to be some abuse. It's just the nature of the system, but if you start asking for something, then it doesn't send a message that this is a free-for-all that lets everybody go have lunch."

Perquimans schools Chief Technology Officer Martha Nixon said the school system has organized an internet based learning regimen so teachers can connect with students. Since internet ac-

ROUND-UP

Triage, closures, Bocephus

BY MILES LAYTON

Editor

A round-up of Perquimans County...

A lot of things are shifting because of the coronavirus, so bear with us during these trying times.

First, read this very important public service announcement from Coastal Carolina Family Practice of Hertford.

Please do not come into Coastal Carolina Family Practice if you are running a fever or are symptomatic of the COVID-19 Virus. Clinic is setting up a triage outside to screen any of its current patients that are symptomatic. The drive through will be open as soon as possible from 3-4 p.m. Monday through Thursday with anticipated expanded hours. Please call before coming 426-5711 ext: 221 and 225.

"It is very important to be patient realizing that we are trying to do the very best we can," said Chris Lane of Coastal Carolina Family Practice. "We are being inundated with phone calls. If you are not symptomatic, please stay home if at all possible. Isolation is the best way to prevent the spread of this deadly virus."

In other news, Hertford United Methodist's Lord's Table that runs between 11:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. on Wednesdays is canceled today (March 18) and next week (March 25).

And Piney Woods Friends Meeting has canceled all services and activities until April 1.

Lot of houses of worship are streaming their Sunday services, so go online to check things out. Yeah, it's different not being in church, but you can watch these sermons in your pajamas if you want. And you can check out the different church services.

First Responders Ball scheduled for March 28 has been postponed.

The Perquimans Weekly, Chowan Herald and Daily

See **SCHOOLS**, A2

See **LAYTON**, A6

March on Meals Raises Awareness of Food Delivery

BY NICOLE BOWMAN-LAYTON

Chowan Herald

Throughout the month of March those who receive deliveries from Meals on Wheels will probably see a few new faces as the organization hosts its March on Meals.

"Celebrities" ranging from Perquimans County Sheriff Shelby White to Edenton Steamer's Sam the Clam were to help deliver meals to 12-13 residences one day the month on one of the Area

Agency on Aging's 47 routes in a 10-county service area. That service area includes Chowan, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Gates, Tyrrell, Washington, Hyde, Dare, Camden and Currituck.

In Perquimans County, Sheriff Shelby White covered several routes. Santa - Perquimans County resident Gary Lico - served in Camden.

In each county, a site coordinator, who is a volunteer, finds and trains volunteers, said Laura Rollinson, administrative and volunteer co-

ordinator for the Albemarle Commission Area Agency on Aging and Senior Nutrition Program. They also make sure volunteers are scheduled every day and know their routes.

They deliver every week Monday through Friday, except for one week around Christmas, in which participants receive shelf staples - canned goods. During this time, Meals on Wheels conducts an internal audit and takes inventory.

Three caterers cook the meals provided to the home-



PHOTO COURTESY LAURA ROLLINSON

Chowan Herald editor Nicole Bowman-Layton delivers a meal for Meals on Wheels on Thursday, March 12, in Edenton.

bound clients for the Area Agency on Aging, Captain Bob's, in Hertford, serves Perquimans, Pasquotank and Chowan.

Due to the threat of coro-

navirus, Meals on Wheels of America, the national organization, has recommended that the tray used to serve the

See **MEALS**, A2

