

THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

"News from Next Door"

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2021

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Rotary Club to offer
free tax help



PAGE B1
Perquimans' basketball,
soccer and swim teams
compete



PAGE B4
This week in
North Carolina history

Hertford Has Not Filed Annual Audit Report

BY MILES LAYTON
Editor

State Treasurer's office said the Town of Hertford's annual financial audit for fiscal year 2019/20 has not been filed with the state's Local Government Commission.

Deadline to submit the audit with the LGC was Jan. 31 – fourth year in a row Town Hall has not filed the annual audit by the deadline.

Town Hall did not provide comment about why the audit has not been submitted to the state, specifically to the State and Local Government Finance Division

and the Local Government Commission. Town's audit is prepared by Jeff Best, a certified public accountant based in Belhaven.

Audit reports for counties and municipalities are typically due by Oct. 31 based on the terms of the local government's contract with its auditor, but the deadline was extended to Jan. 31.

COVID-19 has impacted local governments in many ways, not the least of which is interfering with the timeline for completing a June 30, 2020 audit, according to the Treasurer's office that keeps

See **AUDIT, A2**

Town Council Discusses Discord

Hertford hires town clerk

BY MILES LAYTON
Editor

Monday's four-hour long Hertford Town Council meeting will be covered in more detail in a future edition so as to include the sequel – Thursday's special meeting.

However, among the highlights from Monday's meeting include how Lashonda Cartwright of Bertie County was recently hired as the new Town Clerk. Prior to Cartwright's hire, she worked as an administrative assistant at the Windsor-Bertie Chamber of Commerce. Previous Town Clerk Shoniqua Powell resigned in September.

Next, for more than an hour council debated back and forth over the agenda, whether to amend, when to amend, who can amend and more.

Councilmen Quentin Jackson and Frank Norman constantly challenged the Mayor Earnell Brown's decisions as she presided

See **TOWN, A3**



GOODWIN HUNTER

Bill Alters Way Public Notices Are Published

BY PAUL NIELSEN
For Chowan Herald

State Rep. Howard Hunter, D-Hertford, is a primary sponsor of a bill introduced in the N.C. General Assembly that would allow local governments in 12 northeastern counties to publish required legal notices on their websites.

Pasquotank, Camden, Perquimans and Chowan counties are among the dozen eastern counties covered by House Bill 51. State Rep. Ed Goodwin, R-Chowan, is also a primary sponsor of the legislation.

A similar bill sponsored by state Rep. Bobby Hanig, R-Currituck, that includes Currituck and 13 other counties stretching across the state, has also been introduced. Of the seven primary sponsors of the two bills, Hunter is the only Democrat.

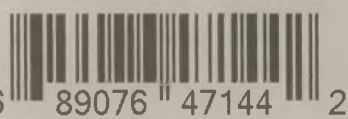
Critics of the legislation say, if passed, it would allow governments to operate more easily in the dark. They note that under current law, local governments are required to post public notices in a newspaper of general circulation in their county.

The legislation would still allow local governments to publish public notices in local newspapers if they choose. However, not being required to do so likely would result in local

See **NOTICES, A6**

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Column: Counties once again
looking to operate in the dark



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Blessed Place to Live

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Photos of the Perquimans River by Elizabeth Porcher Jones are a welcome respite from current events.

Moreover, they should help all citizens embrace the fact that they live in a beautiful place.

Temperatures during the week ahead will top out in the mid 40s and there is 60 percent chance of rain Friday and Saturday.

Sunday may be wet too, though it is less likely.

Monday, temperatures will dip into the 30s while Tuesday, there is a chance of snow, but time will tell.



BY ELIZABETH PORCHER JONES

Cole: Prep, Opportunity, Courage Key to Breaking Barriers

BY PAUL NIELSEN
For the Perquimans Weekly

Judge Janice McKenzie Cole is prominently featured in the Museum of the Albemarle's current exhibit called "Women Breaking Barriers in Northeastern North Carolina."

But Cole did more than break barriers, she smashed them.

Cole, of Hertford, began her barrier-breaking career in New York City but the rest of the barriers she shattered happened during a long legal career in northeastern North Carolina.

Cole was the first female and first African-American attorney in Perquimans County; elected the first female and first African-American District Court judge in the 1st Judicial District; and the first African American to win a presidential appointment as a U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of North Carolina.

Cole told the museum's virtual "History for Lunch" program Wednesday that three basic principles allowed her to break barriers, first in law enforcement and then later as a prosecutor, attorney and judge.

"I think preparation, opportunity and then courage are the three things that had the most to do with it," Cole said.

Cole was among the first group of women in the early 1970s in New York City to be-



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Attorney Janice Cole, founder of the Cole Immigration Law Center and a former District Court judge, U.S. Attorney and Perquimans County commissioner, stands next to an exhibit noting Fordham University's honoring of her in this March 25, 2019 file photo.

come patrol officers and said that prepared her for a legal career.

"They opened the police exam to both men and women," Cole said. "I decided I wanted to take it. I was in one of the first groups of women to be assigned to street patrol. It gave me an opportunity to be one of the first."

Three years later in 1973, New York suffered a fiscal crisis and Cole was laid off.

"Last hired, first fired," Cole said.

Cole had completed over a

year of college before joining the police department and after being laid off she went back and earned a criminal justice degree from City University of New York.

Cole then went to law school at Fordham at night while working during the day, saying she "had always wanted to be a lawyer."

Before graduating with her law degree, Cole had a summer internship in the U.S. Attorney's Office in New York. Cole pre-

See **COLE, A3**

ROUND-UP

SBI and Town Hall

BY MILES LAYTON
Editor

A round-up of all things Perquimans County...

NC State Bureau of Investigation has several agents investigating the Town of Hertford.

Agents have been using a conference room within the Perquimans County Sheriff's Department to conduct business.

Councilman Frank Norman announced via Facebook Feb. 4 that SBI agents took town equipment Jan. 30 from the Community Center. Norman did not say what kind of equipment was taken, only that it is needed for zoom broadcasts.

Norman did not elaborate about any details as to the possible scope of the SBI investigation, but he said the SBI is investigating "something or someone that concerns our town and governing board" that council should've discussed at a special meeting Thursday (Feb. 4) that did not gain quorum.

SBI said search warrants would be filed with Superior Court for Perquimans County.

In other news unrelated to the latest headlines, Hertford Police Officer John Duncan has left HPD and is fighting crime somewhere else. Thank you for your service to the community.

Meanwhile, Hertford Police Department's website has not been adjusted to reflect new hires or present staffing. HPD Officer Gilbert Rodriguez resigned in January, but he is still listed on the webpage for HPD's duty roster.

Pending SBI matters and other Town Hall happenings that deserve immediate attention, a story about the HPD staffing challenges is ahead.

On that note, prior to a recent above-the-fold headline regarding long vacant 321 Market St., the Perquimans Weekly has asked Town Hall to provide a list of distressed properties.

In June, Zacchaeus Legal Services of Trenton to pursue debt collections among other related matters for property that is three years or more behind in taxes, and not a primary residence of property owner. In related matters, the county recently hired Zacchaeus Legal Services to pursue collections on delinquent properties.

Elaine Riddick Charter School has a new sign up by its facility on Harvey Point Road, so that may be an indicator that progress is being made toward a possible opening later this year.

Last August, the State Board of Education approved a one-year

See **ROUND-UP, A2**