

THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

"News from Next Door"

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2021

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Feasibility study for regional water plan discussed



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Pirates boys soccer team takes on Aces



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Sudoku, crossword, word scramble and more!

SBI Probes Whether Councilor's Emails Taken

Investigation also appears focused on alleged extortion

BY JULIAN EURE
For Perquimans Weekly

HERTFORD — The State Bureau of Investigation is apparently investigating whether a Hertford town councilor's personal emails were retrieved from a town computer without his permission and then used by another town councilor to extort him.

A spokeswoman for the SBI recently confirmed that the agency is investigating a matter involving the town of Hertford but declined to provide details. The SBI began the probe at the request of District Attorney Andrew Womble.

Documents attached to a search warrant granted to SBI Special Agent Steven Norman by Resident



HODGES



JACKSON



NORMAN

Superior Court Judge Jerry Tillett on Feb. 1 shed more light on the reasons for the SBI's probe.

According to the documents, copies of which The Daily Ad-

vance obtained on Thursday, Womble asked the SBI on Jan. 29 to investigate allegations of "computer intrusion and extortion" that targeted Hertford Town Councilor Robert Ashley Hodges.

"It was alleged that some of Hodges' personal emails had been retrieved from a Town of Hertford computer without his permission and that Hodges had received some threatening messages from another member of the Town Council," Norman's application for the search warrant states.

When Hodges was interviewed, he told the SBI the town kept a personal computer at the Hertford Community Center for which he, one other council member, and a former town clerk had the access code. The town uses the computer to livestream its meetings and conduct other business, the warrant application states.

Hodges told the SBI that when he logged into his personal gmail account from the computer on

See SBI, A3

Hertford Police Chief Resigns

Brown: Some using town's police as 'tool for discord'

BY MILES LAYTON
Editor

Hertford's police chief has resigned, citing an "acrimonious political environment" that he claims has the town's police department "being used by some as a tool for discord."

Chief Dennis Brown submitted his letter of resignation to Hertford Mayor Earnell Brown, Town Manager Pam Hurdle and members of Hertford Town Council on Sunday.

Brown's letter states that he has accepted a "more stable position which will provide increased financial support for my family and professional growth." The letter does not state where he's going.

Brown, who began work with the town in December 2018, said his last day with the Hertford Police Department will be March 31.

The chief said his decision to resign "was not reached in haste" and that serving as Hertford's police chief "has been an exceptional honor," adding that he "wishes the department and the community nothing but success."

The chief said his loyalty had always been to citizens and that during his tenure he had "employed judicious and equal enforcement of the law and never showed favoritism to one person or group."

Unfortunately, he said, "the police department is being used by some as a tool for discord."

"This is not our primary function and is placing staff in the middle of political disagreements," Brown said.

Brown didn't mention names but noted it became public last year that one member of Hertford Town Council was

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PERQUIMANS WEATHER



PHOTO BY ELIZABETH PORCHER JONES

Depends on how you look at this wonderful photo by Elizabeth Porcher Jones of a cypress tree in the Perquimans River, but the words optical illusion come to mind because of the tree's reflection on the water.

Monsoon Season in Coastal Carolina

BY MILES LAYTON
Editor

Monsoon season has arrived and then some in Perquimans County.

During the last several days, more than 3 inches of rain has fallen in Hertford and surrounding counties – a helpful statistic learned Tuesday morning during the Rotary Club of Hertford's meeting.

Rain gauge in the back of the editor's house says much the same thing – 3 inches plus of rain

fell in Edenton too. Thanks to retired science teacher and chairperson of the Chowan-Edenton Environmental Group Colleen Karl, we are members of Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network (CoCoRaHS), a network of volunteer weather observers in the United States, Canada, and the Bahamas that take daily readings of precipitation and report them to a central data store over the internet.

For those who may be new to coastal Carolina, monsoon season happens usually in the early

part of the year between February and April. Our region has its dry spells too.

Been foggy of late as this photo by Elizabeth Porcher Jones of Hertford shows of the tree by the Perquimans River; looks almost like a mirage. Or if anyone remembers those personality tests with the ink blots, what do you see? Perhaps a tree creature from the Lord of the Rings movie? Great photo.

Thursday, get ready for some

See MONSOON, A2

ROUND-UP

AP and 5K

BY MILES LAYTON
Editor

A round-up of all things Perquimans County... Congrats to the recently elected **Board of Directors for Albemarle Plantation:**

- Anne Lankford- President
- Art Honeycutt- Vice President
- Bruce Behrend- Treasurer
- Kevin Jackson- Secretary
- Steve Pomp- member
- Travis Walsh- member
- Bobby Masters- member

Let's say like it is – Albemarle Plantation is perhaps the best planned neighborhood/development in northeast North Carolina. Marina is top notch, golf course and clubhouse too. People who live there never cease to amaze me from former Pennsylvania congressman **Dick Schulze** to **Gary Lico**, the guy who does Forensic Files television show – it's worldwide! **Winfield Boyer** is a great Rotary president too.

Speaking of the **Rotary Club of Hertford**, the Students of the Month for February are Pirates' seniors **Trevor Smith** and **Tanaysha Watson**. Trevor wants to be a farmer, hopes to attend NCSU and works at Cartwright Farms. Tanaysha has set her sites for a career in nursing with plans to attend Winston Salem State University. Congrats!

Another note about Rotary, **Charles Lacefield**, who was a former Executive Vice President at Dow Corning and President of Hertford Rotary Club, has been returned to his home for hospice care. Please keep Charlie, Ruth and their family in our thoughts and prayers. Charles was president for the Rotary year

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Hertford Council Tightens Access to Center

Councilors now have to get council OK to enter building

BY JULIAN EURE
For the Perquimans Weekly

Hertford Town Council has tightened councilors' access to the town's community center in the wake of a state probe into allegations a councilor's personal emails were illegally retrieved from a town-owned computer in the center.

Councilors approved a measure last week requiring

members to first seek the full five-member council's permission to use the center at 305 West Grubb Street. The measure also gives the town administrator control of keys to the facility.

According to Councilor Frank Norman, one of two councilors who opposed the change, Hertford councilors must now seek the full council's authorization to use the building. They then must seek a key from the town administrator, who is required to get the key back when they've finished

use of the facility. Councilors' hours of use are limited to between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Norman said.

Norman said the change "doesn't work for me," noting he often holds meetings in the office with either constituents or elected officials, some of which are impromptu and after hours. He said under the measure, he and other councilors must surrender their existing keys to the building.

Councilman Ashley Hodges, who voted for the change, described it as "good gover-

nance," noting the town previously had no "documented procedure" for controlling access to the building. While the town administrator controlled access for members of the public, the town's four councilors had unlimited access. Or at least some did, he said.

"Six weeks ago, locks to the building were changed," Hodges said. "Councilman Norman and Councilman (Quentin) Jackson had keys that worked. But Councilman (Jerry) Mim-

See CENTER, A2