

THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

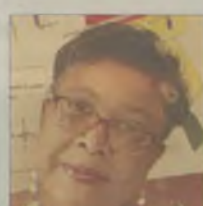


"News from Next Door"

THURSDAY, AUGUST 19, 2021

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Brothers explores legal response to release of info



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Foundation golf tournament raises \$11K for schools



PAGE A7
Expectations raised for Perquimans High football team

Report: Jackson should have been removed after guilty plea

Auditor also details \$11K in questionable spending

BY JULIAN EURE AND REGGIE PONDER
Staff Writers

HERTFORD — Hertford Town Councilor Quentin Jackson should have been removed from office after he pleaded guilty to assaulting another council member in December 2019, a new report by the state auditor says.

The report, released Tuesday and based on a special investigation performed by State Auditor Beth Wood's office, also details \$11,671 in



JACKSON

questionable travel and other expenses incurred by Jackson while he was the town council's mayor pro tem.

The 99-page report also states that the town "disregarded the law and its attorney's advice" when it overpaid \$25,749 for a street lighting project, awarding the contract to the highest bidder, referred to in Wood's report as Jackson's "preferred vendor" for the project.

ONLINE

To read State Auditor Beth Wood's full investigative report, read the online version of this story at www.dailyadvance.com/perquimans

Wood's report doesn't refer to Jackson specifically by name; it refers to him throughout only as "the former mayor pro tem."

Jackson on Tuesday took issue with the report and said he would discuss his objections in greater detail later in the week.

"I dispute all of the findings," Jackson said.

Wood's report states Hertford didn't follow its own charter when it allowed Jackson to remain in office following his guilty plea to assault. Jackson, who struck then-fellow Councilman Sid Eley in the face following a council meeting in October 2018, pleaded guilty to simple assault and was sentenced to serve 15 days in jail.

According to Wood's report, North Carolina's Constitution disqualifies "an elected or appointed official ... from holding office if they are not qualified to vote because of a felony conviction." However, Hertford's charter is more restrictive. It states "the mayor

of a member of the board of commissioners ... convicted of a crime while in office, shall immediately forfeit his office."

Because Jackson didn't forfeit his office following his conviction, the town not only allowed him to continue participating in its decision-making, it also ended up paying \$3,000 for his legal fees related to the assault charge, Wood's report states.

Wood's report recommends Hertford Town Council follow the town's charter and remove "the former mayor pro tem from office." It further recommends the council consider changing its charter to comply with the state con-

stitution.

In the town's response to Wood's report, Mayor Earnell Brown indicated the council wasn't likely to follow the state auditor's recommendation and remove Jackson.

"Although the majority of the current Town Council is resolute in its condemnation of (Jackson's) behavior, the current Town Council is advised by its attorney that the Town Charter's provision for immediate forfeiture of office is unenforceable as it runs counter to the forfeiture requirements stated in the North Carolina Constitution,"

See JACKSON, A6

Census: County, towns lose population

Perquimans' population fell 3.3% to 13,005 in 2020

BY PAUL NIELSEN
The Daily Advance

U.S. Census data released last week show that while North Carolina's urban areas grew in population over the past decade, boosting the state's population to 10.4 million residents, a majority of area counties, including Perquimans, have lost population.

Among area counties, only Currituck and Camden saw their populations grow over the 10 years since 2010. Perquimans, Chowan and Pasquotank, meanwhile, lost population over the past decade.

Perquimans' population dripped 3.3 percent to 13,005 people, according to the Census. The county's population in 2010 was 13,453.

The county's two municipalities, Hertford and Winfall, also lost population over the past decade. Hertford's population decreased by 209 people, falling from 2,143 in 2010 to 1,934, a decrease of 9.5 percent. Winfall's population fell by 39 people, decreasing from 594 to 555, a decrease of 6.5 percent.

"The Census numbers are counter-intuitive and don't

See CENSUS, A3

Rock Autism



REGGIE PONDER/THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

Backwoods Co. performs during the Rock Autism Music Festival at the Crawfish Shack in Hertford, Saturday afternoon. The event raised money for the N.C. Autism Society.

Festival brings together bands, music lovers for good cause

BY REGGIE PONDER
Staff Writer

The North Carolina Rock Autism Music Festival Saturday in Perquimans County raised money for the N.C. Autism Society and gave fans of Southern rock an opportunity to enjoy live music and sunshine in a festive atmosphere.

Daniel Jordan and his wife DiAna started the festival in 2017. Their

own son is on the autism spectrum and they wanted to do something to benefit the N.C. Autism Society and its work with people who experience autism.

This year's festival, held at the Crawfish Shack, was the fourth. It didn't happen last year because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Fans of live music were excited to see the festival return this year.

Nicky Winslow of Belvidere was

enjoying his second time at the festival.

"The music is great," Winslow said. "They're playing anything from Prince to Lynyrd Skynyrd to Eric Church."

The music leaned mostly toward country, country rock and Southern rock.

Robert "Rabbit" Stallings, also of Belvidere, was listening to the music

See AUTISM, A2

Hertford manager Hurdle to retire

Hurdle, manager since 2018, to step down Jan. 1

BY REGGIE PONDER
Staff Writer

HERTFORD — Hertford Town Manager Pam Hurdle has announced plans to retire effective Jan. 1, 2022.

Hurdle, 59, said in an interview Thursday that she has enjoyed working for the town of Hertford but now looks forward to completing her dissertation and earning a doctorate in public administration from Capella University.

Although she has no immediate plans beyond her studies and continuing her involvement in church and community activities, Hurdle said she would like to teach at the college level.

A Gates County native who lives with her husband, a farmer, in the Hurdletown section of Perquimans County, Hurdle joined the Hertford town staff in 1998 as assistant to the town manager. She became interim manager in May 2018 when

See HURDLE, A3



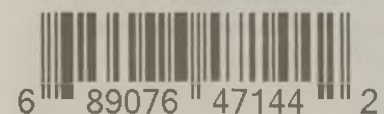
HURDLE

Rain holds off, Hertford holds first downtown Stroll

Showers canceled downtown gathering in both June and July

BY REGGIE PONDER
Staff Writer

The rain stayed away long enough to give residents a visitors an evening of summer fun at



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Friday night's Hertford Stroll in downtown Hertford.

The event was slated for previous Friday evenings in June and July but both of those outings were canceled or shortened by rain showers.

It was hot Friday evening but the weather remained clear.

And there were water hoses, a dunking booth and bottles of cold water to provide relief from the heat.

Thomas Waller, owner of the new shop Hertford Mercantile in the downtown district, said he was glad to see the Stroll finally come to fruition.

"We're finally getting to have a

full night so we're excited," said Waller, who opened Hertford Mercantile about three months ago.

He said the event seemed to generate a lot of excitement.

"The town is really coming together," he said.

A popcorn popper was turning out fresh, hot popcorn in front of the store, and inside Waller offered samples of some of the food items he sells.

Waller explained that he is from New Orleans and sells a number of food products that reflect the Big Easy heritage.

Waller said he came to Hertford

See STROLL, A3



REGGIE PONDER/THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

Gina Durante bags hot popcorn as owner Thomas Waller shares a laugh with a customer in front of Hertford Mercantile during Friday evening's Hertford Stroll.