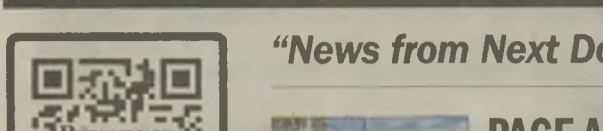


# THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY



"News from Next Door"

THURSDAY, JANUARY 13, 2022

\$1.50



SCAN ME



**PAGE A2**  
Overtens opened Inner Banks BBQ in Edenton in December



**PAGE A6**  
Starting community garden both rewarding, challenging



**PAGE A8**  
Civic League holds Breakfast With Santa, Santa parade

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## White: Sheriff's Office reaches full staffing

Sheriff's Office now has 24 full-time sworn officers

BY REGGIE PONDER  
Staff Writer

The Perquimans County Sheriff's Office is now fully staffed, Sheriff Shelby White said last week.

The office has added five sworn officers and an ad-



WHITE

town limits.

In addition, the county

administrator as part of a contract with the town of Hertford to provide law enforcement protection inside the

town limits.

In addition, the county

funded two additional deputies in the 2021-22 budget.

The hiring of William Phillip Lane III, announced at the Jan. 3 meeting of the Perquimans Board of Commissioners, brings the sheriff's office up to full staff, White said.

Commissioner Joseph Hoffer asked White what he considers full staffing, and White explained that 24

full-time sworn officers now work for the sheriff's office.

Since July 1 of last year the sheriff's office has been providing law enforcement services within Hertford's corporate limits under a contract with the town.

The policing contract is a result of town councilors' majority vote last year to dissolve Hertford's police department, citing the high

cost of operating a stand-alone policing agency.

Town officials determined that contracting law enforcement services through the Sheriff's Office could save the town hundreds of thousands of dollars a year.

The town is providing the sheriff's office \$350,000 under the contract, and also vehicles and equipment.

White said in July that he expected it would take about six months for the new arrangement to run smoothly. He said last week that he believes that point has now arrived.

"I feel like it's going pretty smooth," White said.

The sheriff said everyone in the department is fitting

See SHERIFF, A3

## A Matter of Truss



REGGIE PONDER/THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

Perquimans and Hertford officials are seeking grant funding to have the N.C. Department of Transportation preserve the former S-Bridge truss, shown here Saturday on a barge in the Perquimans River, and relocate it to Missing Mill Park in Hertford.

## County: Move bridge feature to park

S-Bridge truss would be focal point at Missing Mill Park

BY REGGIE PONDER  
Staff Writer

Perquimans County officials last week strengthened and clarified their support for a town of Hertford effort to preserve the S-Bridge truss as a new feature at Missing Mill Park.

Last month County Manager Frank Heath wrote a letter to N.C. Department of Transportation officials supporting the preserva-

tion of the S-Bridge truss and its relocation to park site.

That sentiment was cemented in a resolution adopted unanimously by the Perquimans Board of Commissioners on Jan. 3. The resolution supports the town's request for grant funding to relocate and preserve the S-Bridge truss.

Heath noted the resolution asks that funds be provided to the NCDOT for the project. Heath added that county officials hope the agency will oversee the project, though that kind of

detail has yet to be worked out.

The resolution notes that the S-Bridge is being replaced "due to functional obsolescence." Nonetheless, the bridge's historic and aesthetic importance has not diminished at all, according to county and town officials.

"Since the bridge was constructed in 1929, it has served as the centerpiece of our county, even appearing on town and county logos throughout the years," Heath wrote in a Dec. 14 letter to NCDOT Division 1

Engineer Sterling Baker.

"Recently, the town of Hertford has approved a waterfront revitalization plan along the Perquimans River with the S-Bridge truss again being incorporated as a focal point," Heath said in the letter. "In this plan, the S-Bridge truss would be located in the Missing Mill Park area as an integral part of the bike and pedestrian paths on the water."

Heath's letter said the project "would accentuate

See TRUSS, A3

## Marine park basin designer also tapped to build it

Perquimans project can begin once state funds released

BY REGGIE PONDER  
Staff Writer

Perquimans County plans to use the engineering firm that designed the inland basin for the Marine Industrial Park to oversee the basin's construction.

The Perquimans Board of Commissioners voted unanimously Monday to authorize County Manager Frank Heath to contract with Moffatt and Nichol Engineering when it comes time to construct the basin.

That time could be soon. The recently signed state budget includes \$4 million for the park, which comes on top of \$2.8 million the

county received in state funding for the project about five years ago and a \$750,000 Golden LEAF grant about four years ago.

The county has not yet received the new funds allocated in the state budget but county officials expect to have them in hand soon. The project can begin once the newly budgeted state funds are released, according to county officials.

Moffatt & Nichol Engineering is the firm that designed the Marine Industrial Park basin. Board of Commissioners Chairman Wallace Nelson pointed out that Moffatt and Nichol also completed a lot of work at the commerce park in Wanchese.

See PARK, A3

## Perquimans: Temp 911 sharing with Gates working fine

Gates dispatchers working in Perquimans for now

BY REGGIE PONDER  
Staff Writer

Perquimans County officials said last week that shared 911 operations with Gates County have gone smoothly and all calls are being answered on a timely basis.

Because of staffing shortages at the Gates County 911 center, Perquimans County's 911 center is temporarily providing dispatching services in both Perquimans and the neighboring

county.

The Gates 911 Dispatch Center has temporarily relocated to the 911 center in Perquimans and Gates telecommunicators began working there on Dec. 17.

Gates County Manager Tim Wilson said last month that as soon as dispatcher vacancies in Gates are filled, 911 dispatching services for Gates will relocate back to the Gates County 911 Dispatch Center.

Wilson could not be reached this week for comment on why the vacancies happened or what Gates'

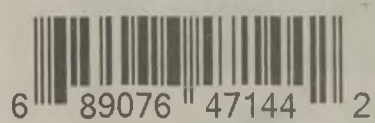
See 911, A3

## Bertie drug trafficker gets 25 years in fed prison

Feds: Leary bought drugs, then supplied local dealers

From staff reports

A Bertie County man who for five years headed a drug traffick-



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ing organization that supplied illegal drugs in communities across the region — including Perquimans County — has been sentenced to 25 years in federal prison, a press release from the U.S. Attorney's Office states.

Levar Anthony Leary, 41, was convicted in August of trafficking cocaine, crack cocaine, and methamphetamine and conspiring to commit money laundering, U.S. Attorney Michael Easley said Wednesday, Jan. 5.

According to Easley, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of North Carolina, Leary organized

and led a drug trafficking organization from 2016 to early 2021 that distributed cocaine, crack cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin and marijuana throughout northeastern North Carolina.

Easley said Leary and his "associates" used a hotel, nightclub and convenience store in Bertie to distribute narcotics and launder money. Narcotics agents were able to track and observe Leary travel across the country, including to California, Texas, Florida and Georgia where he obtained large quantities of illegal drugs and returned to North Carolina,

Easley said.

Some of those assisting Leary's drug trafficking organization have already been convicted and sentenced, Easley said. They include Johnny Earl Jordan, who was sentenced to six years; Fred Rudolph Robbins Jr., sentenced to 7½ years; and Alexander Leander Williams Jr., sentenced to 11 years.

As a result of the investigation, law enforcement seized numerous vehicles and properties that Easley says were used to conceal the profits of Leary's illegal activities. Investigators also recovered a number of firearms and illegal

drugs.

Perquimans County Sheriff Shelby White said Leary is believed to have provided drugs to individual drug dealers who were operating in Perquimans. White said his office helped with the investigation, and added that nearly every county in the region had at least one officer who contributed to the probe.

Pasquotank Sheriff Tommy Wooten said Leary was also a supplier for drug sellers in Pasquotank. He said his office

See BERTIE, A3