

THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

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"News from Next Door"

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2022

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SCAN ME



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 Cole urges more mental health money for state courts



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 No Tarboro comeback this time: Pirates slam door 82-67



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 Iroquois Confederacy helped inspire founding fathers

Shortages tied to COVID delay S-Bridge completion to June

Contractor has trouble keeping workers, getting materials

BY TYLER NEWMAN
 Staff Writer

Shortages of workers and building materials caused by the COVID-19 pandemic will delay completion of the replacement S-Bridge in Hertford until this summer, according to the N.C. Department of Transportation.

The \$57 million project, which was originally slated to wrap up in March, will now be completed in June, Tim Hass, communications officer for NCDOT, said.

"COVID-related staffing issues have been the biggest factor in the

delay," Hass said. "At times, our contractor has been reduced to half to two-thirds of its usual labor force. On top of that, fabrication issues with bridge components and other material delays have also been contributing factors."

Commenting on what types of bridge materials have been delayed, Hass said it's "pretty much a little bit of everything."

"From the structural steel we get from a plant in Birmingham, Alabama, to the plywood and the power cable that will run to the bridge fender house," he said. "Nearly every supplier has been hit by COVID-related staffing shortages, and that's resulted in delays in a whole array of deliveries."

The original S-Bridge, which was built across the Perquimans River in 1928, has been moved by barge to its current site alongside Missing Mill Park in Hertford. Town and county officials are hopeful it can repurposed to become part of bike and pedestrian paths along the town's waterfront.

While much of the new bridge is complete, there is still some work to be done.

In Winfall, the last bents of concrete piling for the structure have been driven. There are also a few timber piles for the pile-supported roadway remaining to be installed.

Placement of curbs and gutters will resume in Hertford once the

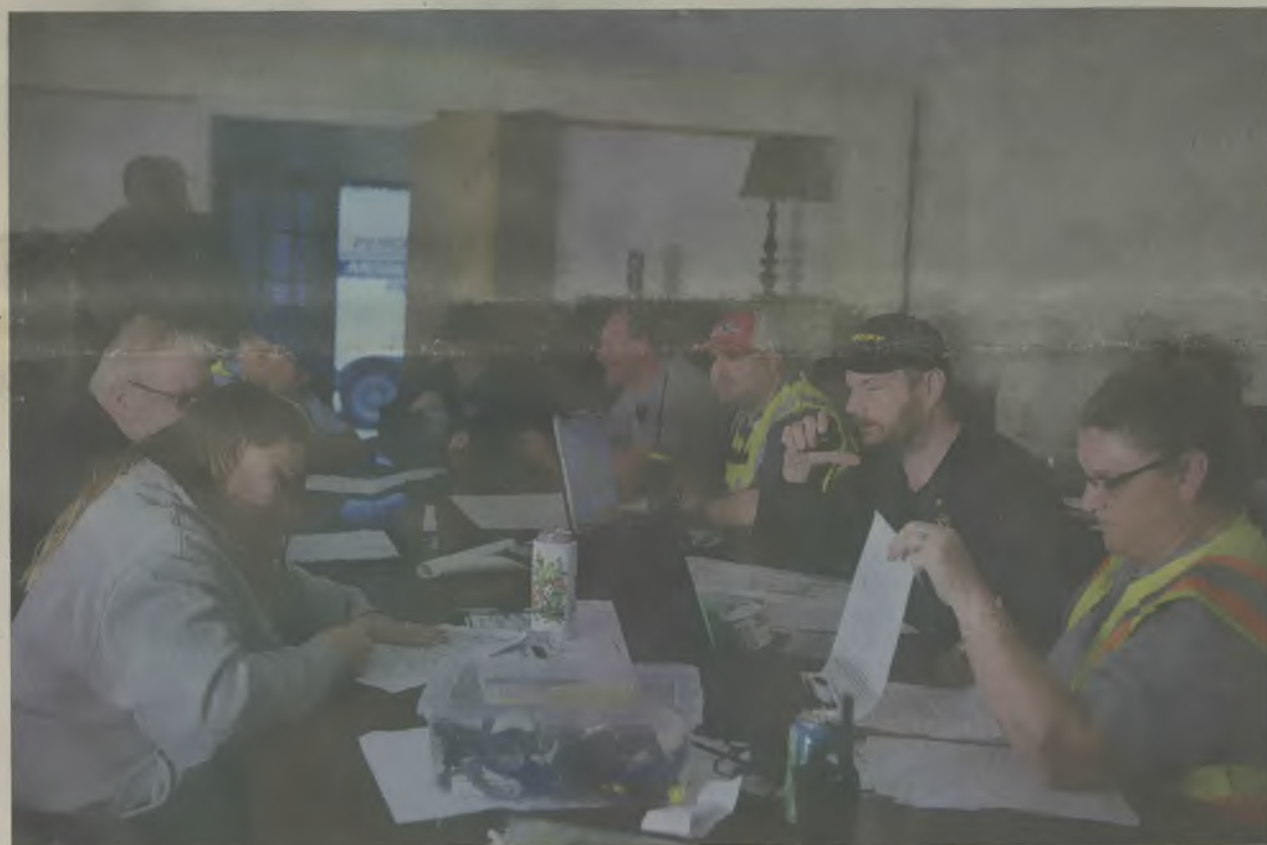


TYLER NEWMAN/THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

Work continues on the Hertford S-Bridge project as seen from North Church Street in Hertford.

See BRIDGE, A3

Preparing for the worst



CHRIS DAY/THE DAILY ADVANCE

Perquimans Sheriff's Investigator James Fowden (right in black hat), the incident commander for an "active shooter" drill held in downtown Hertford, Friday, is seen speaking over the radio alongside other emergency service workers in the incident command center. A number of Perquimans, state and federal first responder agencies took part in the exercise at the Perquimans Courthouse and Annex.

First responders drill for gun attack

Scenario put 3 gunmen in Perquimans courtrooms

BY REGGIE PONDER
 Staff Writer

Organizers wanted Friday's "active shooter" drill at the Perquimans County Courthouse to be as realistic as possible.

But the drill took an unexpectedly real turn as the Hertford Fire Department was dispatched to an accident scene just moments

before the exercise started and had to extricate someone from a vehicle.

Details about the accident weren't immediately available but it's timing underscored the uncertainty first responders face when having to react to emergencies.

At 1:19 p.m. the first shots "fired" during the drill rang out in the Perquimans County Historic Courthouse. About that same time a "fire" was started in the space between the his-

toric courthouse and the annex.

Two men entered the courthouse just before the shots were fired. They were wearing hooded sweatshirts; one was carrying a shotgun, the other held a rifle.

Within two minutes of the first gunshots the 911 emergency communications center received three calls. The first reported the fire between the two buildings. The second call stated the deputy at the

metal detector had been shot, and the third caller said someone had been stabbed in the courtroom.

In just a couple of minutes after those calls the sound of sirens could be heard as deputies and other first responders headed to the courthouse.

In a pre-event briefing, consultant Sam Mickey and county Emergency Services Director Jonathan Nixon both stressed the importance

See DRILL, A3

Bland draws 2 GOP challengers in judgeship primary

Moreland, McAvoy hope to unseat newly sworn-in judge

BY PAUL NIELSEN
 The Daily Advance

For perhaps the first time ever, the First Judicial District will have a Republican primary for judge.

Two lawyers — one an assistant district attorney, the other in private practice — are challenging recently seated District Court Judge Jennifer Bland in the May 17 GOP primary.

Bland, a former assistant district attorney, was appointed to the District Court by Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper in late August and was sworn in Sept. 2. Bland replaced Judge Eula Reid, who was appointed by Cooper to fill a vacancy on the Superior Court created by Judge J.C. Cole's retirement last March.

At the time of her swearing-in, Bland was a registered Democrat. But she switched her party registration from Democrat to Republican on Sept. 3, telling The Daily Advance she did so because the GOP best reflects her values as a conservative.

Bland's declared challengers include Jeff Moreland, an assistant district attorney, and Bernard "BJ" McAvoy, a Dare County attorney. Filing for the May 17 primary resumes Feb. 24 after being halted in December because of legal challenges to the North Carolina's newly drawn maps for legislative and congressio-



BLAND

MCAVOY



MORELAND

nal districts. Bland said her first four months on the bench have been "fulfilling." She is currently only presiding over non-criminal matters because the state's judicial standards require a six-month "cooling off" period for former prosecutors who are either elected or appointed district judge.

Bland said she will begin hearing criminal cases on March 2, when the cooling off period ends and she's completed the second of two weeks of "judge school" in Chapel Hill.

"I really love the job," Bland said. "I'm doing civil cases, child support and child custody cases, domestic violence cases. When it comes to child cases, I feel like I can make an impact on children's lives and families lives."

Moreland has been an assistant district attorney since 2016 after having worked in private practice in Perquimans County. He said he is the

See JUDGE, A3

New Chamber director Lee enjoys helping Perquimans biz

Lee's family also operates Owl Feed Ya food truck in area

BY ANNA GOODWIN MCCARTHY
 Correspondent

As both a Perquimans County native and local business owner, LeAnn



LEE

na Lee is excited about her new role helping businesses grow and thrive in Perquimans.

Lee was named executive director of the Perquimans County Chamber of Commerce in October. She formerly worked as a warehouse specialist at the Coast Guard base in Elizabeth City.

In her nearly four months as Chamber director, Lee has already p l a n n e d a number of upcoming networking and educational events

for Perquimans businesses.

On Feb. 22, the Chamber and the Perquimans County Schools will partner on "Discovering Possibilities," a program similar to the job-shadowing programs held in other communities.

During Discovering Possibilities, a group of students from Perquimans County High School will have an opportunity to visit businesses in the county and see first hand how different workplaces operate.

Lee said one of her goals is to build on the success of past Chamber events while also creating new ones. She's also excited about the opportunity to work with both current and

budding business owners.

"I love being able to see an outcome," she said.

Lee is also looking forward to April 9, when the Perquimans Chamber will host its spring expo and vendor fair at the Perquimans County Recreation Center. Lee said the Chamber is still accepting applications for vendors for the expo that will focus on weddings, celebrations and gifts.

Lee is also excited about the renovations currently underway to the Chamber's building at 118 West Market Street in Hertford. Lee said once the renovations are complete in a couple of weeks, she hopes to plan a grand opening for the community to

come and see the improvements.

When she's not busy with her Chamber duties, Lee helps her husband and her parents with her family's food truck business. The family's Owl Feed Ya food truck operates seasonally and caters to special events.

Lee said "my husband dad and husband do all the cooking," while she and her mother manage the business.

Lee said her favorite items on the Owl Feed Ya menu are the vinegar-based barbecue and brisket.

For more information about the Perquimans County Chamber of Commerce, visit the organization's Facebook page.

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