

# THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY



"News from Next Door"

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2022

\$1.50



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Thanks to grant, 2 'Little Libraries' coming to Perquimans



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Durants Neck Ruritans brighten Christmas for families



**PAGE B2**  
Pirate boys drop fourth game to Bruins at home

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## Albemarle Commission celebrates its 50th anniversary

Agency manages employment training, aging programs

BY REGGIE PONDER  
Staff Writer

The Albemarle Commission last week celebrated 50 years of service to the region in areas such as grant administration, service coordination, and management of services like senior nutrition and employment training.

State Sen. Bobby Hanig, R-Currituck, told those gathered Tuesday, Dec. 6, for a celebratory dinner

at Seven Sounds Brewing in Elizabeth City that the Albemarle Commission makes a difference every day in the lives of people in a 10-county region of northeastern North Carolina.

Although an early iteration of the commission was organized in November 1964 as the Albemarle Rural Planning and Development Commission — with an annual budget of slightly more than \$14,000 — the anniversary being observed this year is 1972. That's when aging programs and a Manpow-

er Planning Board were added to the organization's responsibilities and then Gov. Robert Scott designated the commission as the regional clearinghouse for grant applications, according to a history prepared by Albemarle Commission staff.

The commission assisted in the acquisition of more than \$500 million in grants for the 10-county area in its first decade of existence, according to the summary of the history.

Environmental studies, water projects in Hertford and Columbia, regional

solid waste planning, grant oversight for the Economic Improvement Council, administration of Community Development Block Grant projects, and administration of numerous loan programs for businesses and homeowners are among the many projects the Albemarle Commission has overseen or spearheaded.

"In other words, over the last 50 years the Albemarle Commission has provided services directly and indirectly as a grant writer

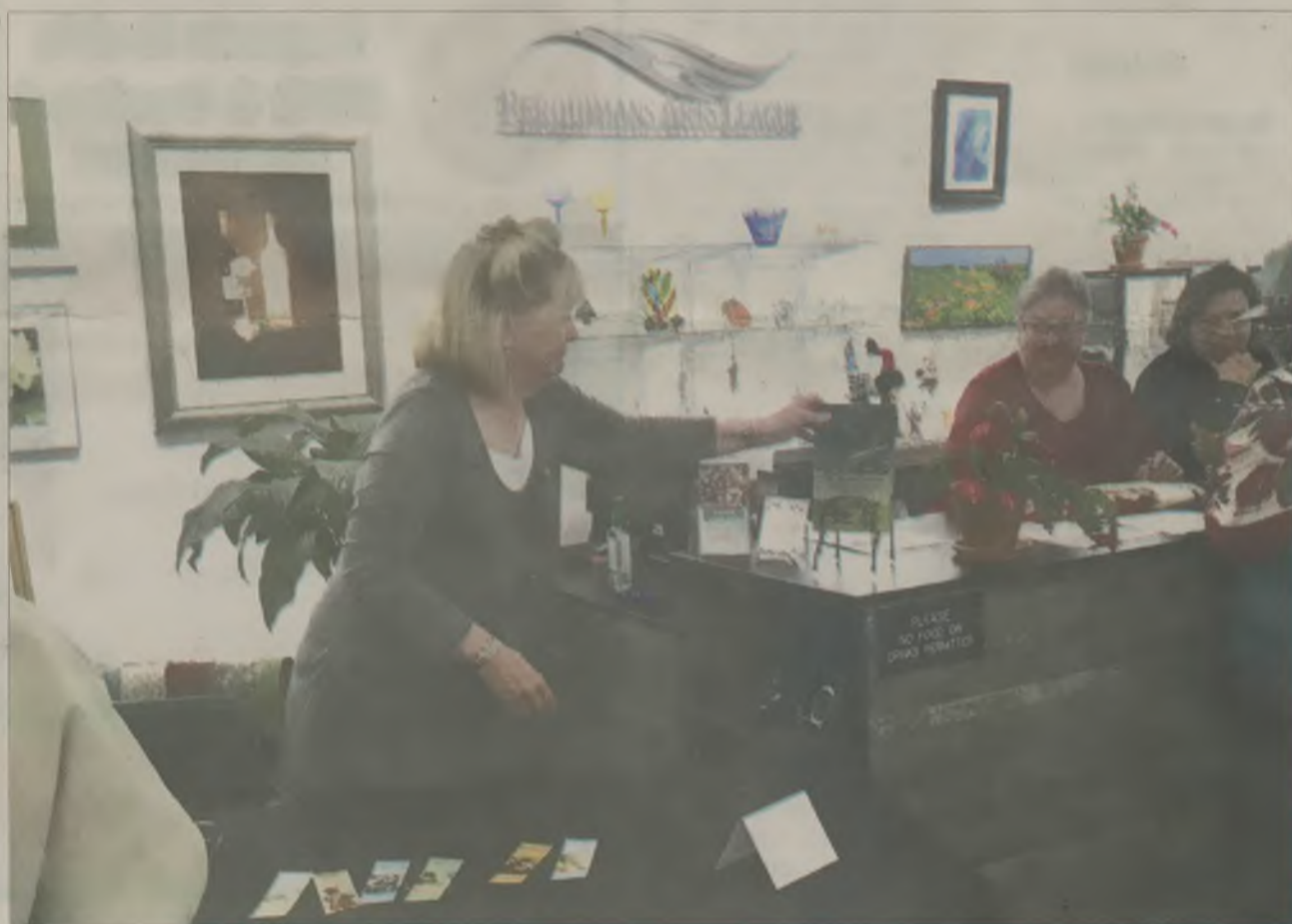
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REGGIE PONDER/THE DAILY ADVANCE

State Sen. Bobby Hanig, R-Currituck, addresses the audience Tuesday, Dec. 6, at the 50th anniversary celebration of the Albemarle Commission at Seven Sounds Brewing Co. in Elizabeth City.

## The Bodacious Bandit



JOHN FOLEY/THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

Beth Sessoms, author of the children's book, "Blackbeard: The Bodacious Bandit and Fascinating Tales of Perquimans County," recently attended a book-signing event at the Perquimans Arts League in Hertford. The book follows the adventures of a misguided snake named Blackbeard and his quest to find happiness among the colorful creatures of the Albemarle Sound.

## Author pens different Blackbeard tale

Sessoms' book follows exploits of a misguided snake

BY JOHN FOLEY  
Staff Writer

The exploits of Edward Teach, the English pirate better known as the notorious Blackbeard, are the stuff of fact and legend.

The pirate, who got his nickname from his thick black beard and frightening

visage, plundered ships off the East Coast and West Indies in the early 18th century until he was killed during a ferocious battle with Colonial soldiers and sailors off the coast of Ocracoke in 1718.

However for Hertford resident Beth Sessoms, Blackbeard is a misguided snake who will always be close to her heart and occupy a prominent place on her bookshelf.

Sessoms, a first-time author, self-published the children's book, "Blackbeard: The Bodacious Bandit and Fascinating Tales of Perquimans County," in April. The book, published by her company, Fascinating Tails Publishing, follows the adventures of a misguided snake named Blackbeard and his quest to find happiness among the colorful creatures of the Albemarle Sound.

Sessoms, who recently signed copies of her book at an event at the Perquimans Art Gallery, said she penned "Blackbeard: The Bodacious Bandit and Fascinating Tales of Perquimans County" with her grandchildren in mind.

"I wanted to leave my six granddaughters something original from me," she said. "I also was interested

See BLACKBEARD, A3

## Firm to provide clearer view of town's finances

First Tryon's model will correlate spending, impacts

BY REGGIE PONDER  
Staff Writer

The town of Hertford will contract with a consultant to seek a clear picture of town finances — especially the impact of spending and borrowing on water and sewer rates, taxes and fees charged to residents and property owners.

At its regular meeting Monday night, Hertford Town Council voted unanimously to hire financial services firm First Tryon \$35,000. According to town officials, the firm will develop a financial model that will correlate the town's debt, fund balance, spending, revenues, inter-

est, and other variables to determine short- and long-term impacts of purchasing, spending and borrowing decisions.

Interim Town Manager Janice Cole recommended council approve First Tryon's proposal.

It was the lack of such a long-term financial model that Councilor Ashley Hodges, council's mayor pro tem, cited at last month's meeting for the town not proceeding with a loan application to fund much-needed sewer infrastructure.

Hodges said as much as the work needs to be done, he's not comfortable taking on additional debt for the town until Hertford officials have a clear, long-term model of the town's

See FIRM, A3



REGGIE PONDER/THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

A light display synchronized with music has been set up on the lawn of the historic Perquimans County Courthouse in Hertford. A former county manager described the light show at the courthouse Monday, Dec. 5, as a "travesty."

## Lights have fans — and detractor

Retired county manager calls lights 'travesty'

BY REGGIE PONDER  
Staff Writer

The Perquimans Festival of Lights on the lawn of the historic Perquimans County Courthouse is drawing people to downtown Hertford for a holiday-themed light show — but one former county official is not a fan of the display.

Paul Gregory, who served as Perquimans' second-ever county manager, characterized the lights

display as a "travesty" because of the historic nature of the courthouse during remarks to the Perquimans Board of Commissioners Monday, Dec. 5.

Gregory acknowledged at the outset of his remarks that his opinion was likely a minority viewpoint.

He said the county has done a good job of modernizing operations inside the courthouse without disturbing its exterior appearance.

But the flashing lights are out of place, Gregory said.

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## Solar farm permit gets two-year extension

Pender Road only facility OK'd in county not yet built

BY REGGIE PONDER  
Staff Writer

The only permitted solar farm in Perquimans County not yet built will have another

two years to come online. The Board of Commissioners last week granted a final two-year extension to the developer of the planned solar at the north end of Pender Road in Perquimans County.

Representatives of Pine Gate Renewables, the company developing the Pender Road Solar Farm, asked for the permit extension at the Dec. 5 Perquimans Board of Commissioners meeting. The board approved the permit extension

unanimously on a motion by Commissioner Kyle Jones.

The project is designed to be a 5-megawatt facility on about 60 acres.

The solar farm was initially permitted in 2019 and commissioners had already granted a two-year extension once before. The two-year extension granted Dec. 5 is the last extension the project is eligible for.

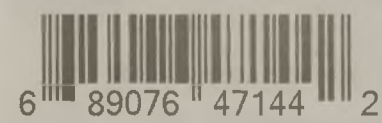
Mikala Newsom of Pine Gate Renewables explained that all permits have been obtained for the project and that the only hold-up is working out an inter-con-

nection with Dominion Power.

Newsom told county commissioners that the schedule is dependent on a large-load customer that is expected to go off line. The large load customer had targeted the end of this calendar year to go offline but that has now been reset to June 2023, Newsom said.

The wait is necessary because Dominion's transformers near the planned Pender Road solar farm can only accommodate a

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