

Downtown revitalization gets a \$50K state boost

By DEUCE NIVEN
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A \$50,000 appropriation from the N.C. General Assembly will be a significant aid to downtown revitalization, state Rep. Brenden Jones and Mayor Royce Harper said last week.

Jones delivered the check to the mayor at his downtown autoparts business.

“I worked closely with my colleagues during the budget process to include this much needed funding for Tabor City,” Jones said. “The bill in which this appropriation is included was vetoed by the Governor but I was happy to return to Raleigh before the end of the year to override his veto and secure funding for the district.”

“We’re tickled to get it,” Harper said. “It’s



Mayor Royce Harper, left, accepts an appropriation for downtown revitalization from state Rep. Brenden Jones. (Deuce Niven, TLT)

going to be a big help in what we want to do downtown.

Jones said the check

reflected his priority “to look after the folks back home.”

Funding for Tabor

City was included as a grant-in-aid under a State Budget and Management appropriation,

Loris Chamber fete is Jan. 24.

By JENN CAUSEY
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Citizen of the Year, Merchant of the Year, and other honors will be awarded during the annual awards banquet of the Loris Chamber of Commerce later this month.

Scheduled for Thursday, Jan. 24 in the banquet room at The Center for Health & Fitness, the evening will begin with a 6 p.m. social hour, dinner at 7 p.m., awards an hour later.

Backstreet Café is to cater.

Nomination forms have already been sent to chamber members who have also selected recipients of Lifetime Achievement, Public Safety award, Community Service, Robert Brooks Entrepreneur

and the Outstanding Youth awards.

Emcee for the evening will be Jack Murphy, owner of WLSC Tiger Radio, a television host, and creator of the “Down at the Barber-shop” program.

“Chamber directors are very excited for the awards banquet,” Chamber Executive Director Samantha Norris said. “Some changes have been made to keep the event exciting for the audience.

“We look forward to present these awards to those who deserve them. Without people like those chosen, Loris wouldn’t be the great city it is today.”

Tickets are \$25 and are available at the Chamber, 4242 Main Street, or at the door. For details contact Norris at 843-756-6030.

Sheriff’s race brings both sides, peacemakers before commissioners (Continued from Page 1)

the county where he lives “has absolutely zero protection.

“I don’t care if it’s Jody Greene, but Hatcher should not be there, he is not doing his job.”

For Hatcher

- Karen K. Thurmond read a letter from the Columbus County Democratic Party, to commissioners, because since it was sent “we did not get a response.”
- Calling Greene’s sitting as sheriff without a certificate of election “a serious situation,” the letter argued that Hatcher should hold the office until appeals in the race are settled, adding that “we believe we are now without a legitimate chief law enforcement officer in Columbus County.”
- Gloria Smith, vice chair of the Columbus County Democratic Party whose election protest was dismissed by the county board of elections on procedural

grounds said Greene is “not the sheriff.”

Commissioners can expect legal action, Smith said.

“We are going to sue, because our civil rights were violated.”

She also promised political action.

“Minorities keep you in office, so every last one of you is coming out,” Smith said.

- Charles Robeson, who challenged Greene’s residency claim, was passionate in his plea.
- “I’ve never seen anything like this in my whole life,” Robeson said. “I’m sick of it.”
- O.C. Jones said that community watch established in his community, Farmers Union, in 2015 has reduced rampant crime and “now this is one of our safest areas. Because we had good positive support from law enforcement. It only works when you’ve got a leader who will listen.”

Peacemakers

Two women, Marlando Pridgen and Andy Anderson, spoke for peaceful, Christian resolution of the issue without specifically supporting either Greene or Hatcher.

Pridgen asked commissioners to “make a spiritual decision. Don’t make a decision to be pulled either way.

“What God is revealing is that we are missing it on love.”

Pridgen said racism is at play on both sides, but called for “a peaceful way. We have a choice to make this right. I ask that you get on your knees and make this county pray.”

Anderson said he was “excited about the passion” demonstrated by both sides, and about being before commissioners, and called both Greene and Hatcher “fine guys.”

Anderson said race is not the issue, and the “it has become an issue because of a lack of sensitivity and a

lack of compassion.

“I’m just wishing today that we take higher ground.

“I want us to understand that integrity counts.”

Norton

Norton presented maps and other records from the Columbus County Tax Office and Register of Deeds he said disproved Greene’s claim of residency in the Cerro Gordo area.

He called residency “the only issue” at play, and argued that Greene is not a county resident, and therefore ineligible to run for sheriff, much less serve.

Norton said anyone sworn before certificates of election were issued, including new commissioner Jerome McMillian, should be re-sworn with those certificates in hand.

“Everything you are doing is null and void,” Norton said.

By refusing to remove Greene from office and restore Hatcher, Norton argued that commissioners are violating the law, and have committed multiple crimes.

the pending lawsuit from Hatcher, said “I can’t say much, we are in litigation.”

He said the public misunderstands the commissioner’s authority.

“This board has no voice in this,” Burroughs said. “Ultimately this will be decided by the state Board of Elections, by the courts, by a body higher than this.

“We cannot make any decisions affecting the outcome of the sheriff’s race.”

Several commissioners late in the meeting, spoke in general of the issue, urging patience, without talking on any specifics.

“Let the process work,” commissioner James Prevatte said.

“Everybody, put it in your hearts to make sure you do the right thing,” McMillian said.

“I think we all need to get home and pray about it,” commissioner Edwin Russ said. “Whatever happens, happens.”

“I do know the state will make the decision,” commissioner Ricky Bullard said. “I’m just waiting on that answer.”

Commissioner Buddy Byrd said reports that he wanted to remove Greene

from office were untrue, but that he had experience that he had shared with others.

When Byrd challenged incumbent Waldo Marlowe for Democratic nomination for a commissioner’s seat in 1982, the election was extremely close, Byrd said just a five-vote margin, that shifted during recounts with complaints of election irregularities that eventually prompted the state Board of Elections to order a new primary.

By the time the legal process was complete, the November general election had come and gone, and Marlowe stayed in office although Byrd had won the second primary, he said.

“Waldo Marlowe held that seat until next April, until the successor was sworn,” Byrd said.

Byrd was not that successor, despite winning the new primary, he was bested by Republican Caletta Faulk in the special one-on-one general election in the spring of 1983.

With that experience behind him, Byrd said everyone should “let the law and due process work. It’s not our responsibility.”

Hatcher complaint (Continued from Page 1)

manager “acted outside the purpose and beyond the scope of such agency and employment when they failed to take action to establish and support the Constitutional and Statutory Sheriff of Columbus County, Sheriff Hatcher.”

- That Greene is a resident of either Robeson County or Horry County, South Carolina, and “has not shown he resided in Columbus County for one year preceding the election and therefore should be disqualified for the office.
- That Greene’s oath of office is also invalid because

it was signed by state Rep. Brenden Jones of Tabor City, although the oath was administered in open court by District Court Judge Ashley Gore.

- That Greene “said he took an Oath of Office of Sheriff “in which he was to swear to uphold the Constitution and laws of the State of North Carolina, however he has quickly failed by not listening to the rule of law that applies in elections and his purported taking office.

Hatcher also maintains that Greene “has not shown he is even qualified to vote in the election for the Sheriff of

Columbus County for failing to establish residency and therefore should be disqualified for office.”

Hatcher asks the court for “a temporary restraining order, a preliminary injunction and a permanent injunction” that would require Greene, commissioners and the county manager to recognize Hatcher “as the true and indeed Constitutional and Statutory Sheriff of Columbus County.”

Hatcher also seeks monetary damages, attorney fees, legal costs, and “such other and further relief as the court deems proper.”

Town Clerk

(Continued from Page 1)

“Later, we will be advertising for a full-time person to serve as Town Clerk,” Leonard said.

Leonard said he and water clerk Lora Merritt Thompson will take on some of the duties Ward currently handles, at least in the short term.

“Every team has a franchise player,” Leonard said. “Diane is our franchise player, always has been. If we can keep her on board, even part time, that’s a win for us.”

Ward began work as an assistant clerk at Town Hall in 1980, and just a few years later became the Town Clerk.

She was designated a Master Municipal Clerk in 2003.

Just last month council agreed to ask the Columbus County Tax Office to take over tax collections for the town, one of the jobs Ward has had for nearly four decades.

Ward’s husband, Charles Edison Ward, died Dec. 29, 2018. He was 83. - Deuce Niven

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