

Northumberland school board chairman Rev. Lee Scripture, board member Dean Sumner and superintendent Clint Stables inspect the exterior of the sixth-grade building where students must go outside to access restrooms. The building is prone to flooding due to its low elevation and slab-on-grade foundation. The steel beam construction is rusting.

## White Stone seeks bids for boundary line survey

### Food tax hearing is September 2

by Robb Hoff

WHITE STONE—By a 4-0 vote last Thursday, the White Stone Town Council authorized a request for bids on survey work related to the possible adjustment of the town boundary lines.

Acting mayor David Jones reviewed possible areas beyond the current town limits for inclusion in the survey. They include James Wharf Road, Route 3 east to the Norris Bridge, Route 3 west to Ocran Road and Route 200 north to the Carters Creek bridge.

The survey is a preliminary part of the boundary line adjustment process that ultimately includes public hearings and consideration by Lancaster County officials.

"If we don't have much or any opposition from the people who we would take in, and the county doesn't have a problem with it, it's a

fairly simple process," said Jones.

Councilman Jack Boles noted that objections to the boundary line adjustment should be minimized by the fact that the town does not assess utility or property taxes.

Food tax

Also on a 4-0 vote, council scheduled a public hearing September 2 on a proposed 4 percent prepared food tax to be paid by White Stone businesses. Boles cited a need for more revenue to pursue town projects as grounds for adoption of the tax.

"With what we're doing and how the town is growing, I think we can certainly show a need for additional income," said Boles.

Main Street

Town manager Sherri Jewell reported on the town's \$1.1-million Main Street enhancement project.

She said the town was recently awarded \$125,000 in federal funds by the Virginia Commonwealth Transportation Board for the project's second phase, which includes construction of a round-  
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## Survey shows aging school needs repairs, or replacing

First in a two-part series by Reid Pierce Armstrong

CLARAVILLE—Considering that Northumberland Middle School is 48 years old, its condition is not bad.

Sure, the ceiling leaks and the floor is sinking, but the concrete walls and foundation are in great shape, said superintendent Clint Stables, running his hand along a section of masonry that is well over-the-hill in human years.

The average lifespan of a school is 50 years, and as the middle school nears that anniversary, the condition of those walls may become a key factor in deciding whether to modernize the current building or build a new one. That's a decision the county's elected representatives and taxpayers must address in the months to come.

In June 2003, Northumberland County contracted Rodriguez, Ripley, Maddux, Motley Architects of Norfolk to survey the



Asbestos tiles crack under foot.

middle and high schools. A related 200-page report was released to the board of supervisors last week, outlining the problems at the middle school and addressing possible cures. The initial report does not cover needs at the high school.

Once the black high school — called "Old Central" by those who attended it — and later a junior high school, tens of thousands of students have passed through the

middle school corridors.

The memories may run sweet in the minds of those who sharpened their minds within its walls, but a tour of the building with the school board last week revealed problems that a bucket of paint just can't fix.

Erected under antiquated building codes, the building has no air conditioning and few operational windows. The iron plumbing fixtures all need replacing. Asbestos tile in the hallways, cafeteria and home economics room is cracked. Paint is peeling from the kitchen ceiling and a mounted space heater and exposed utilities violate current code requirements.

The ceiling tiles are spotted brown from roof leaks. Pools form on the roof during rainstorms. Runoff drains toward the building rather than away from it. Downspouts are leaking and broken. Standing water swamps the parking lot and surrounding property. The sidewalks and parking lots are crumbling.

The former technical shop, with its poor insulation, low lighting and drafty, single-paned windows, is being used as the art and music building.

Handicap ramps are not code compliant. Bathrooms, sinks, water fountains, science labs and home economics appliances are not accessible.

Exposed wiring and piping appear throughout the building, as do an exposed fuel storage tank and an electrical box hanging from a tree.

The mobile classroom trailers lack a covered access to the main building and the rearmost trailer lacks sidewalk access, making a trip to the cafeteria in a rainstorm a wet and muddy dash for teachers and students.

"The worst deterioration and damage found involves the cracking observed in the exterior wall around openings," the architects' report states. "The cracking associated with the rusting of the steel angles and lack of control joints will only continue to get worse as the expansion of the rusting steel progresses. The presence of more water into ever enlarging cracks will only accelerate the rate of deterioration."

These are only a fraction of the problems listed by the architects.

"Most of the items discussed ... can be cosmetically repaired..." the report states. But other issues

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The gym floor is buckling due to a leaking roof. The damage occurred over a recent rainy weekend. The leak in the roof has been repaired and the board anticipates insurance to cover the cost of replacing the floor.

## Architects to review Northumberland school facility survey for county supervisors

HEATHSVILLE—Architects will reveal results from a long-awaited school facility study today, August 12, for Northumberland supervisors.

The board meets at 2 p.m. at the courthouse in Heathsville.

The board commissioned the firm Rodriguez, Ripley, Maddux, Motley Architects of Norfolk in June 2003 to survey the middle and high schools. The study was expected to take six months to complete.

The presentation, entitled the "Middle School Modernization Study," will address various problems at the middle school and will lay out the options and costs to repair or replace them. The discussion is set for 3:30 p.m.

The board also will hear from Kevin and Joan Maloy, Heathsville residents who have recently returned from a visit to Northumberland County, England. While there, the couple met with some members of the county

council and carried with them a Northumberland County, Va., flag.

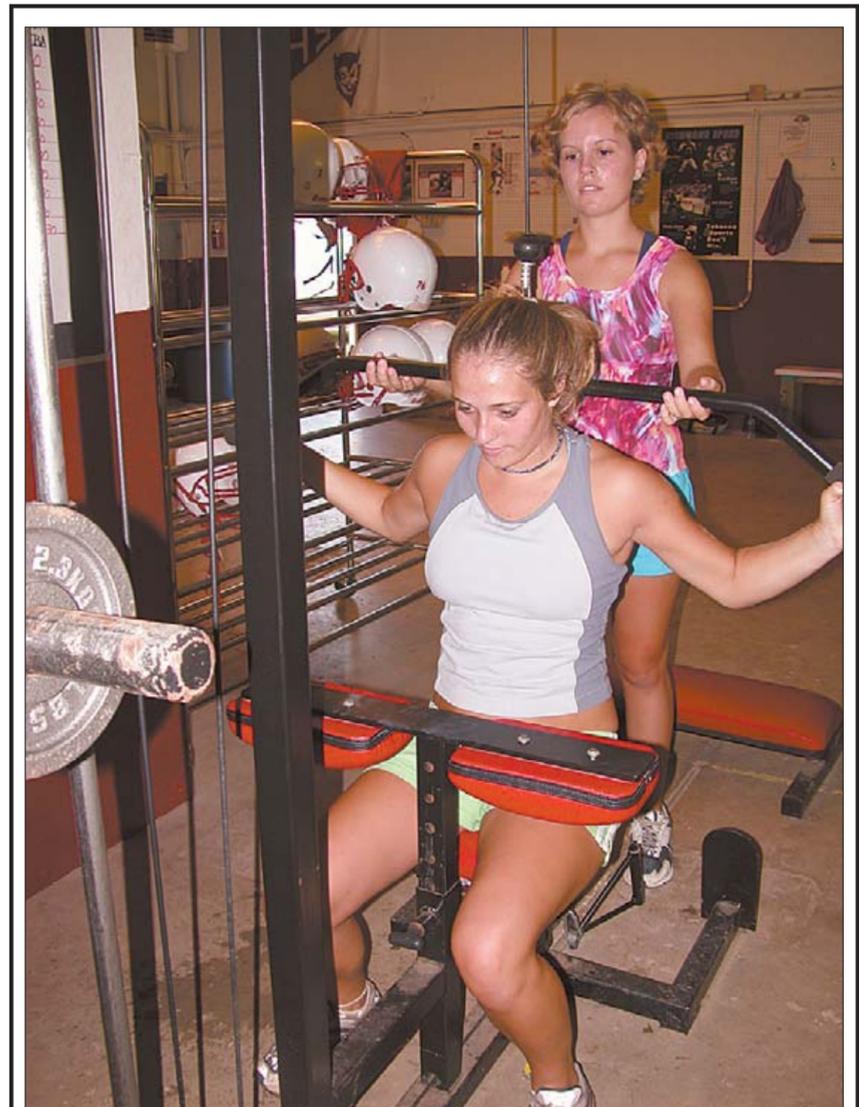
The board will recess for dinner and reconvene at 7 p.m. at the courts building for public hearings. On the agenda are:

- a request from Daniel S. Badenoch to establish a service and repair shop at the corner of Old Glebe Point Road and Pine Circle near Burgess.

- a request from J. Wallace Johnson to create a new lot with less than the required 15,000 square feet of buildable area at 308 Tyson Lane.

- a request from Jeffrey and Jessica Poole to construct a cluster home development near Lillian at the mouth of Warehouse Creek.

- a proposal to prohibit dogs from running at large in the Chesapeake Harbor subdivision.
- a proposal to issue bonds in the amount of \$423,000 to finance the Callow Sewer Project, and a related fee schedule.



### Back to sports

Field hockey players Hillary Holt (foreground) and Beth Jackson work out in the weight room and coach Billy Jarvis (below) gets down in the trenches with his



football players during a defensive drill as the athletic teams begin practice at Lancaster High School. The field hockey, football and golf teams started preparing for the upcoming season last week; volleyball and cross country teams begin practice next week. The golfers opened their season August 11 against Middlesex. The Red Devils gridiron season opens at home with the Northumberland High Indians on September 3. (Photos by Lisa Hinton Valdrighi)

## School reports prep board for new session

by Robb Hoff

KILMARNOCK—The Lancaster school board met Monday for its last scheduled session prior to the start of the new school year on September 7. Reports from school division principals

and administrators were heard.

High school principal Sandra Spears projected an enrollment of 128 freshmen, 124 sophomores, 100 juniors and 99 seniors. She reported that academic success at the high school has produced a 97

percent graduation rate and double-digit increases in state standards of learning testing over the past two years.

"We've made some nice gains,

but our goal is to be even better," said Spears.

The high school is expected to receive full accreditation from  
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### Register for school:

- August 18 - Grades 10-12 at Lancaster High, 7 a.m.-6 p.m.
- August 26 - Freshmen at Lancaster High, noon-3:30 p.m.
- Registration at Lancaster Primary School and Lancaster Middle School was held earlier this week. If you missed it, call the school.

### Open Houses:

- August 31 - Lancaster Primary School Open House: 5:30 p.m., preschool; 6 p.m., kindergarten; 6:30 p.m., first grade; 7 p.m., second grade; 7:30 p.m., third grade.
- September 1 - Lancaster Middle School Open House: 5:30-6:30 p.m., fourth grade; 4-6 p.m., grades five through eight.

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