



The Spring issue of Albemarle Magazine HITS STANDS THURSDAY

Council to debate salary study

State averages are higher than town pay

By RITCHIE E. STARNES AND REBECCA BUNCH
Chowan Herald

A salary study could be on the horizon for the town of Edenton employees. At issue is whether department heads are overpaid while rank and file employees are underpaid.

In the wake of attempting

to hire a new fire chief for the Edenton Fire Department at a salary as high as \$70,000 yearly, questions have surfaced whether that salary is too steep for a one-station department with seven firefighters and 18 volunteers. It also prompted a call for a review of all of the town's salaries.

Councilman Steve Biggs, chairman of the administrative committee, said he favors a salary survey. Biggs said that he's concerned salaries for department heads are higher than they

need to be and that sanitation workers, meter readers and others who have worked for the town for 20-plus years are underpaid.

"I think when a study is done we're going to find out we're lower in terms of what some workers are being paid than we need to be," Biggs said. "I also think we'll find that

we have some employees that are in the wrong pay grade."

Town Manager Anne Marie Knighton said questions about the new fire chief salary has caused her to step back and reassess. She defends the fire chief salary recommendation, adding that there is more to consider than population comparisons.

"The fire department protects an area larger than 5,000 people," Knighton said.

Before setting the salaries, Knighton said she confers with the N.C. League of Municipalities to compare positions with similar responsibilities. Because Edenton's population hovers just below the 5,000 mark, Knighton said she reviews two sets of comparisons, those towns with populations between 2,500 to 4,999 and

See SALARY, 3A

State OKs E-Chowan schools calendar waiver

By REBECCA BUNCH
Staff Writer

The Edenton-Chowan school system is one of 91 out of the 115 school districts in North Carolina to receive a waiver from adding five additional class days to its calendar next fall.

Superintendent Allan Smith briefed the local school board concerning the new development at its regular monthly meeting on Monday night. Board member Jean Bunch was absent.

The state Board of Education authorized the waivers last week based on meetings held in February where its members had the opportunity to hear from school districts about the potential impact of adding more school days. Educators across the state told the state board that those extra five days would cost already finally strapped school systems more money and remove needed training time for their teachers.

Smith said that the local schools would have had to spend an additional \$22,000 next year for transportation costs if it had not been granted a waiver. There would also have been small increases reflected in the child nutrition program as well as additional pay required for custodial staff, he said.

Statewide, school districts estimated it could cost as much as \$14 million in additional funding to operate schools for those extra days.

In a March 27 story published in the News & Observer, state Senator Jerry W. Tillman, R-Montgomery, who co-chairs the Senate Education Committee,

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Not These Eggs!



PHOTO BY RITCHIE E. STARNES

A Canada goose blends into the landscape as she sits atop her nest located in the wetlands of Filbert's Creek.

Chowan County nixes property tax discount

By RITCHIE E. STARNES
Editor

No longer will Chowan County property owners get a discount for paying their taxes early.

By a 6-1 margin, the Board of Commissioners voted Monday night to eliminate any discount for paying property taxes in July and August.

Since 2009, Chowan taxpayers have been eligible for a 2 percent break if they paid their property taxes in July and 1 percent for payments in August. That benefit has evolved into an increasing annual loss for the county's coffers.

Between shrinking interest rates on its money investments and the growing number of tax-

Chowan County Tax Discount Analysis

Curr. Yr. Levy*	2009: 68,659
Collections	2010: 83,317
2009: 3,640,238	2011: 88,782
2010: 4,353,249	Cumulative: 240,759
2011: 4,589,717	

Interest	Loss
2009: 6,235	2009: 62,424
2010: 4,083	2010: 79,234
2011: 3,929	2011: 84,853
Cumulative: 14,247	Cumulative: 226,512

Discount Allowed

*Fire District and other special district taxes not included.

payers capitalizing on the discount, Chowan experienced a near \$85,000 loss last year by keeping the program. The loss has con-

tinued to mount each year since its inception, including a net loss of more than \$79,000 in 2010, and \$62,424 during its first year. Com-

missioners first implemented the discount as a means to raise immediate cash when Chowan was on the brink of bankruptcy and possible state takeover.

"They did have a cash flow problem with loan payments and they needed the cash," said County Manager Zee Lamb earlier in the day Monday. "Given the decreased interests earned off the money and we're no longer having cash problems, I no longer think it's beneficial."

Lamb shared those thoughts with the board at its regularly scheduled meeting.

Keith Nixon, vice chairman, questioned how dropping the discount would impact the tax office at the end of the year, since the majority of taxpayers would like-

ly wait until December to settle their tax debt.

"Come December we're probably going to be overwhelmed," countered Kep Kepley, tax administrator.

Lamb acknowledged the late year push, but said the difference in money saved and worth the hassle.

"I cannot tell you the lines (taxpayers) will not be long in December. They will be," Lamb said. "I'd argue that for \$88,000 (prior to interest earnings), we could hire part-time help."

He added that many taxpayers would still pay early anyway. Most early payments come from financial institutions, taking advantage of the discount.

See DISCOUNT, 6A

Police nab shooting suspect

From staff reports

The man suspected of shooting into an 86-year-old woman's North Oakum Street home was arrested Monday morning while

traveling in the same neighborhood.

Skyler Jevelle Holley, 27, was arrested around 11:30 a.m. after a Chowan County sheriff's deputy spotted the suspect traveling in a Cadillac on Whitemon Lane and in

the vicinity of two recent shootings, according to Edenton Police Chief Jay Fortenbery. Police had earlier received information that Holley and another man were in the area and armed with handguns, Fortenbery said.

Police arrested Holley and Harold Melvin Jones Jr. on charges of weapons violations after two

See HOLLEY, 6A

Commission backs anniversary

Town to vote on its role

By REBECCA BUNCH
Staff Writer

The 300th anniversary of the town of Edenton may yet be celebrated this November.

Despite confusion over whether it would be appropriate to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the

town's founding — which occurred in November, 1712 — or the 300th anniversary of the town's incorporation in 1722, which wouldn't be for another 10 years, it seems likely a celebration will happen this year.

During its quarterly meeting on March 29 the Edenton Historical Commission adopted a resolution that calls on the town to officially sanction a

celebration of the 300th anniversary of the founding of the town, according to its chairman, Jerry Climer.

The Town Council is expected to discuss whether to support the proposal at its April 10 monthly meeting. However, during the council's committee meeting last month, some councilmen questioned

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Sponsored by the Rocky Hock Ruritan's Relay for Life Team Tickets \$10.00 SATURDAY, APRIL 21ST, 7:30 PM EDENTON, NC
Tickets Available at various locations or call 252-221-4875 or 252-340-3438. Email rockyhockopry@live.com