

Elon water tower gets a makeover

Upgrades to promote safety for maintenance workers, increase cell coverage

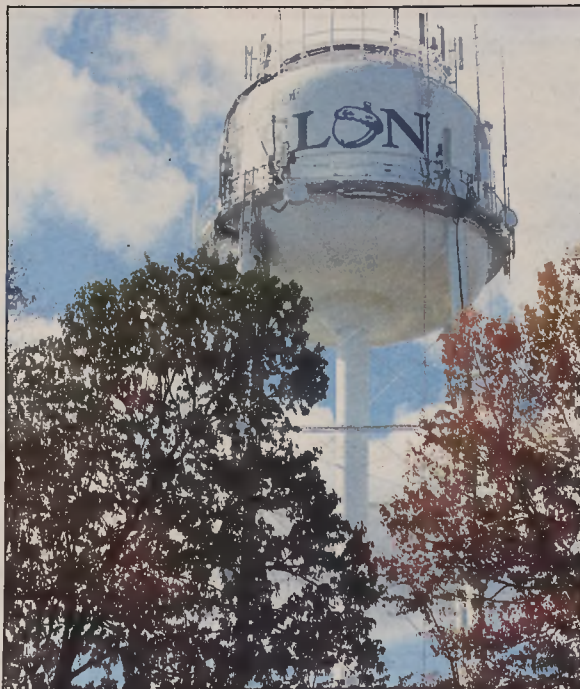
Elizabeth Kirkhorn
Senior Reporter

The Town of Elon's water tower is being reconstructed to bring the design up to industry standard. This means increased safety and efficiency for the utilities employees who man the tower as well as increased cell coverage for Elon's citizens.

The tower received its last update in 1990, according to Scottie Wilkins of The Elon Department of Public Works and Utility Services, who recently spoke at a Board of Alderman Council Meeting. To keep the tower's tank running smoothly, Wilkins said it needs to be re-coated and re-insulated.

Last year, ice storms prompted the Town of Elon Department of Public Works and Utility Services to bolster the water tower with increased insulation and support beams, but Wilkins and the rest of department believed that the temporary protective adjustments made can only last the tower so long. It would benefit from a total redesign.

Such a redesign includes reinforcing the cables that root the tower to the ground and working on the welding of the tank, which Wilkins refers to as "improper" in its current state. Once these changes are made, utility services believes the water tower will have a much longer



The Town of Elon water tower is getting some upgrades to meet industry standards and improve safety for workers and cell service.

projected lifespan.

One significant structural change is being made to the cellular service antennas, owned by AT&T, currently situated around the handrails of the water tower. The design was functional when it was built, but maintenance workers have found it increasingly difficult to navi-

gate the tower to monitor water quality, according to Wilkins.

The placement of the antennas is currently obstructive, making navigation around the "catwalk" of the tower potentially dangerous. Wilkins also said the apparatus which transports workers up and down the tower is hindered by any and all cellu-

lar antennas there.

Utility services and the Town of Elon are currently in the process of building what Richard White, town manager of Elon, refers to as a "corral." This circular structure will provide a new basis for the cellular antennas atop the tank, so they are no longer trouble for maintenance workers. Other municipalities in North Carolina who have adopted this construction include Burlington, Gibsonville and Mebane.

"I wouldn't call what the tower has 'issues,'" White said. "The addition of a corral just makes it more structurally sound. This will make the tower even safer."

The tower needs to be repainted as well, since it has been two decades since its last paint job.

"The construction of the corral allows us to rearrange cables that go up the water tower in such a way that makes it easier for the painters to actually work on the tower," White said.

AT&T, who operates the antennas that moderate cell coverage from the top of the tower, is undertaking this project in conjunction with the Town of Elon and the utilities department. The corporation provided the majority of the funds for the corral and the repositioning of the antennas to the peak of the tower.

Meanwhile, the rest of the

funds needed to repair the tank are being managed by the utilities department itself, according to White. Wilkins told the Board of Alderman that AT&T predicts a higher position of the antennas will mean a stronger cellular signal throughout Elon.

But increased coverage for mobile phones and safety for Public Works and Utility Services employees are not the only changes coming to Elon's water tower. The new paint job includes a redesigned logo, which features a sharp, contemporary letter "E" against a teal background. This logo is distinctly unlike the picture decorating the tank currently and contrasts all traditional designs representing the town and Elon University.

White said the idea for a new logo was created as a part of the "downtown mass division plan," and was drawn by private consultants prior to his appointment as town manager. He said that this plan is intended to rebrand the image of downtown Elon and that the modernized logo is one of the steps is doing just that. The branding will cost the Town of Elon around \$1,500.

Construction on the water tower has already begun. White confirmed that the corral is almost completed. Work on welding, cables and outdated features of the tank will continue into the month.

Elon alumnus elected Burlington mayor

Ian Baltutis '08 won election, hopes to continue open communication

Emmanuel Morgan
Senior Reporter

Ian Baltutis was as confident and poised as he had ever been during election season. But when the Elon University 2008 graduate heard he had won the Burlington mayoral election, one word came to his mind: disbelief.

"We knew that we had done tremendous work across the community and heard positive feedback from our volunteers standing at the polls," Baltutis said. "But it was almost unreal seeing those numbers come in."

Baltutis, 30, triumphed over Burlington City Councilman Jim Butler by 378 votes. The satisfying feeling of beating another politician was incredibly new to Baltutis. For the past three years, he failed to win an election, but by laboring vigorously, he garnered a large following of supporters — something he said aided his victory.

"Something that really helped was the culmination of all the previous campaigns

that we've run," Baltutis said. "We had volunteers and donors and the whole support network across the community gunning for our victory."

The mindset of Baltutis throughout the election was to reach as many voters as possible and personally engage with them. This entailed going door to door to speak with prospective voters and distribute yard signs.

The newly elected mayor hopes to continue this successful practice of open communication throughout his term and aspires to create jobs in Burlington and beyond through proactivity and personable collaboration.

"The biggest thing that we want to do is continue to be very visible and very active," he said. "We want to continue what we've started and talk with teachers, business leaders and church leaders across the community and talk with them about having more involvement with the mayoral office."

Baltutis added that he thinks job creation is a priority for the future of Burlington.

"[Job creation] will rely heavily on my administration to work with people with an entrepreneurial mindset," he said.

Another aspect Baltutis hopes he can alter is the stereotype associated with youth. By defeating someone who was 20 years older than him, Baltutis hopes to influence younger individuals to chase their dreams despite inexperience.

"We really view this elec-

tion as a pivotal moment to inspire people across our community," he said. "So often, people will tell us 'You're not old enough to be a leader.' I wanted to break down that barrier and really make sure that folks are not turned off by that kind of comment."

"I've seen incredible students come out of Elon and out of our high schools and if they want to start a business, I want them to know that they should start investing in that now and they will have support all throughout Burlington."



Ian Baltutis, an Elon alumnus, is Burlington's new mayor.

