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Businesses looking at potential impact of Wal Mart here

Chamber forms task force, while downtown plans separate meeting

BY REBECCA BUNCH
Editor

While no firm deal has yet been made, the prospect that Wal Mart may locate a store in Chowan County already has local businesses discussing the pros and cons.

Elizabeth City dentist Dr. Lloyd Griffin, Jr., owner of the property in question, said in a telephone interview Monday night that about two months ago he granted a North Carolina-based development company a six-month option on the land. Griffin owns almost 70 acres of farmland on "B" Lane adjacent to Albemarle Motor Company in Edenton.

Dr. Griffin, who grew up in Edenton, said he was not aware that Wal Mart was looking at the site until two weeks ago

when he received a telephone call from Edenton-Chowan Chamber of Commerce President Jim Chesson in which Chesson told him someone from Wal Mart had been out to look at his land.

However, at this point, Dr. Griffin said, he has not made a deal to sell any part of his property to Wal Mart, nor has he been asked to.

He said that since word has begun to spread throughout the local community, he has received calls from several concerned Chowan County residents asking about the sale of his land, something he said came about because of the increase in his property taxes that followed the recent revaluation.

"Ya'll have tripled my property taxes, just raised taxes like crazy on it," he said. "It's just a little piece of farmland that's been sitting there for 20 years. There's no way it's worth what (tax) they put on it."

According to the Chowan County Tax Department, the appraised value of the 68 acres owned by Griffin, both before

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Love of books provides bond

BY REBECCA BUNCH
Editor

Take some interested adult volunteers, and some elementary school students who share a love of books, and what do you have? A winning combination, thanks to the hard work of Rosalie Boyd, head librarian at the Shepard-Pruden Library in Edenton.

D.F. Walker Elementary School Principal Ralph Cole, whose second, third and fourth graders will be spending time over the next few weeks of summer school honing their reading skills with the help of community volunteers recruited by Boyd, said she had been "great" to work with on this very important project.

"We are having summer school for about 70 students in grades two through four, trying to help them improve their reading, writing and math comprehension skills," he said. "Rosalie said she could help us, and she did."

What Boyd did was to arrange for adult volunteers to join the kids at the public library on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays and spend an hour reading together.

"These volunteers have been helping them with their reading comprehension, and it's working out really well," Cole



Volunteer Gail Miller listens as D.F. Walker fourth grader Jalisa Sessoms reads from her book

said. "She has done a tremendous job of providing volunteers to read to the children or to listen to them read."

Cole said that in addition to helping the children learn bet-

ter reading skills, he hoped that the "Book Buddies" project would also serve another purpose: encouraging children to want to visit the library when they are out of school.

"I think it is very important for them to develop an interest in visiting the library on their own," he said. "That's

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County says tax rate will be reduced

BY SEAN JACKSON
Staff Writer

County residents will experience no increase in service fees and a 14 percent reduction in the tax rate, according to the county's proposed 1999 budget.

Still, it remains to be seen if school officials will be smiling next fall when they return to work with only half of the school system's requested budget increase approved.

Copeland, Chowan's county manager, unveiled his FY 1999 budget last Monday morning (June 8) during the regular monthly meeting of the Chowan County Board of Commissioners. The budget was unanimously approved by commissioners at a public hearing last Tuesday evening.

The \$13,400,356 budget includes an 11-cent rate reduction in ad valorem taxes (from 80 cents per \$100 to 69 cents per \$100), a \$15,000 increase in the Inspections Department's budget for either an assistant inspector or a county planner, a three percent cost of living increase for county employees, and an eight percent budget increase for the Edenton-Chowan Schools System.

The county's \$66.9 million tax base rose 17 percent as a result from the increase in real estate values that is attributed to the recent revaluation.

The county's general fund, which currently totals \$10,429,229, rose 2.6 percent—\$273,396—over last year's budget. Most of that increase, Copeland said, went toward the increase in school funding. The Edenton-Chowan Board of Education had asked for a 15 percent increase in funding for its Exceptional Children's Program and general technology needs. Although Copeland said those programs were worthy of additional increases in funding, the county simply did not have the financial resources to budget more than a \$176,979 increase.

The school system had asked for a \$331,835 increase.

"This year, they felt like the

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Accused drug dealer Arthur "Big Bud" Privott (in wheelchair) is helped from the courtroom by an EMS technician and a court official. (Staff photo by Sean Jackson)

Suspect collapses at family bond hearing

BY SEAN JACKSON
Staff Writer

ELIZABETH CITY — Just moments before a scheduled bond hearing was to take place relating to a number of federal drug charges he was facing, Arthur William "Big Bud" Privott collapsed in a federal courtroom here on Thursday.

Privott, his wife, and their two daughters each face life imprisonment and minimum fines of \$8 million if convicted on drug charges stemming from their arrests last week.

After leaving the courtroom in the care of Pasquotank County EMS personnel, Privott, 50, was taken to Albemarle

Hospital for treatment. Upon his release from the hospital approximately two hours later, Privott was returned to the courtroom.

Privott and his wife Janice Lee Moore Privott, 49, both of 352 Cofield Rd., Edenton, were each charged last Tuesday morning with conspiracy to distribute and to possess with intent to distribute cocaine and cocaine base (crack), along with six counts of distribution of cocaine base. If convicted, the Privotts face life in prison and maximum fines of \$28 million.

Their daughter, Jennifer Anne Privott, 25, was charged

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Hospital oversight committee chooses two among its bidders

BY SEAN JACKSON
Staff Writer

Hoping to complete a deal to lease/sell Chowan Hospital by Oct. 1, a committee charged with overseeing the process has narrowed the list of prospects to two health care providers.

During the closed session portion of its meeting at Chowan Hospital Monday, the oversight committee in charge of reviewing the lease/sell process selected Pitt County Memorial Hospital (PCMH) and Province Healthcare as the only two survivors of the ongoing bidding war.

Both PCMH and Province offered bid proposals at a public hearing last month along with HealthCarolina, a joint venture between Albemarle Hospital and Sentara Health System, Community Health Systems (CHS) and New American Health Corporation.

According to attorney Bob Wilson, legal counsel for

Chowan County and Chowan Hospital, the oversight committee elected to choose one non-profit agency as well as one for-profit agency from the list of five bid proposals.

PCMH and HealthCarolina are non-profit agencies, while Province, CHS and New American — all three based in Brentwood, TN — are for-profit agencies.

"The oversight committee wanted to choose a representative from both styles of health care delivery," said Wilson.

As to why the oversight committee chose PCMH over HealthCarolina, Wilson said the committee felt Chowan residents had a stronger relationship with PCMH where health care needs were concerned.

"It just made more sense not to disrupt those (Chowan-PCMH) relationships. In their (oversight committee) view," Wilson said, "it (choosing PCMH over HealthCarolina) would be a continuum of the

same type of pattern."

"The existing referral relationships of the Chowan County medical community and the preferences of the residents of Chowan County are more oriented toward Pitt County Memorial Hospital than toward Sentara Health System, located in Norfolk, or toward Albemarle Hospital in Elizabeth City," the official statement of the oversight committee, released Monday afternoon, stated. "In addition, the financial consideration offered by Pitt exceeded that offered by HealthCarolina."

At last month's public hearing, PCMH proposed to spend \$19.1 million in up-front money for a 30-year lease, along with \$10 million for capital improvements, for a total financial offer of \$35.8 million.

Province, considered to have offered the best financial proposal to the Chowan County

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HONORING A DEDICATED PUBLIC SERVANT

Chowan County Sheriff Fred Spruill, left, and Edenton Police Chief Gregory Bonner, right, present gifts on behalf of their respective departments to retiring Edenton Police Officer Joe Norman. Norman, a sergeant on the EPD, is retiring after 28 years on the job. The presentations were made during a dinner in his honor at the American Legion. (Staff photo by Rebecca Bunch)