

# THE CHOWAN HERALD

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## Residents oppose proposed truck route

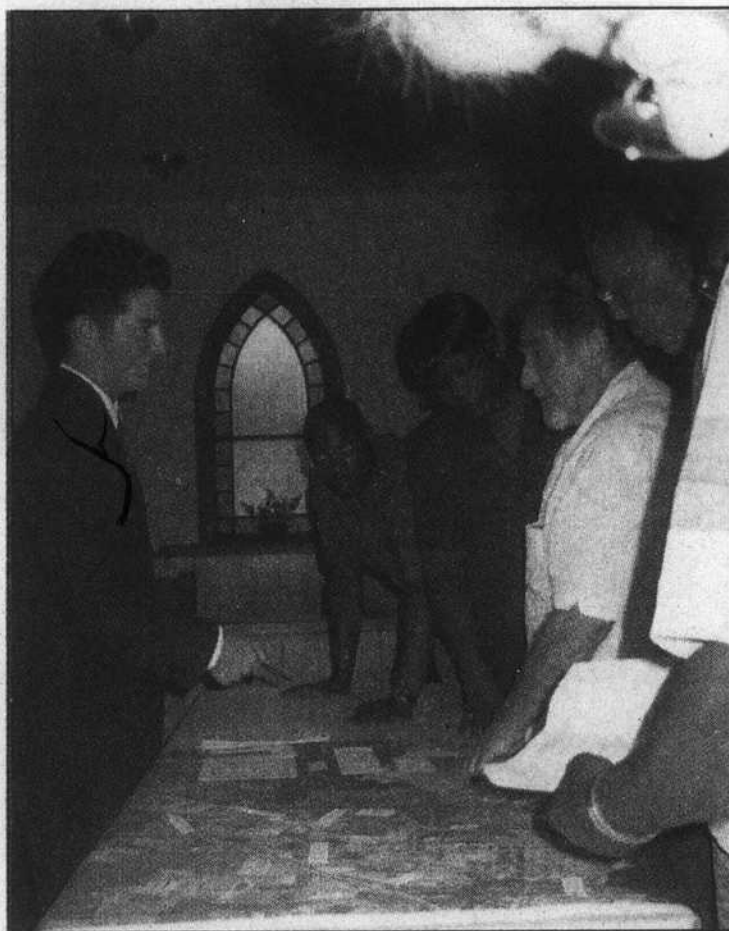
BY HELEN KERR OUTLAND  
 Staff Writer

About 60 concerned citizens, residents of the Old Hertford Road area, and community leaders met Tuesday night with representatives of the North Carolina Department of Transportation at Union Grove AME Zion Church Tuesday evening. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss proposed upgrade of Old Hertford Road that would serve as a truck route for the airport.

The proposal, should it ever become a reality, is slated for construction in 2006. One such route would impact those living in Edenton Manor and along Old Hertford Road.

A report from the office of Town Manager Anne-Marie Knighton states that back in the early 1990's the town updated its Transportation Thoroughfare Plan. That plan called for the construction of a new road, to help improve access to and from the Airport Industrial Park.

The proposed road would basically extend Soundside/Base Road to the north, and connect to the US 17 By Pass. This would create a much-needed north/south connection and reduce through-traffic of trucks within the city limits.



Doug Jeremiah of the North Carolina Department of Transportation talks with Old Hertford Road residents. (Staff photo by Helen Kerr Outland)

At present, many of the large trucks making their way to the Airport/Industrial Park on

Soundside Road use Highway 17 or 32 as a direct connection with Yeopim/Soundside. However, both routes bring the

large trucks through downtown Edenton and, according to residents of Edenton Manor, down Old Hertford Road that runs adjacent to the apartment complex.

"There are times when these big trucks pull into the parking lot, park, the drivers sleep, then crank up the trucks at 4 o'clock in the morning and pull out," says one resident who wished to remain anonymous. "The thing that bothers me is we don't even have sidewalks and now they want our street," said another.

Doug Jeremiah, engineer from the Development and Analysis Branch of DOT, conducted the meeting. Although Jeremiah reassured the gathering that the road proposals were just that, a proposal only, emotions were sensitive. The initial atmosphere of the meeting was a little tense. "This is not set in stone," Jeremiah went on to say. "However, we need your comments, in writing."

Town Manager Anne-Marie Knighton reassured the crowd that the meeting was an informational opportunity designed so that the neighborhood could ask questions and offer input regarding the proposal. "These men are not our enemies," said Knighton. "Don't attack these

folks. They are doing their job. They are here to help."

Knighton went on to remind those assembled that the representatives were not there to tell them there would be a road built, ever, but to encourage feedback in verbal and written form from as many residents as possible.

Part of the review process for any new road construction project requires state and federal environmental permitting agencies to review and comment on the proposed project. Several of the reviewing agencies have expressed objections to the Base Road Extension project. Doug Jeremiah stated the main objection centered around the potential loss of wetlands. Therefore, NCDOT must look at alternatives. One such alternative proposed by the reviewing agencies was that of an upgrade to Old Hertford Road.

Some citizens had expressed concern that no matter how they felt, or what they said, that the road would be constructed anyway. Knighton responded by saying adamantly, "We have been working a long time on identifying a new route, but should for some reason this insane proposal to use Old Hertford Road become a reality the town would oppose it."

The Old Hertford Road proposed truck route would bring the highway and the eighteen wheelers within a hundred yards of Edenton Manor. Arnette Forehand, manager for the complex, is not pleased with the possibility. "We have 111 apartments that have families with three children. The sidewalk on one side, the side street, and the fields across the road are where the children play. They don't have a playground."

Some of those present asked Jeremiah why the trucks could not use alternate routes already available. "For most of the drivers the alternate route would be another five or six miles of travel," said Jeremiah. "For others it might mean an additional 15 or 20 minutes of driving time. You have to understand there is legislation in place that says we can not make these drivers do anything." Jeremiah did assure the gathering that some of the drivers were just as concerned about the issues as the citizens were.

Town Manager Ann-Marie Knighton reiterated the position the town was taking concerning the proposal. "There is a route that we have been looking at for some time now."

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## Hill: A lifetime of growing things

BY HELEN KERR OUTLAND  
 Staff Writer

Fred Hill sits in his old ford truck that he has parked in the shade. He reads some of the New Testament then gently stores it away in the glove compartment as he cranks the truck and goes to check his fields.

"I farm about 25 acres," he begins. "It ain't a big farm, but I don't see any need of having more than I can handle." Hill is 74 years old and arthritis has caused him leg problems. "I love farming," he says with a big smile. "I left it for two years while in the service and couldn't wait to get back to it." He figures he did all the traveling in the military he wanted to do. "I plan to stay right here in the fields," says Hill. "My wife says to come on and let's go somewhere. I tell her to go right ahead."

Fred Hill is a third-generation Chowan County farmer of the same land his granddaddy and daddy farmed. He grows butter beans, half an acre of watermelon, some soybeans, etc. Up until some recent soaking rains Hill says he had been a little concerned about his crops. "We got some good rain last week and we need more," he adds.

The house Fred Hill grew up in sits next to his field. It is a two-story frame house that has long since been empty. But, Hill has some memories of that house, the people in it, and growing up there. "Kids now a days couldn't take the way we had to work when we were young'ns," says Hill. "We worked before we went to school and when we got home."



Fred Hill

For Fred Hill and his family, as with a other farmers of the time, many hours were spent behind a mule digging a living out of the land. Hill grins broadly as he relates the story of one mule in particular. "That mule was smart now," he says. "He'd work all morning but, when it got close to lunch time he'd stop dead in his tracks and wouldn't plow another row till I fed him."

Hill says he and the mule had been working one field all day. It was hot and the walk back to the house was a long one. "I decided I was going to ride that mule home," adds Hill. "The mule decided I wasn't and he dumped me quick the first time I got on him." Hill says he took a good look around to see if anyone was watching. After many more dumps, lots of bucking and spinning from the mule but he rode the mule to the house. "He was a pretty mule too," says Hill. "I have never seen a mule with white 'socks' like that mule had."

Hill has known hard work all his life. Because arthritis has gotten the best of his knees and he now spends a lot of time sitting in his truck. "Farming and surviving is hard work," he says. "Not many young folks getting into any more. They can make a good living out of playing sports." Hill points to the two tractors parked behind the house. Neither of the tractors is new. "I got to go get a filter for the big one," he says. Hill still does all his own mechanic work.

For Fred Hill there were no choices when he was young.

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## Literacy push to be major initiative for school system

BY REBECCA BUNCH  
 Editor

Beefing up literacy skills among children will be the cornerstone of the Edenton-Chowan Schools' program of work for the coming school year, according to Dr. Allan Smith, superintendent of schools.

Smith, in fact, has set an ambitious goal for local school personnel. "By the fall of 2003," he declared, "we are aiming for a literacy rate of 100 percent among our students by the end of third grade and beyond." By meeting that goal, he said, each child in the local school system would at least be able to participate in learning activities within a regular classroom setting.

He said that, to be successful, teachers would need to re-emphasize a balanced approach to teaching reading. "Nothing we do in school is more important than developing solid reading skills among

our students," he said. Smith also vowed to help provide a "framework for a systemwide emphasis on reading" through staff development opportunities for teachers over the next few years.

"Teacher's are the key to the success of our efforts," he said. Smith's remarks came during the traditional "Back to School Breakfast" held at Nixon's Catering and hosted by the school system with local dignitaries as invited guests. The theme was "Excellence Through Innovation."

Keynote speaker was Dr. Dwight Pearson, section chief for the statewide "Closing the Gap" initiative.

Dr. Pearson explained some of the reasons for the education gap that exists among different races and cultures, and outlined some strategies for eliminating the barriers and closing the gap.

"Can this gap be eliminated?" he asked. "Research shows the answer is 'yes'."

## Prayer Walk set

Rocky Hock Baptist Church invites all members of the Board of Education, the administration of Edenton-Chowan Schools, principals, teachers and other school staff to join an Aug. 5 service of prayer and consecration for the upcoming school year.

"Our purpose," said Pastor Ron Cava, "is simply to surround all of our school personnel and students with

the prayers of God's people for wisdom, protection, health, safety and a productive educational environment."

The brief service will begin at 6:30 p.m. and the public is welcome to attend.

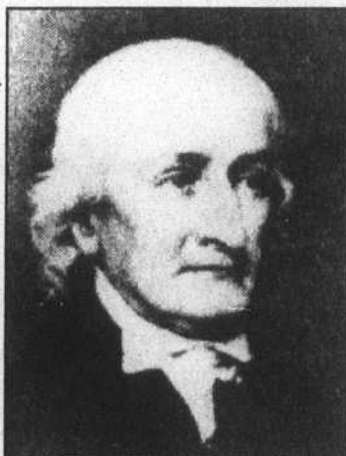
Following the service, at 7 p.m., members of the congregation will go to the campus of each school and conduct a

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## Honoring Williamson commission's goal

At its May 7 meeting, the Chowan County Board of Commissioners, with the support of the Edenton Tea Party Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, created a commission to study ways to honor former Edenton resident Dr. Hugh Williamson. Dr. Williamson was one of North Carolina's three signers of the United States Constitution.

There is currently a monument in Edenton paying tribute to former resident Joseph Hewes, one of North Carolina's signers of the Declaration of



Hugh Williamson

Independence. The Hon. Terrence Boyle has been selected to chair the commission. Other members will include: Virginia Wood, Beth Taylor, Ross Inglis, Margie Hollowell, Linda Eure, Louis Belfield, Peter Rascoe, Cliff Copeland, Anne-Marie Knighton, Mike McArthur and Cliff Copeland.

(The Edenton Tea Party Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution will sponsor a short ceremony on Constitution Day, Monday, Sept. 17, at noon to honor

Williamson and the Chowan County Commissioners for choosing to memorialize one of the county's most famous residents. The NC Society DAR State Regent, Mrs. Richard A. Boyd, will speak at the ceremony scheduled to take place in front of the 1767 Chowan County Courthouse on East King Street in Edenton.)

According to commission member Peter Rascoe, who serves as Special Projects Officer for Edenton and Chowan

See GOAL On Page 5-A

DEADLINE TO COMPLETE AND RETURN AUGUST 3

Don't forget to fill in your survey

SEE PAGE 4-A OF THIS WEEK'S NEWSPAPER