

# THE CHOWAN HERALD

Vol. LXIX, No. 23

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## Proposed county budget message: 'Hold your own' time

**BY REBECCA BUNCH**  
Editor

(Editor's Note: A public hearing on the 2002-2003 county budget is scheduled for 6 p.m. on Monday, June 17 in the Commissioners Room, at the Chowan County Courthouse on Broad Street. A copy of the proposed budget is available for inspection at the County Manager's office.)

County Manager Cliff Copeland told Commissioners that the proposed budget for 2002-2003 is of the "hold your own" variety. He noted that the process of preparing it "proved to be very difficult," even as he commended department heads in county government for "the manner in which they have

responded to identify possible cost-cutting measures".

Copeland noted that factors particularly impacting the proposed budget were no secret to commissioners. "You are familiar with the process," he told them in his budget message for 2003, "declining interest rates that affect interest earned, the State budget crisis that impacts our reimbursements, and the declining economy, which impacts sales tax receipts."

Highlights of the proposed budget, as outlined by Copeland in his budget message, are:

- Revenues: A tax base of \$786,617,150 was utilized for this year's budget, Copeland

noted, an increase of about \$14,000,000 over last year. The county tax rate remains at \$.69. "All of this year's tax base increase occurred with automobiles and projected increases in our corporate excess tax base," he said. "For the first time in memory, there was an actual decline in the value of machinery listed by our industries and businesses, which has long been a stable component of our tax base. This reduction in equipment listings offset the increase that we received from new construction."

Copeland said other revenue items that were decreased in the proposed budget included a four percent reduction in projected sales tax revenues, a 33

percent reduction in interest earned, and a 33 percent reduction in the revenues that the county receives from the sale of foreclosed property. He said the proposed budget anticipates additional revenues from the ambulance fees due to an increase in Medicaid and Medicare reimbursements, and that the 2003 proposed budget reflects a jump in jail fees from \$40 to \$45. He noted that a \$2 increase in the monthly user fee for sanitation services also appears in the budget. The increase, he explained, "is in line with the county's philosophy of trying to implement user fee increases versus increases in the tax rate because of a closer correlation between user fees

and services received than otherwise is the case with many general fund services. Even with this increase, Chowan County's rates remain comparable with surrounding counties."

Copeland said that proposed expenditures for 2003 contained in the budget reflect "small increases in funding levels for nine departments and actual decreases in eleven departments. For the first time, also included in the budget is a cost savings goal for each department. In tough times, it is imperative that the county tighten its belt as much as possible..."

A continuing rise in Medicaid costs is also reflected in the

proposed county budget for 2002-2003, Copeland said. The budget contains a five percent funding increase for those services. And, he said, another budget feature is a one percent increase in current expense funding for the school system (see related story on the school budget on this page).

"Despite what might be depicted in the media," Copeland said, "school systems are experiencing cutbacks in their State funding. While the Board of Education's original request was for an eight percent increase in current expense fund or \$259,352, it was the position of the Finance Committee that,

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## School system may lose some staff positions

**BY S. BRADY CALHOUN**  
Cox NC Publications

Even though the Edenton-Chowan Schools budget will be increasing next year, it may not be enough to prevent personnel layoffs, according to school officials.

The Chowan County Board of Commissioners have agreed to raise the \$2.9 million school budget by nearly \$30,000 next year. However, the one percent increase is far less than the nine percent the Edenton-Chowan Board of Education had requested, and may force the schools to cut personnel, Supt. Allan Smith said.

"It (the county's allocation) would require us to go back and revisit our budget and make cuts," he said. "The cuts would have to be made in personnel."

Smith said the schools, because of the state's budget crisis, have already been pinching pennies.

"I've already asked the principals to see where they can cut," Smith said. "We've already frozen travel, staff development, hiring and replacing vacant positions."

Smith said he couldn't determine yet where the cuts will come from. More than likely the personnel cuts will be through attrition, he said, adding that no teacher positions will be cut.

"We do have some folks that have either resigned or retired," he said. "I feel confident that any type of adjustments we have to make will be made through attrition."

Smith said all school dis-

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## Graduation Day, 2002

**BY GLENDA JAKUBOWSKI**  
Special Correspondent

Before 144 graduating John A. Holmes High School seniors assembled for commencement, before spectators overflowed stadium seats and lined up three-deep along a fence bordering the field where graduates would march, before Pomp and Circumstance, before the turning of the tassels and before mortarboards were tossed joyfully into the air, Holmes principal John Williams had grass to cut.

A Dumpster had been moved earlier in the day to allow additional parking for the Friday evening ceremony. When Williams arrived at the school two hours before the 7 p.m. commencement, he noticed high grass in the area where the Dumpster had been.

When teachers arrived a short time later, they noticed their principal, manning a lawn mower, making things



**Ashley Runyon**  
Valedictorian



**Karen Perry**  
Salutatorian

before and after school to make it better."

Reflecting on their time at the school before the commencement, students echoed Williams' mention of the strong work ethic that lead to their diplomas.

"I played football in grades nine through eleven, wrestled in grade ten, and worked hard my senior year," said Terrance Stallings. He plans to go into landscaping after graduation.

Marketing teacher Bruce Dudley had nothing but praise for the students, also citing their hard work. "They've been great," Dudley said.

Student Noel Basnight, after giving Dudley "one last hug," said she was going to miss the school. "I've been through so much here these last four years," she said. But Basnight doesn't plan to be

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**Mary Anne Karriker**

## Principal is leaving

D.F. Walker School principal Mary Anne Karriker will be leaving the system at the end of the 2001-2002 school year. She and her husband will be returning to the Iredell/Rowan area of the state to care for ailing family members.

"Mrs. Karriker has been a tremendous asset to our system," said Superintendent Allan Smith. "While we certainly understand her reasons for leaving, her D.F. Walker family and her Edenton-

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## OLF Committee to hire lobbyists

**BY HELEN K. OUTLAND**  
Staff Writer

With the Navy's Environmental Impact Study due for release in July, the OLF Steering Committee met this week to finalize its plans for hiring a lobbying group. They also discussed a recent meeting that Chowan County Manager Cliff Copeland and City Manager Anne-Marie Knighton had with Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Duncan Holaday.

With the exception of Washington County and their non-committal, the other counties that would be impacted by the proposed OLF were on hand make a commitment to hiring a lobbying firm to dissuade the Navy's attempt to locate a touch and go field in Northeastern North Carolina.

For the members of the committee getting the public to understand what a community faces, should a landing strip become a reality, is important. Edenton Chamber Director Richard Bunch informed the committee of a video made on a

recent trip to Fentress Air Field in Virginia and the magnitude of the noise from incoming jets to the field. "Most people have no idea when we say 'OLF' just what we are talking about," began Bunch. "They think we mean some little landing strip, but that is not the case." For those watching the video, the level of noise put a very different light on the issue of an OLF. Another concern is the low altitude that jets would be maintaining when flying to either a Belvidere or Bertie site. As the crow flies it is only 27 miles from Oceanna. With the close proximity to Oceanna, the jets would not have time to gain high altitude before reaching the practice field. Bunch goes on to say that when the squadrons were coming in from off shore to Oceanna "they were doing some screaming."

These and other issues were addressed by Edenton City Manager Anne-Marie Knighton and Chowan County Manager Cliff Copeland during a recent meeting with Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Duncan Holaday.



The Edenton Male Chorus entertains the crowd at the annual Community Male Chorus, in this Chowan Herald file photo. The popular event will take place Saturday, June 15, from 4-7:30 p.m. at the Edenton waterfront park.

## Community Music Festival nears

**BY REBECCA BUNCH**  
Editor

The Chowan Arts Council will present its Community Music Festival on Saturday, June 15, at the Edenton water-

front park, from 4-7:30 p.m. Featured performers are scheduled to include:  
• Holly Winslow - Classic Rock/Western  
• RJ Gospel Singers - A Capella Gospel

• Chamblee Simonsen - Original Music, Singer/Songwriter  
• Andy Faircloth - Pop/Folk  
• Edenton Men's Chorus - Gospel

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