

# THE CHOWAN HERALD

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## Town to ask for 4.5 cent tax hike

Town Manager Anne-Marie Knighton's proposed budget for FY 2003/04 calls for a 4.5 cent tax rate increase. The current rate is 39.5 cents. If adopted as recommended, the tax rate would rise to 44 cents.

"It is not a recommendation I make lightly," said Knighton. "After many rounds of budget cuts, after careful review and revision of revenue projections, there were still needs to be met."

"The last few years we have held the line, made operational cuts when the Governor withheld our reimbursements, when the General Assembly did not fully fund our reimbursements. The only thing left to cut is personnel, and we seriously looked at that option. Over the last four or five years, we have eliminated positions. Personnel cuts now would have direct impact on services to the public."

Knighton noted that the

town utilizes seven to nine inmates on a daily basis, to assist Public Works. "The program has helped us tremendously, we have improved quality of our street and sanitation services while not having to hire more people," she said. She added that the town's auditor has recommended for the last several years that the town start funding a capital improvements reserve fund to help build up revenue to pay for future capital outlay expenditures; two cents from the tax increase is earmarked for this purpose.

The General fund budget includes funds to lease purchase a replacement garbage truck with the first year's debt service payment fully funded. Also included is approximately \$30,000 worth of equipment, hoses and supplies for the Edenton Fire Department. A new fire truck, estimated to cost \$200,000 is also in the pro-

posed budget. The delivery date for the truck will push the first year's debt service payment into FY 2004/05. Also included in the proposed budget are two replacement police cars. The town was forced to defer purchase of the cars for two years in a row when the state withheld local reimbursements, Knighton said.

Property owners with property valued at \$50,000 will see their tax increase from \$197.50 to \$220, a net increase of \$22.50. Property assessed at \$100,000 would see a \$45 increase. Property assessed at \$200,000 would result in a \$90 increase in the owner's tax bill.

Knighton reported that the budget also recommends an increase in water and sewer rates. "Our water rates do not generate enough revenue to cover our costs. We have relied on grants and on reserves in the past to carry us through," she said. "We have to repaint

the Park Avenue Water Tower, that is projected to cost \$100,000, and we need \$60,000 worth of repairs and preventive maintenance done to the tower."

The budget calls for the basic water charge to increase from \$3.35 to \$5.35. A dollar increase in the basic charge for sewer customers is also proposed, taking the minimum from \$5 to \$6. Water rate would rise from \$1.05 per 1,000 gallons of water purchased to \$1.50 per thousand gallons. Knighton recommends the sewer rate increase of 40 cents per thousand gallons, from \$2.16 to \$2.56.

The Town Council will conduct a public hearing on the proposed budget on Tuesday, June 10, at 7:30 p.m. in Council chambers. A copy of the budget is available for inspection at Town Hall or citizens can go on line at [www.townofedenton.com](http://www.townofedenton.com) to review a summary of the budget.



## Marker dedicated

Commission members Dorothy Blount, Norman Brinkley Jr., Lois Jordan Cooper, Frances Inglis, Rosalie Miller and John Morehead, Jerald I. Perry and Civil Rights Leader Golden Frinks stand beside the Historical Marker dedicated in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s visit to Chowan County in December, 1962. The ceremony took place Tuesday at noon at the old National Guard Armory. Look for more on the dedication in next week's Chowan Herald. (Staff photo by Bud Weagly)

## Commissioners review budget

BY TAMIKA SPRUILL  
Staff Writer

The highlight of Monday night's Chowan County Commissioners meeting was the 2004 Budget presentation by County Manager Cliff Copeland.

According to Copeland, the county had to deal with many issues in preparing this year's proposed budget was still able to present a "budget meant to ensure we provide good and secure services for the citizens of Chowan County." Those issues included continued stagnation of revenues, a decrease of \$85,000 in COPS fast revenue and an \$88,000 increase in Workman's Comp coupled with an 18 percent increase totaling \$78,624 in health insurance. There was also a de-

crease of \$30,000 in the Town of Edenton's Recreation contribution.

However, Copeland said that despite these challenges, the county tax rate will remain unchanged. He expressed appreciation to his department heads for implementing cost savings totaling over \$300,000 in last year's budget and for presenting frugal budget requests for the upcoming year. Copeland added that Chowan County has continued to address the slowdown in the local economy through cost-cutting measures and the strengthening of the user fee schedule.

The county plans to hold a public hearing on the proposed budget on June 16 at 6 p.m. in the commissioners meeting room at the new Chowan County Courthouse.

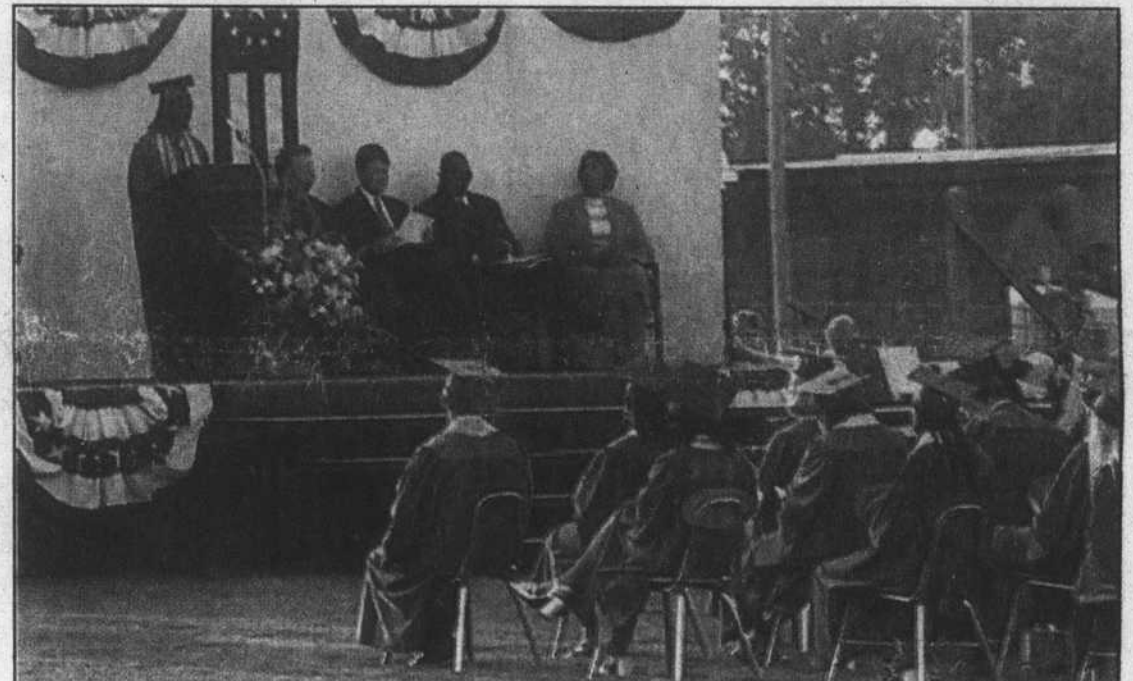
## Holmes grads receive diplomas

BY TAMIKA SPRUILL  
Staff Writer

The graduating class of 2003 exemplified John A. Holmes High School's tradition of higher standards. Of the 144 graduates that assembled for the commencement services at John A. Holmes High School Athletic Complex on May 30, over fifty percent graduated with honors and ninety-two percent plan to further their education beyond high school. The class also accumulated a total of \$450,000 in scholarships. A feat Assistant principal David A. Lewis was proud of.

"This is the largest group of seniors in my years at Holmes to receive honors and awards," Lewis stated at commencement.

Valedictorian Domanique Downing was one of the students that embodied the tradition. She received over \$30,000 in scholarships to attend UNC-Chapel Hill. During her remarks to the senior class she



John A. Holmes High School valedictorian Domanique Downing addresses those attending the 2003 graduation ceremony Friday evening. (Staff photo by Bud Weagly)

emphasized five traits to have that would ensure future success and happiness. One of which was confidence and pride in your community.

"If you don't believe in your roots, your dreams will wither and die," Downing stated. She also told classmates to stand strong. "If you don't

believe in yourself no one will," she added. Salutatorian for the class of

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## Suspects charged in shootings

BY TAMIKA SPRUILL  
Staff Writer

Tyrone Mooring, 24, of 336 Wildcat Road, Edenton was shot twice while standing in front of 123 West Cartaret Street on Saturday night when a four-door purple Cadillac rode by and started shooting at him.

According to Mooring and witness accounts the driver and passenger side rider in the Cadillac fired an undetermined amount of shots at him. A 1993 Ford Taurus was parked in front of the residence and received damage to its windshield and bumper.

The driver and passenger of the purple Cadillac were later identified as 22-year-old Jan Maurice Bonner of 129 Thick Neck Road, and 21-year-old Deshannon Kenta Stepney of 101 Lenny Lane, both of Edenton. Bonner and Stepney are both charged with communicating threats and assault with a deadly weapon armed to the terror of the people. They are both still at large.

An unidentified juvenile

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## Edenton man killed

According to the NC Highway Patrol, a head-on collision on Highway 17 just north of Windsor Sunday at around 9:50 p.m. resulted in one fatality. Edenton contactor Oras "Toot" Blount, 53, died as a result of injuries sustained in a head-on collision with a 1993 International tractor trailer driven by William Cradle of Portsmouth, VA. According to the accident report, Blount, driving a 2001 Ford Explorer, was traveling north in the southbound lane of Highway 17 when his vehicle collided with the tractor trailer. The accident is still under investigation. (Helen Kerr Outland photo)

## DFI owner issues apology to Partnership

BY REBECCA BUNCH  
Managing Editor

William Horton, head of the Raleigh, NC-based DFI Group, has issued a written apology to the Northeast Partnership on behalf of his company. In the

letter, dated May 30, Horton thanked Watson, his staff and the Partnership for its past support of DFI's ethanol projects in Martin and Beaufort counties.

He also wrote that he wanted to "clear up some previous

matters" including the basis upon which his company earlier this year filed a lawsuit against the Partnership. "This civil action and request (to Sen. Jesse Helms) for a criminal investigation concerned interactions that had occurred

previous to that lawsuit and request, while my company and I were considering locating two ethanol manufacturing plants in your region.

"This lawsuit and request for investigation came about because of my good faith be-

lieved at that time that inappropriate activities had occurred. Upon receiving further information I reached the conclusion that the concerns in this matter were incorrect. Unfor-

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## Service honors officers

On Thursday May 15 2003, the family of Deputy Sheriff Richard Ashley Sr and several members of the Chowan County Sheriff's Office were present at the services honoring the officers who made the supreme sacrifice in the service of the citizens of our country. President George W. Bush spoke at the event honoring the 148 law enforcement officers across the United States killed while performing their duties. Thousands of other officers were injured and assaulted. Deputy Ashley, Sgt. Scott Futrell of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department and Major Robert Kennedy of the Boone Police Department died July 17, 2002 when their airplane crashed in a cotton field off of Happy Home Road in rural Chowan County while participating in

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President Bush comforts (l-r) Steven, May and Rick Ashley Jr. After speaking at the National Peace Officer Memorial Service, Bush spent several minutes speaking to the Ashley family who lost their father and husband, Chowan County Deputy Sheriff Richard Ashley Sr. July 17, 2002. (Photo courtesy of Chowan County Sheriff Fred Spruill)