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Council cool to Legion's request for flea markets

BY SEAN JACKSON
Staff Writer

Flea markets have seeped into American culture over the years, becoming an icon for the bargain-hunting Saturday-morning shopper in all of us.

But it's not something the Edenton Town Council is keen on seeing setting up shop on the southwest side of town until certain issues are addressed. During a Feb. 23 committee meeting, several councilors expressed concern about the idea.

The American Legion Post

40 on West Queen Street is seeking to host flea markets every available Saturday and Sunday at its fairgrounds.

"The reason I don't like it," Councilman Jerry Parks said, "is because I don't like the way (flea markets) make a town look."

Councilors also had concerns that vendors would eventually begin to store their wares at the fairgrounds in a permanent fashion. Edenton-Chowan County Planning Director Elizabeth Bryant said the town's planning board had similar concerns.

"The planning board saw ... that you might be creating something like a self-storage unit," she said. "Then on the weekends the (storage unit) doors would go up and people would sell out of that."

Councilman Willis Privott feared that flea-market vendors could hurt the business at a local farmer's market, where fresh local fruits and vegetables are sold when in-season.

"I'd hate to see something that could hinder them," Privott said of a flea market possibly sapping business

from the farmer's market on Virginia Road.

Parks noted that the fairgrounds' neighbors already endure a week-long county fair on Legion grounds every fall.

"The (other) 51 weeks of the year isn't so bad," he said.

But how would those residents feel about a flea market every weekend?

With that question in mind, council asked Town Manager Anne-Marie Knighton to alert the fairgrounds' neighbors of the Legion's request. Parks said those neighbors should be notified of the request during

the conceptual stage and not, as required by law, have to wait until the Legion officially seeks a conditional-use permit.

Bryant also presented results of queries to other North Carolina towns' dealings with flea markets. Hillsborough prohibits flea markets, while Cary limits the number of times they can operate there during a year.

Both Zebulon and Hillsborough have indicated that a "negative effect had been felt" for existing merchants when flea markets were

held, Bryant said.

The town's Unified Development Ordinance currently allows for yard sales.

The Legion made its request in September.

"The American Legion was looking at ways to generate more revenue out there," Knighton said regarding the flea markets. Plans are for the Legion to rent space to vendors, but not on the scale done in Raleigh or larger cities, Knighton said.

Council will hold a public hearing on the issue April 13.

Utility bills likely to rise

BY SEAN JACKSON
Staff Writer

Effective April 1, Edenton residents will likely see an increase in their electric bills and higher rates to connect or reconnect to the town's power system.

The Town Council's Utilities Committee forwarded a recommended 1-percent rate hike to the full council's March 9 meeting.

Councilman Willis Privott said the board had hoped it wouldn't have to raise electric rates.

"It just has to be done sometimes," he said.

Electricities, the town's electric supplier, raised its wholesale rate by 1.2 percent on Oct. 1. That increase boosted the cost to purchase power by \$93,000 a year, Knighton said.

Knighton also recommended that the council approve using monies from the town's rate stabilization fund to pay for added costs from October through February, due to Electricities' rate increase.

She also recommended an increase in service-related rates, including:

- Increase the fee to install underground electric services to \$300, from its current \$150 rate. Knighton said the town typically does two underground installation projects a month, usually on newly constructed homes.

- Raise the after-hours reconnection fee to \$75, from its current \$40. Cost to have power reconnected during regular business hours would not change.

- Increase the charge for temporary power services for construction projects to \$40, from its current \$30.

- Raise the cost to install an electric meter to \$25, from the current \$5 charge.

Knighton said the service-related increases would generate about \$11,700 annually.

Councilman Jerry Parks did raise a concern about increasing the after-hours reconnection fee. He said the increase would place an added burden on customers who are already having trouble paying their bills on time.

"Put yourself in their shoes," Parks said.

Knighton said about 30 customers per month have their power shut off for not paying past-due bills. She said that number often includes repeat offenders.

"It is very, very rare," she said, "that somebody doesn't know they're going to be cut off."



Boat building is a rapidly growing industry in Chowan County. Unfortunately, companies are having difficulty finding a qualified work force to fill their staffing needs. (Contributed photo)

Better educated workforce is key

BY ANGELA PEREZ
Staff Writer

Chowan County's economy is doing well despite a great need to develop a workforce, according to a report given by Richard Bunch, Director of the Edenton-Chowan Chamber of Commerce, at last Monday's County Commissioner's meeting. The top employers in the

county are medical services, mainly Chowan Hospital, textiles, peanuts, and boat building. Though these employers are, for the most part, growing and expanding, said Bunch, the problem is that there aren't enough qualified people to fill all of these jobs. Recent statistics show that Chowan County has a 4% unemployment rate, lower than the national aver-

age. "We have people applying for these jobs who don't have any of the necessary skills," said Bunch. "Or they aren't working at all. We need to make sure that people know what these jobs are offering besides wages, like the benefits, health insurance, and extras that are offered." One particular local industry that desperately needs qualified

workers is boat-building, with companies like Regulator Marine, Carolina Classic, and Albemarle Boats. Bunch hopes the county will work closely with vocational programs at the College of the Albemarle and Edenton-Chowan Schools to address workforce development issues.

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Navy flyover doesn't quiet fears

BY ANGELA PEREZ
Staff Writer

Last Saturday, close to 200

opponents and curious on-lookers gathered at the makeshift protest field "Liberty Village" in southern Washington County to witness a Super Hornet jet flyover held by the Navy. The Navy organized the demonstration in response to persistent opposition against their proposed outlying landing field (OLF) scheduled to be built on farmland near the village and five miles from Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge.

The deafening sound of the jets streaking overhead through the clear blue afternoon sky brought sad tears to the eyes of many of those in attendance. The noise also inspired anger and suspicion. "They are misrepresenting themselves," said a former Air Force pilot, who shook his head in disgust. "If they flew

See OLF On Page 3-A



The jets flew at low altitudes. (Photo by Angela Perez)

Singleton new Herald publisher

David Daughtridge Singleton of Greenville, NC has been named publisher of *The Chowan Herald*. Singleton began work at the paper yesterday (Tuesday).

Singleton is a native of Raleigh, NC. He is a graduate of East Carolina University in Greenville, where he earned a degree in Marketing. Since 1990, he has worked for Cox North Carolina Publications at its Greenville headquarters.

Singleton is no stranger to the *Herald* staff, or to the Chowan County.

"Dave has worked with the staff of *The Chowan Herald*, as AdNet Sales Manager, for three years. This experience gives Dave a working knowl-



Dave Singleton

edge of the newspaper and the community," said Mark Wilson, regional manager for the Cox non-daily newspapers. "I am confident that Dave will do a wonderful job managing the day-to-day operations."

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EDENTON ROTARY CLUB BREAKFAST

Pancakes, Sausage, Scrambled Eggs • Saturday, March 6, 2004
6:30am - 12:00pm • Holmes High School Cafeteria • \$5 Donation • Eat-In or Take-Out

