

Town residents may feel pinch of tax hikes

BY SEAN JACKSON
Staff Writer

Town Manager Anne-Marie Knighton has proposed hikes in property taxes, water and sewer fees, and electric rates in the 2005 fiscal year budget.

A proposed 2.5 percent tax boost would push the town's ad valorem rate to 44.5 cents per \$100 value. For example, a property valued at \$100,000

would be assessed \$445 in taxes using the proposed new rate, a \$25 increase over the current rate.

The proposed increases would offset revenue losses in tax reimbursements withheld by the state in recent years and spending for repairs of damage caused by Hurricane Isabel in September.

"It is with much trepidation that I make this recommenda-

tion," Knighton said in a letter to the Town Council, "especially in light of the financial hardships most, if not all, of our property owners endured due to the wrath of Hurricane Isabel."

Council raised property taxes by 2.5-percent last year.

The proposed tax increase would, in part, funnel \$34,477 back into the town's Capital Reserve Fund, which is used to

repair town property and for new construction. An additional \$35,100 will be sunk into the Electric Fund, as was recommended by the state Local government Commission, Knighton added. The tax hike would produce \$60,100 in new revenue.

Revenue decreases include a \$70,000 drop in Powell Bill funds, money that comes from a tax on gas that is distributed

to municipalities for street projects.

The proposed budget also contains only slight salary hikes for town staff.

Knighton also projects the Electric Fund to rise from roughly \$9 million to nearly \$9.73 million. Council had already approved the electric rate increase earlier this year.

The budget contains "unmet needs," Knighton said. They

include:

- Needed exterior maintenance for Town Hall
- A \$20,000 air vac system for the fire department
- A new copier for the police department

Knighton's proposed budget includes a General Fund of nearly \$3.47 million, compared to the slightly more than \$3.5 million budgeted for the current fiscal year ending June 30.

Park is site of assault

BY SEAN JACKSON
Staff Writer

A 76-year-old Edenton man was attacked and robbed at Queen Anne Park May 24. Police have arrested two of the assailants and are searching for the third.

The man, a resident of South Broad Street, was exercising at the waterfront park when he was knocked down and robbed, police Chief Greg Bonner said Friday. The victim said money was stolen but his wallet was later recovered.

Dexter Jermell White, 17, of 215 E. Albemarle St., and Lamar Privott, 16, of 70 Chowan Court, both of Edenton, were each charged with common law robbery. Both are jailed at the Chowan County Detention Facility under \$510,000 secured bonds.

Devon Allen Riddick, 20, of Mexico Road, Edenton, is being sought for his role in the attack, Bonner said. Warrants have been issued for his arrest.

"We ask anyone with information of his whereabouts to please call the police department," at 482-5144, the chief added.

The assault occurred at 3 p.m., along one of the most prominent town streets — Water Street. The victim was asked to make change and as he reached for his wallet was struck from behind, Bonner said. The man said he got up, only to be knocked down again.

The victim sought medical attention but appeared more angered than physically injured two days after the assault. He has returned to his frequent outdoor exercise routines in downtown Edenton. He is hoping town officials can devise a plan to step up safety measures downtown.

Queen Anne Park is managed by the town. Town Manager Anne-Marie Knighton said Bonner has stepped up foot patrols in the town's two waterfront parks.

"We are pleased that two of the suspects were in custody in less than thirty minutes of the incident," Knighton said. "We know who the third suspect is and are actively looking for him."

The town is also doing crime analysis, Knighton said, including tracking and mapping every crime that has occurred over the past six months.

"We are going to track where every offender or person arrested/suspected lives," Knighton said. "We are hoping we can identify some trends from this data and then focus resources, including law enforcement, probation, code enforcement, social services, mental health and other agen-

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Turning of tassles . . . new life begins

BY EARLINE WHITE
Staff Writer

Over 160 students graduated at the 2004 John A. Holmes commencement ceremony on Friday, May 28. Holmes grads were antsy in their seats awaiting their diplomas. Energies were high and the crowd was just as excited as those graduating were.

"This is one of the largest groups I have seen in four years. This group was out-

standing," said Principal John Williams. "This class included 20 National Honors Society scholars, 27, honor graduates, 18 Holmes Scholars, 41 NC Scholars, 22 Fine Arts scholars, and 24 Tech Prep scholars. Over \$600,000 was accrued among this class in scholarships alone," said Williams.

Of the graduates who have indicated their plans, 105 said they plan to attend a community college, 4-year college or university; 9 plan to enter directly into the work force; and

5 plan to enter military service.

Several students received scholarships of over \$20,000. Cal Walters with his appointment into West Point Academy received a scholarship for \$285,000. Erin Potocki who will go on to study at UNC-Chapel Hill received \$30,000; Laura Breedlove who will be attending Peace College received \$28,000; Chris Holley will take his football expertise to Chowan College with a \$22,400 scholarship; Jay Cooper will be attending Fayetteville State in the fall and received \$20,000; and Allison Winslow who will pursue Nursing at ECU received \$20,000. There were many other scholarships awarded at the ceremony.

Over 1,000 volunteer hours were spent by this special group of students through such efforts as the Dream Team, Teacher Cadet, Language Bridges through the Spanish class, Key Club and ROTC. Athletically the class did well this year; during all the playoffs each team made it to at least the first round.

Representative Bill Culpepper was the commencement speaker that night and gave a wonderful, inspiring address to the graduates. "I urge each one of you to reach out for your

own personal best," Culpepper said. "You are living in a world full of choices and I urge you to open your mind to those choices. Consider all the options that are available to you. Choose what will make you happy because your career should be more than just a job. It should be a joy."

Culpepper continued, "All of your life you will meet and mix with other people. Do remember that their opinions, their rights, are as important as yours. Some of you will become successful in the world's eyes, more of you will be important only to those you love and who love you. Success comes in different shapes and sizes but never be afraid of failure. Should it occur your charge is to try again. Commit yourself to excellence in whatever you do, big and little things. A little thing is a little thing, but little things done well is a big thing. Be happy, because happiness spreads. You should feel very proud this evening of your accomplishments and look forward to your respective futures with excitement and anticipation."

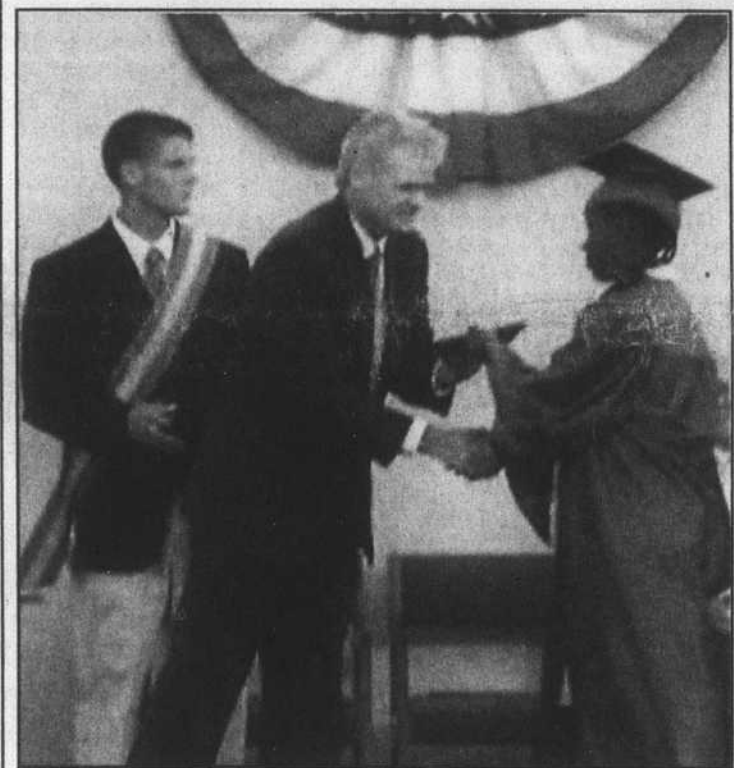
Erin Potocki and Eric Sliva represented the Class of 2004 as valedictorian and salutatorian respectively. Potocki also gave her fellow classmates



Rep. Bill Culpepper

good advice. "We're sad that this chapter of our lives has come to a close, but more than that, we are excited about what the future has to offer. Many of us dream big for ourselves, and we have goals of how we want our lives to be. I simply ask that we not give up on those dreams for the future...we can succeed, despite any setbacks we may encounter...we should never have to compromise our values and integrity to achieve our goals. Wherever our lives take us, we must always continue learning. Also, we must never forget John A. Holmes, and all the memories that were shared here."

(Graduation 2004 photos courtesy of John Wells of Edenton)



Board of Education Chairman Gene Jordan presents Krystyan Fleming her diploma Friday evening.



Staff photo by Earline White

Remembering fallen heroes

Veterans salute the American flag during a Memorial Day ceremony held Monday morning at the Chowan County Veterans Memorial in Edenton.

Boys/Girls Club coming to town

BY SEAN JACKSON
Staff Writer

Scotty Harrell wanted to give Edenton and Chowan County youths something to do. And he has done just that.

The owner of Albemarle Boats has helped lure Boys & Girls Club of Southeast Virginia to the old D.F. Walker School in Edenton. Harrell was on hand Tuesday afternoon as members of the Edenton-Chowan Community Foundation handed over start-up funds to Chet Emerson.

"It's just been wonderful to work with the folks in Edenton," Emerson, executive director of the Norfolk-based youth club, said after the check-passing. "I've found them to be very receptive, very concerned about youth-development issues."

Harrell was one of the concerned citizens.

"Looking around," he said, "there was just a big need in the community for a place that kids could go."

Officials are already hammering out a time frame for when the club will get into action.

Firm plans include temporarily housing the Boys & Girls Club at the former elementary school on Oakum Street. The building is undergoing renovations and will be the home of Chowan's College of The Albemarle campus. The Edenton-Chowan Recreation Department also has staff at the school.

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