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Budget Despite tough breaks, CAC going strong includes tax hike

BY SEAN JACKSON
Staff Writer

Chowan County commissioners unanimously approved the 2004-05 fiscal year budget Monday night, which includes a 5-cent tax hike.

County Manager Cliff Copeland said the property tax increase was needed to improve services offered to county residents. And the board decided not to borrow money to do so.

"We could have easily dipped into the county's reserve fund," Copeland said. "But that wouldn't be the prudent thing to do down the road."

The increase would push the county's ad valorem tax rate to 74 cents. It is the first increase since 1997, Copeland and board Chairman Louis Belfield said.

"We haven't raised taxes since I've been on the board," said Belfield, who was elected in 1998.

Alvin Earley, a Yeopim area resident, asked the board to reconsider raising taxes.

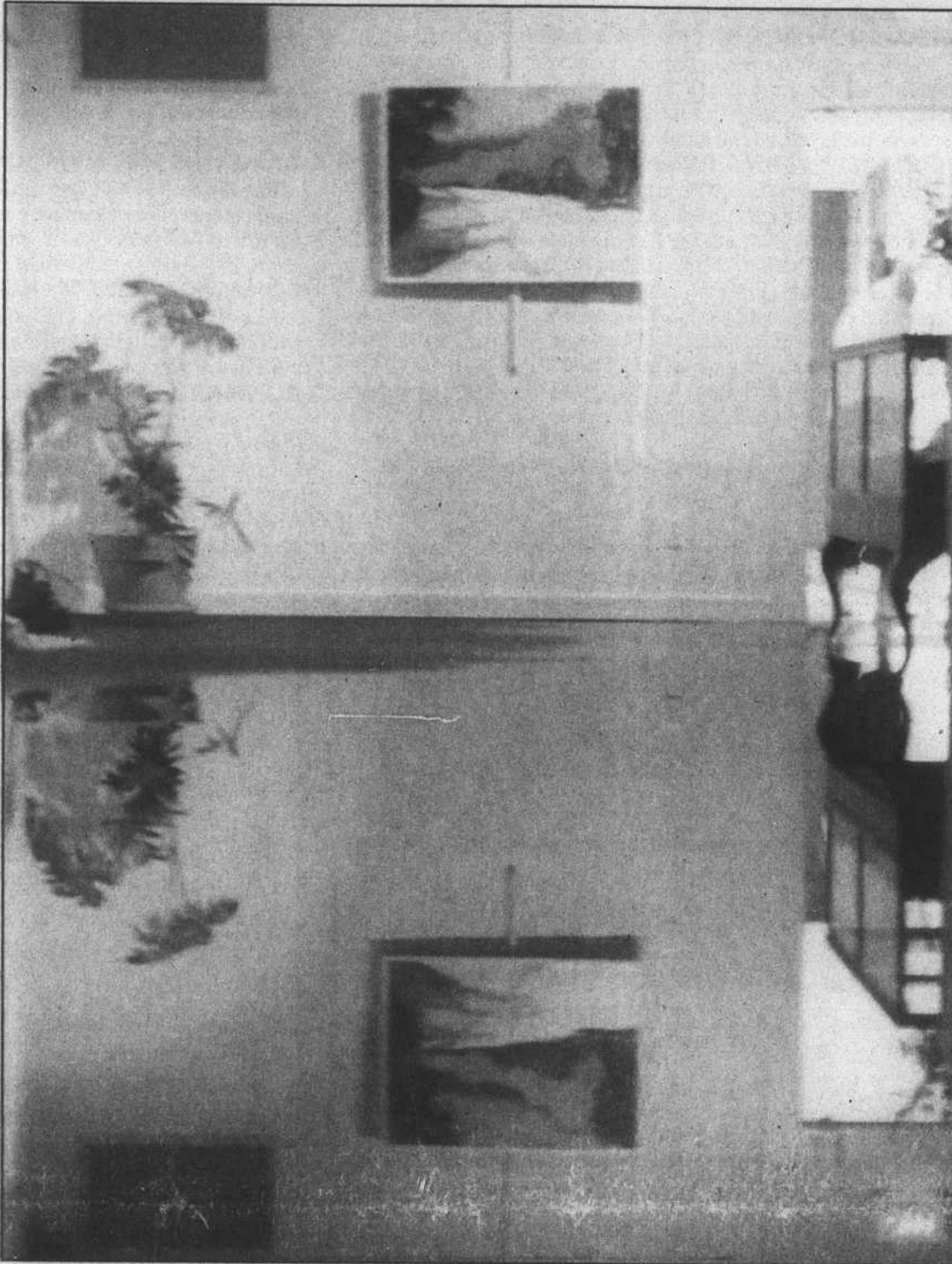
"Isn't there some way (stopping the tax increase) can be done?" Earley asked.

Copeland said there were several factors that necessitated the hike. Hurricane Isabel stripped the county of some of its tax base, Copeland said. The county has also spent millions recovering from the Sept. 18 storm.

In recent years, the county tax office has done a good job collecting delinquent taxes.

"That's the good news," Copeland said. "The bad news is there's not as much delinquent taxes to collect."

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In this photo that Chowan Arts Council Executive Director Sue Clark has dubbed "reflected art," the top end of the photo reflects wall space at the Arts Council while the bottom shows a reflection of that same space mirrored in the water on the floor. Following extensive water damage after Hurricane Isabel it was months before the nonprofit organization was able to reopen its doors — but with lots of hard work and strong community support the CAC had a good year anyway.

BY REBECCA BUNCH
Managing Editor

Oftentimes struggle brings out the very best in people - and organizations. Just ask Sue Clark, executive director of the Chowan Arts Council. The nonprofit arts organization she heads was among the hardest hit locations last September after Hurricane Isabel roared through. It took months before needed repairs to the site were completed. For part of that time, Clark's kitchen table served as their headquarters while the doors to their Gallery remained closed. But you'd never know about the challenging year they've had by looking at their bottom line.

"In a year marked by mayhem and disaster," she said in her annual report to CAC

members, "we are currently projecting a moderate end-of-year surplus. Given all we've been through, that seems nothing short of miraculous."

Clark noted that a flash flood which dumped three to four inches of water across the Arts Council Gallery's floor just after the opening exhibit in September 2003 "was a harbinger of things to come. The following week, Hurricane Isabel hit our community and shut down our offices and gallery space for nearly four months."

"Much of that time," she said, "was spent moving artwork from one dry place to another, staying one step ahead of the construction workers. It is remarkable that during that entire period not one single

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Outdoor movies on wish list

BY REBECCA BUNCH
Managing Editor

Ever wished you could sit out under the stars and enjoy a good movie? With a little luck, the Chowan Arts Council in partnership with the Edenton Steamers and the Edenton Main Street program, may just make your wish come true.

"We are currently working on showing old-fashioned outdoor movies," said Chowan Arts Council Executive Director Sue Clark. "If anyone knows how to build or can help us find a portable outdoor movie screen, we definitely would love to hear from them. They can reach us at

(252) 482-8005."

Ever the optimist, Clark has tentatively scheduled the first movie for Sept. 17 with another set to follow in October.

Preceding the old-time movies will be the opening of a very meaningful art exhibition on Sept. 10. "We are very pleased that our opening exhibit of the 2004 program year will be a one-woman show by one of our most talented local artists, Katherine Wolf Webb," Clark said. "After losing her entire studio and much of her artwork to the hurricane last September, she personifies the power of

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3rd suspect held in park mugging

BY SEAN JACKSON
Staff Writer

The third suspect in the May 24 assault of a 76-year-old Edenton man was arrested by police June 19.

Devon Allen Riddick, 20, of 408 Mexico Road, Edenton, was slapped with a host of charges stemming from the daylight mugging that took place at Queen Anne Park. He is jailed under a \$600,00 bond, police Chief Greg Bonner said Monday.

Riddick had been hiding

from police prior to his arrest, Bonner said.

"Obviously," the chief added, "(Riddick) decided he was tired of hiding and came out where police could see him."

After being spotted by Detective Sgt. Rhonda Copeland standing in front of a home on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, Riddick fled into Beaver Hill Cemetery, where he was nabbed by Copeland and Detective Dwight Rawlins.

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Woman charged in identity fraud

BY SEAN JACKSON
Staff Writer

An Edenton woman was arrested June 10 on charges of financial identity fraud after allegedly netting \$600 from another person's bank account.

Shirley Bazemore Spivey, 50, of 104 Blade Circle, was charged with two counts of obtaining property by false pretense, two counts of forgery, and financial ID fraud. She was placed under a \$2,500 unsecured bond.

Police Chief Greg Bonner said Spivey used another person's financial informa-

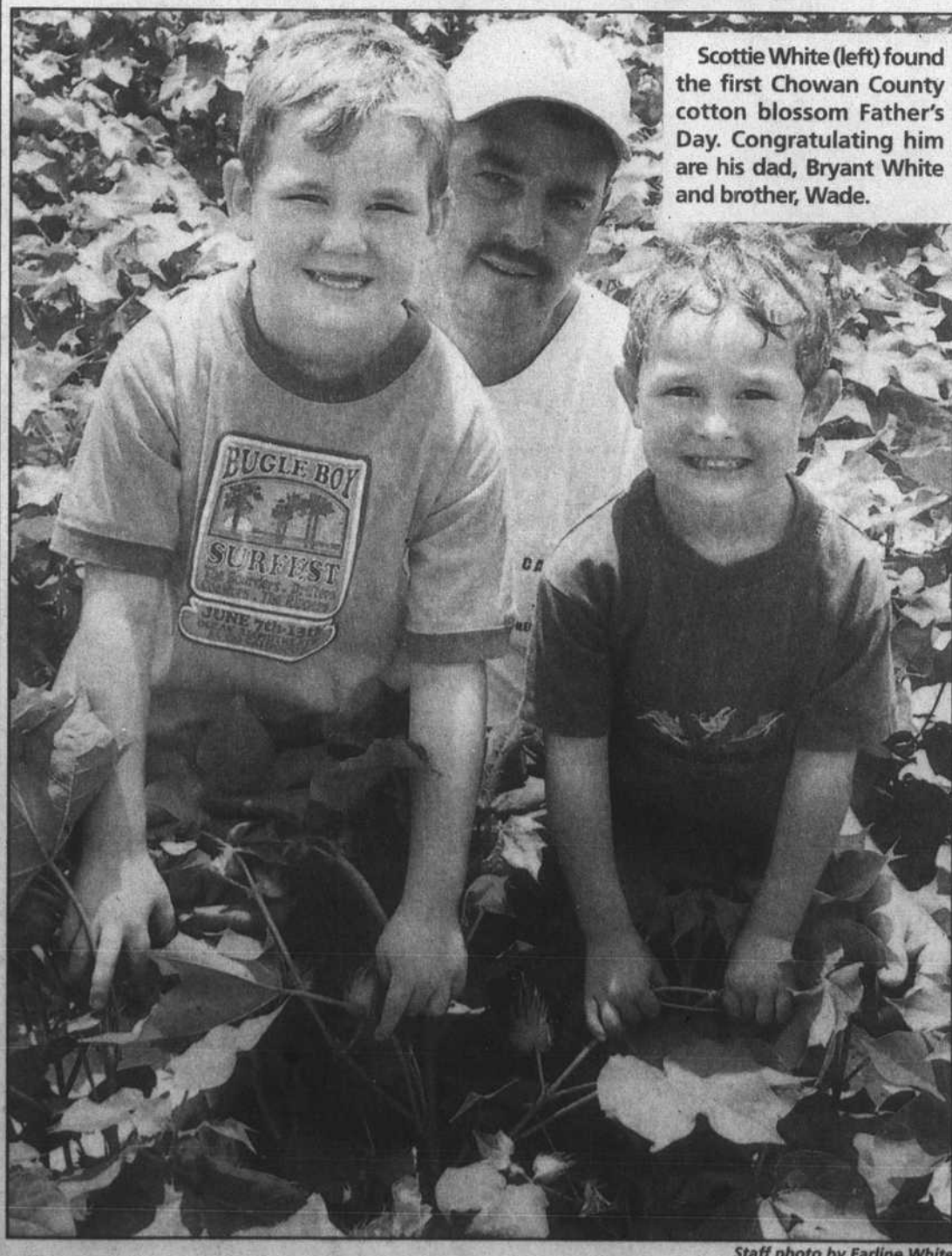
tion on two occasions to make illegal cash withdrawals from Generations Community Credit Union. Spivey had inadvertently received the rightful account owner's information in the mail, the chief added.

"She went down to the credit union posing as the person who owned the account," Bonner said.

The fraud was detected after the second \$300 withdrawal, Bonner said. Spivey later attempted to deposit the money back into the true owner's account.

Detective Dwight Rawlins investigated the case.

FIRST BLOSSOM



Scottie White (left) found the first Chowan County cotton blossom Father's Day. Congratulating him are his dad, Bryant White and brother, Wade.

Staff photo by Earline White

Filing opens this Friday

Two seats on the Edenton-Chowan Board of Education are up for re-election and the filing period for candidates for the jobs opens Friday at noon.

Kay Wright's District 3 post and board chairman Gene Jordan's District 1 seat will both be the on the Nov. 2 ballot.

The filing period closes at noon July 30.

Candidates can file at the Chowan County Board of Elections Office at 108 E. King St., Edenton. Office hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

In addition, the filing period for the Soil and Water Conservation District seat opened June 14 and will end July 2.

The registration period ends Friday at 5 p.m.

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