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Pembroke Circle park has ups and downs, residents say

BY SEAN JACKSON
Staff Writer

Although it will have months to make a decision, the Edenton Town Council has to decide whether or not hurricane-damaged lots on Pembroke Circle should become open to the public.

During a public hearing at its Oct. 12 regular meeting, council heard from both supporters and opponents of locating a public park at 113 and 115 Pembroke Circle.

Homes at those sites were battered by floodwaters during Hurricane Isabel in September 2003.

The homeowners have expressed interest in participating in a federal buyout program.

Under that Federal Emergency Management Agency program, the town would acquire the land, tear down the houses, clear the lots, and establish public-use space.

A number of nearby residents have rebuked the idea of a public park or "green space" in their neighborhood.

Some opponents told council that traffic, litter and noise would harm the residential area's "safe and quiet" atmosphere.

"I just don't feel this (proposed park) is a good use for that property, in that neighborhood," Bill Pepper, of 111 Pembroke Circle, told council during the 30-minute public hearing portion of the hour-and-a-half discussion on the issue.

Town Manager Anne-Marie Knighton said town staff believes placing a park on the lots could be a "once-in-a-lifetime opportunity." The town operates 11 parks and open spaces, and a "passive park" — one without playground equipment — could be a less intrusive option, Knighton said prior to the public hearing.

"We feel it is our responsibility to be advocates of more open spaces and parks for the community," she said. One Pembroke Circle couple split on support and opposition to the idea.

Dabney Narvaez, of 119 Pembroke Circle likes the passive park idea.

"I just don't feel this (proposed park) is a good use for that property, in that neighborhood."

— Bill Pepper,
a Pembroke Circle
park opponent

"We feel that could be a contribution to our community," she said. "A greenway could (also) be a very positive thing."

Her husband, Al Narvaez, was not opposed to the playground-free park, but said private ownership of the properties should continue. He was also concerned that the town would absorb costs for improvements needed to build a park or green space on the properties.

Under the terms of the buyout grant, FEMA would pay 75 percent of all costs, consultant Pat Young told council and the about 30 residents on hand for the meeting.

Opponents, who significantly outnumbered supporters of the idea who spoke during the public hearing, indicated that increased pedestrian and vehicle traffic was their chief concern.

Pepper pointed out that Pembroke Circle is a narrow street without sidewalks.

"It's not a safe place to get in and out of," he said.

Knighton said town officials could address that and other issues during the months it could take to finalize the grant.

"We feel like there are ... ways we could deal with those (park opponents') concerns," she said.

A clearer view of Edenton

BY EARLINE WHITE
Staff Writer

The Main Street Resource Team gave a public presentation on Thursday, October 14 at Swain Auditorium to reveal the information they had discovered during their week-long stay in Edenton.

Mayor Vaughan expressed his thanks to the team for their terrific efforts over the week.

Rodney Swink, Director of the North Carolina Main Street Program, introduced each team member before turning it over to them for their respective presentations. To rile the crowd's interest in the Main Street Program, Swink gave vital statistics about the impact the program has given to other main street communities in the past. "Over \$890,000 have been developed in new investments in the Main Street communities; over 10,250 new jobs have been created; over 2,500 businesses created and nearly 2,600 buildings have been inhabited," Swink reported.

Bob Murphrey, the Main Street Small Towns coordinator for the Office of Urban Development, gave a detailed report on the economic restructuring to current realities for the businesses of downtown Edenton. "The primary trade area of downtown Edenton is within a five-mile radius.



October through December are reported to be the 'good' business months, which means you are attracting real customers. So far you are capturing 23% or \$21 million or retail sales within the 5-mile radius. But there is \$10 million in potential sales available within that radius primarily in pharmaceutical drug, miscellaneous, clothing, and general sales-areas in which you already deal. Our recommendation is that you aim to capture that \$10 million and increase the availability of those sales areas," Murphrey said.

Another area of potential improvement is clustering within downtown. There are apparent linkage issues between businesses, that is, all the clothing stores should be within close proximity, as with retail, etc. Murphrey's recommendation is to fill in the gaps and group businesses, while moving office space to side streets. "There are 165 busi-



nesses downtown," Murphrey reported, "but only 31 of those are retail related."

Two findings by the Main Street Resource Team are shown above and at left. Above shows a confusing signage problem for area visitors. At left is an illustration of the ideally renovated storefront facade in historic downtown.

Staff photos by Earline White

Julie Metz Thompson is the executive director of Downtown Goldsboro Development

Corporation. Thompson gave the crowd ideas on how to market and promote downtown. "Taking it to the next level would be to increase summer sales. Look at the community calendar and fill in the gaps with goal-oriented events, keeping the audience in mind. Don't hold a family event on the weekends when most locals leave town. Create annual schedules early and solicit sponsors for the events early in the year. Communication is the greatest tool for spreading the word about your downtown. Send out a newsletter with the annual schedule, create a summer concert series, an annual dinner or hold an open house. Make dining and shopping brochures for the visitor's center, and use direct mail," Thompson indicated.

Thompson also suggested that Edenton should have a tag line that could be published on all the literature that comes out of it. "Edenton needs a slogan that people will remember and draw them in," Thompson said. She gave a few ideas such as "Edenton-A Slice of Americana", "Where the Waterfront Meets Main Street", and "Making Memories on Main Street". "Advertise downtown as a destination, create t-shirts using the slogans and get involved," Thompson said.

Susan Suggs, ASLA is a

See VISION On Page 5-A

Voters flocking to polls

BY SEAN JACKSON
Staff Writer

With Democratic hopeful Sen. John Kerry in a furious race with President George W. Bush for the White House, voters are already swarming the polls.

Chowan County Board of Elections Director Rennie Harrington-Jones said 124 one-stop ballots had been cast through Tuesday morning. Elections officials have said roughly 600 one-stop votes were cast in the 2000 general elections.

This year's pace could exceed that.

"At the rate we're going," Harrington-Jones said Tuesday, "we probably will (surpass the 2000 total). We keep doubling our numbers each day."

Escapee nabbed

BY SEAN JACKSON
Staff Writer

A Columbia man who escaped from a local jail this summer was nabbed in Edenton on Sept. 28.

Al Kendell Spencer, 28, was arrested by Edenton police after a search of apartment 65 at Davis Place Apartments. Spencer had escaped from the Tyrrell County Jail in July. He was being held there on charges of probation violation and two counts of trafficking cocaine.

Police had received information that Spencer was inside the Davis Place residence and received consent to search the apartment, Police Chief Greg Bonner said earlier this month. Spencer was arrested without incident, the chief said. He is confined at the Dare County Detention Center under a \$500,000 secured bond.

The arresting officers were Det. Aaron Davidson, Det. Sgt. Rhonda Copeland, and Officer Joe Felton. N.C. Probation and Parole officers assisted in the arrest, Bonner said.

Evans tapped Chowan schools top principal

BY GLENDA JAKUBOWSKI
Contributing Writer

D.F. Walker principal Sheila Evans is Edenton-Chowan Schools' 2004-2005 Wachovia Principal of the Year.

"Mrs. Evans' dynamic leadership continues to be an asset for Edenton-Chowan Schools," said superintendent Allan T. Smith.

"Not only does she lead a strong team of staff and students at D. F. Walker, she also works tirelessly for teachers throughout the system who are pursuing National Board Certification. Sheila plays an integral role in raising student and teacher achievement to ever-higher levels."

Evans now moves on to compete with other local award recipients from the northeast region of the state.

One principal will be selected from among the six regional winners as the 2005 Wachovia Principal of the Year.

This is the 21st year Wachovia has sponsored the financial awards. Local Principals of the Year receive \$200. The regional winners receive \$1,500 for personal use and \$1,500 for their schools; and the state Principal of the Year re-

ceives \$3,000 for her school and \$3,000 for personal use.

Regional award recipients will be selected by February, and the state Principal of the Year will be announced on April 7, 2005, at a luncheon in Raleigh.

Evans was assistant principal at Chowan Middle School for two years and then Director of Instruction in the Central Office before assuming her post as Walker's principal in July, 2002.

She attained her National Board of Professional Teach-



Evans

INSIDE

- Calendar A2
- Church C5
- Classifieds D3-6
- Editorials A8
- Football Forecast .. B6
- Learning D1
- Obituaries C7
- Society C2
- Sports B1-6

On Page C1 . . .

"Get up and Go" travel series begins

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