

THE CHOWAN HERALD

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Vol. LXXI, No. 51

Wednesday, December 29, 2004

Single Copies 50¢

Year in Review

Chowan up to challenge in eventful 2004



Chowan Herald file photo

Wrenn Phillips, town crier from Halifax County, was one of the dignitaries taking part in the reopening ceremony at the 1767 Chowan County Courthouse.

The year just passed has been a whirlwind of activity and accomplishment for the citizens of Chowan County. From the continuing aftermath of Hurricane Isabel to the thrills of a successful summer baseball season, emotions ran the gamut and the year brought each of us news that affected us in different ways. Our community lost some of its most beloved citizens during the year while enjoying a renewed growth in business, industry and real estate. While we delve headlong into a new year that will surely bring new challenges, we also take a moment to revisit some of the events that shaped our lives and community in 2004.

BY EARLINE WHITE
Staff Writer

• Renovations at Holmes were approved January 2004 by the Edenton Chowan Board of Education. The 'priority one' renovations addressed the needs of the Exceptional Children and guidance programs. Over the summer a large part of the remodeling was completed. The new space includes 3 instructional areas for the EC program and a new space consolidating all the student guidance services into one area. The total cost of renovations and expansion is projected \$17.8 million. Future expansions to accommodate the increasing number of students will take place at the school's current site.

• A proposal for the 927-acre Sandy Point community is still awaiting final approval. The waterfront community that could bring over 1,000 new homes to Chowan County will also offer public beaches, boat slips and upscale bistros. The development is planned to straddle the Albemarle Sound and Hwy. 32 and will be developed in several phases taking as long as 15 to 20 years to complete. The zoning request was approved but a start date has not been formally announced. Approval of state environmental permits are pending.

• The proposed Outlying Landing Field site in Washington County received national attention. The OLF would be used by the Navy Superhornets as a touch and go strip on their way to Virginia. The field would lie adjacent to the Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, which houses thousands of native birds and wildlife. Locally owned lands will also have to be seized by the government to make way for the landing strip. Recent documents however were found concerning manipulation of wildlife data studies that have further placed the OLF on hold.

• Edenton Town Council has allowed the American Legion's request for a flea market,

but only temporarily. The potential effect that the market could have on the farmer's markets and the neighboring communities were arguments given by the council against the Legion's request. The Legion is currently working on the permit application for the flea market.

• The Chowan Herald's new publisher arrives. David Singleton, an advertising manager from Cox publication's Greenville headquarters, officially took the reigns in March. Since his arrival readers may have noticed several changes in the paper's appearance including a new masthead and more professionally designed page layouts. A newfound sense of camaraderie has emerged from the boss' arrival. Welcome to Edenton, Dave.

• Work on the 1767 Chowan County Courthouse ended October 8 when the 10 year renovations was completed at a cost of over \$3 million. Dignitaries and government officials came out for the historic occasion. The NC Supreme Court held a special session in the national landmark; only the second time that has been done in the history of the court. Celebrations for the grand reopening concluded with a Gala on the Green, a lively social event for the citizens of Chowan County.

• Edenton Town Council approved a 1 cent tax hike on electric rates, water and sewer fees and property taxes. The increases would offset spending for repairs caused by Hurricane Isabel. The County Commissioners also approved a 5-cent increase in county taxes.

• Jennifer Harriss arrived in March as Edenton's Main Street Program director. Prior to moving to the area, Jennifer was Lumberton's downtown coordinator for 18 months. Among the numerous projects Jen-

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Photo by Sam Wolfe/The Daily Advance

Blayne Kine sleds down the snow covered hill at the overpass at the intersection of U.S. Hwy. 17 and Hwy. 32 in Edenton Monday afternoon.

Unexpected snowfall brings belated white Christmas

BY SEAN JACKSON
Staff Writer

In what has been labeled a surprise winter storm, a day-after-Christmas snowfall blanketed all of Chowan County and much of the surrounding area with as much as a half-foot to 14 inches of snow.

Beginning in the early-morning hours of Dec. 26, as much as 4.5 inches of snow fell in Edenton, according to data from the Northeast Regional Airport in Edenton and the National Weather Service. Apparently, the storm veered farther east than previously forecasted, with the heaviest snows seen just west of the Chowan River.

Fortunately, no major traffic accidents were attributed to the sudden storm.

"We didn't have any injuries," due to traffic wrecks,

Patti Madry, an official with the Chowan County Emergency Services Department, said Tuesday.

Madry, like other emergency and weather forecasters have said since Sunday, called the storm a "surprise" since it traveled off its predicted mid-state path.

In downtown Edenton Monday, few businesses were open. Town employees had already been given the day off due to the Christmas holiday, Town Manager Anne-Marie Knighton said Tuesday. However, some Public Works employees were called in to spread sand at intersections, she added. In addition, state Department of Transportation workers began salting, sanding and clearing county and state roads Sunday afternoon.

The storm brought varying snowfall amounts to northeast

North Carolina and southeast Virginia. Area and region snow totals released by the National Weather Service's Wakefield, Va. office Monday included:

- Askewville in Bertie County, 7.5 inches;
- South Mills in Camden County, 5 inches;
- Knotts Island in Currituck County, 1 inch;
- Gatesville and Sunbury in Gates County, 11 inches;
- Elizabeth City, 2 inches;
- In Perquimans County, Belvidere had 5 inches, Hertford, 2;
- Quinby, Accomack County, Va., 14 inches;
- Hampton, Va., 10 inches;
- Norfolk, Va., 6 inches;
- Williamsburg, Va., a half-inch of snow;
- Smithfield, Va., 12 inches;
- Virginia Beach, Va., 5 inches.

Town, County schedule public hearings on hazard mitigation

BY SEAN JACKSON
Staff Writer

Residents will have one final say in January about a joint town/county plan to head off damage from future natural disasters.

The Chowan County Board of Commissioners will hold a public hearing on Jan. 10 at 9 a.m. in the board's meeting room at the old Chowan County Courthouse on East King Street. That night, the Edenton Town Council will hold a public hearing at 7:30 p.m. in council's chambers in the Municipal Building at 504

S. Broad St.

The "hazard mitigation plan" will help the town and county receive state and federal dollars in the wake of a winter storm or hurricane, Town Manager Anne-Marie Knighton said. The state suggested North Carolina municipalities and counties devise such plans in the aftermath of Hurricane Floyd in September 1999.

The plans are supposed to outline how local governments plan to reduce impacts from potential natural disasters, Knighton added.

"This is the final step," she said of the plan, "in the process."

Both Edenton and Chowan held public hearings on a draft plan about a year ago, the town manager said. That draft has already been submitted to state officials.

The plan is available for public review prior to the hearings. It can be reviewed at the Chowan Planning and Inspections Department on East King Street, the Chowan County Emergency Services Department on West Hicks Street, and Shepard-Pruden Memorial Library on West Water Street. For more information, call Danielle Donolli of Hobbs Upchurch & Associates at 252-441-3913.

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The Chowan Herald will be closed on Friday, December 31 for New Years. All deadlines will be noon on Thursday, December 30.

Council moving ahead with plans to spruce up street

BY SEAN JACKSON
Staff Writer

The Edenton Town Council has moved forward with plans to seek state funding to spruce up a street between a pair of the town's main thoroughfares.

On Dec. 14, council unanimously agreed to seek a Community Development Block Grant to repair homes and infrastructure on West Peterson Street. The maximum the town can be awarded is \$700,000, which would only pay for new curb and guttering for about half — or 450 feet — of the street, a consultant told

council.

Council forwarded the application to the state Department of Commerce on the Dec. 15 deadline, Town Manager Anne-Marie Knighton said last week. The grant dollars are channeled to states from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. In recent years, grants were capped at \$700,000, which allows for more projects to be awarded, Don Harvey, a Wooten consultant, told council.

According to Knighton, Edenton has 75 "unoccupied or vacant houses." The City of Raleigh has 150.

"We were very surprised that number (in Edenton) was so high," Knighton said.

With the planned repairs on West Peterson Street, and rental homes projects underway at Colonial Village on Coke Avenue and another on Claire Drive, the town could "see some good, quality rental properties open up," Knighton said.

West Peterson Street, which runs between North Broad and North Granville streets, could be revamped in its entirety. Knighton said last week that Edenton would likely apply for grant dollars from the N.C. Rural

Economic Development Center. Adequate funding from that agency could allow for the entire block to be improved, she added.

Also included in the project would be the rehabilitation of 12 homes along West Peterson Street, Harvey said. Half of those homes are owner-occupied, while the other six are rentals, he said.

"All are low-income, to moderate-income households," Harvey said.

Homeowners will be required to not sell their properties there for at least eight years, according to terms of the grant, Harvey told council. In addition, landlords on

West Peterson will only be able to hike rents by 10 percent annually, also a part of the terms of the grant, he said.

West Peterson Street was one of four areas selected for review by Wooten consultants, Harvey said, and was deemed the most likely to be selected for funding.

The town will spend \$30,000 over two years to take part in the grant.

"We're really hopeful," Knighton said last week when asked by a reporter about the town's chances of being awarded a grant. "I think we put together a real strong application."