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Town gets serious about sprucing up homes, sites

BY SEAN JACKSON
The Chowan Herald

With its number of vacant houses growing shabbier by the day, the Town of Edenton has begun taking action to spruce up — or remove — the offending structures.

During its March 28 meeting, the Town Council heard from Town Manager Anne-Marie Knighton regarding ongoing efforts to reduce nuisance properties. In all, 75 vacant houses have been identified by town officials, she said.

"We think that number is really high for such a small town," Knighton told council during her 45-minute Power Point presentation during the March committee meeting.

The offending homes included a house on East Albemarle where drug arrests have been made recently; two-story homes with boarded-up windows; and properties with grass so high in the summer the town is forced to mow and bill the owners.

Knighton said a code-enforcement panel formed after Hurricane Isabel's destructive visit in September 2003 has shifted its focus from storm-damage issues to more general problems in town. Included in her list of identified nuisance properties was a home on North Oakum

Street that has already been condemned by the town. The owner of that property was given until the end of May to tear the single-story house down.

"That structure should be coming down pretty soon," the town manager said. A contractor who restores older homes has expressed interest in buying another North

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Vacant, run-down houses in Edenton are being considered nuisances by the town. They will either have to be repaired or demolished.

Staff photo by Sean Jackson

Wharf Landing okayed

BY EARLINE WHITE
The Chowan Herald

Wharf Landing, a 90 condominium housing structure located on the Chowan River, has received final plat approval from the County Planning Board and the Chowan County Commissioners. The action came during Monday night's commissioners' meeting.

The development will house six condominiums in each of the high-rise structures as well as feature a full-service marina and restaurant/inn. Meanwhile, Wooten Associates of Greenville and Raleigh were retained for the countywide zoning study project to be conducted in the future. Wooten has a long-standing history of work with Chowan County and reassured the Commissioners that the public will be heard throughout the project for input and considerations.

In other business, with expansion comes a need for emergency medical care and transport. Recently Bertie County (Coastal Medical Transport) applied for a franchise in Chowan County. Prior to this application, the Edenton-Chowan Rescue Squad and EMS handled all of the calls within the county and allowed no other company to work within the county, under the county's Ordinance Ambulance Franchises set into place three years ago. On Monday, Commissioners listened as Lisa Jones, Financial Officer; Doug Belch, Executive Director of EMS, and Peter Rascoe, Staff Attorney, presented information on the financial impact to the local EMS if transfers were franchised instead of performed by local workers. Official consideration will be

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Congressman Butterfield conducts 'listening tour' of local industry, airport

BY SEAN JACKSON
The Chowan Herald

Edenton and Chowan County officials were impressed with a visit from U.S. Rep. G.K. Butterfield, D-N.C., last week.

The congressman swept through the town's boatbuilding industries, and made a pass through the Northeastern Regional Airport.

At Carolina Classic Boats Inc., Butterfield met with the sportfishing boat company's owners, Mac and Joan Privott. Mac Privott led the congressman through the production line of his company, which employs 100 workers at Anchors Way Drive.

With town officials in tow, Butterfield toured the expansive facility.

Mac Privott said the industry has changed since he began building boats in the mid-1970s. Privott said he has learned how to change with the times.

His guest admitted to being on the receiving end of educational material, too.

"I'm learning a lot," Butterfield told Mac Privott.

He also said Privott and fellow local boatbuilders are fortunate that their chosen industry has continued to prosper in recent years.

"A lot of (industries) are not," the congressman said. "You are blessed."

Following his tour of Carolina Classic, Butterfield made his way to the airport complex, followed by a stop at Albemarle Boats.

Butterfield made the trip with staff members, including his chief of staff from the Washington, D.C. office.



Staff photo by Sean Jackson

Congressman G.K. Butterfield, right, talks with Mac Privott during a tour of Carolina Classic Boats Inc. during a swing through Edenton. Those accompanying the congressman included Chamber Director Richard Bunch (behind Privott).

Such a move impressed Town Manager Anne-Marie Knighton.

"In all my years here," she said, "I don't recall a congressman bringing this person along, the chief of staff is the top position in the D.C. office. Bringing the top DC staff person to the district for a 'listening tour' shows a real commitment to serve the people of the district."

According to Richard Bunch, executive director of the Edenton-Chowan Chamber of Commerce, Butterfield approached town and county officials about coming in for his 'listening tour.'

"He asked specifically to tour this type of manufacturing facility," Knighton added.

Bunch was pleased to be able to provide examples of how some Edenton and Chowan industries are prospering.

"It was a wonderful opportunity for our congressman to see our boat builders and the workmanship that goes into production," he said. "We were able to address workforce development issues with the Congressman and introduce him to members of our business community."

"The importance of having Congressman Butterfield and his staff visit with our Chamber of Commerce cannot be understated," Bunch

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VA Beach PD capture Edenton rape suspect

• Robbery also involved in Friday morning incident

BY SEAN JACKSON
The Chowan Herald

An Elizabeth City man was arrested April 1 in Virginia after allegedly raping an Edenton woman at her home the night before.

Datrill Marantz McPherson, of 516 Brothers Lane, Elizabeth City, Va., was caught in Virginia Beach, Va. after his victim was able to alert a bystander of her need for help, Edenton Police Chief Greg Bonner said Tuesday.

Virginia authorities have charged McPherson with abduction and resisting arrest, Edenton police said Tuesday.

Locally, he is facing nine felony warrants charging, including: rape, three counts of kidnapping, attempted murder, common law robbery, felony breaking and entering, and assault by strangulation.

The victim reported that she was beaten, stomped, choked, and sexually assaulted, Bonner said. She sought treatment at Sentara Leigh Hospital in Norfolk, Va., he added.

On the morning of April 1, McPherson allegedly also took the victim's ATM charged and withdrew cash from her account, the chief said.

McPherson and his victim arrived in Virginia Beach at

approximately 7 a.m. on April 1, Edenton police Det. Sgt. Rhonda Copeland said Tuesday.

"They left Edenton at 5 a.m.," Copeland added.

The victim "was able to receive some help (in Virginia Beach) by someone calling 911," Bonner said. McPherson fled, but was later apprehended.

Edenton police were notified at approximately 11 a.m.

McPherson is being held without bond. Copeland said she plans to seek an extradition warrant.

"Our jurisdiction would certainly carry heavier weight when it comes to (McPherson's) prosecution," Bonner said.

"Police officers in Edenton are working with the investigators in Virginia Beach to get a full discovery of what took place," the chief added.

The victim and McPherson, who are not married, have a child between them, Bonner added.

McPherson was released from prison in December 2003 after serving two months for a conviction of assault on a female, according to the N.C. Department of Corrections Web site.

Church thief suspect back in custody

Local man nabbed after fencing stolen steaks

BY SEAN JACKSON
The Chowan Herald

An Edenton man facing charges stemming from a string of church break-ins is now facing charges of stealing hamburgers and ice cream from the outside freezer of a closed West Queen Street eatery over the weekend.

Robert Lee Cofield, 36, of 113 W. Peterson St., was arrested Monday on the 200 block of East Gale Street by Edenton police. At the time of his arrest, said police Det. Sgt. Rhonda Copeland, Cofield was attempting to sell steaks he had stolen from Farmers Foods supermarket earlier in the day.

He has been charged with felony breaking and entering and larceny for his alleged food theft from Tastee Freez overnight Saturday. That incident was reported by a Tastee Freez employee at approximately 11 a.m. Sunday, police Chief Greg Bonner said

Tuesday. Cofield was placed under a \$1,000 secured bond and was scheduled to make his first court appearance on those charges Tuesday.

Items reported stolen at Tastee Freez included: five three-gallon containers of ice cream, and cases of hamburger and French fries.

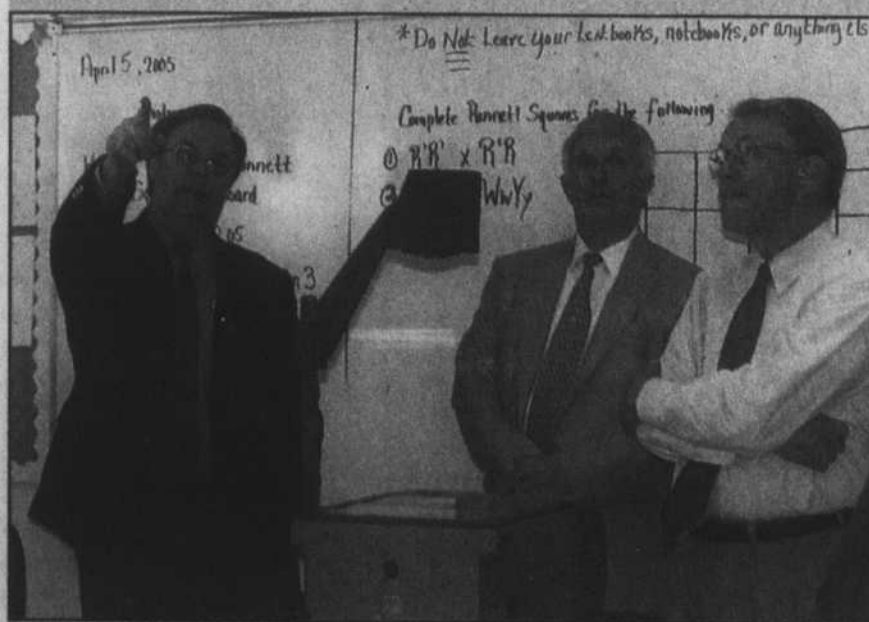
"He did admit to his participation in this crime," Bonner said, adding that he would seek to obtain a grand jury indictment that would forward the case directly to superior court.

Copeland said Cofield is suspect of stealing items to obtain drug money.

The investigating officer was Det. Aaron Davidson.

On March 5, Cofield was arrested on a number of charges of breaking into Edenton churches. That alleged theft spree reportedly began in November, ending in February.

BOE, Commissioners hold talks



The Board of Education and the Chowan County Commissioners met Monday afternoon as a followup to their February work session which focused on the future of local education. During Monday's meeting Dr. Allan Smith, left, showed Commissioners Wayne Goodwin and Jerry Downum a remodeled classroom.

Staff photo by Earline White

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