

THE CHOWAN HERALD

Vol. LXXII, No. 18

Wednesday, May 11, 2005

Single Copies 50¢

Coston cops a plea

BY SEAN JACKSON
The Chowan Herald

An Edenton man charged for his alleged role in a 2003 murder complex pleaded to lesser charges on May 2 in Chowan County Superior Court.

Kenyatta Coston, 25, pleaded guilty to being an accessory after the fact in felonious assault and for possession of a firearm by a felon in the November 2003 slaying of 21-year-old Jamel Coston outside of Edenton Manor Apartments.

Coston was initially charged with second-degree murder.

Boyce was shot after an argument involving the other suspects charged with his murder, police have said.

Assistant District Attorney said Coston would likely be sentenced in the fall. The next scheduled criminal court session is set for October, Johnson said Tuesday.

But with nine other suspects still to appear in court, and at least three other murder trials pending in Chowan County, an additional court session is not out of the question.

"It wouldn't be unusual to have another session scheduled," the prosecutor said. "We'll just go with whatever juries the court sets."

Also charged in Boyce's murder are Jamil R. Johnson, Kenneth Bond Jr., Jermaine A. Bland, William M. Bland, Darrell A. Bentley, Sharif K. Byrd, Dwight A. Coston, Deon C. Copeland, and Edward L. Hill.

Post office part of food drive

Mail carriers for the Edenton and Tyner Post Offices, in conjunction with the United States Postal Service, will be collecting non-perishable food items like canned meats and fish, canned soup, juice, pasta, vegetables, cereal and rice on Saturday, May 14th to help families in need in



See FOOD On Page 2-A

Legislators conduct first business here in nearly 300 years NC House prepares to convene at Old Chowan Courthouse May 25

BY SEAN JACKSON
The Chowan Herald

State Rep. Bill Culpepper pointed to a South-facing upstairs window inside the old Chowan County Courthouse and told Denise G. Weeks, the state House's principal clerk, to take a look.

"It's the finest view in North Carolina," Culpepper told Weeks last week as he led an hour-long tour for her and Patrick Clancy, House Speaker Jim Black's director of citizen affairs, through the historic courthouse built in 1767.

Weeks, Culpepper, Clancy, and most of the House's 120-members will get a first-hand look at the courthouse on May 25, when North Carolina Representatives convene there. It's the first time state lawmakers are to conduct official business at the site since the state Colonial Assembly met inside the building just before the opening salvos of the Revolutionary War, or roughly 230 years.

With legislators, their staffs and - yes - lobbyists expected to arrive in town the night before the scheduled session, local hotels and inns have been booked solid.

"We're going to have a good response," from Raleigh, Culpepper, an Edenton attorney serving his sixth full term in the House, said.

"I know we're going to hit 200," people, he added, "from what I've been hearing."

Much of the May 6 tour focused on the seating for the upcoming session. Where would the lawmakers sit? Who would sit where? Would

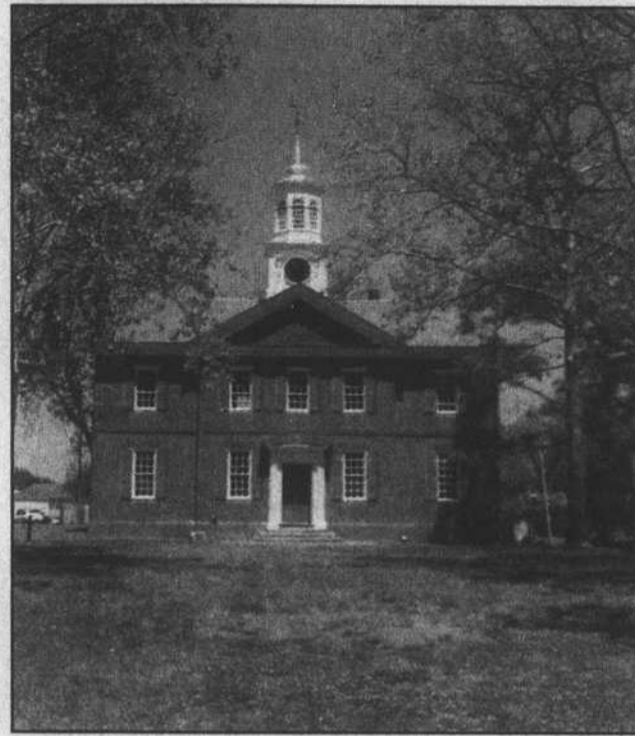


Photo at left, state House Principal Clerk **Denise G. Weeks**, state Rep. **Bill Culpepper** of Edenton, House Speaker Jim Black's citizen affairs director **Patrick Clancy**, and Chowan County Special Projects Officer **Peter Rascoe** view the upstairs of the old Chowan County Courthouse, where Culpepper and fellow House members will meet on May 25, in the first-floor courtroom.

The 1767 Chowan County Courthouse (above) provides "the finest view in North Carolina," says Rep. Bill Culpepper, D-Chowan.

Democrats and Republicans sit on opposite sides of the courtroom?

Culpepper said partisan seating wouldn't happen. And Black would sit in the judge's seat on the raised platform that faces the gallery.

"I think we need to come up with some kind of pecking order," for other top-ranking House members, he told Weeks.

See COURTHOUSE On Page 2-A

BOE budget draft reflects potential cuts

BY EARLINE WHITE
The Chowan Herald

During last week's monthly Edenton-Chowan Board of Education meeting Superintendent Dr. Allan Smith told the board that he wished he had better news about the proposed 2005-2006 Edenton-Chowan School system budget.

According to Smith, drastic cuts loom in the future. Though what was discussed last Monday is not the final budget, the budget continues to look grim. The final draft hinges on what the state legislature and Chowan County Commissioners are able to provide to the county for the next school year.

According to Smith the school system is facing a deficit of \$1.5 million for the next school year. "The good news is that the 4% reduction in state funding last year has been reduced to 2 1/2% for next year. However the bad news is that the state is also rolling in discretionary deductions (approximately \$131,000) including sales tax with that 2 1/2% (approximately \$60,000)," Dr. Smith told the board. Normally sales tax comes back to the county to be used in various ways; that's not an option this year.

Like last year, this year's budget may need a transfer from the fund balance in order to manage the budget. Factors that have contributed to the rise in budget requests are state and federal reductions, proposed salary increases of 3%, the decline in number of students (a federal reduction), a raise of 10% in employer contribution to the state health program, an expansion request for Walker School's science materials, and other items totaling approximately \$375,000.

In order to fill the deficit while keeping the system operational, Smith looked into a variety of things, but the proposed outcome brought moans from citizens in the audience at the meeting.

"Sadly, we are looking at cuts in personnel

See SCHOOL On Page 2-A



Taking aim during May Play Day

Bryce Kime, kneeling at left, helps a youngster hit the target during the archery activities at May Play Day in Rocky Hock on Saturday. Youths and adults alike ventured out to the Rocky Hock Community Center for the children's games and entertainment at the Rocky Hock Playhouse.

Staff photo by Sean Jackson

State Senate comes through with COA funds

BY SEAN JACKSON
The Chowan Herald

The state Senate has approved funding for the continuation of renovations at College of the Albemarle's Chowan County Center.

Senators approved a \$17 billion budget on May 5, which included \$1 million for upgrades to the center, Chowan County Manager Cliff Copeland said Monday. The money will help with upgrades to Building 3 and an adjacent



Holloman

See COLLEGE On Page 2-A

Six sites in Chowan County considered for new trail

BY REBECCA BUNCH
The Chowan Herald

Chowan County is joining communities across North Carolina in developing potential sites to be included along a state Coastal Birding Trail. While not a trail in the traditional sense, the sites would involve a series of stops within a community at locations perfect for observing a wide variety of birds.

According to Nancy Nicholls, executive director for the Chowan Tourism Development Authority, earning a place along the state-designated trail makes tremendous sense both from an economic and tourism stand-

point. Nicholls, who admits to having a "passion" for nature and nature-based tourism initiatives, is heading the local steering committee for the project.

Nicholls noted that her group, which began meeting only a few months ago, has submitted six different sites for consideration by the North Carolina Wildlife Commission, which is overseeing the project.

"We are all really enthusiastic about this initiative and the potential benefits," she said. "We have a lot of really good plans already, including doing a waterproof brochure that

See TRAIL On Page 2-A



Cannon's Ferry Riverwalk is among the trail sites nominated

INSIDE

- Calendar B2
- Church B4
- Classifieds .. B10-14
- Editorials A8
- Learning A9-10
- Obituaries B5
- Society B3
- Sports A11-13

On Page A7 ...

Rodney Cross' House Talk