

Happy New Year!

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Challengers may pursue Culpepper's House seat

BY CHRIS DAY
The Daily Advance

Stan M. White said his long-time interest in serving in the state House of Representatives has never been a secret.

That's why the Dare County Board of Commissioners chairman has announced that he hopes to be chosen to complete the remainder of state Rep. Bill Culpepper's term, which expires in December 2006. Culpepper, D-Chowan, announced earlier this month that he will be stepping down to take a job as a member of the N.C. Utilities Commission in January.

"It's pretty common knowledge that for a couple of years Bill always thought I was going to run against him," White, 58, said Friday.

White said it would have been tough to beat Culpepper, who has served in the House since 1993 and is chairman of the House Rules Committee. But with Culpepper stepping down to take a seat on the utilities panel, White said it's the opportune time for him to seek Culpepper's seat.

White, who also serves as commissioner on the N.C. Board of Transportation, said he intends to take advantage of the opportunity.

"It has been a goal of mine to some day go to Raleigh" to serve in the Legislature, White said.

According to White, he and Washington County resident Tim Spear are the only two Democrats in Culpepper's N.C. 2nd House District who have expressed interest in Culpepper's seat.

White, who lives in Nags Head, owns Stan White Realty and Construction Inc. Spear is a former clerk of court and game warden in Washington County. He could not be reached for comment.

Gov. Mike Easley will appoint Culpepper's replacement based on recommendations from Democrats from Dare, Chowan, Hyde and Washington counties.

Starting Jan. 1, the day Culpepper begins his job at the Utilities Commission, two delegates from each county's Democratic Party have 30 days to elect Culpepper's replacement, White said. It's not likely that Easley will disagree with the parties' recommendation, White said.

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New Year Traditions

2005: The year in review

A year in transition

The twelve months just past were marked by the stark contrasts of plant layoffs and closings by traditional employers, while the boating, tourism and real estate sectors showed promise for the coming year and beyond for Edenton and Chowan County.



"The Dog Days of Summer"

"I am excited to be the first to show this town in the cinema," Mark Freiburger, director of "The Dog Days of Summer," a major movie production written and directed by NC School of the Arts alumni, said about Edenton during the first round of filming in July. "I'm honestly very surprised that this area of the state hasn't been explored more by filmmakers."

Edenton is no stranger to the lights and cameras of crews from all over the state; magazines, television crews, documentary filmmakers, and professional photographers have all found Edenton's charm captivating enough to include it in their work.

The film was shot primarily this past summer with a few remaining scenes done in December. Plans are to unveil the film at the Toronto Film Festival in fall 2006.



Housing market gets boost

Edenton and Chowan County's potential for growth grew brighter in 2005, with several housing development projects going through various stages of approval.

In September, Colonial Village held a grand opening for potential buyers and local officials alike. The 120-home subdivision is located on Coke Avenue. It was the first subdivision to be built in Edenton in roughly 20 years, Town Manager Anne-Marie Knighton said.

The town approved a voluntary annexation request for Wharf Landing earlier in the year, paving the way for the multi-use project to provide benefits for both the town and county. At least 90 units are slated for the three condominium buildings at the site on Chowan River.

Plans are in the works for a large scale development at Hayes Farm just south of Edenton, and the Sandy Point subdivision near Chowan Golf and Country Club.

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N.C. House returns to Edenton

In a historic return to a former Colonial capital of North Carolina, the state House of Representatives visited Edenton on May 25 for a session outside Raleigh.

"It's just been wonderful," Rep. Richard Morgan, a Moore County Republican, said to Rep. Bill Culpepper, an Edenton Democrat, during the session. "We appreciate so much you giving us this opportunity to visit."



Boat business booms; textiles lag

It was a time of come-and-go for businesses and industry in Edenton and Chowan County this year.

From continued growth in the boat-building industries to a proposed near-shutdown of a major textile company, the local labor market had its share of ups and downs in 2005.

In March, Albemarle Boats announced that it was being purchased by the Brunswick Corporation, a Fortune 500 company with such varied interests as the boat-building industry and high-end pool tables.

Albemarle Boats officials said the buyout should result in increased production - and added jobs - at the factory located on the Albemarle Sound south of Edenton. In addition, Caliber Yachts located a dealership in Edenton, while both Carolina Classic and Boats and Regulator Marine continued to see increased sales and job openings at their respective sites.

However, George C. Moore's announcement on November 30th that it was shipping roughly 200 textile jobs overseas tempered the positive steps the local boat-building industry experienced in 2005.



OLF battles farmers, birds

A near-hit with tundra swans on a December 7 flyover proved that the OLF opponents may be right after all - the birds living at the Pocosin Wildlife Refuge (near the proposed 30,000-acre landing field) will pose a problem to Navy fighter jets using the touch-and-go airstrip. A second flyover set for the following day was cancelled due to the collision potential.

Chowan County residents continue to monitor a prolonged legal battle between the Navy and area citizens who would be impacted by construction of a new OLF in Washington and Beaufort counties.

Managers cite possible 'ethical' conflict of interest

Communique asks for CEO Rick Watson's resignation if job in Halifax Co. is pursued

BY SEAN JACKSON
The Chowan Herald

A group of area county managers plans to meet with the executive board that oversees the Northeast Partnership next month to submit concerns regarding the agency's top official.

Chowan County Manager Cliff Copeland confirmed last week that he and other local county managers will meet with the Partnership on Jan. 12. The managers, in a memo drafted by Copeland earlier this month, are concerned about Partnership CEO and president Rick Watson's dual role with the Edenton-based agency and an entertainment theater in Roanoke Rapids.

"The managers prefer that Mr. Watson not pursue a relationship with Parton Enterprises and remain as Executive Director of the Partnership," Copeland's wrote. "If Mr. Watson decides to accept/pursue that position, while it may not be a legal conflict of interest, the managers feel that will be an ethical conflict. For example, if a competing entertainment enterprise were to contact Mr. Watson, would Mr. Watson be able to serve this Partnership client while he is under obligation to Parton Enterprises?"

Copeland declined to elaborate on Dec. 22, saying the managers had agreed to not discuss the issue publicly until they meet with the executive board. However, he did say last week that the managers would prefer to have Watson stay on with the Partnership. In October, Watson said he would be leaving to join the Parton team full-time within 18 months. That project, working under the name Moonlight Productions Inc., is headed by Randy Parton, brother of country music star Dolly Parton.

Watson, who is paid \$165,000 annually by the Partnership, met with the eight managers in Edenton on Dec. 9.

"All managers present voiced positive comments about the (N.C. Northeast Economic Development) Commission and the Partnership," Copeland wrote. "All of us are familiar (with those two agencies') accomplishments, from Nucor to the new entertainment theater district in Halifax County."

However, the managers also expressed concerns about Watson's dual role - as the Partnership's top executive, and an equity investor in the theater project. If Watson cannot choose between the two, he should step down, the memo stated.

"The managers request that Mr. Watson deliver his 120-day (resignation) notice as required in his employment contract," Copeland wrote of the managers group's preliminary recommendation to the executive board, the panel in charge of Watson's employment status.

The managers also recommended that the search for Watson's potential replacement begin. That successor should also serve as an employee of the Partnership, and not be an independent

"...the interest of both parties may be in conflict."



Chowan County Manager Cliff Copeland

"It's the opportunity of a lifetime."



NE Partnership CEO Rick Watson

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