

"Some of these guys come from a background like I did; maybe they did drugs or alcohol, something like that. Then God looked down and they looked up."

— Jack Keel, on fellow parishoners at "the biker church" in Bethel Inspiration, C8



Clams fail to claim third cup Sports, B1

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Susan Birckhead paints a bright future

Helping Hands, A3

WAL*MART a no-go at Merry Hill

Retailer backs out of deal to build Supercenter at Bertie County site

By Connie Sage
Contributing Writer

A California developer this week failed to meet the terms of a \$10 million option to buy hundreds of acres of Bertie County farmland

for a project that county officials had hoped would include a Wal-Mart store.

Laurence R. Martin "couldn't make it work," according to Joe B. "Jobie" Davenport, who with two cousins owns 850 acres

along Route 17 and Salmon Creek, south of Edenton in Merry Hill.

Martin had proposed building Mimosa Plantation, a four-phase development that would include "big box" retail stores, a water treatment plant, condos, and single-family homes. Bertie County officials invited Wal-Mart to build on

the land.

Martin's 15-month option on the property expired last Wednesday. Davenport, who extended the deadline until Monday, said Martin called him Monday morning and told him he needed more time.

Five or six other developers were "waiting in line," if the deal fell through, Dav-

■ Joe B. Davenport, an owner, says the site is suited for a commercial hub. "Our property is more valuable now than it was 15 months ago."

enport said, and he was unwilling to further extend the option.

A weak housing market and credit crunch killed the project, Martin said yesterday (Tuesday). "Basi-

cally, banks have stopped all commercial loans to take a break." The project also is a complex one, he said, and there is a misperception among some lenders and de-

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Parents surveyed on school uniforms

By Earline White
Managing Editor

In September, parents will be able to express their opinions about school uniforms through a survey being distributed by Edenton-Chowan Schools.

"The Board is looking at the possibility of school uniforms, but no decision has been made and will not be made until a large consensus can be reached," Superintendent Allan Smith said.

The possibility of school uniforms was explored eight years ago, Smith added, but the data did not show a significant groundswell to implement the dress code.

"Uniforms will only work when there is strong community support for them," Smith said.

Parents will be asked to list the number of children they have enrolled at the four local schools and if they would support a policy to establish mandatory dress

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Kadesh AME Zion seeks restoration funds



Mildred Wills, 85, poses with her daughter Felicia Wills Spencer, both of whom grew up at Kadash AME Zion Church, during a recent restoration celebration.

By Rebecca Bunch
Staff Writer

When the members of Kadash AME Zion Church had to find a new home after Kadash sustained major damage from Hurricane Isabel in 2003, it was a time of great sadness for the congregation.

And while they found a suitable spot on Badham Road in the church that formerly housed Open Door Baptist, they longed to be back at their "real" home.

"I have such wonderful memories of growing up here," Catherine Carter, 88, said as she surveyed the damaged sanctuary.

She looked to the ceiling where the tiles have collapsed in some places and the stained glass that has been boarded up to protect what is left. It doesn't look exactly like the church she remembers

from her youth when the basement was her playground, but the potential is there.

"I think about all the times my mother who was an usher walked down this aisle with me in her belly. When I die I want them to carry me down this same aisle. I want Kadash to be the last church I go in."

Now, it appears that the dream of going back home to Kadash AME Zion Church will come true.

And that dream will now include a cultural arts center where locals can learn cottage industry craft skills like pottery, weaving and more.

Dr. Harold Barnes, a grant-writer/fundraiser, who is part of the team working to restore the church, says the

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST?

Experts: No conflicts for Steve Biggs



"Whether or not Mr. Biggs or myself may ever ask to be recused from a vote is not the issue."

— Terry Waff, challenger for Biggs' council seat

By Sean Jackson
Staff Writer

Two legal experts say Steve Biggs doesn't have a conflict of interest serving as a town councilman and a Bertie County official.

Biggs, seeking re-election to a third four-year term this fall, is economic developer in Bertie.

Challenger Terry Waff has said Biggs has a conflict serving in the dual roles.

She says N.C. School of Government officials David M. Lawrence and Fleming Bell are missing the point.

"Whether or not Mr. Biggs or myself may ever ask to be recused from a vote is not the issue," Waff said.

Opposing views

Both Lawrence and Bell said Biggs could avoid any potential conflicts — should a developer be dealing with both Edenton and Bertie County — by recusing himself from any discussion or

vote on the matter.

"It is the time leading up to the vote that is crucial," Waff said, adding that she feels Biggs has had access to privileged information before it became public.

"By the time the issue makes it to a vote," she said, "he has already had knowledge of the client, and had time to present Bertie County's options and advantages to locating there."

"I pledge to the citizens of Edenton that I will not join my opponent in hateful politics," Biggs said.

Biggs said that has never been the case during his 12 years on council.

"As the son of a minister,"

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Town airport aims to keep soaring along with growth

By Sean Jackson
Staff Writer

Edenton's airport is looking to grow along with the residential boom forecasted for the town and surrounding areas.

Officials from Northeastern Municipal Airport recently told Town Councilors that their operation just south of Edenton continues to have an expanding cus-

tomers base.

"Developers are all the time coming in," airport manager Harry Davis said.

With such projects as Sandy Point in Chowan County — just a couple of miles from the airport — and the Innsbrook development in nearby Bertie County, business has picked up over the past few years, Davis said.

And when developers fly in, they spend money — por-

tions of which revert to Edenton's coffers.

"They don't leave without buying fuel," Davis said.

In addition, as of July 1, the town receives 10 percent of the money the airport receives from Enterprise Rent-A-Car, Davis said. Business there is picking up, he said.

Hopes are to continue realizing profits.

"We're looking at new ways to come up with rev-

enue," Davis said.

Growth at the airport could also create more jobs, officials said.

Past, current and future improvements to the facility should make that possible, Davis said.

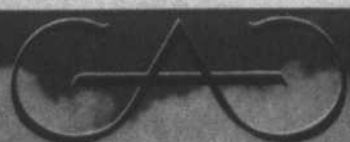
The airport is about three-quarters of the way to completing a state-of-the-art landing system, he added.

The airport received federal funding for the upgrades

to its system, which aids pilots in landing their planes by using radar.

The town is working with U.S. Rep. G.K. Butterfield to obtain the rest of the federal funding for improvements to the airport — including the landing system.

"We are fairly optimistic," about getting the funding, Town Manager Anne-Marie Knighton said.



Chowan Arts Council

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