

Unemployment
in Chowan was
8.8% in July A2

Aces JV football team on a hot streak

Mack Leary caught a 55-60 yard pass for the game-winning touchdown against Gates 14-6



CHOWAN HERALD

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50¢

A long-standing
tradition — Happy
Home Camp Meeting B6

Matador crew takes first
in EC sailing tourney B1

Holmes project on hold

School officials
respond to
fiscal crisis

By Rebecca Bunch
Staff Writer

After spending \$57,000 on plans to renovate John A. Holmes High School, the school system has put the project on hold, for now.

Superintendent Allan Smith, said that all conversations with the architectural firm that created the plans have come to a halt.

Smith said he felt the action was appropriate given the county's current budget shortfall.

County Manager Peter Rascoe said, "Obviously right now, due to the financial situation of the county and due to the current budget situation, the county would be challenged with funding capital needs."

Smith said he took the action due to the extreme pressure the county is under to pay for new construction already completed.

That new construction includes the library expansion and the new public information building which houses local law enforcement and related offices.

The county will have to begin paying for those buildings next year.

Drawings done

The school system spent \$57,000 to obtain drawings from an architect, showing different options for carrying out the renovations.

Smith said that no dollar figures had yet been attached to any of the options.

Of the proposed ideas, he said, Option 5 was the favorite at the time.

Smith said that option would have allowed for construction of a new auditorium and a new gymnasium at the high school, among other things.

Reviewing plans

Funds for the architect's drawings, prepared by Moseley Architects of Raleigh, were included in last year's budget, Smith said.

"It would be my desire that we come back to this project sometime in the near future but that is going to depend on local financial circumstances," he added.

Smith said that the school board, administrators and teachers were reviewing plans for the renovations at the time news of the county's budget shortfall came to light.

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RESIDENTS REACT TO PROPOSED EDENTON BYPASS



Vernon Fueston

Tommy and Robin Skittlethorpe of Butternut Lane say a proposed highway bypass would cut off access to their home, forcing them to abandon it for lack of access.

"In this day of uncertainty with the economy, you want to put a road through homes and farmlands, why don't you just shoot us now and put us in the ground?"

— Robin Skittlethorpe

Steps business, homeowners will be taking:

■ The minutes of a closed DOT meeting will be posted on the Albemarle Commission's Web site within the next 60 days.

■ A team of state and federal agencies will write an environmental study. The study should be finished by September 2010.

■ The state's acquisition process will begin sometime near September 2010. Letters will be sent to property owners and a hearing planned.

■ Plans for the exact route will be firmed up after the hearing and another meeting held 12 months later to address individual property issues.

■ The state will pay "fair market value" for all property taken. Damages may also be paid when property is not purchased but its value is decreased.

■ Construction on the bypass should begin in September 2012.

Tommy and Robin Skittlethorpe vow to keep their home despite bypass

By Rebecca Bunch and Vernon Fueston
Staff Writers

Tommy and Robin Skittlethorpe could lose the home they've lived in for 22 years to Edenton's proposed Soundside bypass route.

Their home won't be plowed under by the construction. They just won't be able to have access to their land if the route is selected.

The Soundside route is one of three being proposed and is backed by the Town.

Their home will simply be abandoned for the lack of an onramp to the only road near their house.

"We were both in shock after the meeting," Robin said of the DOT hearing Aug. 19.

"Nobody told us there would be no access to our home. We just assumed they would pave Butternut Road where we live and widen it. It was definitely a surprise."

Tommy literally found their home while hunting on land owned by Dr. Leibert DeVine back in 1986.

Behind the undergrowth, he noticed a single-wide trailer and outbuildings he believed would

make a great home and workshop for his construction business.

The couple rented the property from DeVine and later purchased it, replacing the single-wide trailer with a double-wide in 1997.

Today their home has a deck, vegetable garden and plenty of room for the couple's three dogs to run.

"Tommy's business operates from the outbuildings behind his home.

He's started building a new workshop structure, but wonders now whether or not to bother completing it.

Tommy said he couldn't understand why the DOT would ask him to leave his home rather than provide access to the bypass.

He said it particularly galled him to hear that the bypass will be widened for bicycle access and then to learn his home would have to be abandoned because of the lack of access.

"We just can't start all over again," Robin said. "I've been here half my life. It's too late in life for us to start a new 30-year mortgage."

"It's just wrong to think the DOT can just come in one day and

INSIDE

People write letters about DOT bypass meeting

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then you're out."

"We're not going down without a fight," Tommy said.

Losing land

For his part, DeVine said he stands to lose part of his front yard but thankfully not access to his home.

He said the proposed road would take part of his front yard, putting it 400-500 feet from his front door.

DeVine, who is living with incurable cancer, said he has no plans to move away from the home he and his late wife, Cyndy, shared together.

His wife died several years ago from cancer and is buried behind their home. He said he plans to be buried there as well.

DeVine, who helped build Butternut Lane, which remains a private road, said he sympathized with the Skittlethorpe family's situation.

"If they were doing that to me," he said, "somebody would have to pull my dead, lifeless body off a tractor because I'd be out there

trying to keep them off my land."

Other options

Two Chowan County farmers are among those questioning the proposed bypass for another reason — they say it's no longer needed.

Leonard Small Jr. and Frankie Parrish both say that while large truck traffic was a big problem for the community back in 2005 when the DOT survey used to justify the bypass was done, that's no longer the case.

Their argument is that time, and the economic downturn, have already solved much of the problem.

Small and Parrish said that a local lumber company that ran large log trucks through town has closed in the intervening years, and that Mi-Tek, which replaced another company with large trucks, uses a barge system to bring in the steel beams it uses, bypassing the local roads altogether.

Both agree that if another survey were done today, it would show that the majority of large trucks coming down the streets of Edenton now are actually delivering to

See BYPASS, Page A2 >

Town taking steps to ensure future financial security

By Vernon Fueston
Contributing Writer

Edenton's town council is reviewing a new financial management guide to prevent fiscal problems like those facing Chowan County.

The guide, still a work in progress, spells out a series of financial policies, some new and some long-standing.

Town Manager Anne Marie Knighton said the policies need to be understood by everyone in town government.

"I guess what motivated us was that many

of the councilmen were getting a lot of questions from citizens on what our policies were," Knighton said.

During a meeting Monday evening, Knighton pointed out areas where the town's finances were in good shape and where improvement was needed.

She said the town has done well in avoiding debt. The town currently owes \$646,000, well below the limits advised by the state.

Knighton also said the town has kept to its goal of keeping a 30 percent

reserve fund, but said the town's audit was suggesting 40 percent.

Among the policies suggested by Knighton in the guide are:

■ The town will continue to budget based on the previous year's books for revenue rather than projecting for growth.

■ When estimating tax collection rates, the town will use figures from the previous year's books.

■ The council will not use bond financing to cover expenses.

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Some unhappy with new proposed subdivision

By Rebecca Bunch
Staff Writer

A 15-lot area on Athol Lane in the Cape Colony community known as Revell's Cove could become the county's latest subdivision.

Other subdivisions in the works in Chowan County are Beechwood, RiverSound and the Refuge at Drummond's Point.

Wes Haskett, planner for Edenton and Chowan County said his office thinks Revell's Cove "is a great plan."

Not so enthusiastic about it is property owner Christi Basnight. She and her husband, Robert, have lived in their home on Athol Lane for the past 10 years.

"I would hate to see it happen," she said of the proposed subdivision. "We have a lot of wildlife, and it's so nice and peaceful."

"Having 15 more homes back here would create a lot more traffic," she added, "and that's something we don't need."

Proposed plan

If approved, the subdivision would be used for single-family homes, according to property owner Bill Revell.

Revell and his project engineer, Bob Farris of Elizabeth City, presented plans for a preliminary review at the Aug. 19 meeting of the Chowan County Planning Board.

The Revell's Cove property is See REVELL'S, Page A2 >

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT:
AMERICAN LEGION
COLONY TIRE
WESTOVER GENERAL STORE
REMBROVE MARINA
CHOWAN GOLF COURSE
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SHRIMP FEAST

Music by Common Ground

SEPTEMBER 13TH, 2008

5:00-7:30PM DINNER

6:00-9:30 MUSIC

\$20-ADVANCE; \$25-AT GATE
TABLES & CHAIRS PROVIDED