

Letters to Santa
deadline is Dec. 15.
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Knighton announces new chief of police

From Staff Reports

Rocky Mount Police Sgt. Jay Fortenbery is set to become the Town of Edenton's new police chief on Jan. 1.

Fortenbery will replace Gregory Bonner who retired after 10 years as Edenton's Police Chief and 35 years of service to the town.

Knighton said that Fortenbery's 20 years of law enforcement experience along with his training and educational background

should serve Edenton well. "Rocky Mount's police department has an excellent reputation, and the sergeants there are considered the backbone of the department," Knighton said.

Knighton said she was looking for a seasoned law enforcement officer, and especially wanted someone who had been a part of a department larger than Edenton's, in a community that had been dealing with challenges similar to Edenton's.

"Rocky Mount has been dealing with many of the same issues we have here — young people being attracted to gangs, increasing complaints about drug houses and even a few complaints from long time residents about being afraid to sit out



Fortenbery

on their front porches," she said.

Knighton is hopeful that Fortenbery will bring the tools and strategies the Rocky Mount Police Department uses to successfully address these concerns in this community.

Knighton received over 60 applications for the position since it opened just a few months ago.

Knighton recruited W. Alden "Doc" Hoggard, III, retired director of the state's

Law Enforcement Training and Standards Division, to help her evaluate and interview the candidates.

Hoggard also served for 18 years as a law enforcement officer and a former town manager.

Fortenbery said his goal has always been to be the chief of a police department in eastern North Carolina.

Fortenbery, 44, is married to Mysi (Boykin) formerly of Wilson, N.C.

The Fortenberys have

a son, Skye, who will be a freshman at John A. Holmes High School.

The family enjoys boating and fishing and is looking forward to making their home in Edenton.

Sgt. Fortenbery earned an associate degree in criminal justice technology from Nash Community College in 2005 and a BA in justice studies from Wesleyan College in 2007.

State to take \$95,000 from local schools

Shortfall due to shrinking state tax revenue

By Vernon Fueston
Contributing Writer

Chowan County's schools will be forced to return over \$95,000 in money sent from the state because a slowing economy is expected to shrink anticipated tax revenues.

The state has required its Department of Public Instruction to return \$117 million in funding to help balance the shortfall. Of that amount, \$58 million will come from local school systems and charter schools around the state.

That means Chowan's schools must return over \$95,000, or .75 percent of its state funding.

Superintendent Allan Smith said he plans to return the money from three budget line items.

A grant from the state for low-wealth schools intended to teach students about business and entrepreneurial thinking will be returned for \$25,000.

Another \$35,000 designated for "non-instructional support," primarily money used for clerical and custodial services, will also be returned. Smith said he anticipates no job cuts as a result.

The remaining money will come from state funds allocated for the purchase of textbooks.

Smith said he must still find ways to replace that money from local funds but added that he does not see a reduction in available textbooks because of the cut.

State officials advised local school boards against making cuts that will affect classroom services or any programs for students considered at risk or having special needs.

Specifically prohibited were cuts in services required by a student's personal education plan (PEP)

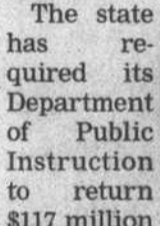
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ALL DECKED OUT



Da'marje Ferebee, a member of Edenton's Boy's and Girl's Club, hangs an ornament on the Barker House Christmas tree Monday afternoon in preparation for the Christmas Candlelight Tour next weekend.

VERNON FUESTON



Smith

Chowan re-rated to reflect economic distress

County now rated as one of 40 most distressed counties in the state



"We can certainly use this as a positive thing to help ... recruit industry, create jobs and retain jobs."

— Richard Bunch, chamber director

By Vernon Fueston
Contributing Writer

At first glance, Monday's announcement by the state's commerce department that Chowan is now considered an economically distressed county might seem to be bad news.

But Richard Bunch, director of Edenton's Chamber of Commerce, is excited.

"We can certainly use this as a positive thing to help us in many ways, especially to recruit industry, create jobs and retain jobs," Bunch said.

The re-designation of Chowan one notch downward to the status of a tier-one county places it at the bottom of a three-tier structure.

That structure rates counties based on unemployment, median household income, population growth and property values per capita.

The state reserves tier-one status for its 40 most economically distressed counties.

At stake when it comes to tier designations are tax credits for companies that create or bring in new jobs for the county.

The new designation means that Chowan County businesses creating at least five jobs are eligible for a \$12,500 tax credit and a 7 percent tax credit on eligible business property purchased.

But business taxes are not the only area in which the county may profit from the state's new designation.

A host of grants to local government and non-profit organizations could stand to benefit.

"It's a ripple effect throughout the whole system. We've been in the middle tier; it seems like, forever," Bunch said.

"When you drop to a tier-one, it means your unemployment rates are not where they need to be. Just about any type of granting agency asks for your tier designation."

Bunch said both the county and town governments could benefit when seeking grant money.

He also said a host of non-profit agencies, from the arts council to the hospital foundation, may see increased grant opportunities.

E. Goodwin selected as board chairman

New board of commissioners take oath of office Monday

By Vernon Fueston
Contributing Writer

Chowan's new board of commissioners selected political newcomer Edward E. Goodwin, a Republican, as its chairman during the board's first meeting since November's elections.

The need to fashion a balanced budget in the face of new debt payments and shrinking tax revenues was on everyone's mind.

Emmett Winborne summed up the challenges for many of his colleagues as he addressed his fellow commissioners and a capacity crowd of over 70 in the 1767 Chowan's historic courthouse ballroom.

"We as a board have to question everything," Winborne

said. "We have to say no to those things which are not needed. And you, the citizens, have got to be our eyes and ears. Let us know how you feel."

Two pressing items were on the table for commissioners as they tackled their first items of business: open government and fiscal restraint.

Kenny Goodwin proposed changing all the commissions meetings to 6 p.m., doing away with morning sessions in the hope of attracting better citizen participation.

"There is an overflow crowd here tonight and I hope it will stay that way," Goodwin said. The motion was passed unanimously.

Even the relatively mundane



Goodwin

School lunch prices expected to rise next year

By Rebecca Bunch
Staff Writer

School officials learned Monday night that the school system lost about \$67,000 on its lunch program last year.

Child Nutrition Program Director Karen Tynch told board members that she expects to ask them for an increase next year in school lunch prices.

She did not specify how much.

She said the last increase, which raised meals by 25 cents each, occurred during the 2007-08 school year. Currently, students

are paying \$1.75 per meal.

Ours is one of 94 among the 115 school systems in the state that are continuing to lose money, she said.

The situation is the result of unfunded changes in nutrition guidelines, rising costs for items such as milk, mandated salaries for food service workers, and an increase in the number of those students receiving free and reduced price meals.

There has also been a decrease in the student population, she said.

Tynch said that while the num-

ber of free and reduced price meals being made available in the local schools has jumped as the economy has worsened, the number of those purchasing meals has dropped.

That number includes high school students who are allowed to eat lunch off-campus if they wish.

Tynch said food costs in the school system have increased, in some cases, by up to 60 percent over last year. Milk, for instance, now costs the school system

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