

Leaders outline effort to secure VA Clinic

Chowan County Commission Chairman Eddy Goodwin and Edenton Mayor Roland Vaughan are leading the effort to have Edenton selected as the site for the proposed outpatient clinic to serve area veterans.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs is proposing to establish a community-based outpatient clinic in the Edenton/Elizabeth City area.

The clinic is part of the VA's plan to improve access to veterans in rural areas to primary and specialty care. Funding for the clinic is being proposed in the VA's FY 2009/10 budget.

According to information obtained by the steering committee, the community-based outpatient clinic will be located in an area that will greatly reduce the veteran's drive time to receive primary and specialty care and reduce waiting times for follow-up care, and also improve waiting times at main VA hospitals.

Mayor Vaughan suggested the idea of a steering committee to ensure that all bases are being covered in the effort to get the clinic in Edenton.

The steering committee, co-chaired by Goodwin and Vaughan, also includes E.C. Toppin, American Legion Post 40 Adjunct; Richard Bunch, the Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce and the Edenton-Chowan Development Corporation; County Manager Peter Rascoe; Chowan Veterans Representative Clyde Adams and Town Manager Anne Marie Knighton.

The committee invited David Blomquist to also serve as a member.

Blomquist is affiliated with the local "Change for America" group.

"Change for America" has identified securing the VA clinic as one of the group's goals.

Various contacts have already been made including Senator Burr whose senior military affairs staffer was invited to Edenton by the Chamber of Commerce when the news about the proposed clinic was first released.

The staffer met with Vaughan in Edenton the week of Christmas. Toppin briefed the committee on his meetings with Burr about the need for such a clinic in northeastern North Carolina.

The clinic is proposed to create 14 new jobs which our town and county desperately needs given that the N.C. Department of Commerce has designated Chowan County as a Tier One "economically distressed county" with current unemployment rate of a 10.6 percent.

REMEMBERING THE DREAM



VERNON FUESTON/THE CHOWAN HERALD

Members of the choir hold hands and sing "We Shall Overcome" during Edenton's ML King Celebration.

About 150 people gathered to celebrate the life and accomplishments of Martin Luther King, Jr. Monday at Swain auditorium.

The event held special

poignancy for those attending as King's birthday fell on the eve of Barack Obama's inauguration. Several speakers marveled at the progress King's movement has made in

since the civil rights movement began over five decades ago.

Edward Goodwin, chairman of the county's board of commissioners, lauded King for "having the guts"

to bring America into an age of tolerance.

First District Court Judge Eula Reid spoke on King's Legacy and Marie Daves recalled King's rally in Edenton back in 1962.

Commissioners get education on school system

By Rebecca Bunch
Staff Writer

New Chowan County commissioners say they feel a recently held joint meeting with members of the board of education will yield positive results in the future.

The meeting was planned to discuss "items of mutual interest," according to Dr. Allan Smith, superintendent of schools.

Topics on the agenda ranged from urgent renovation needs at John A. Holmers High School to state bud-

get cuts that will impact the school system's budget.

Smith said that some needs at the high school will not be able to wait the four to six years it may take before renovation funds are available.

(As of Monday afternoon, board of education members were scheduled to hold a board retreat on Tuesday to set priorities for repairs that must be done in the near future.)

Commissioner Keith Nixon said he found the meeting "very informative" when

it came to understanding school needs and funding sources.

Nixon and two others — Kenny Goodwin and Eddy Goodwin, recently named to chair the board — attended along with County Manager Peter Rascoe.

Nixon said he felt it was a very good first step in developing positive communication between the two bodies.

Additional meetings between the boards will probably take place, he said.

Commission board chair

Eddy Goodwin said he learned a lot of useful information too.

Goodwin said that he is willing to sit in on additional meetings to help improve his understanding of the working relationship between the two boards.

"If you'll let me, or somebody, sit in a corner, I'm available," Goodwin said.

And board of education chair Ricky Browder described the meeting, which lasted about three hours, as "very productive, very cordial."

Local woodworker re-creates 18th century masterpieces

By Vernon Fueston
Staff Writer

Don Jordan belongs to an elite club.

He is one of a handful of artisan-woodworkers who manage to earn a full-time living making reproductions of the world's finest antique furniture.

Jordan started his career working for a lumber company after graduating from N.C. State's forestry and wood technology program.

Trained to meet the needs of North Carolina's forestry and furniture manufacturing industries, he thought he knew where his life was headed. Then the sawmill he worked for closed its doors in 1983.

Lane change

That's when he decided to turn his energies toward doing something he loved.

Jordan had always loved working with wood, so he decided to make furniture himself — really fine furniture.

Don Jordan makes antique reproductions, pieces made using the techniques and designs common among American furniture makers two and a half centuries ago.

It's an exacting business that meets the demands of some extremely picky cus-

tomers.

"I'm not trying to make fakes," Jordan said, "but I am trying to make something close to the original."

Jordan's customers are sophisticated connoisseurs of fine furniture.

Sometimes he's called in when the owner of a special piece wants his children to each have a copy of the original. At other times, he's asked to reproduce an antique that has finally deteriorated beyond repair.

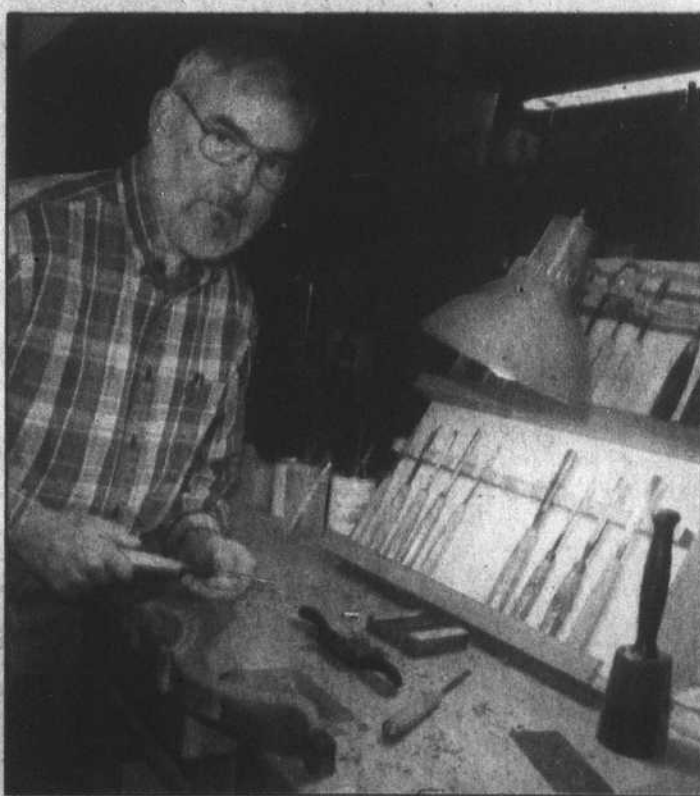
Tough market

Whatever the reason, his customers want something intangible, the look and feel of a hand-made original.

"People prefer hand made things," Jordan said. "I've read about studies where people are asked to choose between a piece of fine, mass-produced furniture and a handmade copy of the same thing. They usually choose the handmade product."

Just why they do that is a complex question that Jordan said he can only guess at. One reason is that people like the look and feel of a handmade item.

Jordan pointed to one of his works in progress, a mahogany folding table. He ran his fingers over the sanded surface of its mahogany table top.



VERNON FUESTON/THE CHOWAN HERALD

Don Jordan works on the carved leg of a folding table.

"All of that finished surface there has the same tool marks the original had," Jordan said. "I use a table saw and power tools, but everything on the surface is done the same way."

Jordan said there is something else that's special about a handmade piece of furniture. Using hand tools allows the maker to produce a single piece that's unlike anything else.

Even if he makes multiple copies, Jordan said, the pieces will still be individual, if they are handcrafted.

Jordan said he worries that our fast-paced society is losing its appreciation for things that are both unique and of high quality.

Disposable age

"This younger generation, they're part of the See JORDAN, Page A2 >

Citizens discuss finances

Group ponders bankruptcy and/or local government consolidation

By Vernon Fueston
Staff Writer

It was a packed conference room at the Nothin' Fancy Café, Thursday night, as 43 citizens gathered for an unofficial town meeting sponsored by the Edenton Discussion Group on Chowan's fiscal crisis.

They had a lot on their minds. Jim Badger, moderator for the evening, welcomed the group.

"This is a time when we all have to set aside our Republican, Democrat and Libertarian labels and work together," he said.

Defining the problem

Bob Chapman summarized the county's financial situation for the group — big new debt payments falling due on several recent capital improvement projects and a series of "balanced" annual county budgets that chewed through a \$20 million-dollar reserve fund in four years time.

"Many people think the county's reserves were spent on big projects like the public safety center," Chapman said.

"But the shocking thing is that the money was spent on county operations over a period of years.

"Now the citizens are being asked to sustain a budget and a level of spending that was unlawful in the first place."

Finding a way out

Participants explored several options the county might have for dealing with its problems. One speaker uttered the "B-word" — bankruptcy, suggesting the county simply allow banks to foreclose on some of its new buildings.

Chapman responded that any bankruptcy would put the county in receivership with unpredictable consequences.

"You can get a good guy or you can get a bad guy as a receiver," Chapman said.

"You don't know what he will do. He can cut services in ways you might not want."

Another speaker suggested consolidating the county with Edenton's healthier town government, creating a metropolitan system for the entire county.

One member of the audience responded, "If you consolidate the government, you consolidate all the assets. You're still in the same spot."

Chapman dismissed both the bankruptcy and consolidation options.

"We have only two real alternatives," he said. "We can either tax ourselves out of existence, or the other option is to lay off employees."

Services or taxes

An audience member commented that he favored a drastic reduction in services.

"We were told (at the coun-

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