



Edenton native inducted into National Assoc. of Intercollegiate Athletics Hall of Fame

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50¢ softening water A4

Edenton Commons downsized

Initial phase will be cut in size to attract small businesses

By Rebecca Bunch
Staff Writer

The loss of Lowe's as its anchor store won't keep the Edenton Commons shopping center from being built, its developer said Friday.

However, it will be smaller in scope until the economy improves.

Plans now call for the shopping center to be downsized to 80,000 sq. ft. during its initial phase, and to focus on attracting small businesses.

Originally, including sidewalks and parking space, it was to occupy over one million square feet.

Developer Jon Wheeler, of the Wheeler Group, said his company remains excited about having a strong presence in the community.

And, he said, previously announced tenants like Peebles and CVS remain committed to relocating to the new shopping center.

"We're very optimistic about this project," said his associate, Susan Pleasants.

"We're in it for the long haul," she said, "because we know that, like earlier recessions, this, too, shall pass."

Starting work

Wheeler said he expects work at the site to begin in the fall of 2010, with the shopping center opening in the spring or summer of 2011.

In the meantime, the Wheeler Group will continue to work to be a good neighbor within Edenton, "a community we love," Wheeler said.

Adding on

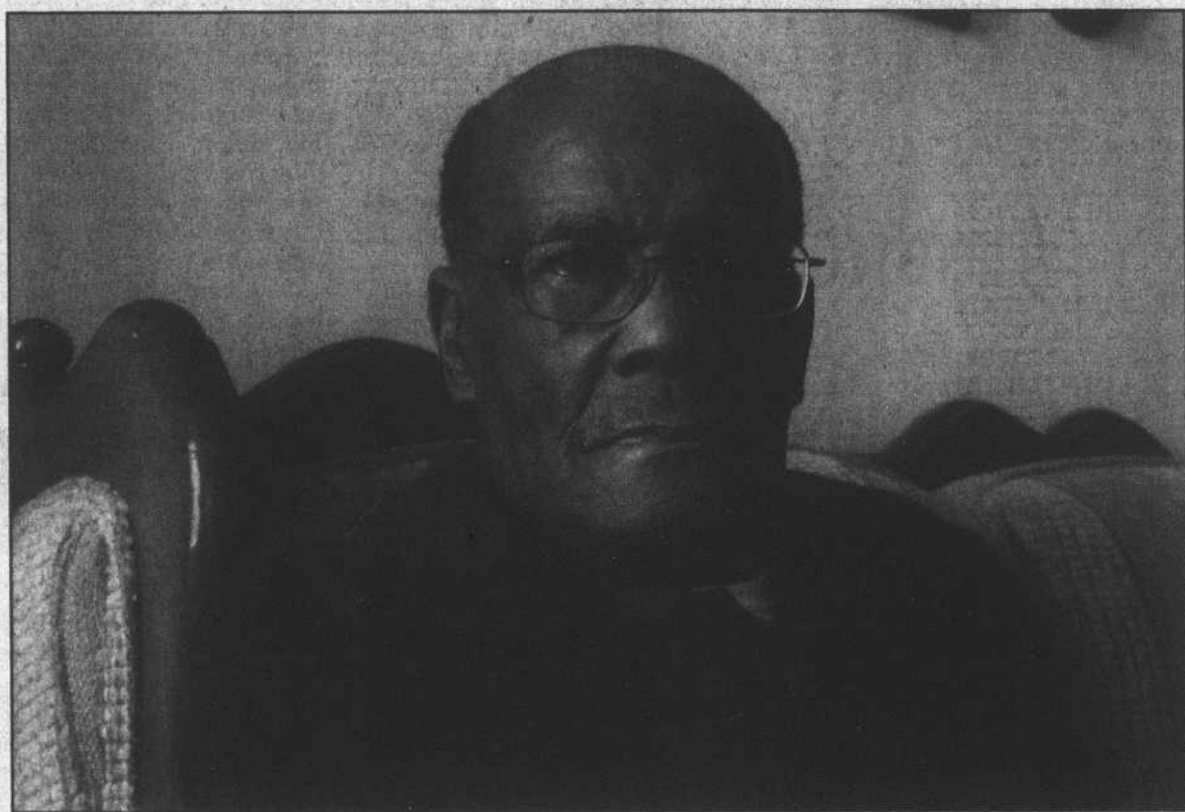
Wheeler emphasized Friday that the shopping center would be constructed in a "stair step" manner that would allow Lowe's and other larger stores to be added to the mix once the economy improves.

He also said that speculation the town had focused too much on restrictive signage and landscaping which had caused Lowe's to pull out was simply wrong.

Unfortunately, he said, the poor economy resulted in a cutback in the number of new stores Lowe's could commit to build. But, Wheeler said, his development will continue working to attract other top-notch tenants.

"We would love to see a hotel component" added to the mix, Wheeler said, "a Holiday Inn Express or something with a similar price point."

During tense times, Herman Jernigan quietly put himself between the high school he loved and those who might do it harm



Herman Jernigan at his home, remembering an Edenton during times of racial tension.

By Vernon Fueston
Staff Writer

Ken Stalls remembers Herman Jernigan as one of the good guys during tough times.

"He took his job very personally," Stalls said of the custodian who tended John A. Holmes High when he was principal. "He had the greatest work ethic of anybody I've ever worked with."

But Jernigan's dedication to the school he maintained was tested during extraordinary times of racial tension back in 1972 and 1973. A popular band director's firing sent shock waves of racial tension through the town, placing Jernigan between his school and those who might do it harm.

Stalls said Jernigan's face was always the first one he saw each morning when he opened up the high school and the last one he saw when he locked up at night.

NOBODY'S GOING TO HURT MY SCHOOL

Jernigan's shift brought him into the high school at 4 a.m. in the winter months to tend its coal-fired boilers. He would come back again in the evening to clean.

Rumors were flying that an attempt might be made to damage the school.

"Mr. Jernigan read the community very well," Stalls remembers. "He pretty much knew what was going on. Words can't express the admiration and respect I have for him."

Stalls said he recalls Jernigan telling him, "Nobody's going to hurt my school."

But it wasn't until after the crisis passed that Stalls realized Jernigan had gone a step beyond the call of duty. He'd spent the night there, putting himself between the school and those who

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Four percent hike for town electric rate

Expect an increase of \$4 for average home. Last increase was 14% in August.

By Vernon Fueston
Staff writer

Homeowners and businesses in Edenton were voted an electric rate increase by Edenton's town council of four percent, Feb. 10.

NC Municipal Power Agency, the town's electric supplier, handed down the increase, which is retroactively effective Feb. 1, based on the company's need for larger cash reserves and a volatile market for fuel.

The increase means a rise of \$4 in the electric bill for an average home consuming 1,000 kilowatts. This increase comes after a 14 percent rise in electric rates in August.

The new rates will be reflected on consumers' March bills covering consumption during February.

Kenneth Raber, a vice president with NC-MPA, said falling prices for petroleum have not affected the cost of fuel for its coal and nuclear plants.

He said the price of coal has been particularly volatile, bouncing between \$25 and \$68 per ton.

Raber said the utility buys its coal on contract and has managed to sidestep the volatility, but planning for future purchases has been difficult.

Raber said another factor forcing the increase was the need for bigger cash reserves to see the company through periods of closure when its nuclear plants re-fuel and its coal-fired plant go down for maintenance.

And more increases will probably come in 2010, Raber said.

He said information on what those increases may be will probably be submitted to the council this fall.

Raber said environmental regulations restricting carbon dioxide emissions from coal-fired plants are expected to increase rates as much as 20 percent, if passed.

Citizens respond to park proposal

By Vernon Fueston
Staff Writer

About 60 citizens packed Edenton's council chambers Feb. 10, eager to comment on plans for a new park on the town's east side.

The park, which will increase the town's designated "green space," would be purchased and constructed using funds from two state agencies totaling \$1.1 million.

Before taking public comment, Mayor Roland Vaughan said he wanted to set the record straight on some items.

"There appears to be at least some knowledge gap as to what is going on here," Vaughan said. After reviewing the project's finances, he stressed the park would not require any cash from the town and would be built using state money.

"These are restricted pools of money from the

"The state is taking money back from our schools because the state is broke. The county is broke and I'm broke."
— resident

state," Vaughn said. "The money can't be used for anything else. Since these are restricted funds, if we decide not to participate, the money will go to the next county on the list."

Vaughan said another factor overlooked by many critics of the park was its environmental benefit. He said the park's construction would enhance wetlands already on the property, adding vegetation and increasing the natural filtration of water entering Queen Anne Creek.

When all is said and done, Vaughan said the town will have to decide whether or not to proceed with the project based on financial considerations. He said the property currently brings

in \$900 in taxes each year.

Vaughan said the town could rent out a residence located on the property and also use the space for gardens, another revenue possibility. He said two anonymous donors had pledged additional funds to cover any shortfall in money to build the park.

He said maintenance on the park would only require labor from two or three town workers for five or six hours every two weeks. He said labor could also come from prisoners and others working off community service hours.

Although public comments ran heavily against the park proposal, four citi-

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Restaurants suffer in troubled economy

By Rebecca Bunch
Staff Writer

Local restaurateurs — some of whom have seen their business drop as much as 25 percent over last year — are doing all they can to keep the doors open.

Survival strategies have become a necessary part of doing business in a troubled economy.

"We've introduced a \$5.95 lunch special so people can eat here as economically as possible," said Gail Singh, owner of Nothin' Fancy.

Singh said that her restaurant depends on a strong lunch crowd.

Although Nothin' Fancy does serve dinner, it's the turnout at lunchtime that is "make or break" for them.

The slowdown as the economy has worsened

has required cutting hours for some of the staff, but none have yet been laid off, she said.

One thing that has stayed strong at Nothin' Fancy, she said, is the back room they rent out for special occasions.

"We still seem to have quite a lot of special occasions like family birthday parties, anniversaries, as well as meetings and other types of get-togethers going on," she said.

"It still seems to be a useful room," Singh added. "I've been very happy with that."

Staying close

Trying not to cut jobs also remains a challenge at Chero's, said owner Lisa Douglas.

"Everybody here has

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Supper 5:00pm - 7:00pm

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