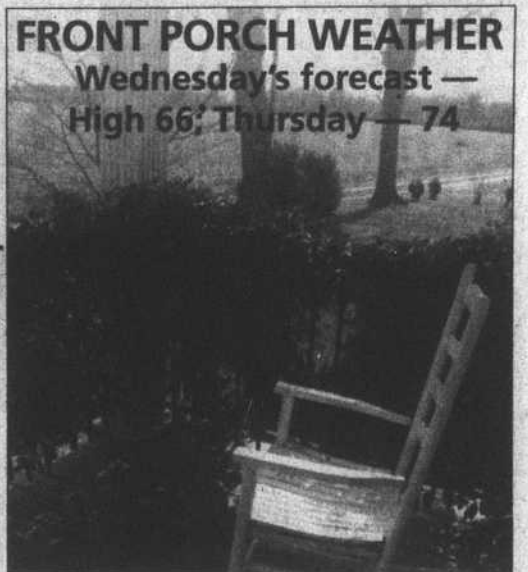




JAH SOFTBALL TEAM 4-0. BASEBALL STAR OFFERED SCHOLARSHIP. A7



Habitat for Humanity Restoration Store reopens Saturday B5

CHOWAN HERALD

482-4418

Wednesday, March 18, 2009

50¢

Charges dropped against officer

Charges could be reinstated at a later date, DA said

By Vernon Fueston
Staff Writer

Edenton Police officer Derrick Wayne Knox confirmed Tuesday that the district attorney is dropping charges against him of felony assault.

Knox had been charged on Feb. 17 with two counts of felonious assault resulting from two altercations in the line of duty.

Knox's attorney, Joseph Forbes, said he had been notified by the district attorney's office that the charges were being dropped and that his client would not have to appear in court Tuesday.

District Attorney Frank Parrish said a dismissal in court today would only indicate the case is not ready to proceed at this time. He said a special prosecutor would review the case and determine how it will proceed from here. The charges could be reinstated later.

"That would happen sooner than later," Parrish said. "That review would take place probably within the week."

Knox was charged with assaulting DeShannon Kenta Stepney, striking the man with his service weapon and inflicting serious injury in an incident that took place on Sept. 24, 2006.

He was also charged with assaulting and striking Thomas Allen Dail, Jr. with a taser, discharging the weapon into Dail on July 13, 2007.

"I think its kind of suspicious that it took two and one half years to bring these charges against me," Knox said.

"You need to look at the people involved. One of them (Stepney) was a four-time convicted felon and the other (Dail) was found guilty in court of resisting a police

See OFFICER, Page A2 >

Pet & Pedal
This Saturday at 10 a.m.
Pet pageant, agility course, vendors, food and more
COLONIAL PARK

6 89076 44813 0
©2006 The Chowan Herald
All Rights Reserved.

Welcome Home Cooper family

The "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" episode featuring Jamesville family is set to air May 3.



BRETT A. CLARK/THE DAILY ADVANCE

Spectators wait in the rain to see the unveiling of the Cooper's home by Extreme Home Makeover: Home Edition Friday.

By Earline White and Rebecca Bunch
Staff writers

Saturday afternoon was all about happiness for Aaron and Windy Cooper of Jamesville.

The two met with reporters and friends outside their new home to accept gifts and good wishes on behalf of themselves and their parents, Jeff and Clara Cooper.

The Cooper family just became the recipients of a home unveiled Friday evening by the crew of Extreme Makeover: Home Edition.

Many Chowan County residents were involved in the effort including John Norris of Edenton Builders, Inc., who was in charge of overseeing construction.

Speaking for the family, Windy Cooper expressed their gratitude to all those who had given so much to make this happen.

She said she knew that all the gifts were given "from the heart" and not because people were looking for public recognition. It was done, she said,

because people cared.

Gifts galore

Among the gifts presented to the family were an American flag flown over the Capitol building, given by Sen. Richard Burr and his staff.

The family spent the week in Washington, D.C. waiting for their house to be finished.

The Martin County Ministerial Association presented a family Bible, and two Edenton women, Diane Ryan and Lou Rogers, gave a 12-block handmade quilt titled "A Community Joins Together."

But the biggest surprise of the afternoon came when Windy Cooper was introduced to a special guest, Ashley Fiolek of Florida.

Fiolek is the 2008 Women's Motocross National Champion; the Cooper family, and Windy in particular, are big fans of the sport.

Her visit was made possible by an Edenton volunteer, Kristie Mize, whose son, Marcus, also participates in the sport.

She called the national headquar-

ters and made arrangements for the visit.

"I thought it was especially appropriate since Ashley is deaf, and has had her own share of struggles," Mize said, alluding to the health problems of Jeff Cooper. "Her father came with her to sign for her."

Jeff Cooper suffers from multiple sclerosis, and immune disorders relating to his military service. With his strong advocacy on behalf of fellow veterans and the disabled, he fit the show's theme this year of honoring everyday heroes.

Mize was also able to secure \$2,000 worth of motocross equipment for Windy and her family.

"Everybody I asked wanted to help once I told them what was going on," she said.

Get moving

That same spirit carried through the entire project.

On Friday afternoon, after waiting for hours in the rain and wind, hun-

See HOME, Page A2 >

County to give discount for taxes

Plan is to reduce county loan costs by collecting faster

By Vernon Fueston
Staff Writer

Chowan's commissioners have proposed a two percent discount for the early payment of property taxes in order to improve the county's cash flow.

The commissioners hope to reduce loan costs by collecting property taxes faster, allowing them to pay less money to banks in interest, attorney fees and loan costs.

The county would offer a two percent discount for taxes paid before July 31 and one percent off taxes paid by Aug. 31. County property taxes are due by Sept. 1.

The county's tax collector, Lynda Hendricks, said a survey of other counties where the discounts have been used indicates that a potential \$1.2 million could be collected early if the discounts were taken, costing the county \$19,000 in discounts.

She said receiving that money early enough to avoid borrowing the same amount from banks could save almost \$18,000 in interest, \$15,000 in legal fees, amounting to total loan costs of \$33,000.

That means the county could save \$14,000 by offering the discounts, Hendricks said.

Hendricks said she surveyed 15 counties that offered the discounts. She said that on average, those counties received 45 percent of their taxes due early with mortgage banks and other

See TAXES, Page A2 >

Balancing the budget in the face of a recession

By Vernon Fueston
Staff Writer

Chowan's commissioners faced tough decisions last week when faced with falling sales tax revenues, forcing heavy cutbacks and layoffs. But even tougher decisions lie ahead.

An analysis of published county budget figures reveals those decisions could require higher property taxes, deep cuts in county services or a combination of the both.

The problem

State law requires the commissioners to pass a balanced budget by June 1. Work on that project halted temporarily when sales tax

receipts began showing a drop of 30 percent and cost overruns left the budget short \$970,000 for the four months remaining on this year's budget.

The commissioners took action, plugging that budget hole by reducing work hours for county employees and cutting departmental budgets. But the task of balancing next year's budget still remains.

The current budget represents a substantial reduction from its predecessor. Commissioners trimmed the 2008 budget from \$19 million to \$17 million in order to reduce county spending to its current level.

But those August cuts were a compromise. Solv-

ing the county's financial woes also meant a property tax hike from 56 to 65 cents per hundred dollars, an increase of 16 percent.

Balancing act

This year, commissioners will have to factor in falling revenues from sales taxes, reductions in building permits and land transfers, increased operating costs and new debt service covering the construction and the renovation of county buildings.

The budget process has barely begun. A finance subcommittee, composed of private citizens charged with advising on the budget has held only an organizational meeting and many

THE BUDGET CHALLENGE

2007-08 Budget	\$19,300,000
2008-09 Budget	\$17,200,000
Possible Rev. Decrease	\$422,000
New Debt Service	715,000
Increased Operating Costs	117,000
Shortfall	\$ 1,254,000
Percentage of Current Budget	7%
Percentage of current property taxes	13%

budget numbers and forecasts are still being developed.

But checking the information posted on the county's website reveals some of the challenges the commissioners will face.

If the commissioners assume sales taxes will re-

main depressed by 30 percent through December of 2009, they will have to cut the budget by \$367,000. But land transfer taxes, building permits and other economy-sensitive taxes are slumping, also.

See BUDGET, Page A2 >

TUESDAY, MARCH 24TH

LEON NIXON'S CATERING

Free delivery at lunch for businesses
Call Jack Evans 340-3438 or 221-4875

RELAY FOR LIFE
BBQ & FRIED CHICKEN
BENEFIT LUNCH AND DINNER

Donation: \$8.00

Sponsored by: Rocky Hock Ruritan Relay for Life Team

11am - 2pm & 4pm - 7pm

6pm - 7pm Dinner Music
by "Big Daddy" Sam Morris

AUCTION 7PM UNTIL