

Construction lags on subdivisions

Nearly 3,500 homes yet to be built

By REBECCA BUNCH
Staff Writer

Planned subdivisions may not be moving ahead as quickly as local officials had hoped due to a slow recovery in the economy.

But of the seven announced projects in town, all remain active at this point, town officials said.

Beechwood, Colonial Village, the Cotton Mill Development, Queens Landing, Wharf Landing, Strawberry Hill, and Pembroke Pointe — all have obtained the necessary permits. Conditional use permits

are currently active for four of the seven, meaning some work has been done at the sites.

The others still maintain "vested rights" to the property through 2011-2012. And Town Manager Anne-Marie Knighton said the town is not reeling from any financial impact. "The mayor and council's

fiscal management policies do not allow us to budget or anticipate revenue from future projects," Knighton said. "So, the fact that some of the developments have not moved forward does not have a fiscal impact on the town."

Among those is Beechwood, which announced plans prior to the recession

to build 217 units in a residential development. So far, it has built none.

However, Knighton said, the development has installed water and sewer and storm water improvements, as well as a privacy fence. That construction has allowed Beechwood a spot on the "active" list of local subdivisions.

Knighton said that where the impact has been deeply felt in the community has been in the area of construction jobs, both for local residents and those who might have come seeking employment.

"The economic slowdown has had a dramatic

See LAGS, 3A

Bank robber pleads guilty

From staff reports

A suspect in 11 armed robberies, including the July 2009 heist at Southern Bank in Edenton, pleaded guilty to all charges Thursday in federal court in Tennessee.



Chad Schaffner, 38, of Indianapolis, Ind., entered the guilty plea in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Tennessee in Greenville, Tenn., according to a press release issued by George E.B. Holding, U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of North Carolina.

According to Holding, Schaffner pleaded guilty to nine bank robberies, the armed heist of a credit union and the robbery of one retail store. The crimes were committed in western and eastern North Carolina, South Carolina, western Kentucky, southern Indiana and southern Illinois, according to the release.

Schaffner is scheduled to be sentenced for all of the robberies on Dec. 8.

On July 6, Schaffner brandished a gun and robbed the Lumbee Guaranty Bank in Fayetteville. Thirteen days later, he robbed the Southern Bank in Edenton, also with a gun, the release states.

After a nationwide manhunt, Schaffner was arrested in Missouri. He admitted to all 11 of the robberies, telling authorities that he began robbing banks to support his drug addiction.

A federal grand jury in the Eastern District of North Carolina returned a criminal indictment against Schaffner on Nov. 19. A month later, Holding's office consented to transfer the case to the federal courts in Tennessee.



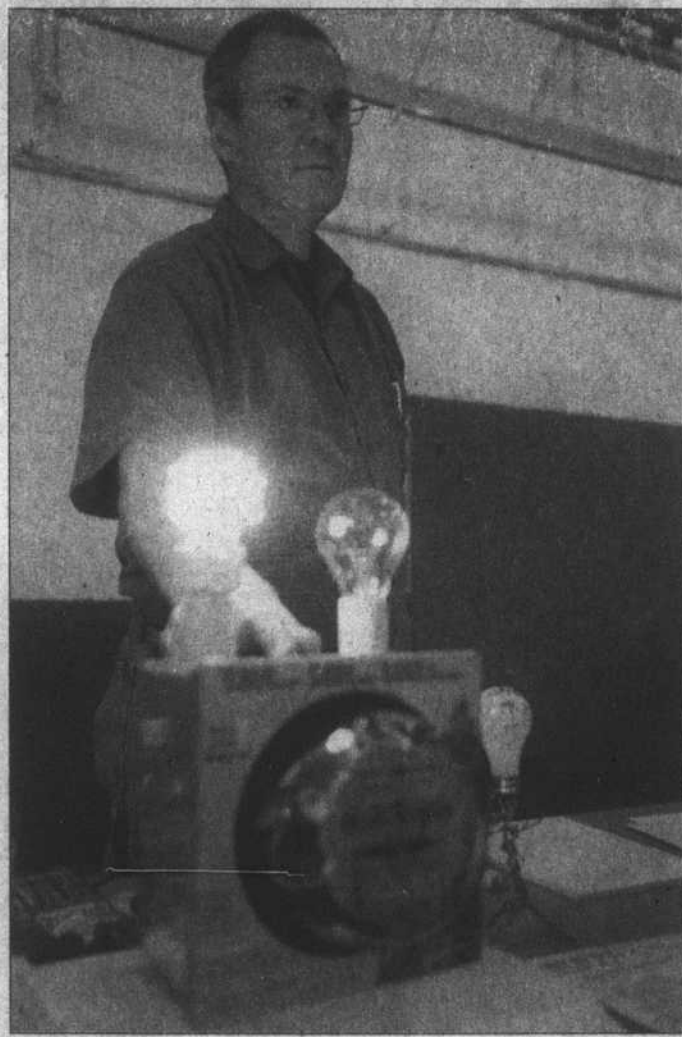
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Going green



STAFF PHOTOS BY BRETT A. CLARK

TOP: Rhonda Bates demonstrates a technique known as vermicomposting at the "Green Is Growing Fair" at D.F. Walker Elementary School in Edenton, Saturday.



LEFT: Glenn Anderson, director of the Edenton electric department, displays the efficiency of compact fluorescent light bulbs versus traditional household bulbs, Saturday's green fair.

BOTTOM: Donald Murdoch (left) speaks to Clara Smith at his Sandhills Solar and Wind booth display, at Saturday's green fair.



County tires of VA clinic delays

By RITCHIE E. STARNES
Editor

County leaders have grown tired of repeated delays about whether Edenton-Chowan would become home to a Veteran Affairs clinic, instead choosing to pursue other options.

At a recent Board of Commissioners meeting, it unanimously voted to instruct County Manager Peter Rascoe to seek other potential tenants or buyers of the building that formerly housed Albarbaro Mental Health.

The building has been vacant since September.

"We have pushed and pushed," said Eddy Goodwin, board chairman. "We need to have a fall back in place. We can put somebody in that building or unload it."



Goodwin

Since November, U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs representatives have promised a decision as to where the clinic would go. The agency keeps postponing a decision.

It remains clear that commissioners prefer to field a VA clinic, but they've concluded that the dormancy is hurting the financially strapped county.

"We're not going to kill it, but we're going to start pursuing other options."

See CLINIC, 3A

Edenton-Chowan Schools dropout rate increases

Other school area districts take dip

By KRISTIN PITTS
Staff writer

With the exception of the Edenton-Chowan Schools, all area school districts reported lower dropout rates in 2008-09 than the year before.

Although Edenton-Chowan's 5.19 percent dropout rate doesn't rank among the state's highest,

the N.C. Department of Public Instruction's annual dropout rate report indicates the district has the state's third largest three-year rate increase.

"Any student who drops out of school is one too many," Edenton-Chowan Superintendent Allan Smith said, adding that for three of the past four years, his district's dropout rate has been below the state



Smith

average.

According to dropout reports from the past four years, the 2008-09 school year was the first time in four years that Edenton-Chowan Schools' dropout rate was above the state average. The state average for 2008-09 was 4.27 percent, a decrease

See DROPOUT, 3A

Currituck tops in school crime rate

Edenton-Chowan second in region

From staff reports

An internal effort by faculty and staff to increase reporting helped push Currituck County Schools to the top of the list of North Carolina school districts with "reportable acts" of crime and violence in 2008-09.

The district's results are included in a study by

the N.C. Department of Public Instruction, which analyzes school crime and violence. Each district's safety is assessed using a school system's reportable acts, which range from possession of an alcoholic beverage to assault on school personnel to sexual offenses.

The study shows that Currituck had 40.33 reportable acts per 1,000 students — a steep jump

See RATES, 4A

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