

Changes coming for solid waste fee

Error shows \$150K garbage fee debt

By RITCHIE E. STARNES
Editor

Efforts are underway to change the way county residents pay their solid waste fee.

Instead of finding the \$15.50 solid waste fee on the monthly water bill, plans include making it an annual fee that will appear

on the yearend property tax bill. The change should help the county improve its collection rate while also keeping it separate from the water bill.

"We're going to revise the solid waste ordinance so the bill will be on the ad valorem property tax bill instead of the water bill; that way we'll catch everybody," said Paul Parker, interim county manager.

Chowan County commissioners learned last Mon-

day night that a handful of customers had not been paying the fee. Whereas the county can disconnect a customer's water service to ensure garbage fee payment, there is no way to enforce the county's 150 well users who pay their fees quarterly.

"For the ones who use a well, there is no mechanism for enforcement," Parker said.

Eight out of 12 delinquent accounts have not paid the

solid waste fee. Parker said the eight customers continue to "ignore the bill" while the other four are making payment installments.

Adding to the problem is a software glitch that shows the delinquent customers owe penalties in terms of fines and interests for past due charges. While the county can charge penalties for delinquent water invoices, it cannot charge past due fees for solid waste, Parker said. The software

installed three years ago automatically treats the garbage fee the same as water service. Consequently, records show Chowan has an outstanding debt of \$150,000 related to garbage fees.

"We know that's not right," Parker said. "We're trying to get a realistic number. We're going back and researching the accounts that have not been paid."

"This is really a comput-

er-generated problem," he added.

Parker acknowledged that the county still has to figure out how to collect the delinquent debt.

John Morrison, county attorney, nixed further discussion so the board could meet in closed session and review potential remedies.

"We have to make a reasonable attempt to collect the debt before we can take any legal action," Parker said.

SCHOOL BUS CRASH VICTIMS RESPONSIBLE FOR MEDS

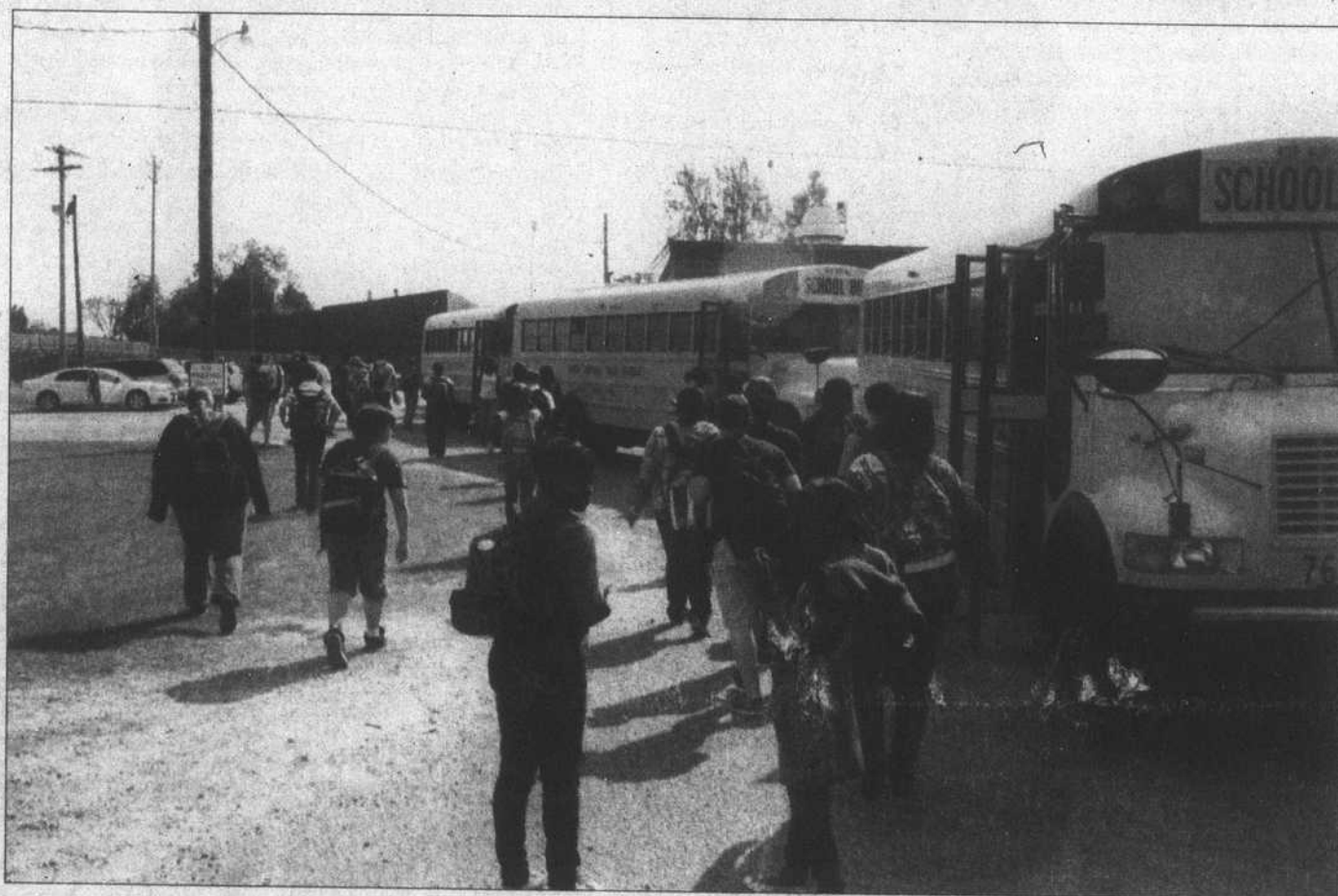


PHOTO BY RITCHIE E. STARNES

More than 1,800 Edenton-Chowan students, or 76 percent of the system's student body, ride the school bus as a mode of transportation. Riders are not covered by the state in the event of a wreck whereby an uninsured or under insured motorist is at fault. Holmes High students, shown above, prepare to leave at the end of Monday's school day.

Teenage driver at fault had no insurance

By RITCHIE E. STARNES
Editor

Parents of the 22 Chowan Middle School students taken to the hospital in April after a school bus crash will be responsible for paying their child's medical expenses.

Parents learned that they would have to turn their child's medical bills over to their own automobile insurance carrier since the teenage driver at fault in the April 22 collision had no liability insurance. Neither is there liability coverage for underinsured or uninsured on a school bus, according

to the N.C. Department of Justice.

"Someone has to be liable other than the parents," said Patrick Railey, parent of a daughter who was a victim of the bus crash. "Somehow the school should take care of this."

Parents were instructed via a June 3 letter to forward their medical bills to the Edenton-Chowan Schools Transportation Department. But, a month later a second letter was mailed to parents instructing them to contact their personal auto insurance carrier. Attached to that July 29 letter was a state

letter, dated the same day.

"There is no provision for underinsured or uninsured motorist liability in the Tort Claims Act," the letter stated. "This is contractual coverage commonly available in commercial and personal insurance policies but has no application under the Tort Claims Act."

The Highway Patrol reported that Justin Chappell, a John A. Holmes High School student, mistook the bus' caution lights for a turning signal on the foggy morning before turning his pickup truck into the path of the bus. The bus was

heading north along N.C. 32 on the final leg to CMS when Chappell turned off Sandy Ridge Road and into the bus' path. Trooper C.D. Montgomery then said Chappell believed the bus was slowing to turn right into White Oak Elementary.

Although none of the students were seriously injured, all of the 22 students involved in the crash were taken to the hospital for treatment. Five were taken by ambulance. Any student that complained of not feeling well was sent to the

See CRASH, 6A

Scores down, but more take SAT

E-Chowan raises both score, participation rate

By KRISTIN PITTS
Staff Writer

Even though area students as a whole appeared to do less well on the SAT this year than last year, more students are taking the college-admissions test, results released this week indicate.

The average score on the test fell in three of five area school districts but participation rates climbed in four of

See SAT, 6A



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The Albemarle Area United Way launched its annual fund-raising campaign last Tuesday with a goal of raising \$400,000. Most of the donations come through employer campaigns. For example, Piedmont Gas recently completed their workplace campaign with 100% participation. The employees of our banks, hospitals, government agencies all support the area United Way with

See AAUW, 4A

Questions raised about who owns Courthouse Greens

County, state lay claims

By RITCHIE E. STARNES
Editor

There seems to be some confusion about who owns the Greens that front the 1767 Chowan Courthouse.



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During last Monday night's Board of Commissioners meeting, county leaders revealed that the county still owns the Greens and not the state as previously indicated.

Amid plans to declare the historic jail and jailer's house surplus property as a prelude to donating the property to the state's Historic Sites, the Courthouse Greens - a rectangular lawn that lies between the historic courthouse and Edenton Bay - was also listed as potential property for surplus. But, com-

missioners asked that Paul Parker, interim county manager, proceed with the jail and jailer's house, but keep the Greens under the county's domain.

On Thursday, Parker said there is no contractual evidence that the Greens were ever turned over to the state, but added that the matter is still under review. He acknowledged, however, that the state has been maintaining the Greens and that the Historic Sites rents the lawn

See GREENS, 3A

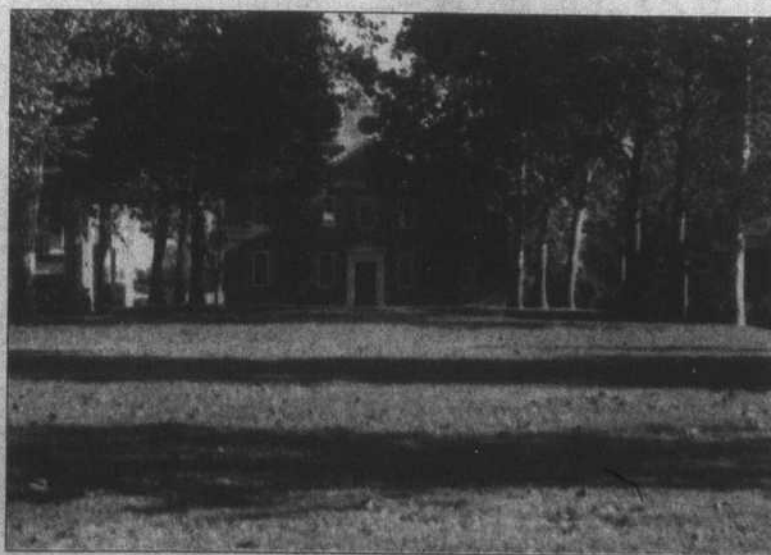


PHOTO BY RITCHIE STARNES

There is a duel over ownership of the 1767 Chowan Courthouse Greens. Chowan County officials claim they own the property while the state points to documents that originated centuries ago.

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