



## PNC pitches building options

By RITCHIE E. STARNES  
Editor

As the remaining departments that still occupy the county office building continue efforts to vacate the premises, ideas over the structure's future have become the topic of discussion.

Suggestions gained momentum during Monday morning's Board of County Commissioners' meeting when Claudia DeViney

of Preservation North Carolina and Jennifer Harriss of Destination Downtown Edenton shared their visions of the 1926 brick building that originally housed Hotel Hinton.

DeViney suggested that the county partner with PNC so the 113 East King Street building could be saved and marketed for uses that would add to the historic district. Such a venture would likely involve selling the property

to a developer willing to renovate the building while adhering to protective covenants outlined by the non-profit PNC, DeViney explained.

To illustrate her pitch, DeViney presented a slideshow of numerous properties across the state that had fallen in disrepair and later rehabilitated under the guidance of PNC.

"These are more than just old buildings," she said. "They mean some-

thing to the people in this county. And they have life after death."

DeViney pointed to the Mill Village as an Edenton-Chowan project that PNC restored 16 years ago, turning a \$1 million investment into a residential community worth \$20 million to the local tax base.

A 1979 state bill allows municipalities to sell properties to non-profits without having to abide by the normal bidding process.

But because of the sagging economy's impact with real estate, DeViney made it clear that PNC would not be in the position to buy the property outright, despite repeated inquiries from County Manager Paul Parker. She did, however, advise the board that PNC would accept the building as a donation.

If PNC could identify a buyer, it could negotiate a deal that funnels the purchase from the county

through PNC to the buyer. Such a deal would ensure that future development meet assigned covenants.

While county leaders seem set on trying to secure compensation for the property that currently generates no tax revenue, they also show an interest in ensuring that the building contributes to the community.

"I think it's important for

See BUILDING, 2A

## 'I heard something like a train'



VERNON FUESTON/BERTIE LEDGER-ADVANCE

Two tornados ripped through Bertie County Saturday evening, killing 11 and injuring 50. A swath of devastation stretched about 19 miles long and left many homeless. The above house was badly damaged and the occupants' vehicles thrust against the structure.

## Tornados rip Bertie County, kill 11

Two twisters confirmed

By VERNON FUESTON  
Bertie Ledger-Advance

COLERAIN — When Leon Raynor and his wife arrived home after an outing, he thought they'd spend a quiet evening at home, in spite of the gathering storm clouds and gusting winds.

But sometime around 6:30 that evening he said things outside just didn't sound right.

"I heard something like a train," Raynor said. "I opened the door and I saw everything was moving. It happened so quick. Everything was blowing that way. I was standing by the doorway there and something hit me in the head. I couldn't get back to where



PHOTO BY REBECCA LOWE

Saturday's tornados blasted Bertie County as shown here on Knowles Farm Road near Colerain. Chowan County Sheriff's Office provided mutual aid to the neighboring county, sending six deputies to assist. "We (Chowan) dodged a bullet Saturday night," said Sheriff Dwayne Goodwin. "It's amazing the amount of destruction in Bertie County."

See BERTIE, 4A

## Schools' move sparks testy talk

Confusion lingers about IT building

By RITCHIE E. STARNES  
Editor

An update during Monday morning's Board of Commissioners' meeting about the impending relocation of the Edenton-Chowan Schools' central office stoked testy talk about the decision to let the College of the Albemarle take control of the schools' information technology building.

After Superintendent Allan Smith referred to conflicting perspectives among the commissioners about the March 21 decision that gave COA control of the IT building by June 2013, Eddy Goodwin, commission chairman, struck first challenging Smith and the board about any lack of clarity of the deci-

sion — a vote that included a unanimous standing by all commissioners and not the typical raised hand.

Commissioner John Mitchener, a former school board member, began explaining about how he had misunderstood the impact of the decision and had become caught up in the "euphoria" of helping COA and the D.F. Walker Alumni Association mend a rift and reach a compromise on a meeting place for the alumni group.

Goodwin next asked County Clerk Susanne Stallings to recite the March 21 vote, which she replied was unanimous.

Minutes later Commissioner Ralph Cole said he too acted hasty with his vote.

Commissioner Keith Nixon next took exception.

See SCHOOLS, 6A

## Seabrook contests fatality fines

By RITCHIE E. STARNES  
Editor

An Edenton business fined \$28,000 by the state for five "serious" violations that contributed to the death of an employee has contested the findings, according to the Department of Labor.

Seabrook Ingredients contested the state's ruling after company representatives met with Department of Labor officials during an "informal conference" on March 1.

"The informal conference did not reach an agreement between the

Department of Labor and the company," said Neal O'Brian, Department of Labor spokesman.

Steven Lamar Phelps, 25, of 304 N. Granville Street was fatally injured Nov. 11 after his safety harness became entangled in an auger while cleaning facility apparatus.

On Jan. 24, the state ruled that Seabrook failed to have locking procedures for moving parts when Phelps' was "cleaning a 5,000 gallon stainless steel tank when his lanyard became wrapped around

See SEABROOK, 6A

## Forum yields business ups, downs

Real estate lags with 250 properties for sale

By REBECCA BUNCH  
Staff Writer

Local business leaders discussed the ups and downs of conducting business in a difficult economy

at a gathering Thursday morning.

The event, promoted as a business summit, was held at the College of the Albemarle's Culinary Arts Building in Edenton and hosted by the Edenton-Chowan Chamber of Commerce.

The forum enabled local business leaders to comment on the state of business in the community. For most businesses, there have been positive signs over recent years, but there remains plenty of room for improvement.

Among the speakers was Joan Maxwell, president of Regulator Marine.

Maxwell, whose company builds sports fishing boats, said candidly that the downturn in the economy in recent years has had a "tremendous impact" on sales and manufacturing in the boating industry.

"People don't have to have a boat," Maxwell said. "But they do have to eat."

Maxwell said that while dealers to whom Regulator markets its boats are beginning to place orders, the demand isn't as strong

as it was just a few years ago.

"They're (dealers) coming back but in fewer numbers," Maxwell said.

Maxwell added that in 2008 when demand was at its height, her company employed more than 160 workers. Once the economy tanked, that number plummeted to 11.

Now, those numbers are beginning to rebound, Maxwell said. By Jan. 1, the number of employees in the plant had risen to 50.

See FORUM, 6A



STAFF PHOTO BY REBECCA BUNCH

Chowan County Commission Chairman Eddy Goodwin, left, talks with Bill Chesson at the business summit held Thursday at College of the Albemarle's campus in Edenton. The event was sponsored by the Edenton-Chowan Chamber of Commerce.

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