



No county tax hike expected

Latest structures debt service due

By **RITCHIE E. STARNES**
Editor

Chowan County taxpayers are not likely to face a property tax increase for

the next fiscal year. "We're looking good. We should have money left on the table this year," said County Manager Paul Parker, offering his opinion of the county's next fiscal year budget during Thursday's Board of Commissioners' meeting held

at the Northern Community Center. County leaders dissected a \$16 million annual budget that appears free of any sharp revelations that could lead to a tax hike. That doesn't mean this year's budget expenses are spike free. In fact,

county taxpayers must begin paying principal payments on the debt service for the Shepard-Pruden Memorial Library and the Public Safety Center in the amount of \$200,000. Employee benefits for county personnel also increased 25 percent for an

extra \$130,000. Before now, the county had been paying only interest for the library and public safety center, Parker said. Principal payments are due for the first time during the next fiscal year. A sudden increase in

county employee benefits means the county must offset the increase so the take-home pay for personnel will not change. Previous talks included requiring employees to share the pain of the increase with

See **TAX HIKE, 2A**

A HELPING HAND

Relief workers fan out to help tornado victims

Volunteers, donations amass in Bertie

By **VERNON FUESTON**
Bertie Ledger-Advance

ASKEWVILLE — Relief workers' vehicles were so plentiful that many were parked along the street near the Askewville Assembly of God church, Wednesday.

Workers from the Baptist Men, Samaritan's Purse, Salvation Army and a host of other organizations, companies and individuals, came to man a feeding station, organize to clear debris and distribute needed supplies to storm victims.

About 450 volunteers were working in the Askewville area alone Wednesday, with many more working in the hard-hit Colerain area.

Out in the church parking lot, a long black and white semi and trailer from Samaritan's Purse served as a nerve center for volunteers who were arriving from all over North Carolina and beyond, its generator throbbing to power the offices and communications facilities inside.



PHOTO BY VERNON FUESTON

Milly Jernigan of Bertie County picks through the bulldozed debris that was once her home, picking out useable video tapes from a ruined dresser drawer. Residents are still cleaning up the mess left when two tornados ripped through Bertie County, killing 12.

See **RELIEF, 4A**

Chowan joins disaster relief effort

By **REBECCA BUNCH**
Staff Writer

From clearing debris to preparing meals, Chowan County locals have extended a helping hand to the tornado victims of neighboring Bertie County.

Among them is Gary Swanner, a retired Edenton firefighter who is a

member of the Baptist Men's Group at Edenton Baptist Church. He and Gloria Voigt, another EBC member, are volunteering to cook meals for workers and survivors at the Colerain Fire Station.

"We have been cooking as many as 900 meals a day," Swanner said.

See **DISASTER, 4A**



SUBMITTED PHOTO
Deborah Lee joins Steven Brown, both of RBC Bank in Edenton, in showing some of the items collected for the Bertie County tornado relief effort. Lee said the bank will continue to serve as a drop-off point for donations locally as long as the service is needed.

Owens downplays district rumors

Owens: 1st District already leans to GOP

By **REGGIE PONDER**
Staff Writer

State Rep. Bill Owens last week downplayed speculation that Pasquotank might be joined with Perquimans, Chowan and Gates counties to form a new House district.

"No," Owens said when asked if he was aware of plans to join Pasquotank, Perquimans, Chowan and

Gates in a House district. "That puts the cart way before the horse."

Public hearings on N.C. General Assembly redistricting will be held May 7 at 4 p.m. in three locations in northeastern North Carolina: Room 111 at the John Wood Foreman Center on the campus of College of The Albemarle in Elizabeth City; Room DC201 at the Technology Center on COA's Dare County Campus in Manteo; and the Information Highway Room at John A. Holmes High School in Edenton.



Owens

Owens, D-Pasquotank, represents a district that includes Camden, Currituck and Tyrrell counties as well as Pasquotank.

He said the only person he has heard talk about a district encompassing Pasquotank, Perquimans, Chowan and Gates counties is Earl Rountree, a former member of the N.C. Board of Transportation.

Owens said neither he nor Rountree would have any say in the drawing of House districts since a "handful" of Republican leaders would be making those decisions.

There are no definite plans now and the GOP leadership is still getting public input in a series of

See **OWENS, 3A**

MUSEUM OPENS FRIDAY



PHOTO BY KIP SHAW

Gerald Lassiter (left), Cotton Mill Museum Board member, talks with museum visitors, Thursday. Friday at 10 a.m. marks the official grand opening of the museum.

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MAY PLAY DAY
SATURDAY, MAY 7TH starts at 10:00 am
ROCKY HOCK COMMUNITY CENTER

CORN HOLE TOURNAMENT
10:00 - UNTIL
GRAND PRIZE \$100
EDENTON DANCE STARS
11:00 - 12:00PM

CASTON YOUNG
1:00-2:00PM

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BBQ CHICKEN PLATES
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