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Fund balance reaches \$3.5 million

BOCC bank \$752K last year

By **RITCHIE E. STARNES**
 Editor

Despite nearly \$1 million less in annual revenue from a year ago, Chowan commissioners managed to bank another \$752,000 toward the fund balance that currently totals \$3.5 million.

Revenue for 2011 decreased by \$961,028 while

county expenses rose by \$460,031. Nonetheless, Chowan leaders found other ways to cinch the county's belt and save enough money to replenish the fund balance. Only a few years ago, Chowan was on the brink of bankruptcy and state takeover.

"It just shows what you can accomplish by watching your expenses," said Commissioners' Chairman Eddy Goodwin. "We budget for a revenue shortfall. Ev-

ery since 2008, we've been budgeting for a 30 percent reduction in sales tax. Anything below that is a windfall."

Sales tax fell by \$54,655 from a year ago. Revenue from property tax, however, grew by \$388,012 at a sum of more than \$10.1 million. Ad valorem taxes represent 64 percent of Chowan's revenue producers toward the general fund.

Accountant Bryan Starnes of Martin Starnes

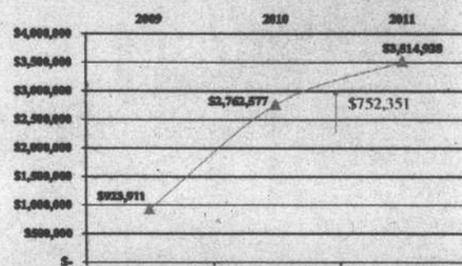
Associates lauded commissioners during the board's Nov. 7 meeting. He praised their ability to increase the fund balance in the face of such economic adversity.

Last year, commissioners banked \$1.8 million toward the fund balance that stood at \$2.7 million. The latest savings puts the county's fund balance at 16 percent of its general fund.

"We wanted 20 percent, but we're right there,"

See **FUND**, 4A

Total Fund Balance General Fund



GRAPH COURTESY MARTIN STARNES AND ASSOCIATES, CPAS, PA.

COA LAUNCHES SUSTAINABLE TECH PROGRAM

Edenton campus erects data towers

By **REBECCA BUNCH**
 Staff Writer

As the Albemarle prepares for its future in sustainable technology, the College of The Albemarle campus in Edenton has become home to a research hub.

A 60-foot-tall wind turbine tower installed Nov. 19 has become the latest addition at the campus as part of COA's sustainable technology program. A meteorological tower of equal size that will allow students and instructors involved in that curriculum to collect weather data was installed earlier in the month.

Lynn Hurdle-Winslow, dean of the Edenton campus, said that with sustainable or "green" technology growing in significance as Americans look for ways to preserve their natural resources, it was becoming increasingly important for students and faculty to enhance their knowledge in those areas.

"We are very excited to be on the cutting edge when it comes to exposing our students to this type of technology," Hurdle-Winslow said as she watched the wind turbine tower being erected.

The installations were made possible through the Albemarle Resource Conservation and Development Council in Edenton. The council oversees a renewable energy solutions program in northeastern North Carolina.

Funding came from a grant provided by the North Carolina Rural



STAFF PHOTO BY REBECCA BUNCH

A 60-foot-tall wind turbine tower was installed behind the COA Edenton campus on Saturday, Nov. 19. The structure joins a meteorological tower of equal size installed earlier in the month.

Center. Albemarle RC&D board member Jim Winebarger said that while the turbines would only generate minimal power their potential to affect education and research was great. Wendy Jewett, director

of the Northeastern Workforce Development Board that along with COA is a partner in the project, agreed.

Jewett said that with the growing interest in green technology and environmentally friendly projects

additional job creation is expected as well. When that day comes, she said, the area will need trained workers to fill those jobs. The grant also helped fund a similar project in

See **TURBINES**, 4A

Town OKs zoning for Dollar General

Northeast Partnership gets new lease

By **REBECCA BUNCH**
 Staff Writer

The Town Council voted unanimously during a special meeting Monday night to approve a rezoning request that would allow Dollar General to build a new store on North Broad Street across the road from its current location at the Edenton Village Shopping Center. It also approved a new lease for Northeast Partnership.

The vote came after the council decided at its regular monthly meeting on Nov. 8 to table to request. Several council members indicated at that time that they felt they needed more time to study the request by The Broadway Group, LLC of Alabama — made on behalf of Dollar General — to allow the rezoning of the currently undeveloped property from industrial to highway commercial.

See **ZONING**, 3A

County amends TDA structure

By **RITCHIE STARNES**
 Editor

Chowan County has restructured its Tourism Development Authority to include nine voting board members.

The Board of Commissioners unanimously approved the change at its Nov. 7 meeting. In addition to fewer members, only seven of the Authority members will be permitted to vote. By streamlining the board, it should be easier to find

See **TDA**, 3A

Retailers: Black Friday sales up

By **REBECCA BUNCH**
 Staff Writer

Local merchants say they've been pleasantly surprised with the Christmas shopping season so far.

The season, which began in earnest on Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving, has found many Chowan County residents shopping locally this year, merchants say.

"I've had a lot of locals coming in my store," said Brooke Overton, owner of the Polka Dot Palm. "It's



STAFF PHOTO BY REBECCA BUNCH

Susan Houck (left) and Joanne Delancey enjoy hunting for bargains at Peebles on Black Friday.

really great to see so many of them shopping at home this Christmas."

Overton said that while business was up some over

last year, she had noticed that more people were shopping with a budget in 2011.

"They're (shoppers)

definitely thinking more about what they're willing to spend," Overton said.

Black Friday was also a good day at Vaughan's Jewelry and Fine Gifts, said Kim Watson, sales associate.

"We've been very busy," Watson said. "I think a lot of people have decided to shop locally instead of just heading out of town, more so than normal. It's been a good day."

Kim Woods, assistant manager at Cato's in the Chowan Crossing Shopping Center, agreed.

"So far, what we've seen is that sales are little bit better than last year," Woods said.

Among those shopping a little closer to home on

See **BLACK FRIDAY**, 2A

Gingerbread Decoration



PATRICK FLYNN PHOTO

This completed Gingerbread House was decorated by local youngsters on Saturday afternoon at the Edenton Coffee House in downtown Edenton. Assisting the children was Carol Hammer of the Lovin' Oven, a local bakery.

