

ECP aspires to reunite county, town

Partnership includes private sector

By RITCHIE E. STARNES
Editor

Whether town and county leaders can reunite in the interest of economic development hinges on a critical vote Monday night, as well as the sustainability of a newly organized non-profit.

The Edenton Town Council is slated to vote on whether to divert its assets and funding of Edenton Today, formerly known as Edenton Chowan Eco-

nomics Development Council (ECDC), and merge its proceeds and future efforts with the Edenton Chowan Partnership (ECP). If approved, the Board of Commissioners will next be asked to recommit its efforts toward the same agenda, marking the county's first return to a joint economic development objective since its fiscal crisis roughly four years ago.

"The county has already agreed that they'll support this effort," said Cy Rich, ECP board member. "Our plan is that ECDC (now Edenton Today) will become the Edenton



Biggs Nixon Rich Vaughan

Chowan Partnership. We don't know what the Town Council is going to do yet."

If the Council's Sept. 26 meeting offers a glimpse, the vote could be close. At that meeting, Rich pitched the concept behind the ECP, outlining that the non-profit is volunteer-driven with a focus on pro-

moting the area's tourism, economic development, and education.

To accomplish its mission, a group of retired professionals and executives have committed to help. Many have already begun with educational initiatives, including a mentoring program aimed

at improving Edenton-Chowan's dropout rate.

In addition to the town and county, ECP will include the private sector. A study revealed that for Edenton Chowan to be successful with economic development, the town and county must reunite while also drawing from the resources of the private sector, Rich said.

All three entities would make equal financial contributions to ECP. Early estimates had each party contributing as much as \$100,000 annually. By merging the three entities, ECP creates synergy under a

single governing board, instead of three.

ECP aims to focus on three strategies toward community betterment. Strategies include:

1. Work to expand tourism and the attraction of retirees to the community by enhancing the attractive downtown environment and providing exciting experiences and opportunities for visitors;

2. Expand economic development by growing existing businesses and attracting those that can be supported by the existing

See ECP, 3A

County opposes fed's FSA closure

Chowan prefers to host consolidation

By RITCHIE E. STARNES
Editor

Efforts are under way to stave off the U.S. Department of Agriculture's plan to close the Farm Service Agency office in Chowan County. Instead, county leaders cite data that suggests Chowan should be the home for consolidation.

On Tuesday morning, the Chowan County Board of Commissioners voted unanimously to submit a resolution opposed to any local closures.

"Years ago they (USDA) came to us and asked to consolidate into one building, which we did," said Commission Chairman, one of three farmers on the board. "I can understand consolidation, but if we're going to consolidate it should be in a building designed for that."

Chowan is among the 259 offices planned for closure as the U.S. Department of Agriculture works to pare \$150 million off its annual budget. Proposals call for Chowan to lose its FSA and the USDA's Rural Development office, both currently housed in the county's agricultural building. In addition to closure opposition, commissioners favor Chowan as the government's place for consolidation.

The federal government plans to eliminate offices nationwide and consolidate services. Perquimans County would keep its services while gaining Chowan's clients, according to Trina Jones, local director of the FSA. Employees will be given the option to relocate. Only two employees occupy Chowan's FSA office.

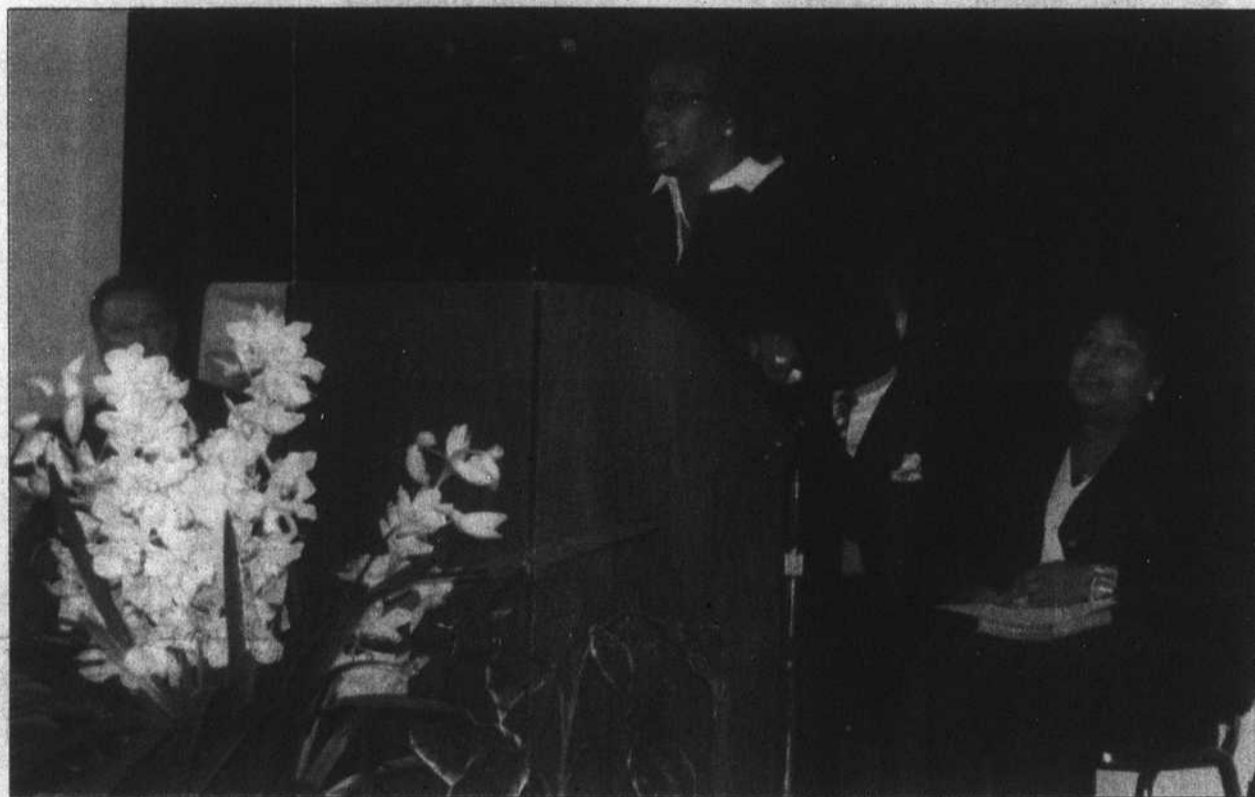
A separate office in the building houses Rural

See USDA, 3A



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A KING CELEBRATION



STAFF PHOTO BY REBECCA BUNCH

The Rev. Vonner G. Horton, pastor of the New Oxley Hill Baptist Church, gives the keynote address at Monday's celebration honoring the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. About 500 people attended.

Horton: Dream of freedom sustained African Americans

500 attend MLK event

By REBECCA BUNCH
Staff Writer

While much has been accomplished in improving the lives of African Americans since the 1968 assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., much remains to be done.

That was the message brought by the Rev. Vonner Horton during the annual celebration of King's life and legacy Monday at Swain Auditorium in Edenton.

About 500 people came to hear the message and to celebrate Dr. King's dream of freedom and equality.

"All of us need to dream," Horton said. "Throughout history, as Afri-

can Americans we have been sustained by the dream of freedom."

Consequently, Horton said, "If you want to kill a people, kill their dreams. If you want to kill a child, tell him he's nothing. Tell him he's slow in school, and he'll never learn."

Horton said that while the African American community has achieved much in pursuing such freedoms as equality and education, much remains to be gained in pursuit of Dr. King's dream for his people.

"We've come a long way, but we've got a long way to go," Horton said.

Prejudice, for instance, still exists today, Horton said. Lack of opportunity and the struggle for advancement through education that will result in a good job and a solid future still exist as well.

"I preach love, I preach honesty," Horton said. But, she said, she also preaches the truth and felt the day provided a chance for reflection on King's dream and how far away the realization of that dream remains for some African Americans.

"We've come a long way, but we're not there yet," Horton said.

As the program concluded Carlton Griffin, co-chair of the event, presented the second annual Humanitarian Award to Douglas Stallings for his work on behalf of the D.F. Walker Alumni Association. The award is sponsored by the Chowan County Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday Celebration Committee.

"I'm very honored to be up here this afternoon," Stallings said in accepting the award.

Upgrades could exceed \$850K

By REBECCA BUNCH
Staff Writer

The Board of Education voted unanimously, last Monday night to hire an independent contractor to assess ways to make the local schools more energy efficient.

Once the energy audit is completed the school system will require board approval before implementing any of the findings or heating/cooling system upgrades. Brad Bass, schools' director of maintenance, told the board an in-house estimate of the system-wide work would total as much as \$850,000, including materials and labor. He emphasized that the figure was only an estimate and that the actual cost could be higher.

"I just think we need a comprehensive picture of our energy situation," board member Gil Burroughs said before casting his vote in favor of the motion. He added that having a professional involved in the process "just seems a much more reasonable approach."

Left unanswered was the question of who would pay for the necessary system upgrades once the audit was completed. Board member Win Dale said he thought the school board needed to reach out to the county commissioners and

See UPGRADES, 3A

Chime, time resume after decades absence

By REBECCA BUNCH
Staff Writer

There's a return chime in town that signals the passage of time too.

The clock, which for decades has been unable to keep time or chime out the hour, is now performing both outside the 1924 bank building at 216 South Broad Street that will soon be the new home of Albemarle Bank — thanks to the craftsmanship of Don St. Aubin of Elizabeth City.

Return of the functioning clock, manufactured in 1912 by the O.B. McClintock

Company in Minneapolis, Minn., is creating quite a stir in downtown Edenton.

St. Aubin is the owner of Don's Clock Repair. He cheerfully admitted he was "surprised and pleased" that his work was attracting so much attention from those stopping to listen to the clock chime and then taking notice of its brighter, cleaner appearance.

"It was old," St. Aubin said, chuckling, when asked what he found wrong with the clock. "Seriously, though, there was a lot of corrosion. It just needed a lot of TLC (tender loving

care)."

St. Aubin said the clock has a face that shows the time on each of its four sides, a McClintock tradition.

Prior to its recent sprucing up, it also had standard mercury vapor lights that had burned the numbers on the faces of two of the clocks.

Those have now been replaced with new LCD (light emitting diode) lights that don't generate the heat of a traditional bulb, he said.

Much of the wiring inside



PHOTO BY RITCHIE E. STARNES

The clock outside the 1924 bank building is now able to keep time and chime out the hour, something it had not been able to do for decades.

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