



## Fired employee: EIC compromises safety

Worker awaits department probe

By RITCHIE E. STARNES  
Editor

A former employee of the Economic Development Council says the agency puts the bottom line ahead of employee safety.

Dale Jernigan, 39, a former supervisor, alleges EIC first demot-

ed then fired him after he filed a worker's compensation claim. He hasn't been able to find work to provide for his family since the EIC terminated the former weatherization auditor.

Although the EIC challenged Jernigan's attempt at unemployment benefits, the Equal Employment Security Commission recently ruled in his favor, adding that EIC failed to show Jernigan was fired for misconduct as

alleged.

The ruling marks the first sign of vindication for Jernigan who claims he has been mistreated since his reported ankle injury on Aug. 22, 2011. He also awaits the findings of an investigation by the N.C. Department of Labor after Jernigan filed a claim under its Retaliatory Employment Discrimination Act.

"I'm just trying to put some light on this," Jernigan said.

"What they've done is wrong."

Meanwhile, Doris James, executive director of EIC, denies that Jernigan has been a victim of any type of job discrimination. She claims, instead, he is a victim of his own devices, which continuously hindered agency progress.

After Jernigan rolled his ankle at a job site in Hyde County he reported his injury for a worker's compensation claim. At the

time of his injury, Jernigan said, he was told that he would have to exhaust his sick and vacation time.

"I was told then that if I had to file a worker's comp, their rates would skyrocket," Jernigan said.

Jernigan said he eventually filed a worker's compensation claim himself online when EIC

See EIC, 2A

## LOST at SEA



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE U.S. COAST GUARD

This 2003 Regulator 26, built in Edenton in 2002, washed ashore two weeks ago in Spain three-and-a-half years after rough seas tossed its two-man crew off the coast of Nantucket. Covered in barnacles and rust, the vessel remained amazingly intact.

### Regulator-made boat washes ashore 3.5 years later

By BECKY BRATU  
msnbc.com

(Editor's note: msnbc granted the Chowan Herald permission to rerun their digital story that first broke last week.)

NEW YORK — As he swam toward the coast of Nantucket, Mass. in August 2008, Scott Douglas, 58, watched his yellow fishing boat disappear, carried away by the swelling surf. He thought it would be the last time he'd ever see the Queen Bee.

But last Wednesday, more than three years after Douglas and his brother-in-law were tossed off the boat by a wave, the U.S. Coast

Guard called to say the vessel had washed up on the Spanish coast.

It was rusty and covered in barnacles, but intact.

"It looks entirely different," Douglas said upon seeing the photos. "That's amazing."

Douglas shared his amazement by calling Regulator Marine in Edenton where the 2003 Regulator 26 was manufactured in 2002.

Workers at Regulator assembled by the telephone to listen to the extraordinary tale about how one of their crafts survived three and half years adrift at sea.

"It's amazing any boat could survive that long at sea, but to learn it was one of ours makes

us especially proud," said Joan Maxwell, Regulator president.

Douglas remembers the water was restless on the day he set out to sea, and the fish weren't biting. He tried to keep the boat stationary, bracing himself as huge rollers crashed into it.

"At all times, it's a very sketchy area," Douglas told msnbc.com. "You wouldn't want to be dumped in the ocean there."

But that's exactly what happened when a rogue wave knocked Douglas and his brother-in-law, Rich St. Pierre, off the boat and into a sink-or-swim fight for survival.

See BOAT, 7A

## Three hopefuls want Britton's seat

By REBECCA BUNCH  
Staff Writer

Three residents of Edenton's ward 3 spent just over an hour Monday evening undergoing Town Council interviews in hopes of filling the unexpired term of the late Councilwoman Phyllis Britton.

Those interviewed by the mayor and council members were the Rev. Roscoe Poole, Amelle O'Leary and Norma Simpson. Councilman Sambo Dixon was absent.

"This is an open process, as you can tell," Mayor Roland Vaughan said as he opened the special public meeting.

"There will be no decision made this evening,"

Vaughan said, referring to filling the vacancy. "We will make a selection at a later date, after considering the candidates' answers."

Candidates were asked a variety of questions including why they were interested in filling the seat.

Poole, who serves as chaplain for American Legion Post 40 in Edenton and works part-time at Elizabeth City State University as a rehabilitation construction advisor, said he had decided to come forward because of his desire to serve the community.

"I am a part of Edenton because I live here, I

See WARD, 4A

## Airport nets part of \$2.8M grant

From staff reports

Edenton's Northeastern Regional Airport will be among seven beneficiaries of \$2.8 million in grants distributed in eastern North Carolina.

Congressman G. K. Butterfield (NC-01) announced Thursday the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the N.C. Department of Transportation (NC-

DOT) will be awarding the grants to seven airports to be used for several critical upgrades. In addition to Northeastern, the other airports include: Martin County Airport, Tarboro-Edgecombe Airport, Tri-County Airport, Warren Field, Oxford-Henderson Airport and Plymouth Municipal Airport.

Plans calls for \$585,000 in runway apron improvements at Northeastern, according to Anne Marie Knighton, Edenton town manager. The grant will

See GRANT, 7A

## Audit: Town on sound footing

By REBECCA BUNCH  
Staff Writer

The town of Edenton's audit for 2010-11 shows it is on solid financial ground, according to auditor Jim Winston.

Winston, of the Oxford, NC-based accounting firm of Winston, Williams, Creech, Evans and Company, LLC, told the Town Council at its Jan. 23 meeting he had no problems to report.

"It's all good news, we had no findings (concerns)," Winston said. "Everything was fine."

The \$18.8-million budget included net assets that

were up \$1.9-million over the previous year.

"Our (town's) assets improved," Winston said. "That's the way we want it to go."

Winston also pointed to an improvement in the amount of sales tax collected during the fiscal year.

He said tax collections rose by \$32,000 over 2009-2010. Total sales tax receipts for the fiscal year 2010-2011 equaled \$430,136.

"Maybe we're seeing a little uptick in the economy," Winston said, with regard to the increase. "I hope so."

The town's general fund balance of \$2.2-million reflected a gain of \$224,000 during the fiscal year, Winston said.

"That gives you a little cushion if something comes up you want to do,"

Winston said.

The largest expenditure reflected in the budget, at 73 percent, was the purchase of electricity from ElectricCities.

That cost was \$10.8-million. Second, at 45 percent, was public safety; that includes equipment and salaries for the police and fire departments. That cost was \$1.9-million for the year.

The town currently has a reserve fund balance of 33 percent, Winston said.

He noted that the town's audit went out on time and has been accepted by the LGC (Local Government Commission).

"Edenton is in good shape financially," Winston said. "I think that says a lot, for the difficult times we're in."

See AUDIT, 3A

## VIDANT BIRTHDAY



STAFF PHOTO BY REBECCA BUNCH

Hospital officials and local dignitaries show off the sign bearing the name Vidant Chowan Hospital, which became official Jan. 25, when a celebration was held marking the new name's official "birthday." Above are (from l-r) Lynn Lanier, vice president of financial services for Vidant Health; Mayor Roland Vaughan; County Commission Chairman Eddy Goodwin; Jeff Sackrison, hospital president; Dr. William C. "Skip" Hope, chief of staff at Vidant Chowan Hospital; the Rev. Thomas Biggs, hospital chaplain; Anne-Marie Knighton, town manager, were among 100 who attended. "For years, the name University Health Systems has stood for the highest level of care in eastern North Carolina. As we continue to evolve and strengthen our integrated system, the time has come to evolve our name as well," Sackrison told the crowd.



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