

Hospital announces skilled nursing closure

Vidant plans to expand outpatient services

By **RITCHIE E. STARNES**
Editor

Vidant Chowan Hospital officials announced Wednesday it will close its 50-year-old Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) that houses 28 long-term care patients and employs 45.

The hospital's directors council voted unanimously Wednesday morning to close its long-term nursing facility June 11

in favor of using the space to expand outpatient services, said Jeffrey N. Sackrison, Vidant Chowan Hospital president. He said the hospital's SNF \$1 million annual loss contributed to the decision.

"The decision to discontinue SNF services was not taken lightly," Sackrison said. "We evaluated many service lines and considered multiple factors, including community need, availability of the service in the community, the need to offer the service in-house, and finally financial performance."

Chowan Hospital, then owned by the county, originally began providing long-term nursing care because the services were not available in the area, Sackrison said. Vidant Chowan Hospital is the last one in the Vidant system still providing a SNF.

"Hospitals just aren't doing that anymore," Sackrison said. "They're staying close to their core services and that's not long-term care."

Although patients were officially notified by letter last Wednesday, some families had already heard leaks about the

impending closure.

Jim Kerr, 70, expressed outrage about the planned closing. His 87-year-old wife first became a patient at the end of 2011 and at a first month costs of \$10,000 from his savings. News of the preference for expanding outpatient services did not sit well with him.

"I don't care what they say, it's about the money," Kerr said. "What they're saying is 'I don't care about the skilled nursing, I care more about the outpatient services because it makes more money.' When they talk about

Vidant's core values, they're forgetting about these people."

Rebecca C. Scarborough of Franklin, Va. said her family considered themselves lucky to have found a uniquely qualified SNF when they placed her 86-year-old mother. She said the quality of care enhanced by the proximity of medical staff has been a comfort.

"I traded off the convenience of having my mother close to me for the peace of mind that she would be in a better place at the

See **CLOSURE**, 4A

Town OKs 300th birthday party

Event slated for November

By **REBECCA BUNCH**
Staff Writer

The Town Council voted unanimously to lend its support to a proposed 300th anniversary celebration for the founding of Edenton.



Knighton

After last month's preliminary suggestion that the town would only financially support

the anniversary of Edenton's 1722 incorporation, the Council softened its position during its April 10 monthly meeting. The board agreed to support the efforts by the Edenton Historical Commission and the Chowan Tourism Development Authority in promoting the celebration slated for November.

Council agreed to have Mayor Roland Vaughan appoint a committee and a chairman to lead a yearlong effort to commemorate the anniversary.

The town hopes to also provide financial support for the celebration.

Town Manager Anne-Marie Knighton recommended that the town utilize a \$4,000 matching grant from Electricities that is available to help fund events promoting the community. Knighton said that funds from the EHC and the TDA could be matched with the grant to help pay for the celebration.

Vaughan endorsed the idea.

"If we can go to a source and get X number of dollars in support of the effort, I think we can endorse them (yet-to-be named committee) in carrying out their mission," Vaughan said.

With the council's approval in hand, the mayor indicated he would move quickly to help get the planning process underway.

"I'm sure they (EHC and

See **300TH**, 2A

Artist at Work



PHOTO BY KIP SHAW

Knox Mitchener, 7, and Hunter Mitchener, 13, from Richmond, watch Barbara Gernat of Nags Head paint in the garden of Mayor Roland and Peggy Ann Vaughan. For story and more photos see page 1B.

Suspect steals winning scratch-off ticket

From staff reports

Trying to cash-in lottery tickets or at least redeem them for beer turned out to be an unlucky move for an Edenton man.

On April 10 at about 1 a.m., police discovered a breaking and entering at the Stop Shop on North

Broad Street in Edenton where as the thief made off with lottery tickets.

"It turned out that 447 North Carolina state lottery tickets were stolen during the incident," said Edenton Police Chief Jay Fortenbery.

Fortenbery said officers received

information the day after the break-in that Walter Lee Privott, 29, of Vance Lane, was attempting to cash-in some of the stolen lottery scratch-off tickets at the S Mart on North Broad Street and the Duck Thru on Virginia Road in

See **TICKET**, 2A

Developer wants to alter housing plans



RENDERING COURTESY OF TIM MORGAN/EVERGREEN CONSTRUCTION

Evergreen Construction has applied for a new conditional use permit to build 50 units similar to these on Coke Avenue in Edenton.

By **REBECCA BUNCH**
Staff Writer

If the developers of a proposed multi-housing complex want to proceed with their plans, they'll likely need to stick with the original design or face further backlash.

Evergreen Construction Company will have to wait until next month to find out if their efforts to get town council approval for a new conditional use permit will be successful. At issue is whether

the company will be able to secure a new permit that will allow it to build 50 multi-family townhouse and garden-style units on Coke Avenue, and move the construction from the back of the lot to the front.

A conditional use permit granted last year gave them the green light to construct 45 units on the rear portion of a 4.6 acre lot at the former Chowan Veneer site. That original permit remains in effect at this time, according to town at-

torney Hood Ellis.

After a lengthy discussion, and comments from citizens, councilors determined they did not have enough facts to make an informed decision at their April 10 regular monthly meeting.

Councilman Sambo Dixon asked the project's developer Tim Morgan to make a copy of a market study available to the council so that that information could be included in

See **DEVELOPER**, 4A

Schools tout reserves as savior

Fund balance remains at \$1.7M

By **RITCHIE E. STARNES**
Editor

Whenever school and county leaders talk jointly about budget needs, the conversation invariably turns to the system's fund balance.

Monday posed no exception as the Edenton-Chowan Board of Education met with the Board of Commissioners and presented the system's 2012-13 expense request. In order to meet the system's top priority needs, school leaders asked the county to pay an additional \$229,100 over last year's allocation for a total of \$3.6 million.

School leaders have appropriated \$500,000 and another \$250,000 contingency from the system's fund balance to bring the total local expense budget at \$4.5 million. When asked how much would remain in the schools' fund balance after the appropriation, Superintendent Allan Smith reported \$1.7 million.

"In my mind, there is some resentment about school systems carrying a fund balance," said Commissioner Emmett Winborne. "Where does the money need to sit, in your coffers or our coffers?"

Smith renewed his defense of the schools' fund balance, adding that the system has been able to offset shortfalls to balance its budget. Many school systems throughout the state have depleted fund balances while facing the same economic shortfalls, he added.

"Without that (fund balance), we'd be in a lot more of a difficult situation," Smith said.

Commissioners' Chairman Eddy Goodwin concurred that he too had

See **BUDGET**, 4A



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