

Edenton police to relocate

Town to build own station

By RITCHIE E. STARNES
Editor

Town leaders have decided to move the Edenton Police Department out of the Public Safety Center.

In an unanimous vote Monday night, the Town Council made the decision official. Part of a long-

term cost-savings move, the council opted to terminate the town's lease agreement with the county for space in the Public Safety Center. Edenton police uses the 7,000-square-foot space to house its offices, located



Knighton

adjacent to the sheriff's office.

The Board of Commissioners recently modified its debts and refinanced various loans in exchange for lower interest rates and shorter terms for a savings of more than \$10 million. Since the county had a lease with the town on one of those refinanced buildings (Public Safety Center), the town was then offered several

options. The options included: staying with the current lease term of 40 years, returning to the original term of 30 years, modifying the lease to an 11-year lease term to follow the county's modified refinancing plan, or to mutually agree to terminate the lease.

"There's no rift between the town and county," said Anne Marie Knighton, town manager. "They're

being very kind to let us out of the lease."

Because the payment options would have cost the town more than the expense of constructing its own building, Edenton leaders decided to end the lease and pursue another site.

A 40-year option at 4.25 percent interest would cost town taxpayers \$5.8

See POLICE, 2A

BOCC to consider shorter terms

By RITCHIE E. STARNES
Editor

Just because the Board of Education voted to keep its term lengths at six years instead of the conventional four years doesn't mean it's a forgone conclusion, at least in the view of the Board of Commissioners.

Former commissioners' chairman Eddy Goodwin appeared before the board during last week's work session and requested that county leaders consider asking the state legislature to reduce Edenton-Chowan's school board term limits by two years during its scheduled meeting Monday night.

"Six years, in my opinion, is too long," Goodwin said. "I think having some new faces, some new ideas, is a good thing on a board."

Current Chairman Keith Nixon said he too had long been questioning the value of longer terms, particularly when only five of the state's 115 school districts still support six-year terms. Pitt County's plan to switch to four-year terms will leave only four in the state using six years.

"My biggest question is what is making Edenton Chowan Schools better by not adhering to the state's norm," Nixon said. "I'm still trying to be sold on why six years is better than four, but I'm still doing my homework."

Research is what Nixon asked his board members to do before revisiting the matter Monday night.

Commissioner John Mitchener, who also served two six-year terms on the school board, prefers the decision remain in the hands of the school board. Only school board representatives know what's required to keep abreast of their duties, he said.

"Once you're on the inside, you find there's a lot more to learn than you could ever have known from the outside," Mitchener said. "Personally, I found six-year terms very helpful."

The school board voted against reducing term limits in December.

Schools' Superintendent Allan Smith said he hopes commissioners will respect the school board's

See TERMS, 2A

CHAMBER PRESENTS AWARDS



PHOTOS COURTESY JEREMY GROVES

Donna McLees, (left) owner of The Shoppes on Broad, accepts the Business Person of the Year Award from Jean Brown at Thursday night's Edenton Chowan Chamber of Commerce 2013 annual Meeting & Banquet.

McLees earns Business Person of the Year

Standing ovation greets tourism director

By RITCHIE E. STARNES
Editor

There were a few worthy surprises at this year's Edenton-Chowan Chamber of Commerce's annual awards ceremony.

While each award shared an appropriate winner, they also shared the distinction of special recognition. It didn't take long Thursday evening for the sold-out meeting and banquet at the Chowan Golf & Country Club to realize the 2013 awards event was one of a kind.

Although the award was not listed on the event's program, a surprise recognition for Outstanding Achievement in Tourism

was presented to Nancy Nicholls, director of Chowan's Tourism Development Authority. With more than 20 years service to the area's tourism, Nicholls received a standing ovation.

"Nancy Nicholls is the most respected tourism director in the state," said Giuliano Gianone, a local bed and breakfast owner who presented her with the award.

For the Excellence in Tourism Award, Mayor Roland Vaughan singled out a town councilman that also volunteered his time as committee chairman that launched Edenton's 300th anniversary.

"He works so hard he had a heart attack," said Vaughan, referring to Bob Quinn who



Nancy Nicholls, (second from left) receives a congratulatory embrace after she was awarded with a special recognition - Outstanding Achievement in Tourism.

See BANQUET, 5A

E-Chowan school board lists capital-outlay priorities

Holmes' activity bus might have to wait

By REBECCA BUNCH
Staff Writer

During its annual retreat last Thursday the Board of Education identified its 2013-2014 capital outlay budget priorities.

Among the most urgent needs is the renovation of student restrooms in the sixth grade at Chowan Mid-

dle School, and the installation of water-saving devices in all restrooms, Superintendent Allan Smith said. That project has an estimated cost of \$40,000.

Another recommended priority is funding a recurring effort to rotate the replacement of carpet and furniture among the county's four schools, Smith said. During the budget cycle in question, the plan calls for six classrooms at White Oak, D.F. Walker, and the middle school to have carpet replaced at a



Smith

cost of \$30,000. White Oak and Chowan Middle School would each receive \$10,000 to fund furniture replacement.

High priority projects identified at John A. Holmes High School included creating handicapped access to the school's band room at an estimated cost of \$16,000, as well as refinishing the gym floor at an estimated cost of \$12,500 - something that has not happened since 1998, Smith said.

Reworking the track at the high school so that worn areas could be repaired would cost about \$3,000, according to an estimate secured by the school's athletic department,

considerable discussion centered on the purchase of a new activity bus for Holmes at an anticipated cost of \$95,000.

Brad Bass, schools' maintenance director, said that the last activity bus bought at the high school was purchased in 2010. The oldest, he said, was purchased in 1987 and has 200,000 miles on it.

"We send these buses on long distance trips," Bass said. "We have three buses that are carrying in excess of 150,000 miles, which leaves us with three buses we can really count on."

"If we don't do it (purchase a new activity bus) this year, we would have to do it next year," Smith

said. "Are there other things on this list that could wait, more than the activity bus," asked board member John Guard. "That's the question."

Delaying the purchase of a new bus for one more year would not constitute a safety issue, Smith said.

"I'm OK with that (delaying the purchase) if it's not a safety issue," said board member Glorious Elliott.

Smith and Bass recommended to the board that a protocol be established whereby the school system would purchase a new activity bus every four or five years to avoid any potential safety issues.

Smith added that based

on the discussion at the retreat, his staff would look at the key projects identified, recheck the costs involved, and bring the list back to the school board at its March meeting for approval.

Smith said that based on conversations he has had with County Manager Zee Lamb, he felt it would be in the school system's best interest to identify capital outlay priorities for the commissioners in March in the future.

"We need to begin that work (on capital outlay projects) the day students walk out for summer vacation," Smith said in

See PRIORITIES, 4A

