



Inside today, our Summer 2013 edition of **Albemarle Magazine** 50¢

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## Town Council adopts proposed 2013-14 budget

BY REBECCA BUNCH  
Staff Writer

The town council adopted its proposed 2013-2014 budget at its monthly meeting on Monday night by a 5-1 vote. Councilman Steve Biggs cast the lone dissenting vote.

"I just could not vote for this budget in good conscience," Biggs said after

the meeting.

Biggs said that he had a number of concerns with regard to the proposed budget but that the biggest one had to do with what he considers an excessive amount of overtime being paid to local police officers. He said that he could not understand why better planning was not used in estimating the amount of overtime that

would be required in a given year.

As of May 31, he noted, the department had accrued \$68,126 in overtime.

Biggs expressed concern that one officer alone had been paid more than \$10,000 in overtime through May 31.

The town's budget year ends on June 30.

"You could almost hire

two more police officers with what is being spent in overtime," Biggs said.

Biggs said that he had suggested that option to Town Manager Anne-Marie Knighton. He said she responded that with salary and fringe benefits, the cost of hiring just one new officer would be about \$45,000 annually.

Knighton confirmed that in an email to the Chowan

Herald Tuesday morning.

"A new officer with benefits would cost \$45,000," Knighton wrote. "We would still incur and have the overtime expenses for all the mandatory training, court time and additional training for each of our 16 police officers ... a new position would help us reduce overtime by \$10,000 but we would have to come up with

the additional \$35,000 to fund the position."

The mandatory training to which Knighton referred is based on every officer receiving 24 hours per year of state-mandated training as well as 40 hours per year of additional training and 48 hours of court time — time the officers spend

See BUDGET, 2A

## Exercise proves valuable

BY REGGIE PONDER  
Editor

Technology allows emergency response agencies to stay almost as closely connected as if they were together in person, Vidant Chowan Hospital staff learned during the regional emergency response exercise earlier this month.

Mary Spruill, the emergency management manager for Vi-



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vidant Chowan Hospital and Vidant Bertie Hospital, said the exercise conducted June 3-14 brought all the agencies in the region together and everyone learned a lot.

"It went very well, I think," Spruill said. "I think it was very educational for all of us."

The hospital does two on-site drills a year and there is also a community readiness drill each year, she said.

But this year's regional exercise, coordinated by Albemarle Regional Health Services, was especially broad in the number of communities and agencies involved.

"This was a pretty extensive exercise," Spruill said.

The scenario for this exercise was a bio-terrorism attack in Elizabeth City. But because a real attack in Elizabeth City would impact the entire region, other communities in northeastern North Carolina and even southeastern Virginia were included in the exercise.

Spruill said she feels good about the hospital's emergency readiness. Over the past four or five years, partly spurred by Hurricane Katrina, the state and the region have committed a lot of resources to emergency preparedness, she said.

One of the biggest things that came out of this exercise was a challenge to the long-held assumption that in an emergency of that magnitude, all of the information officers would get together in one room at a central location, Spruill said.

"I think we realized that in this day and time that's just probably not going to happen," Spruill said.

See EXERCISE, 2A



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## OLD GLORY



STAFF PHOTO BY REBECCA BUNCH

American Legion Post 40 Commander Jerry DiNunzio throws another batch of flags on the fire during a flag retirement ceremony held last Thursday evening. More than one thousand old, battered flags were burned in a respectful manner during the annual event which officials said was the proper way to dispose of them. A collection box for flags in similar condition is housed outside the Legion on West Queen Street.

## Collection efforts improving

BY REGGIE PONDER  
Editor

Chowan County's new tax administrator said the county's tax office has everything in place that's needed to continue improving an already solid collection rate.

Hosea Wilson, who took the reins in the tax office May 1, noted the current tax collection rate for all property is 97.18 percent. The collection rate for real and personal property for the current fiscal year is 97.88 percent, Wilson said.

Wilson said he has only been in the position about 60 days, so credit for that rate really goes to the other employees in the tax office and other county officials.

But Wilson, who worked six and a half years as the tax administrator in neighboring Bertie County before taking the Chowan post, said he will continue working to improve the rate.

"The processes are in place to



STAFF PHOTO BY REGGIE PONDER

Chowan County Tax Administrator Hosea Wilson talks to a reporter in his office, Monday.

continue in a very positive manner," Wilson said.

The collection rate for real property in the fiscal year that ends Sunday is very close to 98 percent. The tax office is working hard this week to get the rate as close to 98 percent as possible.

"It's very good for a small, rural

county," Wilson said of the collection rate.

The collection rate not only determines how much money is available to provide services for citizens but also affects the bond rating for the county.

"There are reasons to get that rate up and to keep it up," Wilson said.

Wilson pointed out that state law charges the office with collecting all taxes that are owed.

The county's tax office makes use of the debt set-off program through the state Department of Revenue, which deducts taxes owed to the county from any tax refund the taxpayer would be due from the state.

"We used it quite a bit in Bertie and we're using it quite a bit here," Wilson said of debt set-off. "It is an effective tool."

Although foreclosures are an unpopular measure, they are necessary in some cases and the office owes it

See WILSON, 2A

## Heart attack a 'wakeup call'

BY REGGIE PONDER  
Editor

Craig Miller never expected to have a heart attack.

But when he began having chest pains one day back in March, he wound up just hours later being treated for a heart attack at Vidant Medical Center in Greenville.

"It's a wakeup call," Miller said. "I just never thought it would happen to me."

Miller, a retired health care administrator, is by his own description an "exercise nut" who has been very careful about his diet and other lifestyle factors because he knew he had a family history of heart disease.

He attributes his heart attack largely to that genetic predisposition.

"You can't fight your ancestors," Miller said. "You can't fight genetics."

Miller told his story at the Vidant Chowan Hospital "Focus on Heart Health" event, held June 20 at Edenton United Methodist Church. The men's health educational dinner included Miller's remarks and a presentation by Dr. Gary Fontana, a Vidant cardiologist.

Miller told of the morning he experienced terrible chest pains. When he took a couple of aspirin and the pain persisted, he decided to visit Dr. Chris Perry, his family doctor in Edenton.

He pointed it was a good call to seek medical help for his chest pains. At the doctor's office, the staff performed an EKG and Perry sent Miller directly to the Emergency Department at Vidant Chowan Hospital.

Miller said he was treated great at Perry's office, at the ER, and by the staff at Vidant Medical Center after he was

See HEART, 2A

## Vehicle damages apartment laundry room

From staff reports

A building at Wedgewood Apartments in Edenton sustained an estimated \$10,000 damage when it was struck by a vehicle last week, according to the Edenton Police Department.

On Monday, a Chowan County man was cited for hit and run in connection with the incident.

Officers cited Kay-

sean Rome, 113-C Ryans Grove Road, Edenton, for hit and run and driving while license revoked, according to Chief Jay Fortenbery.

The vehicle involved was a 1993 Mercury Grand Marquis 1993. The damage occurred when the vehicle was backed into the outside of the laundry room at the apartment complex, according to police.

Information from an

anonymous tip helped solve the case, according to Fortenbery.

The damage, estimated at \$5,000 to a brick foundation and \$5,000 to an exterior wall, occurred sometime between 8 p.m. on June 16 and 8:10 a.m. on June 17, police reported.

The Wedgewood Apartments complex is located at 725 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Ave.



PHOTO COURTESY EDENTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

This photo shows damage from a hit and run at the Wedgewood Apartments about a week ago.

Chowan Edenton Optimist Club  
34th ANNUAL  
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AND PONY RIDES

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GAMES FOR  
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