

CHOWAN HERALD



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Pitching to lead Steamers' run
in Pettitt Cup playoffs — 7A 50¢

School board cuts four teacher assistant jobs

BY REBECCA BUNCH
Staff Writer

The school board voted unanimously Monday night to eliminate four teacher assistant positions for the 2013-2014 school year. Board member Jean Bunch was absent.

The school system nar-

rowly avoided having to eliminate a teaching position. That job was saved when one teacher transferred out of the Edenton-Chowan school system, Supt. Allan Smith said.



SMITH

School officials had said

last week they thought as many as six teacher assistant positions might be lost.

"If there's any bright spot, that's it," Smith said in announcing that fewer jobs than anticipated would be lost.

Michelle Maddox, human resources director for the school system, noted in a July 31 news release that the school system had worked to prepare for job cuts necessitated by the just-passed North Carolina General Assembly budget by not filling open positions in anticipation of the "dras-

tic cuts" to the state's education budget.

Because the school board had not filled 7.5 of the 8.5 teaching positions affected by the cuts, Maddox said, only one position for the 2013-2014 school year would have been lost.

According to the news release, the Edenton-Chowan

Schools received cuts totaling \$831,385 for funding of classroom teacher and teacher assistant positions, classroom materials, textbooks and ESL/Limited English Proficient services.

The school system was able to lower the number of

See SCHOOL, 3A

Edenton considers 1 percent pay raises

BY REBECCA BUNCH
Staff Writer

The town council could consider job reclassifications and a 1 percent salary increase for town employees as soon as its monthly meeting on Aug. 13.

The council at its July 22 work session heard a report from Town Manager Anne-Marie Knighton based on a recently completed salary study.

Councilman Steve Biggs, who chairs the administrative committee, had requested in the spring of 2012 that the study be done. Biggs at the time expressed concern about the low pay being received by some longtime town employees.

He also questioned whether those on the higher end of the salary scale were receiving salaries that were out of line with what their counterparts in other communities of comparable size were receiving. That question was not addressed at the work session.

Knighton said that should the council adopt the recommendations arising from the study, about 26 positions would be affected.

"You may also want to establish a performance-based merit increase of 1 percent," Knighton suggested to the council.

Knighton explained that town staff prepared the salary classification and salaries study by reviewing salary survey data collected and published by the N.C. League of Municipalities. They then compiled salary ranges for positions similar to those of Town of Edenton employees in communities with a population range of 2,500-4,999 and for the population range of 5,000-9,999.

The survey averaged the minimum starting salary and the maximum salary, and averaged the current salary earned, Knighton said.

In addition to the league's survey, town staff also acquired position classification schedules from the towns of Ayden, Farmville and Ahoskie, as well as figures from a salary study prepared for Chowan County last year. Knighton noted that the county commissioners have not yet adopted the study.

Knighton said that most of the salary schedules the town evaluated followed a pattern.

"The minimum salary is generally increased by 50 percent to determine the

See RAISES, 2A

TAX-FREE WEEKEND SHOPPING



STAFF PHOTO BY REGGIE PONDER

Devonne Gold takes advantage of the tax holiday, as she shops for clothes Saturday at Peebles in Edenton.

Local shoppers, retailers lament sunset on the state's tax holiday

BY REGGIE PONDER
Editor

Edenton shoppers and retailers alike will miss the opportunity that the state's tax-free weekend represented.

This past weekend was the final tax-free weekend for back-to-school shoppers in North Carolina. Gov. Pat McCrory has signed a law ending the tax-free shopping days after this year.

Jadelle Wagner, manager of Peebles in downtown Edenton, said local stores likely will lose some back-to-school business to Virginia retailers as a result of the change.

"I think a lot of people will go to Virginia because Virginia is so close," Wagner said. "They'll go to Virginia instead of shopping here."

Elizabeth Lassiter, an assistant manager at Roses in Edenton, said she had heard a lot of customers expressing concern that there would be no tax holiday next year.

"There's definitely a buzz going around with the customers," Lassiter said. "They're talking about it and buzzing about it — disappointment."

Lassiter said sales during this year's tax-free weekend were similar to the same weekend in 2012.

Clothes and school supplies have been doing especially well, Lassiter said.

Wagner said she was pleased with sales at Peebles during this final tax-free period.

The Friday of this year's tax-free weekend was busier than the same Friday last year, Wagner said. Saturday was steady, and the store was looking for a big finish to the weekend on Sunday.

Wagner said the store has more children's shoes right now than it has had in previous years. That shoe selection is paying off, she said.

The children's shoes are selling very well, according

to Wagner.

"Shoes are very good," Wagner said. "I think that's going to help our year a lot."

Wagner said the store's sales for this past week were up 9 percent compared with the same week in 2012.

Peebles stayed open extended hours during the tax-free weekend. The store was open from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Friday, 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Saturday and 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Sunday.

Edenton is different from most other places in terms of when the store is

See HOLIDAY, 2A

County to spend from fund balance

■ \$100,000 to be used for priority capital projects

From staff reports

The Chowan County Board of Commissioners Monday night voted to use \$100,000 from the county's fund balance for high-priority capital projects. Some contracts were also awarded at the meeting.

Commission Chair Keith Nixon said that the projects identified represented "immediate needs." He said the county had been unable to address such needs during its fiscal crisis that dated back to 2008. Since then, he said, the county's priority has been rebuilding its fund balance.

"We had to get our fiscal house in order first," Nixon said.

County Manager Zee Lamb explained that the county had been able to add about \$800,000 to its fund balance, which gave county officials the leeway to look at using the money to take care of some much-needed work on county buildings.

Commissioners awarded a contract to Edenton Construction Company for work to resolve sewer issues at the local Department of Social Services offices. Estimated cost of that project is \$20,000.

Also, Tim Phelps & Company of Edenton received a contract for work on the new Chowan Courthouse. That work will include making the front doors handicapped accessible.

See FUND BALANCE, 2A

First building torn down under new law

BY REBECCA BUNCH
Staff Writer

Demolition of a building on East Church Street on July 29 marked the first instance where the Town of Edenton has enforced the tearing down of a structure in violation of its Demolition by Neglect ordinance.

Town Planner Sam Barrow, who has responsibility for identifying such structures, said that the demolition that started at 10 a.m. went smoothly.

Demolition was handled by Waff Contracting of Edenton. Traffic was directed by the police department and DOT staff were also on the scene, Barrow said.

"There were no incidents," Barrow said. "Everything was handled as

professionally as I could have ever wished it to be."

Among those observing was Edenton Town Councilman Bob Quinn.

In early 2011 when the town council addressed modifying Edenton's Minimum Housing Standards and — within the town's historic district, ordinances to prevent Demolition by Neglect of historic structures — it was Quinn who led the effort to strengthen such standards to address neighborhood blight and help curb criminal activity.

Quinn said his actions were intended to give local building inspectors and the town planner the tools necessary to achieve exactly what occurred at the East Church Street site on



SAM BARROW PHOTO/TOWN OF EDENTON

Employees of Waff Contracting watch as a crane prepares to tear into a building located 301 East Church Street on the morning of July 29.

See DEMOLITION, 2A

