



482-4418

Wednesday, November 20, 2013

50¢

County manager: Fiscal crisis is over

■ Fund balance now at 31 percent

BY REGGIE PONDER
 Editor

With its reserves now surpassing 30 percent of its annual budget, Chowan County can consider its fiscal crisis a thing of the past, County Manager Zee Lamb said this week.

Lamb said county officials of course should continue to be frugal and look for savings and eliminate waste anywhere it's found.

"But in the eyes of the state, in the eyes of the Local Government Commission, and in the eyes of the public, the crisis of 2008 is now behind Chowan County," Lamb said.

In 2008, Chowan County

was broke, having depleted its reserves. Since then, county officials have implemented a number of austerity measures and budget constraints in order to restore the county's fiscal soundness.

Audited financial statements recently received from the county's auditors indicate a fund balance — the amount of money available to the county for

unexpected expenses — of \$5.1 million, or 31 percent of the county's budget.

The county commissioners had established a policy that called for a fund balance of at least 25 percent, and Lamb said the county nearly hit that mark at the end of fiscal year 2011-12.

"That has been a goal, to get it to 25 percent," Lamb said. "Now they're well

over that threshold."

Because the fund balance is now beyond 25 percent, the county has been able to free up \$100,000 for needed capital improvements, Lamb said.

In addition, the county might have a little bit of a cushion for the tax rate if property values in aggregate show a decrease with the 2014 revaluation, he said.

Lamb said it has been the county's expectation that property values overall — some will decrease while others will increase — will decrease.

For that reason, a tax increase likely would be required next year to maintain a "revenue neutral" status, he said.

"It's excellent," Lamb said of the 31 percent fund balance.

Lamb leaving for Nash County

■ Leaving for 'the greater challenge of a larger county'

BY REGGIE PONDER
 Editor

Zee Lamb thrives in challenging circumstances.

Chowan County's county manager, who will take the county manager post in Nash County Jan. 1, said this week



LAMB

that he was very much in his comfort zone in Chowan County and would gladly have remained here until his retirement.

"At the same time, I felt that I needed to accept the greater challenge of a larger county, and I look forward to that challenge," Lamb said.

Lamb has been Chowan's county manager for two years. He came to Chowan County after more than a decade as county manager in neighboring Bertie County.

When Lamb began his service as county manager in Bertie County, Bertie had the lowest tax collection rate in the state and a very low fund balance. During Lamb's tenure there, the tax collection rate rose and the fund balance was rebuilt.

Lamb arrived in Chowan County two years ago after Chowan's county commissioners had begun to dig out of the pit the county had found itself in when it was discovered in 2008 that the county had depleted its reserves and was out of money.

The county has continued to rebuild its financial position since Lamb has been here.

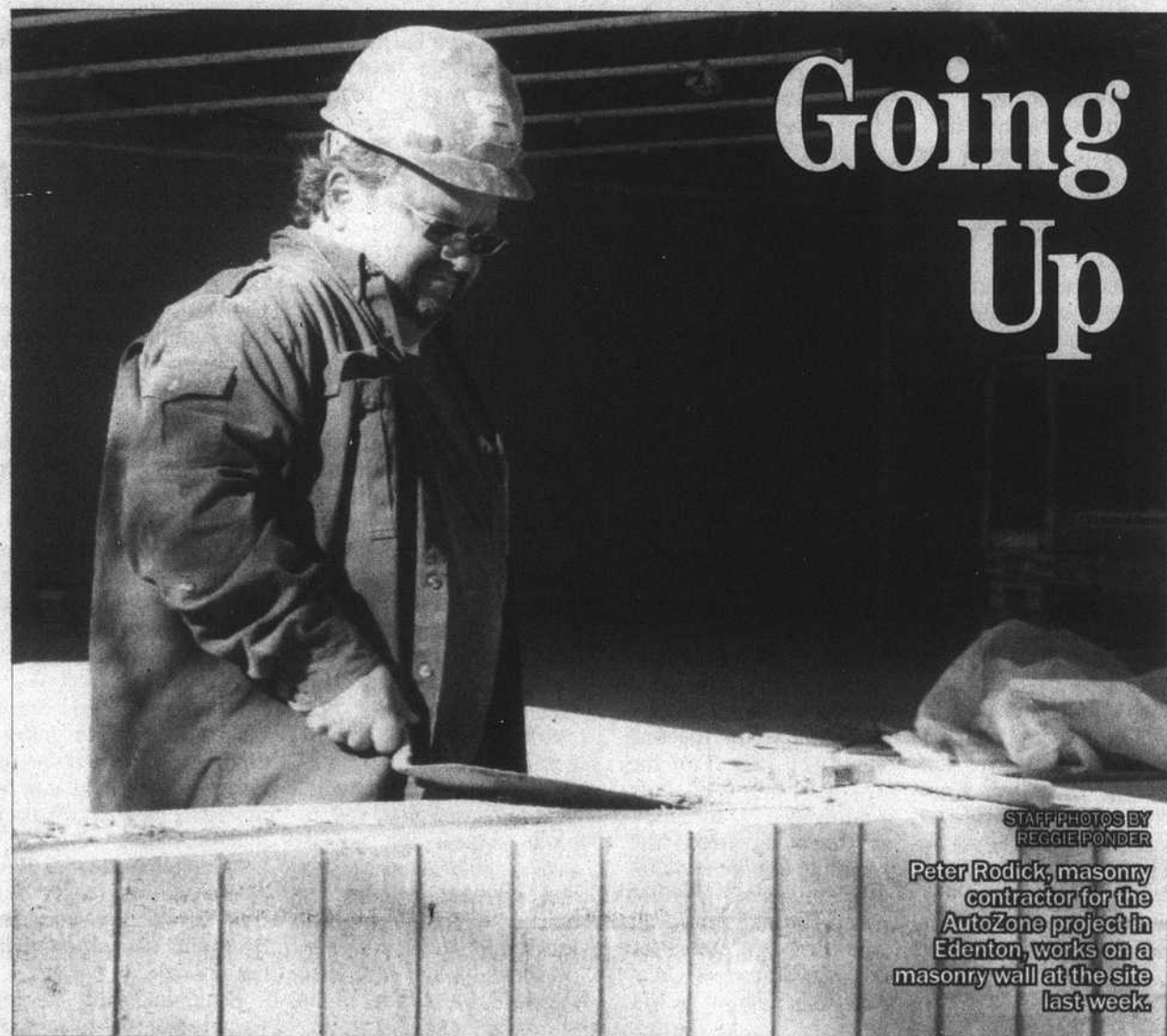
The county's tax collection rate has improved and the fund balance has risen from the teens to more than 30 percent.

"And I look forward to the new challenge," Lamb said.

That new challenge will take him to Nash County.

Lamb explained last

See LAMB, 4A



STAFF PHOTOS BY REGGIE PONDER

Peter Rodick, masonry contractor for the AutoZone project in Edenton, works on a masonry wall at the site last week.

Business construction in slight upturn

BY REGGIE PONDER
 Editor

Dirt is moving and buildings are being erected around Edenton as existing businesses expand and new establishments come to town.

Cases in point:

•Dollar General is erecting a new, larger store on a site across North Broad Street from the shopping center where Food Lion and an existing Dollar General Store are located.

•AutoZone is building a store on an outparcel at the Chowan Crossing shopping center on Virginia Road, at the site where Kathie's Steakhouse was located previously.

•Davita Dialysis is building a new office on Medical Arts Drive.

•Although no new building plans have been announced for the site, the underground storage tanks were dug up last week at the former Etna station at 200 N. Broad St.

Town officials say that both the Dollar General and AutoZone stores will be very nice buildings because they will comply with design standards established by the town.

John Mehler of Chattanooga,



Workers finish up the construction of the AutoZone building on Virginia Road.

Tenn.-based Berry Construction, which is the contractor for the AutoZone project, said the building should be finished by the end of this month.

After that, Mehler said, the AutoZone folks will start bringing in their equipment and inventory.

"We'll be done by Christmas," Mehler said. "They should be open by Christmas."

Mehler said Berry Construction builds AutoZone facilities all over the country.

"I've been on AutoZones now for the last 17 years," Mehler said.

Mehler said AutoZone uses four basic floor plans for its stores. The four plans use different exterior looks depending on a number of factors, including the requirements of a particular town.

The construction crews on the AutoZone project have been in town two months. Mehler said he has enjoyed Edenton and will hate to

See CONSTRUCTION, 4A

Second arrest made in shooting

■ Seeking public's help in home invasion robbery

From staff reports

The Edenton Police Department has made a second arrest in connection with a Nov. 2 shooting incident that wounded two people at a convenience store in town.

Thomas Edward White Jr., 27, of the 300 block of Boswell Street, had turned himself in to police previously.



WHITE

Police now also have arrested Dominic Duron Gay, 23, of 112 Alexander Road, Edenton, Chief Jay Fortenbery said Monday.



GAY

Both White and Gay are charged with attempted murder, assault with a deadly weapon with intent to kill inflicting serious injury and assault with a deadly weapon inflicting serious injury, according to police.

The arrests stemmed from shootings on the afternoon of Nov. 2 at the Crown Food Mart that wounded both Maurice Mabine and Trenita Jackson, according to police.

Police have recovered the 9mm firearm that was used in the shootings, Fortenbery said.

Mabine, 35, and Jackson, 29, both of Edenton, were both treated at Vidant

See FOLLOW-UPS, 4A

Commissioners to revisit bike path decision

BY REBECCA BUNCH
 Staff Writer

County Commission Chair Keith Nixon said during a work session Tuesday morning that the county commissioners would revisit their decision for the county not to participate in the Albemarle Regional Bike Path Plan.

"We'll work on this some more," Nixon said in response to a request from Steve Lane and Bill Miller of Edenton during the public comment portion of the meeting. Both spoke in support of the plan and

urged the commissioners to reconsider and support it too.

Nixon said that the commissioners had also heard from other citizens following their initial decision and wanted to be sensitive to the concerns expressed.

He added, however, that he still had concerns about the county getting involved without additional information such as how much par-



NIXON

ticipating would cost citizens.

"I (haven't seen) any numbers on this plan, what it's going to cost the citizens," Nixon said. "I don't think we're being short-sighted (in seeking additional information)."

Nixon added that the commissioners are already concerned about the change in the formula used by DOT to allocate road and ferry funds — a formula that will require the Albemarle region to compete with urban areas for available funding. Adding the creation of a bike path to the mix certainly raises some concerns, he said.

County Manager Zee Lamb agreed.

"The new formula will mean less dollars disproportionately for the northeast," Lamb said.

But Lane and Miller also urged the commissioners to look at the benefits the bike path could bring to the area.

Lane, who said he rides a bicycle on a regular basis due to heart-related health issues he has experienced, has racked up 37,000 miles

See PATH, 4A



©2009 The Chowan Herald
 All Rights Reserved

ROCKY HOCK Opry FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6TH, 7:00PM
 Tickets \$10.00 SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7TH, 7:00PM
 E.A. SWAIN AUDITORIUM EDENTON, NC
 Sponsored by the Rocky Hock Ruritan's Relay for Life Team
 Tickets Available at various locations or call 252-221-4875 or 252-340-3438. Email rockyhockopry@live.com