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Wednesday, March 26, 2014

# County's tax values down 13 percent

BY REGGIE PONDER  
Editor

Preliminary results of the 2014 tax revaluation show the combined tax value of real property in Chowan County has gone down nearly 13 percent and the combined value within the town limits of Edenton has fallen more than 14 percent. The aggregate values countywide have dropped

by some \$185 million or 12.85 percent and the aggregate values in Edenton have declined \$65 million or 14.51 percent, according to Hosea Wilson, Chowan County's tax administrator.

Wilson emphasized during an interview Monday that the appeals process is continuing and the values are not yet final.

Because values have dropped, some increase in

the property tax rate will be necessary this year if the county is to maintain a "revenue neutral" rate — one that will bring in the same amount of revenue as last year's.

Because the last revaluation was in 2006 and the market peak was actually a couple of years after that — followed by a precipitous drop in the market — the current values in aggregate

are as much as 30 percent below the peak values.

Speculation last year focused on concerns that aggregate values could drop as much as 20 percent in this revaluation, a scenario that did not come about.

About 200 people so far have appealed through the informal process, Wilson said.

"I can't say people are beating the door down with

appeals," Wilson said.

Wilson said he encourages anyone with a concern about their value to make an appointment to come in and talk about it. The goal is to provide people with complete information so that they understand how the value was determined.

"That's what we are here to do," Wilson said.

The other important thing is to correct any errors that

have occurred, he said.

"That's the most important thing," Wilson said, referring to making sure all the data is correct. "You're going to have errors in any reappraisal. It is not a fail-safe process."

Wilson noted it's still very early in the appeals process. Informal appeals will continue through April 15 and

See REVALUATION, 2A

# Citizens view police station plan as positive step

BY REBECCA BUNCH AND  
REGGIE PONDER  
Staff Writers

Community leaders and neighborhood residents are hopeful that a new police station could have a positive effect on the Oakum Street area.

Although the final site decision has not been made, the Edenton Town Council has designated as its preferred site an area at the intersection of North Oakum Street and East Albemarle Street.

Beatrice Stanley, who served on the Citizens Advisory Committee that offered the town input on the Police Department Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan, said she was pleased with the positive impact the project would have on the future of the Oakum Street community.

The selection of a preferred site that occurred at the March 11 town council meeting will allow the effort to continue to move forward as it should, she said.

Stanley added that she also appreciated the fact that the town had reached out to citizens and given them the chance to be a part of the process.

"I've made my opinion known and the people on Oakum Street have voiced their opinion," she said.

Cheryl Williams owns and lives in the house at the northeast corner of North Oakum and East Albemarle streets.

Originally from Plymouth, Williams has lived in



STAFF PHOTO BY REGGIE PONDER

The northeast corner of the North Oakum Street and East Albemarle Street, shown here last Thursday afternoon, has been tapped as the preferred site for a new police station by the Edenton Town Council.

the house 24 years.

She came to Edenton in the mid-1980s.

"I think it's a good thing," Williams said of the plan to locate a new police station on the site where her home now sits. "As long as they're willing to give me a fair price I would be willing to negotiate with them. I'm not going

to give them a hard time."

Williams said the neighborhood might be quieter with a police station in its midst.

"It probably would be quieter, but as far as safer I can't say," Williams said. "If people have some kind of crime they want to do, they're going to do it."

Williams said she thinks crime in the vicinity of the Oakum-Albemarle intersection peaked about a decade ago.

"To me it's not as bad as it once was," Williams said.

Surveillance cameras installed by the town seem to have helped, Williams said.

Williams said no one from

the town has contacted her so far about the plans for the new police station.

Of course, that could change now that the site has been selected by the town council as the preferred location for the facility.

"Me personally, I think it would be a good thing for the neighborhood overall,"

Williams said.

If she is displaced from her current home by the town's police station project, Williams said she plans to relocate elsewhere in town. She said she doesn't want to live in the country.

A local minister, Pastor

See STATION, 3A

# Restrictive zoning for Riversound phase II to be considered

BY REGGIE PONDER  
Editor

The second phase of the Riversound development on the Yeopim River could be required to build far fewer homes per acre than originally planned if Chowan County adopts a proposed rezoning of the property.

The Chowan County Board of Commissioners last week got the ball rolling on a potential rezoning of the property from R-25 to A-1. While R-25 is a residential district with a minimum lot size of 25,000 square feet, A-1 is an agricultural district with a minimum lot size of 40,000

square feet.

Landin Holland, the county's planning director, said the rezoning could limit by 70 percent the number of habitable units that could be built as part of phase II.

Holland said it has been the perception of many residents and property owners in the area that Riversound phase I was approved for too many building lots.

A petition with 75 signatures asks the county to rezone phase II to A-1 in order to limit the density of development there.

The commissioners voted unanimously at their March 17 meeting to send the rezoning request to the Planning Board for its review and consideration. The matter will then come back to the county commissioners for a vote.

Holland said it prob-

ably will be the May Planning Board meeting when the rezoning proposal is taken up by that board.

If the rezoning is approved, the next step would be consideration of the site plan, Holland explained.

Virginia Wood, who owns land adjacent to the site of Riversound phase II, told the commissioners that the land on which the development is being placed is swampland.

"It is swampland, y'all, not matter what you hear," Wood said. "In Chowan County terms, it is swampland."

Wood urged the commissioners to "vote truthfully, without dollar marks in your eyes."

Dossey Pruden told the commissioners that the wetland habitat where the proposed development is going is important to

See ZONING, 3A

# Butterfield: Wages increase needed

BY REGGIE PONDER  
Editor

U.S. Rep. G. K. Butterfield said last week that wages need to increase for workers since corporate profits are increasing — and so are consumer prices, he said.

## IN A RELATED STORY

Women pledge to be sister's keepers on their path to independence — 6B

"Everything is going up except wages," Butterfield said in a speech to a group of more than 100 women last Wednesday night at New Oxley Hill Baptist Church. The women gathered for a conference with Pastor Vonner G. Horton on the economic challenges that affect women, especially in low-wealth counties of northeastern North Carolina.

The minimum wage needs to be at least \$10 an hour, and wages need to be equitable for women and men,



STAFF PHOTO BY REBECCA BUNCH

U.S. Rep. G.K. Butterfield, D-N.C., speaks to a group of women last Wednesday night at New Oxley Hill Baptist Church in Merry Hill.

Butterfield said.

Butterfield said something is wrong when black women earn only 64 cents for every dollar earned by white men. The speech also touched on the national debt, the budgeting process and the federal health law known as

Obamacare.

In an interview after his speech, Butterfield was asked about remarks that State Rep. Bob Steinburg, R-Chowan, made in Elizabeth City last week at a

See WAGES, 3A



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