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Wednesday, April 2, 2014

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Town: Station could save more than \$1 million

BY REGGIE PONDER
 Editor

Edenton town officials estimate the construction of a new police station could save town taxpayers \$1.4 million.

Edenton Town Manager Anne-Marie Knighton said the town council's decision to build a new police station grew out of Chowan County's refinancing of the county's debt.

"When the commissioners refinanced the county's

debt, they saved the taxpayers an enormous amount of money," Knighton said in an email message to the Chowan Herald. "The commissioners offered the town the opportunity to terminate the lease agreement at the Public Safety Center — and the Town Council after considerable thought and analysis decided it made sense financially for the town to terminate that agreement."

Knighton noted the Public Safety Center lease was based on a 40-year loan that

was modified to a 30-year loan at an interest rate of 4.25 percent — total principal and interest \$5.3M.

She said town officials estimate they can build a new facility for \$2.25 million and at a much lower interest rate — 2.69 percent on a 20-year note — for total principal and interest of \$2.9 million. The town has paid \$966,000 in lease payments to the county, leaving a balance of \$4.3 million owed on the lease.

"We therefore estimate

the town taxpayers will save \$1.4 million and at the end of the day, the town will own an asset," Knighton said. "At the end of the lease with the county, the town could continue to rent but would not own the asset."

Knighton said in an interview this week that she had spoken with a couple of architects who had recently built police stations and her estimated costs were based on those conversations as well as other information from a number of sources.

"Our estimates are very conservative," Knighton said.

Not only are town officials confident the project will be completed within the \$2.25 million budget, but they actually are hoping for a lower price tag.

"My goal is to get it in lower," Knighton said in the interview. "I want it to come in under \$2 million."

One possible savings is on stormwater facilities, according to Knighton. She said that when the town

was looking very closely at site 4 — the possible location on the north end of Oakum Street — the need to build a pond for stormwater management was a significant cost.

But as the town now looks closely at site 1 — the town council's designated "preferred" site at the corner of Oakum and Albemarle streets — it appears it might not be necessary to construct a stormwater pond at that location, according to Knighton.

Rountree, Register of Deeds, dies

From staff reports

Susan Rountree, who had served as Chowan County's Register of Deeds for nearly two decades, died Saturday at her home on East King Street in Edenton. She was 64.



ROUNTREE

Rountree worked in the county's Tax Department from 1979 to 1981. She then was appointed Assistant Register of Deeds, serving in that capacity until 1995 when she began service as Register of Deeds, a position she held until her death.

"The Chowan County Board of Commissioners and county staff are deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Chowan County Register of Deeds Sue Rountree," Board of Commissioners Chairman Keith Nixon said Monday. "Sue was employed 34 years with Chowan County. She began working in the Tax office in 1979 and later became the Assistant Register of Deeds in 1981. She was appointed Register of Deeds July 1, 1995.

"At the time Sue came to work in the Register of Deeds Office, all documentation was in paper form and could only be researched manually," Nixon continued. "Sue worked diligently to bring the Register of Deeds office into the digital age. Sue worked hard to serve the citizens of Chowan County and always did so with a positive attitude and a smile on her face. She will be missed greatly."

Chowan Clerk of Superior Court Mike McArthur recalled working alongside Rountree at the courthouse.

"Sue and I worked closely together here in the courthouse for nearly 20 years making sure that our customers received the kind of professional assistance they needed," McArthur said. "We helped each other through hurricanes, bomb threats, floods, political hurdles,

See ROUNTREE, 3A



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Historic sites stress interaction with public

BY REBECCA BUNCH
 Staff Writer

State officials visited Edenton last week to talk about programming changes that will make state-owned historic sites in town more accessible and events more interactive.

"There's no intention of this site going away," said Keith Hardison, director of the N.C. Division of Historic Sites and Properties. "We expect to be here on a continuing basis."

Hardison made the comment in response to a question about the future of the visitor center now that the Barker House — which served as the visitor center until that role was taken over by the state-owned Ziegler House in the early 1990s — has been renamed the Penelope Barker Welcome Center. The trolley car that transports visitors on a riding tour of significant sites in town has also been relocated to a parking area adjacent to the welcome center. Interpreters from the State Historic Site visitor center will continue to ride the trolley with visitors and talk about local history.

Hardison said both actions were appropriate given the fact that the wel-

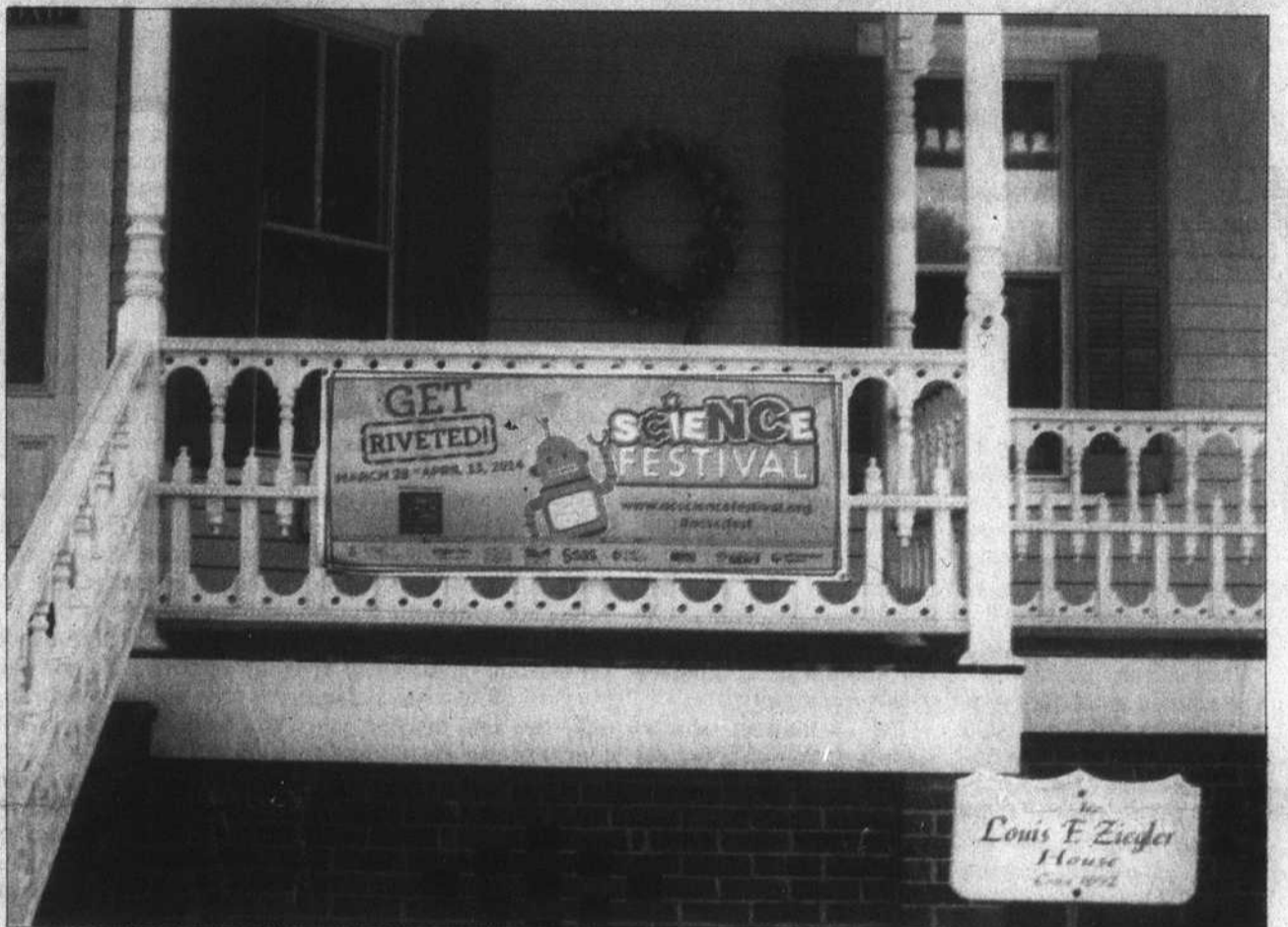


PHOTO COURTESY JOHN COLLINS

This banner on the front of the Ziegler House that houses the Historic Edenton Visitor Center on North Broad Street alerts passersby about an upcoming Science Festival. The event will be the first in a series of hands-on activities taking place at the historic site in the coming year.

come center is located on the downtown waterfront that is such a key focal point for tourists. He added that the change would al-

low the State Historic Site visitor center to better fulfill its new role of planning and carrying out more interactive events, tours and

programming at its North Broad Street location.

"This is simply a reallocation of our resources," Hardison said. "We're not

going anywhere. What you will see is us engaging with the public in a more

See VISITOR, 4A

Former top principal shares turnaround keys

BY REGGIE PONDER
 Editor



STAFF PHOTO BY REGGIE PONDER

Patrice Faison, N.C. Principal of the Year for 2012, speaks to local school administrators during a breakfast meeting March 24.

Local public school administrators gathered last week for breakfast and education shop talk with the state's 2012 Principal of the Year.

Patrice Faison, who was Principal of the Year in 2012, is a native of Elizabeth City. She was in Edenton March 24 at the invitation of Linda White, who is director of elementary education, Title 1 and AIG for the Edenton-Chowan Schools.

Faison talked to the principals and assistant principals

about leading school turnaround. She is the former principal of The Academy at Smith — a "high school option" in the Guilford County Schools — and Oak Hill Elementary School in High Point.

Currently, Faison is principal at Page High School in Greensboro.

Faison said that when she first went to The Academy at Smith, a small school focused on medical careers and construction, she saw "awful instruction — if you can call it instruction."

There were only about 100

students then at The Academy at Smith.

"Nobody wanted to go there," Faison said.

Faison said there really was only one thing missing at the school.

"We needed good teachers," Faison said. "It, to me, was simple."

But Oak Hill was not simple, she said.

The elementary school was the lowest performing school in the state when Faison first went there. She noted the school's dismal

See PRINCIPAL, 2A

Town council mulls Redevelopment Commission

BY REBECCA BUNCH
 Staff Writer

Dale Holland, senior partner in Charlotte-based Holland Consulting Planners Inc., talked with the town council at its March 24 work session about how the council might benefit from the establishment of a redevelopment commission.

The establishment of a comprehensive redevelopment area is one of the major components of the North Oakum Street Housing Redevelopment Plan, Town Manager

Anne-Marie Knighton said.

Holland said that the powers of such a commission would allow the town to exercise other options to acquire property in different areas of town besides relying on eminent domain.

"It would give you a tool that you could use in multiple areas of town," he said. "We recommend that you move forward with this."

Holland added that the commission could take on various configurations, including having the members of the town council serve as the commission. That is the op-

tion his agency would recommend, he said.

He added that the commission could be assigned the authority to sell, exchange, transfer, assign, subdivide, retain for its own use, mortgage, pledge as collateral or otherwise encumber or dispose of any real or personal property or any interest therein, either as an entirety to a single redeveloper or in parts to several developers.

Holland said that such a commission would also have the authority to invest funds held in reserves, borrow money, prepare

surveys, studies and plans, make expenditures, execute contracts and perform redevelopment project undertakings.

The acquisition of property could take place through a variety of means, including the purchase of the property as a result of a tax foreclosure, he said.

Several members of the council voiced support for the recommendation.

"I would hope that we can look at this (formation of a redevelopment

See COMMISSION, 4A

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