



Town-county partnership faces Walmart question

BY REGGIE PONDER
 Editor

The Edenton-Chowan Partnership Board could decide as early as its meeting next week whether it will actively recruit a Walmart store.

A Walmart spokesman earlier this year confirmed that the company was considering Edenton as a future store location. Things have been mostly quiet on that

front since then.

In the meantime, the question of how local economic development officials should approach the retail giant has arisen during discussions of the partnership board, according to reports from some board members.

Frank Miglorie, executive director of the Edenton-Chowan Partnership, said the board has been open to further exploration of the issue.

There's some support on the board for Walmart but also some concern about the effect a big box store could have on the downtown business district.

But Miglorie said the one thing all the board members have in common is a concern for the economic well-being of the community.

"Not one single person on that board wants to do one thing to harm this county or this town," Miglorie said.

Miglorie has been gathering data for a report he will present to the board at its next meeting.

"The decision will really be up to them," Miglorie said.

Chowan County Commissioner Emmett Winborne has made it clear in recent weeks that he believes the partnership should aggressively pursue a Walmart store for the county.

Commissioner Jeff Smith,

who serves on the Edenton-Chowan Partnership Board, during discussion last week at a county budget workshop said that he had talked to Miglorie about the Walmart study and that Miglorie had told him it would be discussed again at the board's next meeting.

Winborne then asked Smith if there was any reason why the Partnership Board was slow to commit to recruiting Walmart.

Smith said some members of the board had said they didn't believe Chowan County needed a big box store.

Then maybe the Partnership doesn't need \$40,000 from the county — not if it's going to pick and choose which businesses it will try to recruit, Winborne said.

Winborne said during the commissioners' May 5

See WALMART, 4A

Officials slash budget spending

BY REGGIE PONDER
 Editor

The Chowan County Board of Commissioners last week identified nearly half a million dollars in spending cuts in an effort to stave off an increase in the property tax rate.

The board is expected to discuss the 2014-2015 county budget further at its June 2 meeting.

The board at the budget workshop identified \$489,250 in spending cuts from the 2014-2015 county budget that was recommended by County Manager Kevin Howard.

All budget decisions to this point are tentative. The budget is not official until the board has held a public hearing on the budget and has voted to adopt it.

The board under state law must adopt a balanced budget by June 30 for the new fiscal year that begins July 1.

Howard presented to the county commissioners last week a 2014-2015 recommended county budget that would raise the property tax rate by five cents. The new rate still would mean lower taxes for many taxpayers because of sharply reduced tax values on their property.

The overall reduction in assessed value of property in the 2014 revaluation means the current tax rate of 68.5 cents per \$100 valuation would generate more than \$1 million less on the new values than it did in the current fiscal year.

To close that gap, Howard has recommended an increase in the property tax rate to 73.5 cents per \$100 valuation, along with a nearly \$40,000 reduction in General Fund spending and an infusion of more than \$450,000 into the 2014-2015 budget from the fund balance in the General Fund.

The Edenton-Chowan Board of Education has requested \$188,000 in additional local funding for operating expenses in the coming year's budget — a 5.5 percent increase that school officials have termed a "modest request" — but

See BUDGET, 4A

REMEMBERING THE FALLEN



STAFF PHOTO BY REBECCA BUNCH

Those attending Monday morning's annual Memorial Day ceremony place their hands over their hearts during the Pledge of Allegiance. The ceremony, sponsored by American Legion Post 40, took place at the Chowan County Veterans Memorial. See story and more photos from the event on Page 1B.

Budget proposal raises tax rate

Plan funds additional police officers, closes revenue gaps

BY REBECCA BUNCH
 Staff Writer

The town manager's recommended budget for next year includes a 10-cent increase in the ad valorem tax rate — with roughly half the increase serving to reach the "revenue-neutral" point in the wake of sharply reduced valuations of real property.

That will raise Edenton's property tax rate from the current 29 cents per \$100 valuation to 39 cents per \$100. According to Town Manager Anne-Marie Knighton, the revenue-neutral tax rate for the town is 33.29 cents.

So the proposed increase in the tax rate is 5.71 cents more than the revenue-neutral rate.

"Revenue-neutral" is a term used to describe the tax rate that is required to generate the same amount of property tax revenue as in the current fiscal year — no more revenue, and no less.

In a typical revaluation year, the total value of real property in a town or county increases over the previous figure. That means that the local

FIVE SERVICE AREAS:

- Two additional police officers — \$90,780;
- Expiration of State Transitional Sales Tax Reimbursement — \$55,000;
- Reduction in funding and lack of growth in Powell Bill Revenue (funds used to maintain streets, sidewalks and storm water systems) — \$45,600;
- Reductions in Revenue from COPS Grant and Electric Fund Transfer — \$30,000;
- Increases in operations: nsurance maintenance, utilities, personnel costs — \$38,600.



KNIGHTON

government is able to reduce the tax rate and still bring in the same amount of property tax revenue.

But Chowan County — like Pasquotank and other counties with a revaluation this year — actually saw its total or "aggregate" property values decrease since the previous revaluation.

The county's property valuations for properties located within the town are also used by town officials, so Edenton also is facing a sharp decline in property valuation for tax purposes.

For that reason, the revenue-neu-

tral tax rate for the 2014-2015 fiscal year is actually higher than the current tax rate — rather than lower, as is typical.

Knighton said the decision to recommend a tax increase — the first the town has implemented in 8 years — was not an easy one.

"This recommendation to raise taxes is put forth after much serious thought and consideration," she said. "Managers must weigh the needs of the community — what levels of services are needed and balance the needs with the increase (in) costs and the impacts these additional costs will have on taxpayers."

Knighton said that since fiscal year 2006-2007 the town had been

See TAKE HIKE, 3A

Hopeline funding to come from DSS

BY REGGIE PONDER
 Editor

The Chowan County Board of Commissioners appears to have found a way to provide \$2,000 for Albemarle Hopeline without creating a "snowball" of so-called special appropriations for nonprofits.

At its budget workshop last week, the board asked Chowan Social Services Director Clifton Hardison to find \$2,000 for Albemarle Hopeline within a line item in the Department of Social Services budget.

There has been a great deal of discussion about funding for Hopeline since the commissioners received a request from the domestic violence agency earlier this year for a \$2,000 contribution in the upcoming county budget.

Much of the discussion has focused on some commissioners' reluctance to return to a previously discarded practice of funding nonprofits through "special appropriations" in the budget.

Commissioner Emmett Winborne said Albemarle Hopeline was a nonprofit and could function without

See FUNDING, 3A

Local teen injured in Sunday shooting

From staff reports

A local teenager was shot in town Sunday night and local police are working to get to the bottom of the case.

Iyanna Roulac, 16, of Edenton, suffered a single gunshot wound to the abdomen from a small-caliber firearm shortly before 10:30 p.m. and was transported to Vidant Chowan Medical Center in Edenton, according to the Edenton Police Department.

The shooting occurred at the intersection of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Ave. and Twiddy Ave, according to police.

Roulac was airlifted to Vidant Medical Center in Greenville and was reported in stable condition, according to police.

Responding officers encountered a large crowd at the scene. Investigators are seeking assistance and information from the witnesses to this crime.

Anyone with information about this case is urged to call Sgt. Laura Wilkins of the Edenton Police Department at 482-9884 or 482-5144. Information will

be kept confidential.

Police Chief Jay Fortenberry said Monday afternoon he was not sure what might have led to the shooting.

Fortenberry said there had been several large groups of juveniles in town Sunday night, but there had not been any problems out of any of the groups prior to the shooting.

See TAKE HIKE, 3A

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SATURDAY, JUNE 7TH
Edenton MUSIC AND WATER FESTIVAL
 BROUGHT TO YOU BY SCOTCH HALL PRESERVE
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