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**INSIDE
TODAY**

 See our
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Magazine

50¢

Some businesses, residents wary of Walmart

BY REBECCA BUNCH
Staff Writer

The Edenton Chowan Partnership has offered to help Walmart with information it may need as it considers Edenton as a future location for one of its stores.

But established businesses in the downtown area, as well as some private

citizens, are taking a more cautious approach to the potential impact of the retail giant's presence.

Jadelle Wagner, manager of Peebles, has seen and experienced that impact firsthand. Wagner took a job with Peebles and relocated to Edenton almost a decade ago after Walmart opened a store in Bradford, Penn.,

where she was living and working at a local Kmart.

"I am where I am now because of Walmart," Wagner said. "I have seen it have an extremely negative effect on a downtown in Pennsylvania."

Wagner said that store after store closed in the wake of Walmart's presence and that even now the town's

retail business community continues to try to recover.

"I don't think we need a Walmart Supercenter," Wagner said. "I think what we need is a grocery store."

"Right now our downtown is our retail center," Wagner added. "I think we need to keep it that way."

Jim Blount, owner of Blount's Pharmacy, said he

too questioned the wisdom of courting a Walmart for the town. Blount, who has been a pharmacist for 45 years, said that if people want to see for themselves what could happen in Edenton all they need to do is look at communities in the area where a Walmart has been built and the resulting impact on existing retail

businesses.

"If you look at downtowns in places like Williamston, Elizabeth City and especially Ahoskie, I just think it would have a deleterious effect on the future of our downtown," he said.

Blount said that he realized there was support for a

See WALMART, 3A

ACES' PRIDE

Laughter, tears as Holmes High honors graduates

BY VERNON FUESTON
Correspondent

Cheers, speeches, music, laughter and a few tears were all a part of the celebration Saturday as family, faculty, and friends honored 130 graduates as their years of study at John A. Holmes High School come to a close.

Like most graduation ceremonies, the commencement began with a parade by the graduates that wound around the track to the applause and cheers of parents, relatives and friends and ended at their seats in front of the stand.

But it quickly became obvious that something was amiss. The graduates came to a stop, but did not take their seats. Assistant Principal Dr. Todd Korbsieski announced that the school had been "pranked" by the removal of two rows of the graduates' seats.

The missing chairs were quickly replaced and the ceremony went on as scheduled.

Jennifer Loeffler, John A. Holmes Teacher of the Year, gave a salute to the seniors, sharing a few memories of things she had learned about high school life during the 2013-14 school year, after



PHOTO COURTESY VERNON FUESTON

See GRADUATION, 4A

Marshals lead the John A. Holmes Class of 2014 to their seats at the start of Commencement ceremonies on Saturday morning.

Locked gate at graduation upsets families

BY REGGIE PONDER
Editor

The locking of the gate 10 minutes before the start of the graduation exercises at John A. Holmes High School caused consternation for some family members of graduates who missed the cutoff time.

School officials explain the locking of the gate as a necessary precaution to prevent disruption of the sol-

emn ceremony as graduates process into the stadium.

Gaspere Misseri, father of one of this year's graduates, said in a letter to the Chowan Herald that his sister and her husband "had traveled great distance" to attend the ceremony, only to arrive about 30 seconds after the 8:50 a.m. deadline and wind up stranded outside the gates alongside other graduates' family members.

"As I approached the

gate from the inside to communicate with my sibling I overheard this upset mother loudly voicing her despair and discontent," Misseri said in the letter. "In turn the deputy assigned to the gate told her 'if you don't leave the property I will have you arrested.'"

Sheriff Dwayne Goodwin said he was working at one of the entrances himself and was not present at the other entrance when the

incident Misseri referred to occurred.

But Goodwin said in that kind of situation his officers do not raise the prospect of someone being arrested except as a last resort. If a deputy ends up telling someone they have to leave or face being arrested, that indicates the person has refused repeated requests by the officer, according to Goodwin.

"They have asked you to

move before then," Goodwin said. "They aren't just automatically going to jump out on that limb."

Misseri said he asked a deputy who had ordered the gates locked and the officer replied that the principal had ordered it locked out of respect for the graduates.

"I tried to wrap my mind around this respect excuse; couldn't however comprehend how depriving parents from attending a once in a

lifetime event can be viewed as a respect act to anyone just because those relatives were just a few moments late to this crucial deadline," Misseri said.

Principal Sheila Evans said that locking the gates 10 minutes before the ceremony begins is a policy that was in place even before she became principal at the high school.

See GATES, 4A

Proposed tax hike questioned

From staff reports

Only one local resident spoke during a public hearing on Edenton's proposed budget for fiscal year 2014-2015 during the June 10 Town Council meeting.

The council is scheduled

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■ Town Council extends lease for Northeast Commission building - 3A

to vote on the proposed budget at its June 23 work session.

Rich Halbert, a Phillips Street resident, expressed concern that because of the way the tax increase is being described — in cents per \$100 rather than in percentages — citizens do not fully realize the magnitude of the

increase.

He said while the proposed tax rate would grow from 29 to 39 cents, the percentage of the proposed increase actually works out to 34.5 percent.

"That's a lot of money," Halbert said.

Halbert added that not only would the proposed budget raise the tax rate but that there would be a 16 percent increase per 1,000 gallons to the sewer rate charged under user fees and

See QUESTIONED, 3A

Halbert praises Chowan officials for budget work

BY REGGIE PONDER
Editor

A local citizen praised Chowan County officials Monday night for their work to hold down the county's property tax rate.

"I applaud your effort to hold the line for the taxpayers," Rich Halbert, a local conservative activist, said during the public hearing on the county manager's proposed 2014-2015 county

budget.

County Manager Kevin Howard's proposed budget included an increase in the property tax rate of five cents per \$100 property valuation. The county commissioners have since identified additional spending cuts that would bring the increase in the tax rate closer to one and a half cents.

The proposed five-cent increase in the property

tax rate would have been below what is known as the "revenue-neutral" rate — the tax rate that would generate the same amount of property tax revenue as in the current fiscal year.

So the proposed increase in the tax rate would still represent a decrease in the local property tax obligation for the bulk of taxpayers, though some still

See PRAISED, 4A



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Upcoming Steamer Events: For more info Call 482-4080

WED. JUNE 18TH
Student Night \$2 off
ticket entry with student ID

FRI. JUNE 20TH
WQDX Max
radio night

SAT. JUNE 21ST
Senior Citizen Night
Baseball Bingo

WED. JUNE 25TH
Annual Home
Run Derby

 Celebrate
Historic Hicks Field's
75th Anniversary
with reduced concession prices
