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County seeks fix for EMS financial woes

County has high costs for upgrading to paramedic level

BY REGGIE PONDER
 Editor

Paramedics and emergency medical technicians are trained to respond to emergencies in which it's critical to stop the bleeding.

But with Chowan County's Emergency Medical Service bleeding money in recent months, the EMS staff, county administrative staff and county commission-

ers alike are at a loss as to how to staunch the flow and restore the department's fiscal health.

Commissioners are expected to delve into the issue as early as this month. County staff currently is collecting a large volume of data to bring to bear on the decision-making process.

Basically, revenues are lagging because the call volume is down. At the same time, the county has had significant start-up costs associated with upgrading to para-

medic level service.

The one-time, start-up costs include training and equipment.

There also is an increase in salaries because of the paramedic level certification for ambulance personnel, and that will be a continuing cost.

The upgrade to the paramedic level enables Chowan EMS to handle medical transport calls that it previously was not prepared to take.

The county's business model

for EMS called for the upgrade to result in a major new source of revenue from medical transports.

But so far that has not panned out.

One of the unfortunate occurrences cited by county staff is that several dialysis patients who were being transported by ambulance to their appointments have now died.

Some of those dialysis transports were among the medical transports that Chowan EMS had

expected to take over.

County staff used what it considered a conservative approach to estimating the number of medical transport calls it would pick up as a result of the upgrade to paramedic level service, but those estimates have nevertheless not turned out as projected.

County staff is still reasonably optimistic that over the long run the change will pay off.

See EMS, 4A

EARLY SUCCESS



STAFF PHOTO BY REGGIE PONDER

Displaying cotton blooms from the field behind their home are (l-r) Joel Forehand, J.C. Forehand and Jacob Forehand.

New generation celebrates first cotton bloom

BY REGGIE PONDER
 Editor

J.C. Forehand of Rocky Hock had this year's first cotton bloom in Chowan County and was glad to celebrate that with his sons the way he and his father did some three decades ago.

Forehand noticed a cotton bloom in his field off Evans Church Road on June 24. The bloom was red, which Evans said meant it was at least a day old. First-day blooms, he pointed out, are

white.

Forehand, 38, who said he has been farming "all my life so far," was glad his sons Jacob, 12, and Joel, 9, were able to have the same experience he had as a young boy when his father, Jimmy Forehand, had the first cotton bloom and their picture was in the Chowan Herald.

The boys said they plan to run the farm as they get older.

"These boys are going to be fifth generation of the family farm," Forehand said.

The farm is planted mainly in cotton and peanuts, though the family also grows corn and

soybeans. Forehand said they used to grow produce, also, but set that aside to focus on their row crops.

This year they planted mostly cotton, based on their regular rotation.

As for getting the first bloom, Forehand said it all comes down to when the crop is planted.

"We just planted a little earlier than some," Forehand said.

The cotton was planted early in the fourth week of April.

"This is an early variety, too, and that causes it to bloom earlier," Forehand said.

Location of fire station key issue

BY REGGIE PONDER
 Editor

The prospect of a fire station for the southern part of Chowan County now depends mainly on resolving where such a facility would be located.

Board of Commissioners Chairman Keith Nixon said last month that he would put together a committee in July to work on the fire station project.

During discussion of the fire station issue during a special meeting of the county commissioners June 23, Commissioner John Mitchener said the county needed to include in the 2014-2015 budget a line item that would indicate a commitment to addressing the situation.

Tom Credle, a resident of the Drummond's Point area, spoke during the county commissioners' June 16 meeting and asked the board at that time to consider including a line item for the fire station project in the 2014-2015 budget as an indication of the county's commitment to the project.

At the board's June 23 meeting Mitchener suggested \$150,000 as a starting point. That would show the citizens that the board has

See STATION, 4A

Brabble in final sprint for spot on sheriff's race ballot

BY REGGIE PONDER
 Editor

Tim Brabble is inching closer to his goal of being on the ballot in the sheriff's race in November.

Brabble, a former officer with the Chowan County Sheriff's Department who ran unsuccessfully for sheriff in a previous race, gathered 475 signatures in his bid to get on the ballot as an



STAFF PHOTO BY REGGIE PONDER

John Guard, chairman of the Edenton-Chowan Board of Education, files Friday as a candidate for reelection to the board.

unaffiliated candidate.

The required number of signatures to get on the ballot in the sheriff's race is 420. Friday was the deadline for turning in the signatures.

As the county elections staff reviewed the signatures, it found the list 20 short on signatures that could be validated.

Brabble, 49, contacted state elections officials on Friday and they told him he

had 10 days to document valid addresses for 20 of the disputed signers, according to local elections officials.

As the Chowan Herald went to press Brabble was still working on documenting the address information.

Brabble is seeking a spot on the November ballot alongside incumbent Sheriff Dwayne Goodwin, a Democrat.

Brabble ran as a Repub-

lican in 2010. But he said he didn't want to run as a political party's candidate this time because that goes against his platform of making the sheriff's office less political.

An officer with the Chowan County Sheriff's Department for 11 years, Brabble now works for the Vidant Police at Vidant.

See BALLOT, 2A

District Attorney Womble meets with voters in Edenton

BY REGGIE PONDER
 Editor

District Attorney Andy Womble told a group of supporters and interested citizens in Edenton last week

that his goal always is fairness and justice.

"I want to keep this job," Womble told the crowd at the Edenton Coffee House last Wednesday afternoon. "I know that I'm the right person for this job."

Womble said he has been a trial attorney for 18 years and is enthusiastic about the justice system.

Womble, the former chief public defender for the 1st District, was appointed by Gov. Pat McCrory to serve out the unexpired term of the late Frank Parrish, who died last fall while serving as district attorney.

In the immediate aftermath of Parrish's death, the office was administered by Nancy Lamb, a 29-year vet-

eran prosecutor.

Both Womble and Lamb were nominated by the District Bar Association for appointment as district attorney.

Womble, a Republican, and Lamb, a Democrat, are on the ballot in the November General Election.

"I'm going to eliminate some of this backlog that

we have created," Womble said.

Womble said there are murder cases in Chowan County from 2005 and 2007 that still have not been tried.

"We're placing an emphasis on violent crime, we're placing an emphasis on crimes involving a weapon, and we're really trying to

put the teeth back into the criminal justice system - but not at the expense of consistency," Womble said.

Womble said that when he came to the DA's office he found that driving while impaired cases were running as much as 18 months behind. He said he has

See WOMBLE, 2A



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