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County adopts budget with 2.5-cent tax hike

■ Plan includes \$66K for schools; raises water rates

BY REGGIE PONDER
Editor

The Chowan County Board of Commissioners Monday night settled on a 2015-2016 county budget that raises the property tax 2.5 cents, with one-half cent of the increase earmarked for public school operations and the rest for county departmental services.

Commissioner Alex Ke-

hayes' motion to that effect passed unanimously, even though there had been no fewer than five previous motions that failed to garner a majority of the commissioners' votes.

The board also adopted a half-cent increase in the fire tax, raising it to 5.5 cents per \$100 valuation. The new county property tax rate is 72.5 cents per \$100 valuation.

Water rates also are going up in the budget for the coming fiscal year. The

board voted to increase the base rate, which covers up to 2,000 gallons, from \$9 a month to \$12. In addition, the water rate was increased from \$4.50 per 1,000 gallons to \$6 per 1,000 gallons.

The water rate increase is intended to raise funds to help the county prepare for expansion and upgrades at the water plant that are expected to become necessary in a few years.

The county also will begin charging a \$25 after-hours service fee beginning

Sept. 1.

Commissioner Keith Nixon made a motion to reduce the development fee from \$2,500 to \$1,500, but the motion failed, with only Nixon and Commissioner Ellis Lawrence voting for it.

Nixon said he didn't want to discourage development. He noted a downturn in building permits and new home construction in recent years.

The 2.5-cent increase in the county property tax rate

is expected to prevent the Sheriff's Office from having to curtail patrols due to shortages in funds for fuel and maintenance. The additional revenue is expected to restore funding for those items in the Sheriff's Office budget.

In addition, the tax hike is expected to generate about \$66,000 in additional funding for schools current expense.

The previous proposal for the county budget did not include any increase in

schools current expense.

Edenton-Chowan Board of Education Chairman John Guard had told the commissioners during a public hearing last week and again at the meeting Monday night that without additional funding from the county, the schools would have to eliminate 12 positions - most of them teachers.

The budget adopted Monday does include some additional funding for the schools.

MASSACRE HITS HOME FOR CHARLESTON NATIVE

BY REGGIE PONDER
Editor

Police have charged Dylann Roof in last week's massacre of nine people at Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, S.C., but his name is not one Deborah Davis will be saying - even though four people she knows were among those killed.

"We decided in Charleston we aren't calling his name," said Davis, a Charleston native who is the director of the Edenton Housing Authority.

"I am so hurt and so devastated and so trying to control anger," Davis said Monday morning during a conversation with other members of Edenton's Racial Reconciliation Group. "It's just when you know people, and you know people are gone senselessly."

Davis said Charleston is coming together and not in any way allowing itself to be divided around race.

"That's not on anybody's mind and that's not how we show who we are," Davis said.

Davis said she appreciates the Racial Reconciliation Group and the honest conversations that take place within the group.

"We have conversations about race - and we don't even all agree," Davis said.

"We're a microcosm of what America is," said Benjamin Speller, a member of the group. "Everybody



Racial Reconciliation Group members (l-r) Joseph Hoffer, Judie Hoffer, Benjamin Speller, Deborah Davis and John Collins participate in a discussion Monday at Edenton United Methodist Church about the fatal shooting of nine people last week at Mother Emanuel AME Church, a historic African-American church in Charleston, S.C. Davis, a Charleston native, knows some of those who were killed in the attack.

STAFF PHOTO BY REGGIE PONDER

brings to the table their own baggage."

Davis said she is staying with the group right now because she's not in her hometown.

"I'm sticking with it because I'm not at home right

now," Davis said. "And this is all I have."

Davis said she will be going home in a few weeks.

"I don't know how angry I'll be present," Davis said of when she returns to Charleston. "I know I'm

angry now."

But she said she has no idea how she will feel once she has gone home and touched the bricks in the church.

"I wonder what all those vets think about him," Da-

vis said of Roof, whom she sometimes referred to ironically as "this gentleman," adding "I'm being generous in calling him that." She noted he had been shown in videos trampling the American flag and burning

the flag, and she wondered aloud, "Now how do they feel about this non-educated lowlife of a person?"

Jo Baker, leader of the Racial Reconciliation

See HITS HOME, 4A

Town adopts budget with 1.5-cent tax hike

BY REBECCA BUNCH
Staff Writer

The town council in a split vote Monday night approved the town's proposed 2015-2016 fiscal year budget. The vote was 5-1, with Councilman Steve Biggs casting the lone dissenting vote.

The budget includes a 1.5-cent increase in the property tax rate. The town's current ad valorem tax rate is 37 cents per \$100 valuation. The new rate will raise that amount to 38.5 cents.

Biggs said he was disappointed when he asked last year for the council to play a more active role in development of the budget and that never occurred.

"I am convinced we could have done a lot better job,"

Biggs said.

Mayor Roland Vaughan suggested that discussion of Biggs' ideas for change could take place at a future finance committee meeting.

Town Manager Anne-Marie Knighton said in her budget message to the mayor and council that the loss of privilege tax revenue due to legislative action by the General Assembly left the town with no way to make up those funds but to raise taxes.

That point was reiterated by Finance Committee Chair Sambo Dixon. Dixon said that losing the funds "left a hole in the budget" that had to be filled.

He referred to the 2015-2016 proposal as a "hold the line" budget and termed the shortfall in the town's coffers "one more thing Raleigh's doing to make it tougher to run the town."

Biggs said he agreed with Dixon's assessment of the proposed budget.

See TAX HIKE, 4A

Mother seeks information in search

BY PETER WILLIAMS
The Perquimans Weekly

The mother of a 39-year-old Holiday Island woman who has been missing for three weeks is pleading for the public to come forward with information about her daughter.

Arlene Murin said Karen Bosta was last seen in Edenton on May 30. Her daughter's car was found the following week in a parking lot in Edenton. Despite their efforts, lawmen said they have few clues as to what happened.

Perquimans County Sheriff Eric Tilley said based on where the car seat was pushed back on the 1997

Lincoln Continental 'she didn't put it there.' The car was found in Gaslight Square, a large parking lot near the Historic Chowan Courthouse.

Bosta is about 5-foot-3 and 140 pounds and the seat was adjusted for somebody much taller than that.

Bosta's family is offering a \$2,500 reward for information.

"If anybody saw who dropped off the car, please come forward," Murin said. "It didn't just appear in the lot, somebody drove it there."

Both the Perquimans County Sheriff's Office, the Chowan

See SEARCH, 2A



KAREN BOSTA

Officials float idea of different deer season

BY REGGIE PONDER
Editor

A group of deer specialists from the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission told a gathering of deer hunters last Wednesday that it might be time to reconsider the deer seasons in North Carolina.

The deer management forum at Swain Auditorium in Edenton

was the fifth of nine the Wildlife Resources Commission is holding across the state.

The biologists at the meeting Wednesday acknowledged the current seasons were established in a much different time, when the state was in deer restoration mode. The areas are purely administrative areas, not necessarily reflecting the habits and characteristics of deer.

The biologists said their understanding is that the current seasons are not really the best biological fit for the deer population.

If there is a change in the seasons, they said, that change will need to take into consideration scientific management principles, the limits of habitat and landscape, and

See DEER SEASON, 4A



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