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Wednesday, January 13, 2016

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County OKs \$5K for work at historic jail

BY REGGIE PONDER
Editor

The historic jail behind the 1767 Chowan County Courthouse could soon be refurbished and take on a higher profile among the community's historic attractions.

The Chowan County Board of Commissioners at its Jan. 4 meeting voted to appropriate \$5,000 to install a locking door on the building and make it more presentable for visitors. The appropriation is contingent on the Chowan County Tourism Development Authority providing a matching amount for the project.

Local officials plan to use volunteer labor as much as possible in order to get more work done with the available money.

The request from funding from the TDA Board is expected to go before that board at its meeting on Tuesday.

The historic jail was built in 1825 and remained in use until the 1980s, according to an informational kiosk on the grounds of the 1767 Chowan County Courthouse. The kiosk notes the structure was the county's fifth jail, with the first having been built in the early 1700s.

Nancy Nicholls, executive director of the Chowan TDA, said refurbishing the jail would help boost visitation to the site and be another tourism draw for the community.

The heritage of the county and town is the strongest tourism draw for Edenton and Chowan County, according to Nicholls, and the jail project would enhance that draw.

"Preservation of our historic assets is number one," Nicholls said. "This would be part of that."

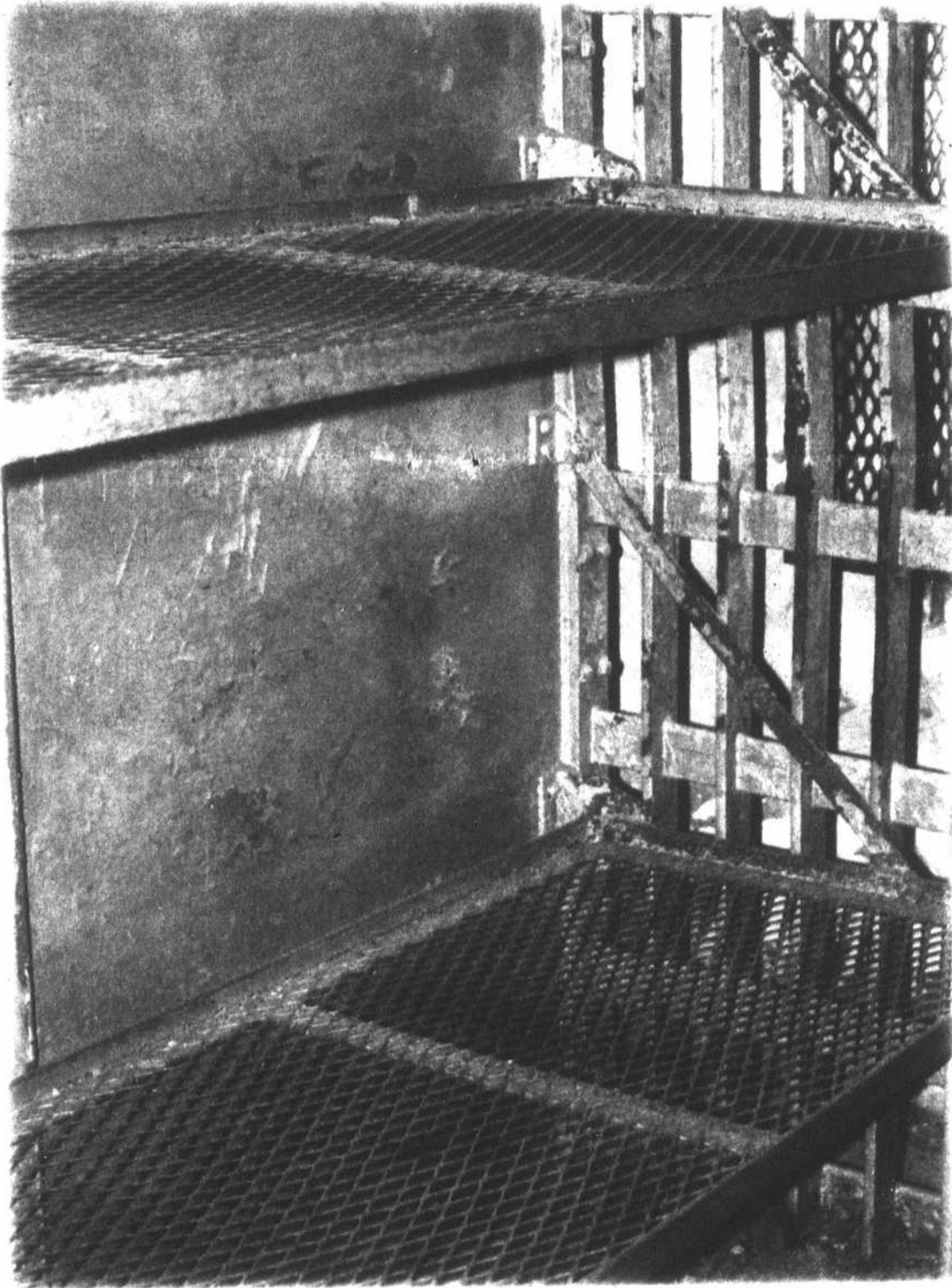
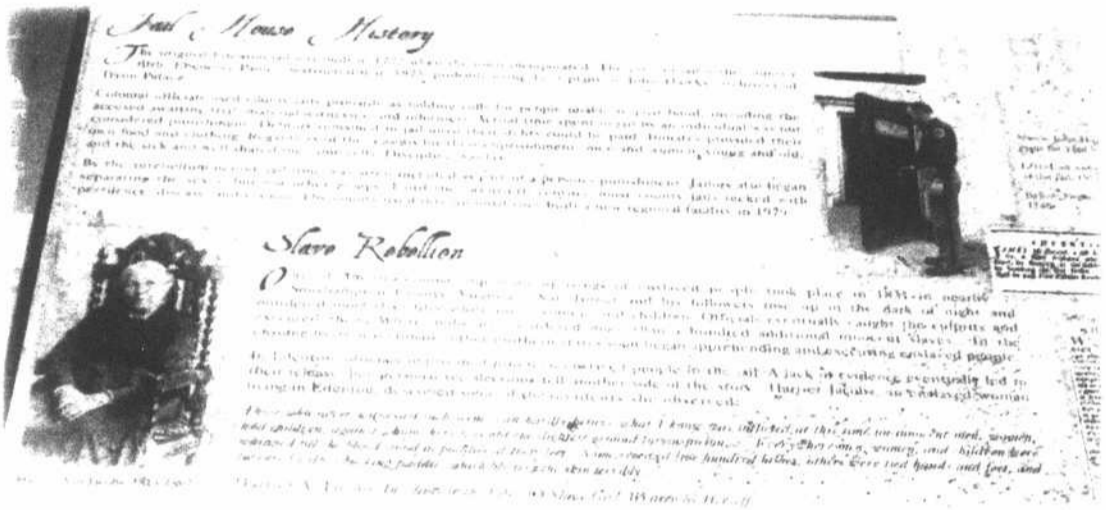
Nicholls said the jail could be an especially strong attraction for students, as a local group learned on a recent visit to the historic jail and other historic attractions in the Carteret County town of Beaufort.

"We learned that children always want to go in the jail," Nicholls said.

The local contingent that visited Beaufort included Nicholls; Chowan Commissioner Keith Nixon, who chairs the Chowan TDA Board; County Manager Kevin Howard; Jerry Climer with the Edenton Historical Commission; and Bob Hopkins, who manages the Historic Edenton State Historic Site.

Hopkins explained that the

See HISTORIC JAIL, 2A



These metal beds are in the cells on the first floor of the 1825 Chowan County Jail. This kiosk (top) on the grounds of the 1767 Chowan County Courthouse provides information on the 1825 Chowan County Jail, which is located behind the courthouse.

STAFF PHOTOS BY REGGIE PONDER

Perquimans delays vote on wind regs

BY PETER WILLIAMS
The Perquimans Weekly

The Perquimans County Board of Commissioners voted last week to postpone a decision on new regulations for wind turbine projects until February.

Only Chair Janice Cole voted against the motion at the board, suggesting that the board has had enough time to make a decision.

At stake is a \$300 million to \$500 million project that would straddle the Perquimans-Chowan County line in the area known as "Bear Swamp." Most of the project would be in Perquimans County in woodlands owned by Weyerhaeuser, a wood products company based in Washington State.

The county board enacted a 120-day moratorium on new wind projects in October. The object was to give the county planning adequate time to review the existing rules. The planning board did that in December with a recommendation to increase the setback between turbine towers and the nearest home to 1/2 mile, or 2,630 feet. It also suggested the county might want to consider changes to the decommissioning policy and create a pot of money — funded by Apex — that would pay for any special studies needed to review the project.

The current setback is based on the height of the turbine blades, and works out to about 1,500 feet based on the size of the wind towers Apex Clean Energy plans to build.

Nineteen people spoke at the public hearing Monday, and the 11 of those argued against allowing wind power at all or lobbied for a one-mile setback from all homes, roads or property lines.

See DELAYS VOTE, 2A

Chowan wind regs likely to remain same

BY REGGIE PONDER
Editor

As Perquimans County officials consider a half-mile minimum setback and other changes to the Perquimans wind energy ordinance, Chowan officials seem poised to stay the course with Chowan's current rules.

Apex Clean Energy Inc. of Charlottesville, Va., has proposed a utility scale wind energy generation facility along the Perquimans-Chowan county line in the Bear Swamp area. The county commissioners in Perquimans County are planning to vote next month on stricter wind energy regulations that have been proposed by the Perquimans Planning Board.

Chowan last year considered two different sets of proposed amendments from the Chowan Planning Board. The first set called for much stricter regulations, including a one-mile minimum setback from neighboring property lines and a noise limit of 35 decibels. That proposal was rejected in its entirety by the county commissioners.

Later in the year the Chowan commissioners received a second proposal from the planning board, and adopted a couple of items from that second document. The commissioners voted to strengthen the decommissioning

See WIND REGS, 2A

Residents' reaction to solar farm plan mixed

BY REBECCA BUNCH
Staff Writer

A request to locate a 5-megawatt solar farm within Edenton's extraterritorial jurisdiction passed muster with the town's planning board last week.

The board at its Jan. 4 meeting backed the proposal from developer Heath McLaughlin of

Blue Green Energy LLC to construct the solar farm at 115 Butternut Lane.

But the proposal that garnered unanimous support from that board drew a mixed reaction from those in the audience who spoke at the meeting.

The town's ETJ extends one mile beyond the town limits. Town officials have planning authority within the ETJ.

Larry McLaughlin, who lives on Butternut Lane, expressed concern about the effect that such a development could have on property values. He added that despite promised landscap-

ing and other screening a solar farm in the neighborhood was not something he wanted to see happen.

"A solar farm looks like a utility," he said.

Chowan County farmer Carey Parrish said he was concerned over the potential loss of farmland should the project be approved.

"I'm not a fan of solar farms on farmland," he said. "We're losing farmland every day."

Developer McLaughlin said that the level of preparedness that would be required to win approval for the project was

something he was committed to seeing through. He added that once all the requirements had been fulfilled the site in Edenton would resemble "the Ritz-Carlton" of solar farms.

"Normally we don't have to do this level of preparedness," McLaughlin said.

Susan Inglis, whose aunt, Rebecca Warren, is the principal owner of the property in question, voiced support for the solar farm being located in the community.

Inglis said it was important to

See REACTION, 2A



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