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Edenton alum Valentine returns for NFL ceremony — 7A

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27, 2016

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County adopts merit pay plan for workers

BY REGGIE PONDER
Editor

The Chowan County Board of Commissioners last week approved a plan that would spend up to \$182,000 to reward outstanding employees and bring county staff closer to the regional average pay for their positions.

The plan, proposed by County Manager Kevin Howard, is based on the average pay in northeastern North

Carolina for particular positions — with the high and low salaries taken out of the equation to avoid skewing the results.

The \$182,000 figure is the maximum cost, based on every employee achieving the top rating on their evaluation. As a practical matter, it is expected that the evaluations will reflect a more typical pattern of scores that range from higher to lower.

For those employees who

are above the market rate for their position or no more than \$500 below it, the merit increase they are eligible for will be a percentage increase based on their performance evaluation. The scale is 108 points, and all employees will get at least a one-tenth percent increase unless they are rated unsatisfactory, which indicates a total score of 50 points or less on the 108-point scale.

Employees who score 51-

60 are eligible for an increase of one-tenth-percent to one-half percent; for 61-80 points the increase goes to 0.6 percent to 2.4 percent. At the 80-94 percent level the merit pay increase is 2.5 percent to 3.4 percent.

Those who score 95 or better will earn an increase of 3.5 percent to 4 percent.

A slightly different system, but based on the same point scale, is being used for employees who are more than

\$501 dollars below the market rate established for that positions. Those employees will receive a percentage scale — for instance, 70 points would be 64 percent of the 108 — and would be eligible for an increase based on that percentage of the difference between their current pay and the market rate for that position.

Employees of the Sheriff's Office, Jail and 911 Center

are not included this plan because they already are eligible for merit pay under a plan the county commissioners approved previously that went into effect in October 2015.

The maximum figure of \$182,000 for implementing the new pay plan is based on an entire fiscal year. For the current fiscal year, the maximum cost would be \$137,000 to make the adjustments effective Oct. 1 of 2015.

SENATE HOPEFUL PROMISES NOT TO FORGET VOTERS

BY REGGIE PONDER
Editor

U.S. Senate candidate Ernest Reeves told a gathering of Democrats in Edenton Saturday night that if he's elected to represent North Carolina in the Senate, he would be back in Chowan County to listen to citizens.

Reeves, a military veteran and retired manager with United Airlines who lives in Greenville, is one of four candidates in the March 15 Democratic Primary seeing the party's nomination in an effort to oust incumbent Sen. Richard Burr, a Republican. The others are Deborah Ross, Kevin Griffin and Chris Rey.

About 180 of the party faithful turned out on the cold, snowy night for a meet the candidates dinner at Leon Nixon's Catering.

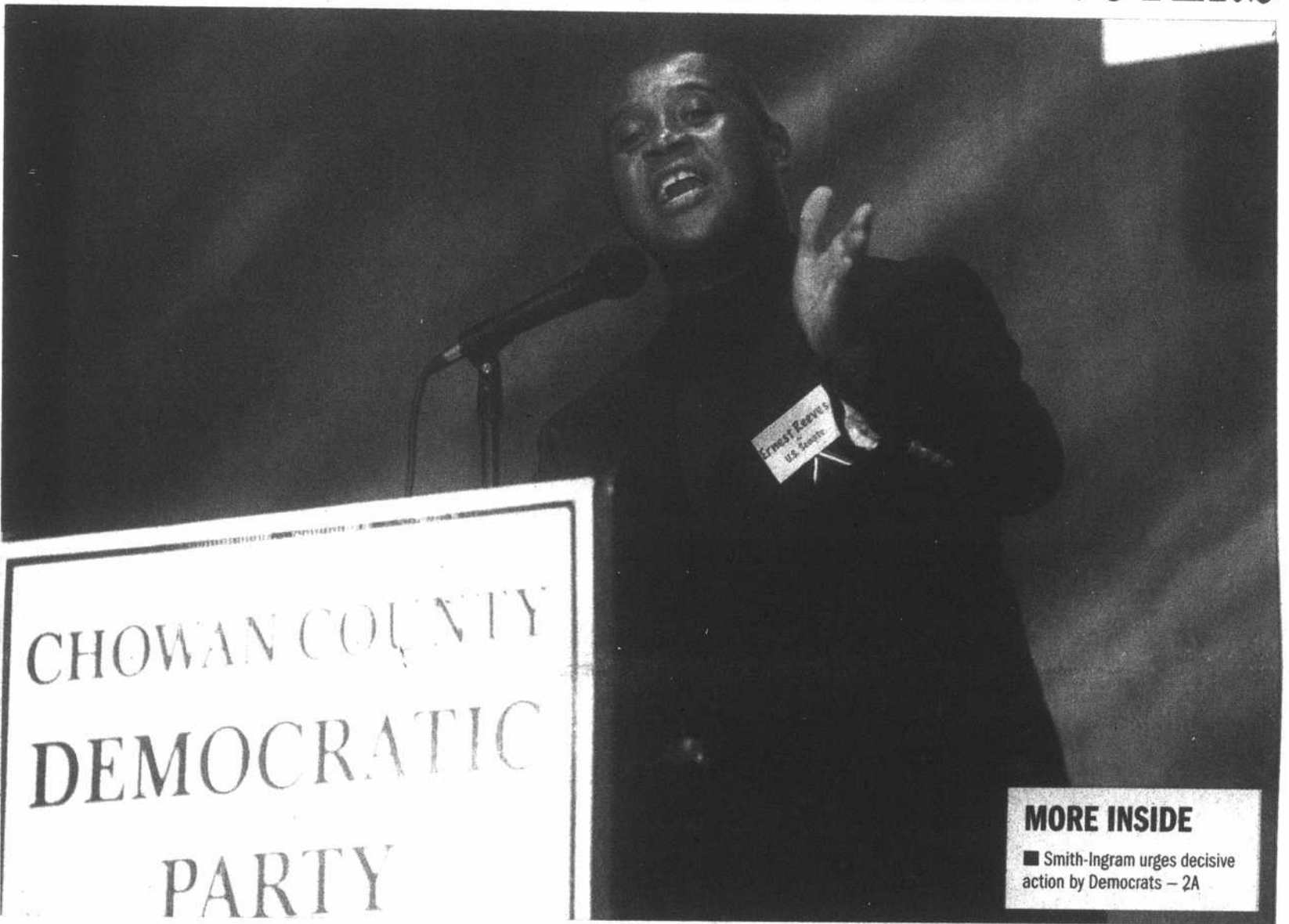
"If you elect me to the U.S. Senate this will not be the last time that you see me," Reeves told the crowd.

Reeves thanked State Sen. Erica Smith-Ingram, D-Northampton, for her keynote address that stressed the need for economic development incentives and infrastructure in the rural counties east of I-95 and the importance of fair pay and professional respect for teachers.

He said the state is great because of its citizens and he wants to be the citizens' voice in the Senate.

Reeves said he was one of 12 children. He said his father didn't have a lot of education but started a successful landscaping business.

Teachers are very special to him because they helped him overcome a speech impediment, he said. He said he supports a national



Democrat Ernest Reeves, a candidate for U.S. Senate, speaks at the Dinner With Candidates event at Leon Nixon's Catering, Saturday.

minimum wage for teachers. Reeves said he won a military scholarship to St. Augustine's College in Raleigh and graduated Magna Cum Laude.

He thanked the military veterans in the audience. Also speaking Saturday night was Ron Newton, a candidate for lieutenant governor.

Newton said his main initiatives are economic opportunity for everyone,

tax reform that benefits everyone, and protection of the environment.

A former pro football player, business manager of a public service union and business owner, Newton said the election is not about him.

"This thing is really about all of us," he said.

Newton said the state has the highest rates in the nation of poverty and child poverty. Addressing those

problems will require comprehensive state and federal legislation on the magnitude of the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act, he said.

The place to start is restoring the state's tax code to what it was before the most recent tax reform was passed, he said.

Reeves called the tax reform the worst legislation in the past 100 years, creating a "reverse Robin

Hood" regressive tax system that serves to "take from the poor and give to the rich."

He said teachers deserve respect.

"I want to pay them what they deserve," he said.

Reeves also expressed his opposition to fracking, which he described as harmful to the environment.

To accomplish the things that are needed in the state, Reeves said, "the governor needs to be a Democrat and

we need to give him a veto-proof majority."

One of the things the party needs to do in order to win is to put young people in leadership positions, he said.

Other candidates in the Democratic Primary for lieutenant governor are Linda Coleman and Robert Wilson.

The event also included speeches by regional and local candidates.

MORE INSIDE

■ Smith-Ingram urges decisive action by Democrats — 2A

THOMAS J. TURNEY/THE DAILY ADVANCE

Byrum takes stand Monday in own defense

From staff reports

Josh Byrum took the witness stand in his own defense Monday afternoon and said he feared for his and his younger brother's life in the midst of an altercation at his residence when he fatally shot 21-year-old Dylan Burton a few days before Christmas 2013.

"I didn't know if they were going to kill us or what they were going to do," Byrum told a Chowan County Superior Court jury under approximately half an hour of questioning by his defense attorney, Andy Gay.

Gay rested his client's defense at approximately 4:50 p.m. Judge Quentin Sumner instructed jurors

to return at 11 a.m. Tuesday to hear closing arguments by both sides, as well as to receive instructions prior to deliberating.

Byrum, 23, is accused of committing voluntary manslaughter the evening of Dec. 22, 2013, with the shooting having occurred at Chowan Beach. The shooting occurred after an incident involving Josh Byrum, Bryan Byrum and two brothers, Brandon and Randy Harrison.

Josh Byrum said he was on the couch and his brother was on the love seat when they heard a commotion, walked to a window and saw a truck at an intersection. He said he and his brother later heard someone knocking at the door, prompting his brother to jump up off the love seat and walk to the front door.

Byrum said he and his brother saw three men wanting to enter, but he said he wasn't stepping outside



BYRUM

because he didn't want any problems and also didn't know what was outside past the front porch. He said he advised the three they just needed to leave.

According to Byrum, one of the men, who wasn't wearing a shirt and who was believed to be Randy Harrison, asserted a stance with one foot outside and the other foot inside the door. "They told us that we could either come outside or they were going to run up in the house," Byrum said.

Byrum said he and his brother stepped back in an attempt to shut the door, but he said the three pushed their way in.

When Gay asked Byrum who he felt was in control of his living room, Byrum said certainly not him. He said one of the Harrison brothers was accusing him of calling his

See TAKES STAND, 3A

Snowfall has slight impact in Chowan

From staff reports

Chowan County saw light snowfall and occasionally heavy rains over the weekend but no major weather-related incidents were reported.

The most serious impact was The Town of Edenton had discharges of untreated sewage from its collection system at two locations during the extremely heavy rain on Friday.

There was a discharge of 5,801 gallons at the intersection of North Broad Street and Paradise Road. The discharge was discovered around 11:00 pm and was stopped at 12:37 am.

About 5,800 gallons of untreated wastewater reached

Filbert's Creek/Pembroke Creek. The untreated wastewater entered Edenton Bay and the Chowan River Basin.

There was also a discharge of 4,845 gallons near 716 N. Granville Street. This discharge was discovered around 11 p.m. and was stopped around 12:15 a.m.

About 4,845 gallons of untreated wastewater reached Filbert's Creek/Pembroke Creek and entered Edenton Bay and the Chowan River Basin. This discharge was due to the extremely heavy rain event. The significant amount of rainfall helped dilute the impact of the discharge.

Town crews responded

See SNOWFALL, 2A



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