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School board seeks start to designing new high school

BY REGGIE PONDER
Editor

Local school officials plan to ask the county commissioners to fund the start of design work for a new high school in the upcoming budget.

The Edenton-Chowan County Board of Education did not formally vote on the request during its quarterly meeting Monday, but gave an informal "thumbs up" to including \$45,000 for high school

design work in the school board's budget request to the Chowan County Board of Commissioners for the 2017-2018 Fiscal Year.

Chowan Board of Commissioners Chairman Jeff Smith said Tuesday morning that while preliminary discussions about high school construction might start now, he doesn't think the county commissioners will be ready for in-depth talks about a new high school until after 2021, when much of the county's debt will be

paid off. And even then, he said, the county will likely look at a 10-year time frame for addressing critical facility needs in the county that would include school facilities but also other critical county needs.

Although the main focus in recent discussions has been replacing the bulk of the buildings at the current John A. Holmes High School - basically everything except the two-story classroom building - one of the questions

for the design work to answer is whether to rebuild at the existing site or build a new school at a different location.

It was also the consensus of school board members Monday to request a joint meeting with the county commissioners to talk about the high school and other pressing concerns.

Superintendent Rob Jackson told the board members at the meeting Monday that it's important to reach a decision soon about the

high school because it affects how the school system should deal with aging heating and cooling units at the high school. The units very much need to be replaced, he said, but it might not make sense to replace them if those buildings will be replaced in just a few years.

Jackson made a presentation to the board titled "John A. Holmes High School - Mapping the Way

See HIGH SCHOOL, 4A

LOCK UP HUNGER



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Sheriff Dwayne Goodwin, left, is joined by Deputy Heather Matthews and School Superintendent Rob Jackson in unloading boxes filled with food in support of the annual Lock Up Hunger food drive conducted by the Edenton-Chowan Schools. See more stories inside: Lock Up Hunger, 1B. Food Pantry, 2A.

County approves agreement on jail

BY REGGIE PONDER
Editor

The Chowan County Board of Commissioners voted Monday night to approve an agreement allowing the Edenton Historical Commission to restore the historic Chowan County Jail and make it available as a public exhibit.

The county retains ownership of the property under the agreement.

Sally Francis Kehayes of the Edenton Historical Commission was at the commissioners' meeting Monday night to answer questions about the agreement.

Lauren Arizaga-Womble, the county's attorney, told the commissioners that she and County Manager Kevin Howard had met with Kehayes, Chris Bean and Tyler Dawson last week to discuss the agreement and that she was comfortable with the board approving the license agreement.

The historic 1825 Chowan County Jail is located behind the 1767 Chowan County Courthouse.

Local researchers have determined that the building is the oldest surviving jail in North Carolina. They also believe it was the longest-serving jail in the nation at the time of its decommissioning in 1983.

The executive committee of the Edenton Historical Commission agreed Tuesday morning to forward the licensing agreement to the full EHC board.

A motion by Commissioner Ellis Lawrence to accept the license agreement passed unanimously.

Chairman Jeff Smith said he is glad the Historical Commission will take over the facility and make it an asset to the county.

The agreement cites as a rationale for the new arrangement that "the Premises are of significant historical value and their preservation and display would provide educational opportunities and other public services which would benefit Chowan County residents."

The agreement is for a

See JAIL, 4A

County approves \$116K for repairs at COA campus

BY REGGIE PONDER
Editor

The Chowan County Board of Commissioners Monday approved \$116,725 in capital projects for the Edenton-Chowan Campus of College of the Albemarle - including replacing the roof on the Culinary Building and re-paving the parking lot next to the Administration Building.

A motion by Greg Bonner to authorize COA to proceed with the improvements passed unanimously.

Bonner said he thought it was best to make the repairs as soon as possible. Taking care of the facility needs now should create savings in

the long run, he said.

Joe Turner presented the projects to the county commissioners at their commissioners' regular meeting Monday night.

Turner said he worked with Edenton-Chowan Campus Dean Charles Purser to put together the list of projects.

The projects are:

- Repair and re-pave the asphalt parking lot in front of the administrative building, \$35,975
- Paint exterior of all buildings, \$16,750
- Replace the ceiling tiles in the culinary building and paint the walls,

See COA, 4A



STAFF PHOTO BY REGGIE PONDER

This is one of the rough places in the parking lot that will be repaired and repaved as part of facility improvements at College of The Albemarle's Edenton-Chowan Campus.

Manager offers revised picture of county fund balance

BY REGGIE PONDER
Editor

County Manager Kevin Howard presented a report Monday on the county's fund balance in the General Fund that confirms the county's fiscal strength but puts the county's reserves in a less glowing light than figures in the recent audit report.

Although the June 30, 2016, fund balance as calculated in the audit report presented at the board's Feb. 6 meeting was \$7.45 million or 43.1 percent, Howard told the commissioners at their regular meeting

Monday night that when the figure is adjusted for funds that have been committed or set-aside it comes down to about \$4.69 million or about 27 percent.

County officials pointed out at the Feb. 6 meeting that the percentage would be somewhat lower when longterm county commitments were taken into consideration. Howard told the commissioners at that time that he would present a report on the fund balance in light of those longterm commitments.

Howard presented that report Monday, and it noted a number of

set-asides and commitments:

- \$689,043 - general operations
- \$29,949 - Register of Deeds
- \$35,372 - Senior Center
- \$56,400 - Sheriff's Office
- \$2,352 - Soil and Water
- \$81,027 - Cooperative Extension
- \$18,778 - Recreation
- \$355,102 - College of the Albemarle
- \$40,246 - Animal Shelter
- \$1,373,690 - Debt Service Fund.

After hearing Howard's report, Commissioner Patti Kersey said

she thinks it's helpful for citizens to understand how the fund balance really works and what it means for the county.

The county's fund balance also was touched on briefly at Monday's quarterly meeting of the Edenton-Chowan County Board of Education.

Schools Superintendent Rob Jackson cited the article in last week's Chowan Herald on the county's fund balance. Jackson

See BALANCE, 4A

Focus groups explore interest in senior living campus

BY REBECCA BUNCH
Staff Writer

Recent focus group sessions held in Chowan and Perquimans counties were the most recent step in a process intended to bring

a senior living campus to Edenton.

Larry Lombardi, executive director of the Edenton-Chowan Partnership which initiated the effort after it was identified as a strategic goal when the Partnership began operations over five years ago.

"According to Charlotte-based Retirement Dynamics Inc., who hold these senior living focus groups around the country, the turnout for the four groups that met late

last month was tremendous and the information the participants provided was insightful and informative," Lombardi said.

"From the Partnership's perspective, we thought the turnout for the focus groups validated what an earlier feasibility study concluded and the enthusiasm and support for the senior living project was very positive," he added.

Lombardi said once a site is chosen and under

contract, "there will be additional focus groups being held to determine whether the housing will consist of cottages and apartments with various square footages and the types of amenities to be included."

Windermere Strategic Partners, an Orlando, Fla.-based operation, was recommended by Cy Rich, chairman of the Partnership's Economic Development Committee, to perform the feasibility study.

The project, it was determined, would consist of three phases - a feasibility study, the conducting of research focus groups to see if the study justified the need for the project, and entering into a contract for a site in the community.

"WSP recommended between 100 and 120 independent living units," Lombardi said. "For assisted living, WSP recommended between 36-40 units and for memory care the rec-

ommendation was for 16 units."

He noted that of the four focus groups held, there were two that met on Wednesday, Jan. 25 at Albemarle Plantation in Perquimans County and the remaining focus groups took place in Edenton at the Shepard-Pruden Library the following day.

"There were a total of 70 people who participated;

See SENIOR, 4A

