

COA President Wynegar to leave at end of June

BY JON HAWLEY
The Daily Advance

College of The Albemarle President Robert Wynegar plans to resign from the college for personal reasons, COA trustee members confirmed today. Wynegar announced his resignation in a called meeting with COA's Board of Trustees on Monday, board Chairman Marion Harris said in a phone call Tuesday. Wynegar said his reasons for resigning are personal, and didn't elaborate, Harris said. Harris said Wynegar is under contract until June 30, and he will serve as president until then. Any earlier departure would have to be negotiated with the board, he said.

Harris, as well as COA board member and former chairman Paul O'Neal, also said they believed the board was satisfied with Wynegar's work and wished him well. Harris praised Wynegar for keeping key renovation projects moving forward, specifically improvements to the Performing Arts Center and the library, and for maintaining or improving COA's key community partnerships, such as with employers who rely on the college for workforce training. The COA board hired Wynegar in spring 2017, choosing him to replace Kandi Deitemeyer, who left the college at the end of 2016. Notably, Wynegar was the only out-of-state

finalist the board considered; he previously worked as a vice president at Western Nevada College. Despite Wynegar's short stay with COA, Harris said he had no regrets about hiring him. It's easy to "second-guess" the decision now, but COA chose the best person for the job, he said. Harris said finding a new president will take several months. He said trustees have already put out a "request for proposals" for search firms to aid in finding another president. As before, the board will select the best person it finds, whether from North Carolina or not, he said. Wynegar was not immediately available today for an interview.



College of The Albemarle President Robert Wynegar (left) is shown in this July 2018 photo with East Carolina University Chancellor Cecil Staton signing a new agreement between the community college and university. Both Wynegar and Staton announced their resignations from their respective institutions on Monday. Wynegar told COA trustees he's leaving for personal reasons.

SOLAR

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County in 2019. In February, county commission gave its blessing to Ryland Road Solar, a SunEnergy1 company, for a conditional use permit to develop the solar farm at 3448 Virginia Road, north of the Ryland Road intersection in Tyner. Ryland Road Solar is proposing to build the solar farm on 65 acres of an approximately 106-acre tract. Gliden Solar's application was to be reviewed Tuesday night by the county's Plan-



A division of SunEnergy1, Gliden Solar, LLC, is seeking a conditional use permit to develop a facility at 414 Sign Pine Road.

ning Board at 7 p.m. March 19 at the Chowan County Public Safety Center. Pending the board's decision, county commissioners may be able to discuss the matter

at the upcoming April 15 or May 6 meetings. According to documents from the county, the staff's review of the project indicates:

- * The proposed site is in an A-1 Zoning District where solar farms are permitted by a CUP.
- * 100 foot setbacks are addressed at all property lines.
- * The parcel does not border adjacent residential property or a ROW, and has standing timber border roughly two-thirds of the proposed project. Any created buffer will not be necessary to meet the ordinance for this project.
- * Proposed placement of panels appears to meet ordinance requirements.
- * Proposed height of equip-

- ment is under the maximum in the ordinance.
- * State Stormwater permit applications are provided. Developer has indicated that the county will be update, as well as the application, as soon as the permit is received.
- * NC Department of Transportation driveway permit is provided.
- * Liability insurance proof is provided.
- * Third party decommissioning plan is provided (Staff has spoken with developer already to address what could be a low estimate).

MORE INFORMATION

Check future editions of the Daily Advance and Chowan Herald for information regarding the Chowan County Planning Board's decision on this proposed solar farm. * The proposed site has been posted with signage advertising the CUP application and contact information. * Adjacent property owners have been notified via first class mail.

BILL

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sembly. Goodwin said of the state's broadband policy, "The official definition of broadband (where everyone is covered) — they do not use. They don't care about it. They say if one person in a zip code is served, then everyone has it." Goodwin said because of the inequities of coverage, there are broadband caucuses on either side of the political aisle in the General Assembly and a bill is being drafted to expand coverage by using a local electric cooperative's infrastructure. "If we can get broadband capacity with the co-ops, we can cover the rural parts of the state," Goodwin said. Goodwin said internet coverage is so very slow at his house in the county that sometimes it takes more than a few hours, perhaps all night, to send emails. He was candid about Raleigh's political will and big telecom's financial reasons for not expanding coverage to underserved rural areas. "It's not financially feasible for the big telecoms to run cable underground and cover every inch of eastern North Carolina — they're

not going to do it," he said. "What they will say is, 'Don't you have broadband in the town of Edenton?' — So they can say that 27932 zip code is served. They have no interest in coming out in the county and doing anything for us." Goodwin cautioned that there is resistance from the big telecom companies to the electric co-ops expanding coverage because any independent and local attempt to expand coverage challenges the telecom's market. He called the status quo that favors telecoms, a monopoly that runs counter to the principles of a free-market economy. Goodwin noted how few communication tower structures he's counted during his travels between Rocky Mount and Columbia, so he believes the only way to expand coverage is to utilize the electric co-op's infrastructure. He said it's not in the telecoms' best interest to expand coverage, so the law needs to be changed to expand coverage in rural areas. "The only people who can do anything are the co-ops," he said. "And they are taking a chance because you know who is the more powerful entity — the telecoms. So they (electric co-

ops) are pushing hard for that. ... The only way we're going to do it is that we've got to change the law so that the co-ops have got to be allowed to do it." Lack of broadband coverage is a major issue outside Edenton so much so that a story Steinburg tells has been making the rounds in Raleigh. Steinburg said one day when there were some kids outside his house on South Granville Street, he asked them what they were doing. They told him that they were looking for the closest hot spot needed to link up to the Internet so that they could do their homework. Goodwin hopes the story will spur legislation action. "You got to find that one thing that will prick someone's conscience and their heart. I think everyone is ready now," he said. "We got to put a bill forward and see how far it gets. We got to take that chance to put something forward, keep doing it and keep doing it." County Commissioner Ellis Lawrence said discussion about broadband has gone on for years but with little result. He said without broadband access,

Chowan County would not be as attractive for industrial development. "What industry would come to this county if you don't have broadband," he said. Lawrence asked for a more definitive timeline to which Goodwin responded that he, Steinburg and others and doing all they can to push this issue in the General Assembly. "Here's the deal," Goodwin said. "I think the law is going to be changed and the co-ops will be allowed to do it for this reason — a primary reason in my opinion — a few years from now, the state will not be buying one single textbook. All school work will be done with broadband capability. We're offering a solution to it. I think it's closer now than it's ever been and ever will be. The only way we are going to get it is through a co-op." Steinburg added that with the enthusiasms the co-ops have for changing the law, once it is enacted, "You are going to begin to see things moving rapidly." Steinburg said he and Goodwin recently met with Bunny Sanders, a former mayor of Roper who has been championing

expanding broadband for many years. "Modern broadband infrastructure is a fundamental requirement for economic development, education and telehealth. But it is also a fundamental right of all citizens of North Carolina, regardless of zip code," Sanders wrote in an opinion piece that was published in February within the Chowan Herald and Daily Advance. "Rural communities cannot be sustainable without policy and funding decisions that reflect the reality that commerce runs on the internet. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that the economies in North Carolina's Tier I counties will change without broadband." Steinburg noted how Washington state spent billions to create statewide access to broadband.

"They made the investment and they did it," he said. "I think ours will be a more gradual approach, but when I see gradual, please, let's keep this in perspective. I'm not talking five or 10 years — we need to have a definite plan ... We've done this with the co-op, now what's next? Broadband access is one of the things that is holding our region back and other rural parts across the state."

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HARRELL

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lights of the landing strip." A native son of Chowan County, Harrell served in the army air corps between May 1943 and December 1945. "I was always interested in flying," said Harrell, who graduated from high school in Chowan in 1942. He described flying as "peaceful" and that aircraft didn't have a lot of the modern technology which is commonplace today. Harrell said his unit was training so as to be ready to conduct bombing runs toward the end of the war, but that day never came because Japan surrendered soon after atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But that's not the end of Harrell's story. After the war ended, Harrell attended North Carolina State University and the University of Richmond. His new flight

trajectory was to become a Baptist minister. Harrell said his military service didn't inspire him so much as it was "a calling" from God to be a pastor. Harrell may not have been on the front lines of any battlefield, but he was certainly in the trenches during the racial divide in the 1960s. An active pastor who served churches in North Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia, Harrell was appointed to the Good Neighbor Council in 1966 by then-Gov. Dan Moore. The group's purpose was two-fold: To encourage the employment of qualified people without regard to race; and to encourage youth to become better trained and qualified for employment. "I think we made real progress from businesses hiring blacks," he said. Harrell's tenure between 1966-69 was an active one as he recalled the racial unrest at the time. When Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.,

was assassinated in 1968, a wave of civil disturbance swept the nation. "When we heard the news about Dr. King's death, we were all shocked," Harrell said. Harrell recalls how afterward, a lot of places across the country were "burning" but he did what he could to calm tensions wherever he was sent. Many years later, Harrell, now 92, looks back on his life with a sense of pride and accomplishment. Harrell said he's glad to have helped as many people as he could by serving the Lord. When Harrell was asked if he would re-enlist — do it all over again — he said, "Oh yes. We were at war at the time and I felt I had an obligation."

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