

Healthcare exec talks to commissioners

BY MILES LAYTON
Staff Writer

The head of a healthcare firm answered questions from the Chowan County Board of Commissioners to clarify possibly establishing a new health center in Edenton.

Dr. Michael McDuffie, executive director of Metropolitan Community Health Services, stopped by the April 1 meeting.

In March, commissioners unanimously dismissed a letter from Metropolitan seeking support to aid possible plans to open a clinic. Commissioners then and more recently on April 1 expressed concerns about how a new clinic may negatively affect the county's health department or how ebb and flow of federal dollars may affect future operations for such a clinic.

McDuffie offered statistics about these clinics that are located throughout the country and serve more than 28 million people by providing primary care, mental health and dental services to low-income patients.

"We provide health care service to the most vulner-

able underserved populations on a sliding fee scale," he said. "We help to fill the unmet need in the community."

McDuffie insisted that commissioners received some wrong information, so he wanted to set the record straight.

"Your health director did state in the August 28 meeting that Metropolitan would take the insured patients and then leave the uninsured back to the health department," he said. "Well, that's not so. We are here to see the most vulnerable patients."

Battle Betts, director of Albemarle Regional Health Service countered, "With some of things I'm hearing, it's just misinformation, quite frankly."

Betts touted some health department services, such as being the first in the state to implement to telemedicine. He noted that it is important to look out for tax dollars at all levels of government.

"We do public health and we do it well," Betts said.

Betts said public health serves birth to grave, except for dental services — a responsibility taken over by

ECU School of Medicine's service learning centers. Also, Betts countered that it's more like 12 percent of the county's population is uninsured, not 58 percent as McDuffie suggested.

Commission President Patti Kersey said after hearing both sides, she wanted the county administration to study what neighboring counties do.

McDuffie said Metropolitan receives funding from the federal government to provide this service to patients on a sliding fee scale, perhaps as low as \$35 for a visit that may include everything from lab work to primary care services. He offered an example about how the purchase of insulin from one of Metropolitan's pharmacy is more affordable because of the federal government's role, than if the insulin was purchased on the open market.

"Services offered by your health department — they don't offer the primary care, oral health, behavioral care services. They don't have an onsite pharmacy," he said.

Betts said, "I respectfully stand by my comments from last time. I do see that

a clinic would be a duplication of services."

McDuffie said though there would be some referrals to the health department for services Metropolitan doesn't offer like HIV testing, there would be no duplication of services between the two entities.

"What we want to do is work together," he said.

Another benefit; Metropolitan would pay for NARCAN — a drug used by law enforcement to temporarily reverse the effects of an opioid overdose.

When talking about clinic's affordability, services offered and collaboration between Metropolitan and various county/state agencies, McDuffie said, "We are good citizens and good community members. This town needs these safety net services for the citizens that can't afford to go other places and get affordable health care. They can get health care just like anyone else, anyone with insurance for as low as \$35. Even if they don't have \$35 — the inability to pay doesn't mean we are going to turn them away."

Possible site for a clinic would be to purchase the

property the old Edenton-Chowan Board of Education building on West Queen Street, McDuffie said. Fourteen staff members would be hired to serve the clinic.

Responding to a question about funding from Commissioner Ron Cummings, McDuffie said the county or the state is not required to provide funding for the clinic — money that comes from the federal government. A letter of support from the commission was needed to better secure federal financing.

Cummings responded, "So once that money from the federal government dries up, then where does it come from?"

McDuffie answered, "The money from the federal government doesn't dry up — that money just goes on and on. Community health centers have been around since 1960. We continue to get expanded services and new funding, so that money doesn't dry up."

Cummings charged, "If it's taxpayer money and the federal government is involved in it, then something is going to go wrong, and we're going to end up

on the hook for it — the county is."

Commission Don Faircloth added, "I see you keep saying the federal government is going to pay for this, but any time someone comes to us with a grant it tells us that in a year, three years, five years — you are going to have to reapply for funding to keep going. That is a big concern."

McDuffie answered by saying that when reapplying, the clinic not only has to have a good grant proposal writer, but be a good steward of the past money it received and demonstrate sound financial practices. Because of the high percentage of uninsured in the area, the federal government has a vested interest in keeping the clinic in operation.

"The federal government isn't going to shut you down unless you are not doing what you are supposed to be doing," he said.

McDuffie reassured commissioners that if a clinic did come to Chowan County, "So it's not like we're going to come here and then leave. If we come here, we hope to be here for many years to come."

Candidates for District 3 seat visit Chowan County

From Staff Reports

Early voting for The 3rd District's Congressional seat started today (Wednesday).

Democratic congressional candidate Richard Bew will be at 11:15 a.m. Thursday at Nothin' Fancy Cafe in

Edenton. A former legislative assistant to Gen. Joseph F. Dunford Jr., the chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff, Bew retired from the Marines last fall after 29 years. He's served in Afghanistan, Iraq, Bosnia and Serbia, and his military background is a key

reason he thinks he has the right profile for a Democrat to carry this district.

On a related note, Republican congressional candidate NC Representative Greg Murphy, R-Pitt, visited Edenton last week. Prior to election to the North Carolina

House of Representatives, Murphy served as president of a medical practice. He was also a member of the ECU School of Medicine Faculty and served as Chief of Staff of Vidant Medical Center. Murphy spoke to folks in places near and far

from Regulator Marine to Shepard-Pruden Library.

GOP congressional candidate Phil Law was scheduled for a meet and greet Tuesday at the library as this newspaper was in the final stages of going to press. Law received his B.S. in information systems from Strayer University

in 2008. He works as a security and community emergency response team trainer and was previously a site supervisor for Hewlett Packard from 2004-2015. Prior to that Law served in the U.S. Marines from 1999-2004.

Chowan U. honor society holds ceremony

From Submitted Reports

MURFREESBORO — On March 24, the Chowan University chapter of the Alpha Lambda Delta honor society inducted 69 new members and bestowed honors cords on their graduating seniors. The honor society founded in 1924, recognizes outstanding first-year students. Students must have a 3.5 GPA

or higher and be in the top 20 percent in their class to be considered for membership.

The area seniors who received graduation cords are LaTavia ShaTora Riddick and Cayla Nicole Smith, of Edenton; and Haley Marie Cooper, of Hertford.

The new members from the area are Jordan Mitchell Brown, of Plymouth; Jarod N. Curley and Aryana Alexis

Hedgepeth, of Eure; and David Thomas Joyner, of Colerain.

Chowan University, grounded in its Christian faith, has been transforming the lives of students of promise for over 170 years. A Christian liberal arts university founded in 1848, Chowan enrolls 1,400 students each year and is located in the Historic Inner Banks com-

munity of Murfreesboro in northeastern North Carolina.

For information about Chowan University, visit www.chowan.edu or call 1-888-4-CHOWAN.

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SUBMITTED PHOTO
Chowan University's Alpha Lambda Delta's spring 2019 seniors received their cords at a recent ceremony.

Rocky Hock Community Egg Drop

April 13
Rocky Hock Baptist Church
11:30 am
Rain date April 20th

Lunch, Games, Prizes,
and thousands of eggs!

NOTICE OF SPECIAL PRIMARY ELECTION CHOWAN COUNTY ELECTION

APRIL 30, 2019

ONE STOP ABSENTEE VOTING

730 N Granville St Edenton NC, Suite "D"

One Stop voting begins Wednesday, APRIL 10, 2019

Hours daily are Monday thru Friday- 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m.

All voters are welcome to vote at One Stop Same-Day Registration for new voters is available at One Stop Voting

If you are not registered to vote or have a change to make in the system you will need to vote during one stop to make the necessary changes.

ABSENTEE VOTING BY MAIL

Requests available for Absentee ballots until Tuesday, APRIL 23, 2019

Hand delivered absentee ballots must be delivered to Elections office by APRIL 30, 2019 by 5:00 p.m.

All returned mailed ballots must be post marked by APRIL 30, 2019

Mailed absentee ballots must be received in office by 5:00 p.m. on Friday MAY 3, 2019

SPECIAL PRIMARY ELECTION DAY • APRIL 30, 2019

All precincts are open County Wide
6:30 a.m. until 7:30 p.m.

Precinct Locations:

- East Edenton — Old National Guard Armory — 702 N Broad St, Edenton
- West Edenton — Chowan County Agricultural Center — 730 N Granville St, Edenton
- Rocky Hock - Rocky Hock Rescue Squad Building — 1414 Rocky Hock Landing Rd, Edenton
- Center Hill — Northern Chowan Community Center — 2869 Virginia Rd, Tyner
- Wardville — Faith Fellowship Baptist Church — 3500 Virginia Rd, Tyner
- Yeopim — National Guard Armory — 739 Soundside Rd, Edenton

CANVASS DAY — ELECTIONS OFFICE

730 N Granville St, Edenton
Absentee/Provisional/Election Day Votes
11:00 a.m.
Friday, MAY 10, 2019