

'That is good coverage for any county'

CenturyLink estimates Internet available to 'between 96, 97 or 98-percent' of Personians

By TIM CHANDLER
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"That's a good story right there. That is good coverage for any county."

Larry Liles, area operations manager for CenturyLink, spoke those words Monday when showing the Person Board of County Commissioners a map of his company's Internet coverage areas in the county.

With the exception of one area in the northern portion of Person County and two areas in the eastern portion of the county, Liles said the rest of the county either had Internet service or would be getting it soon.

Liles pointed out an area in the southwestern portion of the county that currently did not have Internet service. That area, Liles said, should have Internet service available within 45 days.

Liles told commissioners that CenturyLink is "looking now to see" if Internet service could be made available

to the three areas of the county that do not currently have access.

Those areas, Liles explained, are "kind of hard to get to." He later added that the "areas would be really expensive to get to."

Commission Vice Chairman Kyle Puryear, who helped spearhead Person County's push for high-speed Internet service, told Liles the results shown on the map Monday morning were "a considerable improvement" from a couple of years ago. Puryear is also a member of the county's High Speed Internet Committee.

CenturyLink officials had promised to have Internet access available to approximately 95 percent of Person County by late last year, but Liles explained Monday that the company had run into multiple problems during its efforts.

In a phone conversation with *The Courier-Times* Tuesday, Liles said CenturyLink was "well in excess of 95 percent" high speed Internet coverage for the county.

"This is an estimate, it's an ap-

proximate guess, but I would say we are somewhere between 96, 97 or 98-percent now," Liles added. "We are down to just a few hundred people in the entire county now."

Last fall, CenturyLink announced new service areas almost weekly, but that progress slowed during the winter months.

Just last week, however, CenturyLink officials announced that high speed Internet service had been made available to over 400 new customers and businesses in the county.

During Monday's meeting, Puryear asked Liles if CenturyLink would be willing to meet with commissioners and Randy King, president of Electronic Solutions, Inc., in an attempt to offer Internet service to areas of the county that do not have access.

Liles agreed to the meeting, which, Puryear said Tuesday, had not yet been scheduled.

Liles praised King last July for his efforts in getting the county to a more DSL-capable status.



Tim Chandler / C-T

INTERNET ACCESS — A CenturyLink map outlines where high speed Internet service is available in Person County. According to CenturyLink, the green areas represent those with Internet service. The red areas are those where no service is available and the blue area will be getting service within 45 days. The white area in the northwest portion is not in CenturyLink's service area.

Budget cuts at state level put strain on education

By GREY PENTECOST
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Person County's schools will continue to see a strain in resources in the upcoming school year due to cuts in the recently approved state budget for education.

In public schools, position allotments include an 18.8 percent reduction in assistant principals and a five percent reduction in instructional support.

Reductions were also made to central office, instructional supplies, textbooks, non-instructional support and transportation.

Funding for other programs was eliminated all together, including funding for mentors for beginning teachers. The N.C. Teaching Fellows program, which awards scholarships to students who agree to teach for four years in the state after graduating from college, is being phased out. The state will fulfill its commitment for the class of 2011-12.

Another big change was the moving of the More at Four program from the Department of Public Instruction to the Division of Child Development at

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Tim Chandler / C-T

SUMMER COLORS — The Perennial Garden at the Person County Museum of History is in full bloom.

Commission unanimously approves \$48.8 million budget

By TIM CHANDLER
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"I think 40,000 people in Person County benefitted from this budget."

Commissioner Sam Kennington made that statement Monday morning shortly after making a motion to adopt

a \$48.8 million budget ordinance for the upcoming fiscal year.

Commissioner Frances Blalock seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

The \$48,843,728 budget for the upcoming fiscal year, which begins July 1, is

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PCS fares well in EOG testing

Preliminary test scores reveal that Person County Schools (PCS) had nine of 10 schools meeting expected or high growth, and eight of 10 accomplishing gains in overall performance composites for the 2010-11 school year.

According to unofficial results, Helena, Stories Creek and Woodland elementary schools were recognized as Schools of Distinction achieving high growth under the North Carolina ABCs Accountability Model. Stories Creek increased its score this year to 87.17, from 82.19 in 2009-10. Helena's overall performance composite rose from 87.34 in 2009-10 to 89.1 in 2010-11, and Woodland's performance composite increased from 85.71 to 86.98.

Oak Lane Elementary and Southern Middle School were recognized as Schools of Distinction, meeting Expected Growth.

"In order for a school to be recognized as a School of Distinction, 80 percent or more of the students must be on grade level and progressing at the expected rate," explained PCS Director of Accountability Services Deanene Deaton in a press release.

Oak Lane's performance composite of 83.54 remained about the same as last year's score of 83.58. SMS achieved an 8.02 increase, going from 72.32 points last year to 80.343 this year.

"The hard work and determination of our students, coupled with our dedicated focus on student achievement is the key to our success," said SMS Principal John McCain in a press release. "We have great students with supportive parents. SMS teachers collaborate continually to create rich lessons embedded in higher order thinking skills and technology to engage our students."

North Elementary School with a score of 74.53, and North End Elementary with a score of 78.21 were both recognized as Schools of Progress meeting High

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The Courier-Times
"Weekly Poll"
This Week's Question:
Do you currently have high-speed internet service at your home?

- Yes, through CenturyLink
- Yes, through another provider
- No, it is not available where I live
- No, it is available, but I do not have it

Cast Your Vote On-Line At
www.roxboro-courier.com

Results of our latest poll:
What additional items do you think commissioners should approve in the upcoming budget for county employees?

- Merit pay - 14%
- An increase in 401K contributions - 2%
- An across the board COLA raise - 11%
- All of the above - 14%
- Two of the above - 9%
- None of the above - 50%

C-T conducting circulation drive

Circulation, Inc. of Albany Ga. is currently conducting a circulation drive over the phone for *The Courier-Times*. One-year subscriptions are being sold and all phone numbers in the Person County area will be called during the drive.

INSIDE Wednesday

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Rep. W.A. (Winkie) Wilkins

'Not everything in the budget is horrible'

Wilkins pleased with state funding for economic & job development, but unhappy with results for environmental protection & public education

By PHYLISS BOATWRIGHT
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"Not everything in the budget is horrible," state Rep. W.A. (Winkie) Wilkins, D-Person, said regarding the General Assembly's two-year state budget enacted last week.

On Tuesday, Wilkins told *The Courier-Times* that his "three big things" of economic development, job development and jobs maintenance funding were passed by the legislature.

Wilkins said there was "a lot of" economic development funding in the latest state budget, with lawmakers appropriating \$10

million in the One NC fund.

Jobs Development Investment Grants, (JDIG) which award annual cash grants to businesses that locate or expand in North Carolina, was "fully funded," Wilkins said, as was JMAC, the Jobs Maintenance and Capital Development Fund, which encourages retention of existing jobs.

"My Republican chairs were willing to listen to me and others," Wilkins said, on the subjects of economic development and job creation and retention.

But, he said, where other matters were concerned, there was not a lot of reaching across aisles.

"I'm very much concerned

about environmental protection," Wilkins said, saying that the state Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) funding had been "drastically slashed" in the latest state budget. He said DENR estimates it will lose "400-some positions"

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