

# County may lease building to COP

**By Diana McFarland**  
*News editor*

Leasing rather than buying the former health department building by Christian Outreach is an option being considered by the Board of Supervisors' building and grounds committee.

The two groups met last week to consider leasing the building for the amount of yearly property taxes which are slightly less than \$1,400 a year, said Isle of Wight Board of Supervisors Chairman Al Casteen, who is also a member of the building and grounds committee.

The lease arrangement would be similar to that between the county and the Luter Family YMCA. The YMCA, which began in the former Smithfield High School building on James Street, also pays the yearly property taxes as the lease amount, said Christian Outreach President Charlie Seitz.

The lease recommendation will go before the full Board of Supervisors at the Nov. 15 meeting.

Seitz was pleased with

the option because it would allow the non-profit group to put the \$75,000 it was going to use for buying the building into internal modifications and repairs, Seitz said.

The lease would be for 20-25 years with a possible renewal option, Casteen said.

"We felt that rather than dispose of the property for pennies on the dollar, it would be better to retain the building for right now and get some use out of it," Casteen said.

"This isn't going to fund the county budget, but we'll get something in return and won't take a loss on the building," he added.

The former health department building was one of several properties the county put up for sale as a way to balance the fiscal 2013 budget. So far, none of the properties, including the controversial Stoup property, have sold. During the first round of bidding, there were no bids on the former health department.

The 5,500 square foot health department building, constructed in the

1970s, is currently assessed at \$629,600 and is subject to Smithfield's downtown mixed-use zoning regulations.

Seitz said if the county declines the lease option, Christian Outreach will pursue the purchase of the building.

Earlier this month, the Board of Supervisors voted to remove the health department building from the list of properties to be marketed by a commercial real estate firm.

Christian Outreach will use the space to locate all the items it uses for its numerous programs, as well as provide an opportunity to streamline its food program, Seitz said. Currently, Christian Outreach operates out of a remote, unheated and un-air-conditioned building at Isle of the Wight Industrial Park.

Also, relocating to the former health department, which is located on Grace Street in Smithfield, will provide a safer and more accessible location for Christian Outreach volunteers, all of whom are getting older, Seitz said.