

# Meningitis Death Said No Cause For Alarm

BY SUSAN USHER

The death of a western Brunswick County preschooler from spinal meningitis two weeks ago was an isolated incident posing no community health threat, according to a local health official.

However, "The rumors have reached epidemic proportions," Superintendent of Schools Gene Yarbrough said at a Monday night meeting of the Brunswick County Board of Education. Only brief mention of the situation was made at the meeting.

Rumors suggested that additional cases of meningitis—sometimes called "spotted fever" because of the rash that sometimes accompanies it—had been confirmed, but Brunswick County Health Director Thomas Blum said that a survey conducted Sunday and Monday of area health facilities and in-county health professionals indicated otherwise.

"No additional cases or suspected cases of invasive meningococcal disease have been confirmed," he stated in a Tuesday news release.

Meanwhile, also on Monday, Union Primary School reported its highest number of absentees ever, more than 400 of its 752 students.

"About two-thirds of them were out," said Principal Freeman Gause, "probably because of that. They'll probably be back tomorrow."

The cause of the three-year-old's death was confirmed in lab results received last Wednesday as meningococcal meningitis.

The last known death in Brunswick County attributed to this form of meningitis, which happens to be the most common, was in October 1976, according to the State Center for Health Statistics in Raleigh. The last confirmed case, non-fatal, was in February 1978.

Meningitis is an acute inflammation of the membranes of the brain, spinal cord or both. It can be caused by bacteria, viruses, protozoa, yeasts or fungi.

It shares the symptoms of many other diseases, including a number of childhood ailments. Typically the disease "peaks," or reaches its most contagious stage, about four to five days after symptoms appear and a diagnosis can be made, Blum indicated. But medical experts don't know why some people can carry the disease and not become infected and others be exposed to, but never contract the disease.

Its after-effects can include deafness, paralysis, infection of the iris, arthritis and hydrocephalus, common called "water on the brain." It is usually treated with sulfa and antibiotic drugs.

In a memo to parents of Union Primary School students last Friday, the school advised that "there have been a few cases of illnesses that can be con-

tigious at Union Primary School", asking parents to contact a physician if their child contracted one or more of the following symptoms: high fever, stiff neck, increased irritability, colds, skin rashes and sore throats.

The memo was written at the central office and dictated to Freeman for release, he said.

A second memo went out Tuesday, this one from the Brunswick County Health Department. Like the school, the department has received "many, many telephone calls" on the subject.

In it, Blum said the procedures used in dealing with the case conform to those of the N.C. Division of Health Services, the Centers for Communicable Diseases, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Public Health Association.

"We referred the family to a private physician simply as a precaution," Blum said.

The immediate household was evaluated by a physician and Brunswick Hospital reviewed contacts employees may have had.

"Based on the directives for evaluating other sources of spread," said Blum, "they weren't affected." Therefore, additional measures involving other members of the public or other institutions such as the schools were not deemed necessary under these various guidelines.

Blum said he had recommended that anyone in close contact with the child who develops symptoms be referred to a physician. Also, a number of local physicians had called and discussed the incident with him, Blum added.

"I realize the flap in the community," he said. "I've tried to calm it down."

All four members of one family, Steve and Tina Ansley and their two children, are taking preventive medication as a voluntary precautionary measure, Mrs. Ansley said. The Ansleys are neighbors of the child who died; their children had played with the victim several days before his sudden illness and death. And at least one local drugstore ordered extra stock of the drug most commonly used for preventive treatment.

If further investigation and follow-up of the case indicates additional precautions are needed, "a change in procedures affecting the public's health," Blum said the health department will inform the community "immediately."

In any case, he said the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that throat cultures are not of value in deciding whether preventive treatment is necessary.

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# Proposed \$22.6 Million Budget Asks Four-Cent Tax Increase

BY SUSAN USHER

A proposed \$22.6 million 1985-86 county budget would require a four-cent increase in the property tax rate, the first in several years, but the accompanying \$3.2 million water budget projects no rate increase.

As presented Monday night to the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners, the budget includes \$4.1 million for the Brunswick County Board of Education and \$238,000 to Brunswick Technical College. It also suggests that, with the support of the commissioners, the college call for a bond referendum to meet its long-range development needs.

A public hearing on the budget is slated Thursday, June 13, at 7 p.m. in the public assembly building, with adoption of a final budget required by July 1.

In a related resolution adopted quietly by unanimous vote Monday, commissioners put agencies that receive county funding, such as Brunswick Technical College and the Brunswick County Board of Education, "on notice" that the commissioners want their employees to be residents of Brunswick County. The resolution goes into effect immediately.

In January commissioners adopted a requirement that all future county employees must become county residents within six months of hiring. The resolution adopted Monday advises local governmental and quasi-governmental agencies that their compliance with this "desire" of the commissioners shall be taken into consideration when the board discusses funding requests.

Contributions to agencies make up \$1,603,985 of the proposed budget, excluding contributions to funds for the public schools, health (\$605,000) and social services (\$855,000) departments, revaluation project (\$56,250) and debt service (\$4.17 million).

Developed during lengthy work sessions held by the commissioners and county staff, the proposed budget is founded on a tax valuation of \$2.15

billion. The proposed 63.5 cents per \$100 valuation tax rate, with a 95 percent collection rate, would generate \$12,969,875 in revenues, the largest source of income for the county. The figure reflects an increase of approximately \$1.1 million in ad valorem tax revenues from the current year that ends June 30.

County Manager William Carter said the budget gives "strong considerations" to education (\$5.5 million); park development (\$579,800) reorganization, public safety, and staff needs (21 new positions at \$267,434, including nine in the sheriff's department and one jailer).

### Water System

The water rate would remain at 94 cents per 1,000 gallons under the proposed water budget, with water sales of \$2.07 million and a \$866,381 supplement from the general fund the main sources of revenue. With added distribution lines and construction of the new 24mgd treatment plant, operating costs are expected to increase by about \$535,000. The increase includes seven new positions, which would bring the department to 27 employees.

Sales income is based on projections of 2,210.21 million gallons of water use per year, with Pfizer Chemical Inc. accounting for 76.55 percent of that usage.

### Education

Appropriations proposed for the public schools would include \$4.1 million for operations, about \$300,000 less than requested. The sum includes a 10 percent increase for salary and fringe benefits. Another \$1 million would be provided to meet the schools' basic capital outlay needs other than its construction program.

Of a proposed \$860,000 capital reserve fund basically financed by half-cent sales tax revenues, 40 percent would be set aside for the schools' future capital needs while 60 percent would be set aside for the county.

Brunswick Technical College

would receive \$208,000 for operating expenses and \$218,000 for capital needs, including the money needed to exercise a purchase option on land adjoining the campus.

### Fire And Rescue

Each of 19 fire departments and 10 rescue squads in the county would get \$10,000 this year, up from \$7,500. Also, a discretionary fund of \$50,000 per each of the five districts would be set up, but no distributions made until policies are adopted. Funding is included for new fire departments at Navassa and Northwest and one new rescue squad if they organize.

### Parks and Recreation

In addition to providing about \$580,000 to construct a new park in District 5 complete parks in Districts 2 and 3, and improve those in Districts 1 and 4, the parks and recreation budget reflects a proposal to upgrade three of the five laborers in the department to "park supervisor trainees." Each would be assigned maintenance and supervision of a township park. Programming and scheduling would remain centralized at the county office. Salaries would account for \$160,527 of the total \$940,431 budget.

### New Departments

Two new departments, construction and older adults, are expected to improve the delivery of services without increasing expenditures, Carter said.

### Other Agencies

The county's two chambers of commerce would get \$60,000 toward a promotional package, double the \$30,000 they received last year, but less than the \$100,000 they requested. In addition to \$5,000 each for the N.C. Fourth of July and Oyster Festivals, the budget reflects identical contributions to the Navassa Homecoming Parade and the N.C. Festival By the Sea at Holden Beach.

A \$50,000 request from the Brunswick Bay Artificial Reef Association would be cut to \$25,000. Airports on Long Beach Road and at Ocean Isle would get \$10,000 each,

while the county library would get \$105,000.

Other contributions include the forestry service, \$92,284; Southeastern Mental Health, \$125,260; Task Force Against Family Violence, \$2,500; Resources Development Commission, \$112,500; public radio, \$1,000; Offender Aid and Restoration, \$4,214; Lower Cape Fear Hospice, \$300; Special Olympics, \$3,000; and SENClad Community Action, \$5,000.

### Department Run-Down

A breakdown by the proposed budget by department (excluding contributions to agencies and funds) follows:

- Governing Body, \$134,386, includes wages of \$40,545 and per diem of \$30,890 for the commissioners, plus the clerk's salary and \$14,100 for codification of the county's ordinances.
- Public Inspections, \$96,246, a new department required by state law, includes two new positions, building inspector and office operator.
- Public Utilities, \$137,482, the county engineer's office, includes two new positions, soil scientist and secretary.
- Administration, \$123,795, includes a new receptionist for the administrative building.
- Board of Elections, \$139,562.
- Planning, \$130,263, including \$5,000 per diem for planning board members.
- Management and Clerical Support, \$88,000.
- Finance and Purchasing, \$158,540.
- Computer Services, \$106,798.
- Tax Supervisor, \$384,585.
- Tax Collector, \$190,403.
- County Attorney, \$176,506, including \$100,000 for professional services such as expert witnesses, court recorders, etc.
- Register of Deeds, \$250,000, includes a new deputy register of deeds.
- Housekeeping, \$167,748.
- Building and Grounds, \$504,370, (See TAX, Page 2-A)



SAM STALLINGS, left, New Hanover County Prison superintendent, with the help of Brunswick County Sheriff's deputies, lead escapee Hoydt Rogers from the Holden Beach surf.

## Escapee Swims Into Officers' Custody

A New Hanover County prison escapee serving a one-year sentence for driving while impaired was captured in the surf after a long swim at Holden Beach last Wednesday afternoon.

Hoydt Rogers, 38, of the New Hanover County Prison Subsidiary, disappeared from a road gang while he was working near Varnumtown around 12:20 p.m. He was captured by prison officials and Brunswick County law enforcement officers about four hours later.

"It was a rather bizarre incident," recalled Brunswick County Sheriff John Carr Davis. Davis said he received a visit from prison superintendent Sam Stallings around 12:30 p.m. to assist in locating the suspect.

It is believed Rogers swam from Brown's Landing near Varnumtown across the Intracoastal Waterway to the Holden Beach east end. After reports of his escape were aired over local radio stations, some residents reported seeing a man matching the description walking along the east end of the beach, Davis said.

Davis then contacted Holden Beach Police Chief Raymond Simpson, and together they went hunting for the suspect on the east end and

began following some tracks. "The chief and I approached this man in swimming trunks," Davis said. "The chief said, 'I'd like to talk to you.' But he ran and jumped in the surf."

Davis said the suspect began swimming up and down the shoreline just beyond the breakers. An Oak Island U.S. Coast Guard boat was also called to the scene, but did not try to apprehend the suspect.

For the officers on the shore, it became a waiting game. As many as 15 officers had gathered along the beach strand.

"Sooner or later, he had to get tired and come out of the water," Davis said. After swimming for about an hour, Rogers moved closer to shore, where Stallings had already kicked off his shoes and began wading into the surf after the suspect.

After identifying Rogers as the escapee, he was handcuffed and taken back to the facility in New Hanover County. Rogers will face trial in court for his escape and could receive an added three months to a year in prison.

"That's unfortunate," Davis said. "The fellow was putting in a year for DWI and will probably get another six months for escape."

## Deputy Defends Actions Following His Dismissal

BY TERRY POPE

A Brunswick County sheriff's deputy dismissed from his job for his handling of a recent rape case in Shallotte claims he did nothing wrong and wants his job back.

Sgt. Jody Nance of Calabash was fired from his job last week by Sheriff John Carr Davis after the officer refused to resign. Davis asked for Nance's resignation from the department after learning that the victim of a May 25 rape at the Oasis Food Mart in Shallotte had notified Nance at the sheriff's department just minutes before the crime.

According to Davis, the clerk at the

Oasis called the sheriff's department prior to the alleged rape and asked to speak to Nance. She then gave Nance some information about a suspicious suspect loitering outside the store, Davis said.

Twenty minutes later, she called back and told Nance that she had been raped, Davis said. An officer was not dispatched to the store until after the second call.

"My point is that an officer should have been sent," Davis said, "even if she hadn't asked for one. Since it was in the city of Shallotte, Jody should have asked that one of their officers respond."

Nance, an eight-year veteran with the department, was the shift sergeant on duty the morning of the alleged rape. He stated Monday that in the first telephone call, sometime around 6 a.m., the clerk gave him a man's name and asked him to "see what I could find out about him," a request he said he gets frequently from people he knows on his usual beat.

"She never asked that I send someone," Nance said. "She never expressed if he was still there or not." Nance said he used the name the clerk gave him to run through the department's Police Information

Network computer. It was later discovered that the name was wrong, but that the information was enough to pursue a suspect in the case.

Later Saturday, Shallotte Police Sgt. Rodney Gause arrested Elwood Pigott, 22, of Mulberry Street, Shallotte, at his place of work and charged him with the alleged first-degree rape.

Davis said Monday there is a witness who was at the store the morning of the rape that overheard the clerk ask for an officer during the initial telephone conversation. Nance said his only proof that she did not

(See DEPUTY, Page 2-A)