

County Will Save Interest Costs By Refinancing 1982 Water Bonds

BY SUSAN USHER

Brunswick County plans to save money by selling new bonds at current interest rates, using the proceeds to pay off old bonds sold in 1982 at a higher cost.

Commissioners approved the procedure, called "advance refunding," Monday night at the suggestion of Finance Director Wallace Herding.

Hardened likened the method to refinancing of a home mortgage when the interest rate drops.

Citing a decline in interest rates of about four percent since 1982, he added, "It's an opportunity that doesn't happen very often."

At an interest cost of 8 percent or less, Harding said, the county can expect to realize a savings in interest cost of about \$700,000 over the life of the issue, plus recovery of the expense of the sale.

The county will pay Alex Brown & Son of Baltimore, Md., \$18,500 to handle the refunding. Plans are to keep costs to a minimum by scheduling the issuance of the new bonds in conjunction with the Sept. 10 sale of the last \$10 million of the \$37 general obligation bond issue for construction of the water system.

Alex Brown & Sons was one of three firms that submitted proposals for handling the sale. They projected net interest costs of 7.3 percent to 8.67 percent, with rates the date of the sale the only ones that count. Fees ranged from Evans & Dodge's \$32,000 to Brown & Son's low of \$18,500.

Quick action on the sale is important, Harding said, while interest rates are on the decline and because President Reagan's tax reform package proposes elimination of the program.

With an early sale the county can avoid an anticipate glut of issues—and therefore higher interest costs—toward the end of the year. If sold before October 1, instead of paying the bond interest due then, the county can instead put the cash into the escrow account along with proceeds of the sale.

The escrowed funds would be used to pay off the old bonds and to "call" them in 1992. With the escrow account in place, the old bonds will automatically attain an AAA bond

rating.

The \$3.9 million in outstanding bonds are from the sale of \$5 million in water bonds in 1982 at an 11.3 percent net interest cost.

Animal Control

Commissioners adopted a new animal control ordinance, repealing the old one.

Use of the specific word "slain" was deleted from the ordinance at Commissioner Grace Beasley's suggestion and in spite of concerns expressed by the Brunswick County Board of Health. But County Attorney David Clegg said the ordinance provides a "broader meaning" in interpreting the options available to an animal control officer in "immobilizing" a vicious or dangerous animal. It could mean to kill or shoot, he said.

Ms. Beasley said her concern was that an officer might choose to shoot in a situation in which a large, but not vicious, animal evaded capture.

Health Director Thomas Blum said the department has a clear policy on when hand guns may or may not be used.

The animal control ordinance was revised and strengthened partly in response to concerns expressed by residents of Sea Trail community near Sunset Beach.

Second Bridge

Oak Island will someday have a second bridge to the mainland, if the N.C. Department of Transportation heeds the suggestion of county commissioners.

At Commissioner Frankie Rabon's request, the board unanimously adopted a resolution Monday calling for priority status in the next transportation improvement plan for highway access—a bridge or ferry—from island's west end to Sunset Harbor.

Island residents have complained intermittently for a number of years that their only access bridge routes traffic through the warning area for the Carolina Power & Light Co.'s Brunswick Plant and concentrates traffic on the island's east end.

Parking

Liston Hawes, chief civil deputy of the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department told commissioners the

county needs to build a parking area so that confiscated material can be stored in a central location.

As it is, Hawes said he had vehicles, equipment and furniture stored from one end of the county to another at costs ranging from \$3.50 to \$5 per day, including one bulldozer in the county's possession since April 1984. Storage of 150 to 200 days is not unusual, county attorney David Clegg said.

Commissioners agreed to consider the idea, saying any lot built on the complex grounds should be coordinated with the overall building plan, which currently calls for jail expansion, a new courtroom facility and emergency management command center. Estimates will be obtained before the Aug. 5 meeting for fencing and lighting a specific site on the grounds. Storage costs can be recouped by the county.

Spot-Check

Commissioners agreed to add another service to those available on request from the building inspections office.

At \$17 per trip, an inspector can be asked to inspect a structure in advance of relocation within the county and advise whether it is structurally sound and can be fixed up to meet state building code requirements.

For structures moved in from outside the county, Harvey would require a similar written assurance or certification of the building's character.

Other Business

In other business, commissioners: •Learned that Commissioners Chris Chappell, Jim Poole and Frankie Rabon attended the National Association of Counties annual conference in Orlando, Fla., July 13-16, along with County Manager Billy Carter, Clerk Regina White and Register of Deeds Robert Robinson. The commissioners accepted achievement awards presented to the emergency management and recreation departments.

•Accepted from Branchwood Bay near Ocean Isle Beach the first petitions submitted under a new state law that allows the county to reimburse a third party for advancing funds to cover installation of water

distribution lines in an existing, sold-out subdivision. A public hearing will be held Aug. 5 at 5:30 p.m. in the commissioners' chambers.

•Accepted petitions requesting the state to upgrade maintenance on S.R. 1192 and Georgetown Road from N.C. 179 to N.C. 904.

•Heard from Dorene Vereen, special populations coordinator with the Brunswick County Parks and Recreation Department, and William "Hobe" Millard of Oak Island, chairman of the Region O Senior Games, on the fun Brunswick County seniors had competing in the games. Chairman Chris Chappell had certificates for medalists and other participants.

•Approved a single bid of \$17,500 from Bennett's Inc. of Lumberton for a used roll-off truck to back up the new truck used to empty 40-yard gar-

bage containers. They decided against re-advertising when Landfill Director Major White said the trucks are hard to find.

•Approved a contract with the Lower Cape Fear Water & Sewer Authority for return of unspent county bond revenues designated for the regional water line construction project. The county, the authority's only customer, will use the funds to pay the authority.

•Approved a contract with the Leland Sanitary District for purchase of treated water from the county. Final approval had been contingent upon approval by the Farmers Home Administration.

•Approved an agreement with the Town of Bolivia governing easements for installation of water lines through the town.

•Approved a second water line

easement and right-of-way agreement with Seaboard Systems Railroad.

•Designated Chairman Chris Chappell delegate and Vice Chairman Jim Poole alternate to the N.C. Association of County Commissioners annual conference.

•Approved construction change orders of \$11,254 for the water treatment plant and reduced retainage for Triplex Construction Inc. from 10 percent to 5 percent (\$4,506) since more than 50 percent of the work is completed.

•Agreed to invite parties involved in Southeastern Mental Health's drug and alcohol rehabilitation program to the board's Aug. 5 meeting to discuss available services.

•Heard an activity report from Office On Aging Director Ronnie Robinson.

Ocean Isle Beach Obtains Last Of Land For System

Ocean Isle Beach commissioners met briefly Friday morning to complete property acquisition for the town's sewer system so that construction can begin in early August.

The board authorized Mayor LaDane Bullington to enter into contract with developer Odell Williamson. In lieu of a cash purchase, members agreed to provide him 75 future connections to the system in exchange for two tracts of land.

For one 8-acre tract of land in the vicinity of the proposed sewer treatment plant, Williamson agreed on a value of \$1,250 per acre. That's the offered price an adjoining property owner, International Paper Co., has rejected in condemnation proceedings to obtain land for the treatment plant.

The other tract, valued at \$50,000, is located near Laurinburg Street and will be the site of the main pump

station for the collection system.

Mayor Bullington said the special meeting was called because the land transactions had to be completed before the town could apply for Clean Water Bond funds from the state.

Half of the grant, or about \$208,000, will be paid immediately after the application is submitted, the mayor said. The remaining half will be paid out once half of the work is completed.

Leland Woman To Serve Three-Year Sentence

A Leland woman sentenced in May to three years in prison for setting fire to a dwelling house has decided not to appeal her conviction to the N.C. Court of Appeals.

Rebecca Sneed Gaylor was found guilty by a Brunswick County jury in May of setting fire to a mobile home in Leland in 1984. She was sentenced by Judge B. Craig Ellis to three years in prison after the jury found her guilty following 90 minutes of deliberations.

Following her trial in May, Ms. Gaylor's attorney, Michael Ramos of Shallotte, filed immediate notice of appeal, but that appeal was

withdrawn Monday morning in Superior Court.

Ramos said Ms. Gaylor has decided to accept the judgement of the court and asked that the court accept a motion to withdraw the appeal. Judge Preston Cornelius approved the motion Monday.

Ms. Gaylor was charged last year with setting fire to a dwelling house by Brunswick County Sheriff's Detective Douglas "Sonny" Padgett

in a fire that destroyed an unoccupied mobile home.

Setting fire to a dwelling house carries a maximum sentence of ten years in prison and a minimum sentence of three years. In sentencing Ms. Gaylor, Judge Ellis also ordered that she be made immediately eligible for work release and that she receive psychiatric evaluation and substance abuse evaluation and treatment as necessary.

Caw Caw Watershed Maintenance Subject Of Continuing Dispute

BY SUSAN USHER

An extensive agricultural drainage project in the south end of the county has steadily deteriorated over the past 10 years because it has not been maintained, Brunswick County commissioners learned Monday night.

At question is who is responsible for maintenance of 16½ miles of channel in the Caw Caw Watershed, formerly known as Brunswick County Drainage District No. 1: the county or the abutting property owners? County commissioners will meet with soil conservation officials, the county engineer, and mosquito control employees Monday, Aug. 26, in the commissioners' chambers at 1 p.m. to take up the issue for the first time since 1983.

In an August 8, 1983, letter and at a subsequent meeting, the Carolina Shores Property Owners Association asked the county to authorize maintenance of the ditch system from Shingletree Road to U.S. 17. No board action was taken.

Before the August meeting, Chairman Chris Chappell suggested board members begin to research a thick file on the subject housed in the clerk of court's office.

"I'm in the district," he said. "We need it resolved. At the same time, I can see millions of tax dollars involved. If we go into one area, we will have to go into others." He suggested all properties that drain into the system share its maintenance, including Carolina Shores development.

Of particular concern to the county, he noted, are new restrictions on how mosquito control funds are spent. Where once a majority could be used for drainage ditching, the percentage is now limited to 35 percent of the budget.

Who's Responsible?

District Conservatorist Maynard Owens of the U.S. Soil Conservation Service told the board that on August 13, 1976, a Brunswick County Board of Commissioners agreed to assume maintenance of the project at the request of the watershed district's commissioners.

"Whether it is the county's responsibility now I wouldn't say, but the commissioners at that time assured us it was," he said.

After agreeing to maintain the channels, board minutes also show that on Nov. 15, 1976, commissioners agreed to pay off about \$5,600 owed the district in overdue assessments.

Then in Brunswick County District Court proceedings on Dec. 1, 1976, Owens said, Clerk of Court Jack Brown purportedly abolished the watershed district "as if it never existed." The action was taken upon petition of the district's commissioners and upon the assumption that the county would assume maintenance.

No Authority?

Attorney David Clegg questioned whether it was within Brown's authority to dissolve the district.

"I don't think it is legal. I don't think he ever had authority to disband it. He didn't have the authority to create it."

In Clegg's opinion, the water district was a subdivision of the state and could not be dissolved without action of the legislature.

Former drainage district commissioner James Bellamy said he felt Brown was in error when he dissolved the district. But Bellamy insisted clerks of court can create, if not dissolve, drainage districts because he's seen it done.

To confuse the issue further, in 1977, then county attorney John Hughes affirmed in writing the county's intention to maintain the project.

The ditching was begun in 1969 in the Hickman's Crossroads-Calabash area and was completed in 1967. It was constructed with predominantly federal funds with the understanding the project would be maintained, Owens and County Manager Billy Carter said.

A district was established so that individuals whose property drained into the channels could share in the cost of maintenance by paying regular assessments, Owens said.

Some never paid their initial assessments, but paid annual

maintenance assessments, Bellamy added.

Drainage district commissioners were appointed by the clerk of court rather than elected, he said. When district issues became "kind of politically sensitive," he added, the county commissioners agreed to take over maintenance and pay off the overdue assessments.

In 1966 the watershed district commissioners signed a maintenance agreement with the U.S. Soil Conservation Service agreeing to a program of regular maintenance and inspections.

But 1974 was the last year the channels received regular maintenance.

Channels Inspected

In a May 3 inspection of three project channels, Owens said, team members found channel obstructions from beaver activity, as well as silting, sand bars and small hardwood trees that restrict water flow in a number of areas.

Right now, he said, the bottom needs to be cleared of obstructions. "It's at the stage where it is going to get progressively worse unless something is done."

"I wanted to see if we could come up with something collectively."

Overflow Problems

In his August 1983 letter, Carolina Shores POA President Wesley Reynolds said that during periods of heavy rainfall the ditches from S.R. 1167 to U.S. 17 couldn't handle the outflow.

"Water has backed up and overflowed onto Carolina Shores properties and properties below, with both streets and properties under water," he advised.

Owens said Monday that as development in the area continues, the rate of runoff will increase beyond the channel's capacity.

Any attempts to clean out just those ditches at the upper end of Carolina Shores, he said, would help the immediate area while hurting those downstream. The idea behind the district was to provide for maintenance of all the waterways so as to avoid flooding problems.

One Inch Of Rain Expected

Some badly-needed rain is in the forecast for the South Brunswick Islands over the next few days.

Shallotte Point meteorologist Jackson Canady said Tuesday that the outlook calls for above-average rainfall and near-normal temperatures. The area should receive about one inch of rain, with temperatures ranging from nighttime lows around 70 degrees to daytime highs of around 90 degrees.

During the period July 16-22, both temperatures and rainfall zoomed upward. Canady measured 1.4 inches of rain in his backyard gauge, while the mercury registered a maximum high of 101 degrees on the 18th.

A minimum low of 61 degrees was recorded on the 19th.

An average daily high of 91 degrees combined with an average daily low of 69 degrees, for an average weekly temperature of 80 degrees.

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Deputies Recover \$11,500 in Goods

Brunswick County sheriff's deputies recovered property valued at \$11,500 in June, according to the department's monthly report.

Officers also made 16 arrests as prosecuting witnesses, answered 729 calls, handled 221 investigations, and attended 15 crime prevention meetings.

They summoned 65 witnesses and three jurors to court, served 364 civil

papers, one juvenile petition, 207 local warrants and 41 foreign warrants, and four mental and inebriate papers. They made 10 trips out of the county.

They logged 320 court hours as duty officer, 54 hours in court on duty and 11 while off duty.

Their vehicles logged 645,960 miles, consuming 4,040 gallons of gas and nine quarts of oil.

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