

Commissioners Say They Won't Pay For New Service Program

BY SUSAN USHER

What does a county do when the state mandates a new local program, but doesn't provide the funds to operate it?

Monday night, the Brunswick County Commissioners decided to find out what happens when a county fights back. They voted not to fund the \$50,000 or more Social Services Director Jamie Orrock estimated it would cost to operate a new emergency assistance program for families with dependent children. The motion also directed Attorney David Clegg to explore the county's options.

"I think it's time," said Commissioner Frankie Rabon, to see if the county has the authority to refuse to fund such a program. Chairman Chris Chappell was of the same voice, though wary of the consequences.

"I don't know—they may put us in jail," he said.

County Manager Billy Carter and Orrock said the state, "to get your attention" is more likely to deny the county reimbursement for funds it spends in all programs, not just those in the social services department.

No ready estimate of how much those reimbursements total was available Monday night.

The commissioners had balked before at similar proposals, but funded them at the minimum level asked by the state. This program was created after the county adopted its budget in June and it was unprepared to meet the new financial obligation.

Monday night, Orrock even admitted he had his doubts about the validity of the program, saying portions of the program appear to duplicate existing ones and that money might better be channeled into existing programs. He said the program's definition of "emergency" was weak and the income guidelines liberal. "I missed the income qualifications by \$500, if that tells you anything," he told the board.

But to meet his legal obligations as director of the social services agency, DSS will begin taking applications and forwarding them to the commissioners for funding as required by law.

The program is to go into effect Nov. 1, and is funded 50 percent by the federal government and 25 percent each by the county and state.

In addition to meeting income and asset requirements, the identically-constituted household can not receive more than \$500 during a 30-day period within any 12-month period.

The AFDC-Emergency Aid program is intended to assist needy children and their household in emergency situations. Funds can be used to pay for temporary shelter or transportation, certain home repairs, clothing, blankets and food, rent if the family faces eviction, or utility payment to have service reconnected.

Commissioners also heard from Orrock on the department's need for more space in the near future. He said employees were "doubling up" in offices which was interfering with the confidentiality of client interviews. The board also designated DSS the lead agency for the aging and community alternatives programs, retaining the right to change it any time.

Other Business

In other business commissioners:

- Met in executive session for approximately one hour to discuss land acquisition, personnel matters, attorney-client matters and independent contractor, taking no action.

- Voted 3 to 2, on a motion by Commissioner Benny Ludlum, to buy property for \$1,500 from Boyd Mintz in Northwest Township for a Hood's Creek Community Building. Board members disagreed in their recollection of previous action, with Chairman Chris Chappell, District 5 Commissioner Grace Beasley and Attorney David Clegg saying the purchase was to have been tied to whether the land, when combined with adjoining property available from Oakwood Homes, would be spacious enough and suitable for the center and its necessary septic tank and parking area. Chappell and Beasley voted against the motion.

- Interviewed candidates for a computer analyst job on Monday and interviewed candidates for a soil scientist post on Tuesday, with those interviews continued to Monday, Oct. 13, at 4:30 p.m.

- Tabled indefinitely, on a motion by Benny Ludlum, a request from Darry Somerset, construction department head, to advertise bids for a new or used dragline. Somerset, who said the dragline is

needed to dig a new hole at the landfill, is to compile figures on cost of the machine and its operator. He said the equipment would run between \$150,000 and \$200,000. It was not in the budget.

- Heard from Chester Parrish and a group of Brickland area residents on the subject of water, specifically a public access spout for use by residents not served by county water lines proposed by Parrish at an earlier meeting. The commissioners said the matter would be taken up by the utility operation board.

- Directed the county attorney to draft another resolution regarding S.R. 1528 near Southport. At the request of Pfizer, CP&I, and the county, DOT abandoned maintenance of the road in 1984 and Pfizer erected three gates and a barbed-wire fence. Commissioners say they were misinformed by the firms that there were no other property owners on the road, but in 1985 they learned that the gates barred Joe Cochran from his 8.3 acres.

The county has since retracted its support for the abandonment and sought responses to no avail from DOT officials and Pfizer. Cochran, who said he wants access to his property without filing suit, asked the county's assistance again in the matter.

Clegg said the resolution had questionable authority, but would help the county in accumulating supporting material for any future court case in which it might be a party of interest. The county has not filed a formal complaint with DOT, but could, he added.

- Heard requests from Zack Smith of the Cox's Landing (Sunset Harbor) area for the N.C. Department of Transportation to give attention to S.R. 1114, S.R. 1193 and S.R. 1182, which need reeking and scraping, drainage and a bus turn-around respectively.

- Following a brief public hearing, on a motion by Frankie Rabon, certified Camelot Drive in Marlee Acres as eligible for water line construction under a cost assessment program in which land owners pay back funds advanced by the county. A spokesman said 95 percent of the owners had signed the required petition.

Funding For Position Denied

After questioning Soil & Water Conservation District Conservationist Michael Washington for two hours Monday, Brunswick County Commissioners voted 4 to 1 not to pay up to \$7,500 for a soil technician's position in the district office.

The technician would have been hired to assist farmers to implement conservation practice improvements on their farms, such as hog parlor lagoons.

"I'm looking at it two ways, to help the farmer and pollution," said Commissioner Benny Ludlum, whose motion was defeated.

By spending \$5,500, he said, the county could get \$92,000 in direct aid to farmers for projects they will be

required to have sooner or later.

The office serves the entire county. Washington said the technician is needed to help administer \$92,000 available to local farmers to apply certain conservation practices on their farms. Under the 1985 Farm Bill, the farmers will be required in future years to have the practices in place to qualify for commodity support or any other federal assistance programs, he said.

So far, he has received five applications totaling \$40,000 and ranging from a low of \$300 to the maximum of \$15,000. The applications come from across the county, from Northwest Township to Longwood, which means more time will be re-

quired in supervising the projects once they begin.

However, commissioners questioned whether not funding the county's 50 percent share of the position's cost would keep local farmers from getting the assistance. Washington said it would keep them from getting it in a timely fashion. He said he would fit the work in between other job responsibilities such as preparing conservation plans for all farms foreclosed by the Federal Land Bank.

Commissioners also questioned why half-time technician Harrell Baker couldn't assist with the program, even though he is a federal employee, not state. His retirement status was also questioned, with Washington saying he would pick up Baker's workload if he were to retire.

Chairman Chappell cited the position as a job that could mushroom into a full-time county-paid position.

He said he'd rather wait on it, adding, "In hindsight I wish I had waited and let the state implement the building inspection program." Just ahead of a state deadline, the county implemented its own inspection program in 1985.

After voting, Commissioner Grace Beasley added in regard to the program proposal, "I still don't understand it."

It's Christmas Parade Time

With temperatures hovering in the 80s and 90s, it's hard to believe. But it's almost time for Santa Claus to make his annual ride through Shallotte.

Meeting last Wednesday night, town aldermen announced that the Shallotte Christmas Parade will be held on its usual date, the first Saturday in December, or Dec. 6. It will begin at 10 a.m.

Once again, Santa Claus will be the guest of honor, riding atop a Shallotte VFD engine at the end of the parade and handing out candy to children.

As in past years, 15 commercial floats will be available for rent by local businesses. Lena Mae Causey, at Shallotte Marina, will handle reservations again this year. Cost is \$200 for a full float and \$125 for a half float.

The fee for other commercial entries will be \$35. Church, youth, civic and other non-profit groups can enter at no charge. They can sign up by calling any town board member.

This year's event will follow the same route as a year ago, with entries forming up at Shallotte Middle School. From there the route goes to the south U.S. 17 stoplight, then north along Main Street to the United Carolina Bank parking lot at the north end of town. Through traffic will be rerouted during the parade.

"It's about the only route we can handle," said Mayor Jerry Jones. Local schools will receive letters inviting their participation.

Originally begun the Shallotte Jaycees in the 1960s, the parade was taken over by the town approximately six years ago. Volunteer assistance is welcome.

Shallotte To Negotiate Contract

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Pick-up hours would be restricted to between 7 a.m. and 6 p.m., with the vendor given no more than 24 hours to make up missed pick-ups or to respond to customer complaints.

Aldermen said they understood Chambers crews would pick up up to five additional bagged loads of trash in addition to the 90-gallon container.

Also, the town proposes to make up a list of residents not physically able to handle the carts, which would be rolled curbside on pickup days. These sites would be tagged in some so crews would know to move the containers themselves.

Currently weekly pickup is anticipated for residences and twice-weekly pickup for commercial establishments. Any additional collections would have to be negotiated between the business and the vendor. Businesses would have the option of renting more container space.

Chambers expects to haul the trash it collects in Shallotte to the county landfill at Supply.

Other Business

In other business, the board:

- Met behind closed doors for about one hour to discuss a personnel matter in the police department, taking no action.

- Agreed to send a letter endorsing the efforts of a non-profit county group, Tar Heels Against Drug Abuse (T.H.A.D.), that hopes to expand its education program statewide.

County Would Like Market

Brunswick County Commissioners want their state legislative delegation to lobby harder for a farmer's market in Brunswick County as a boost to an endangered farm economy.

Monday night they directed County Attorney David Clegg to draft a resolution to local legislators urging them to support location of the market in the county or nearby. Albert Parker of Supply was appointed during the summer to the committee that will govern the location and operation of the market, one of two to be built in the state.

Duplin County has already launched a strong lobbying effort and Castle Hayne is also interested in the eastern market locating there, according to Jeanette King and Bertie Faye King of the United Farmers Organization.

Warning that one agency alone, the Federal Land Bank, plans to

foreclose on 20 county farms in 1986, the Kings also told commissioners the state should provide financial assistance to all types of farmers now in crisis situations. Chappell said their aid resolution has been adopted by the county board and the state association of county commissioners and would be forwarded to the General Assembly. Helping farmers continue to farm, said Jeanette King, could help keep them off the county's welfare rolls.

"It's going to take farmers getting together to get it (the family farm) back again," she said, warning that the alternative is corporate farming.

Without the family farm, she suggested, "if you think food prices are high now, let me tell you something, you don't know nothing yet."

Testimony Begins In Long Trial

(Continued From Page 1-A)

Discoveries included telephone wires disconnected from the telephone box on the side of the house, a partially smoked pack of Winston Light cigarettes in one wooded area near the driveway, two or three butts of the same brand of cigarettes and some pallets in a corner of the yard, and a fifth of bourbon, a personal letter addressed to Long, and a carton of Winston Lights in the truck.

Also introduced into evidence in the closing moments of Tuesday's session were a bra and blouse, supposedly worn by Mrs. Long, which Burgess delivered to a chemical laboratory for testing.

The trial is expected to continue throughout the week and possibly into next week, with both attorneys promising surprises.

William Shell of Wilmington is representing Long, and Assistant District Attorney Tom Hicks is prosecuting the case.

Hicks said that because the charge is first degree murder, the punishment will be up to the jury, if Long is found guilty. Jurors were questioned during the selection period concerning their feelings about the death penalty.

Seated behind Long at all times during the trial are his two adult step-children, Bruce and Sharon, Mrs. Long's children.

Accompanying Thomas in court each day is his father, C.O. Thomas of Leland.

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