

More Decisions

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The board tabled action on a recommendation to bring hook-up charges in line with actual costs and then adjust them annually. Several members said they wanted to see a breakdown of those costs first.

Currently the county charges \$250, plus a \$25 deposit, though the average cost is \$360 for parts and labor only, not overhead.

Once commissioners look at the cost of hook-ups, they will consider whether to offer a short-term discount as a means of signing on new customers along both new and existing water lines. The rate of hook-up varies from 40 percent to 80 percent along existing lines. Planning Director John Harvey said.

In related decisions, commissioners agreed to several other recommendations of the Utilities Operations Board; they:

- Appointed Planning Director John Harvey as staff administrator for the Utilities Operations Board, with the understanding other support personnel such as legal counsel and engineering consultants would be provided as needed.
- Approved a resolution authorizing the utilities board to act as the county's agent on most matters dealing

with special assessments; and

- Agreeing to consider "hardship cases" on a case by case basis. In general, assessments for water line installation are expected to be paid when due, else a lien is placed against the property, the first step in foreclosure proceedings. In hardship cases the county could simply delay foreclosure, giving a property owner more time to pay with only interest added to the bill.

- Agreed on what costs are to be assessed all property owners in a district slated to receive water, such as construction, legal, right-of-way acquisition and administrative costs. Excluded will be costs that benefit a broader group of water customers and qualifying as capital projects, such as elevated and ground storage tanks, pumping stations and most trunk lines of more than six inches in diameter, except where a larger size is the minimum required to serve a community. Policies regarding boring under highways and other water-related issues will be adopted later.

Said Nubel, "There are a number of things you can't spell out in advance. You can't anticipate every possible change we might run up against."



STAFF PHOTO BY JOHNNY CRAIG

New Officers Confer

Recently-elected officers of the Brunswick Islands Board of Realtors talk about ideas for the 1987 year. New officers include (from left), president Patti Lewellyn, N.C. Association of Realtors regional vice-president Emily Willetts, vice-president Gay Atkins and secretary-treasurer Mary Allen.

Seat Belt Law Has Exemptions

BY MARJORIE MEGIVERN

The North Carolina law requiring the use of car seatbelts by both drivers and passengers has been in effect nearly a month, and there is still some confusion about exemptions to it.

The law, passed in October 1985 by the General Assembly, requires every front-seat occupant to be secured by a seat safety belt.

There are, however, several exemptions. The law does not apply, for instance, to persons with medical or physical conditions that prevent restraint by a belt, or with a certified mental phobia against the wearing of vehicle restraints.

Others exempted include:

- rural letter carriers;
- drivers stopping and leaving their vehicles or delivering property from the vehicle, if the speed between stops does not exceed 20 miles per hour;
- those in vehicles registered as a property-carrying vehicle and used for agricultural or commercial purposes;
- those in vehicles not required to be equipped with seat safety belts under federal law, including vehicles manufactured before 1968.

While all drivers and front seat passengers age six and older are covered by the law, legal responsibility for violation of it rests only with those 16 years old and older. The driver of a vehicle is legally responsible for restraint of passengers between the ages of six and sixteen.

The safety of children under six is covered under the Child Passenger Protection Law that requires a child passenger restraint seat. Children under age three must be in a safety seat, while those three to six have the option of a car seat belt.

Some cars are equipped with lap belts only, while others have both lap and shoulder restraints. The law requires the use of whatever is provided, even if it's both kinds of belts.

If a passenger is found unbuckled,

the driver is not held responsible unless the violator is under 16 years of age.

Vehicles from other states or other countries are equally subject to the law, unless they have commercial or farm license plates, and then are exempt only while being used for business purposes.

For pregnant women and anyone too large to be encompassed by the belt, there are extenders available for a small fee. The parts department of a local automobile dealer can provide ten-inch lengths of webbing to fit onto the existing belt.

The question is sometimes raised as to whether seat belts can cause injuries. In severe crashes their use can result in bruises and cracked collar bones and ribs, considered minor injuries compared to the consequences of failure to wear a belt.

While violators have been subject to a \$25 fine since Jan. 1, many law enforcement agencies say they won't stop drivers just to inspect seat belts and will issue tickets only when the driver has been stopped for another offense.

Don Stovall, Charlotte police chief, said, "We won't set up any road blocks or consider lack of a belt cause for stopping anyone, but if we stop somebody for another reason, we'll cite them if they don't have the belt buckled."

Stovall noted the high incidence of traffic deaths in the state. "Three times more people are killed in auto accidents as are murdered, and three times more are seriously injured that way than robbed," he said.

He added that the economic impacts of auto accidents is six times higher than the value of property stolen.

Each year approximately 1,400 people are killed and 14,000 injured in automobile accidents in North Carolina. This is the leading killer for people age 40 and under in the state, according to Stovall.

Energy Management Could Improve, Though County Does A 'Good Job'

BY SUSAN USHER

An energy consultant whose firm spotted a \$7,600 error in a county electric bill told Brunswick County commissioners Monday night that an energy accounting system would insure that such a mistake doesn't go unnoticed again.

The accounting system was one of several recommendations for a comprehensive energy management program presented by David Wood, an engineer with Integrated Energy Systems of Chapel Hill.

Overall, however, Wood said the county is "basically doing a good job on energy use," partly because of the newness of its buildings.

The firm, under a contract with the N.C. Energy Division, recently completed a survey of county energy for the period December 1985 through November 1986. The county had requested the study.

During that period the county spent a total of \$706,600 on energy. Of this \$264,600 or 37.4 percent was spent on heating, cooling and lighting of

buildings. Another 44.3 percent, or \$313,300 was spent on utilities such as sports field lighting and the county water system, while \$128,700 or 18.2 percent was spent on fuel for vehicles.

In the course of the study, said Wood, IES discovered a \$7,600 overcharge in the Brunswick Electric Membership Corp. electric bill for the Tax and Administration Buildings, one of approximately 40 utility bills paid by the county each month. Even though the average monthly bill for this account was \$3,300, last March's bill of \$11,353 was paid routinely, he said. When IES called the error to BEMC's attention, the overcharge was credited to the county.

Currently each department head is responsible for making certain bills are accurate before they are sent to the county finance office for payment, Attorney and Acting County Manager David Clegg told commissioners.

Clegg said he and Finance Officer Litha Hahn had met with Wood and that commissioners would be getting several staff recommendations based on the study.

The IES study was of two parts, the first a review of current energy management; the second, a package of recommended improvements, estimated costs of implementing them, and the time required for the improvements to pay for themselves.

The recommendations came in two areas with a combined cost of

\$135,014, annual savings of \$60,500 and an average payback period of 2.2 years, as follows:

- Operations and maintenance, such as relamping lights with lower-wattage bulbs and reducing hot water temperature. The \$17,334 package that would pay for itself in 1.4 years with an annual savings of \$12,099.

- Energy conservation measures, such as relamping exit signs, adding timers to heating systems at community buildings and adopting a \$75,000 energy management system. If adopted in full, the \$117,680 package would result in annual savings of an estimated \$48,914, and would pay for itself in 2.4 years.

Wood suggested the county not implement a management system without further study, including attendance at a workshop to be held by the energy division.

However, the accounting system can be implemented more easily, he indicated. It would track monthly data on energy use and costs by county-owned buildings, vehicles and public works facilities. It would provide information on how much of each department's budget is used for energy, what buildings and vehicles most need energy conservation, what cost savings result from conservation measures and how much to allocate each year for energy costs. All energy accounts would be billed directly to the finance department, he suggested.

Lions Hear Miss Brunswick County

The Charlotte Lions club met Jan. 15 at Joe's Barbecue in Charlotte and heard a talk by Lorri Bowling, Miss Brunswick County.

Bowling spoke on the historical progression of the Miss America Scholarship program.

David Clegg, chairman of scholarships pageants of Brunswick County, accompanied Bowling to the meeting and told the Lions funds for the program depend entirely on corporate donations.

Some members suggested there should be more financial involvement by individuals and community organizations, as Miss Brunswick County is an asset to the entire community.

Lion President Harry Pigott announced plans for the club's 40th anniversary and charter night program at Island House South in Calabash on Feb. 19. He said charter members Ed Redwine, Henderson Rourke and Woodrow Russ will be honored then. District Governor George Pollock is expected to attend.

Jess Parker said over 8,000 stamps had been forwarded to the International Lions Stamp Club's Veteran Outreach Program.

The chartering of a new Lions Club in Little River, S.C., on Feb. 6, was announced.

Guests at the meeting included Elmer Hendricks and Mike Blandino.



ANIMAL WELFARE LEAGUE PHOTO

THIS FLUFFY WHITE female cat is among the pets waiting for adoption this week at the Brunswick County Animal Shelter.

German Shepherd Seeks Adoption

A year-old German shepherd, a white female cat, and a two-year-old black female rat terrier are designated "pets of the week" at the Brunswick County Animal Shelter.

Zelma Babson, animal control supervisor for Brunswick County's health department, recommends the animals. She said these and many others can be seen at the animal shelter, just off N.C. 211, Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. till 4:30 p.m.

Seminar Planned For Businesses

A free seminar on the protection of businesses against crime will be offered by the Brunswick Technical College Small Business Center 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 27, at the Public Assembly Building at the Brunswick County Government

Center.

Velva Hall, small business center director, said M.C. Teague, chief of crimes against business with the N.C. Department of Crime Control, will lead the seminar. It is designed for small business owners and managers, and will cover employee theft, bad checks, shoplifting and robberies and burglaries.

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