

Audit Firm Withdraws Services

BY SUSAN USHER

The company that conducted Brunswick County's 1986 audit withdrew its services Monday night after county commissioners refused to reconsider an \$8,000 adjustment in its bill for extra services rendered last summer.

"No hard feelings," said Rex Price of Touche Ross & Co, adding he was being forced into something he didn't want to do. "However, I don't really have any choice from the firm's standpoint."

"I feel we must resign our services from the county," he said. "I feel you can get an audit done for a lesser price, but there's a lot to be straightened out."

Because it was Touche Ross' first audit of the county's books, the company's proposal didn't reflect charges for the full time that would be required. However, said Price, because the county was without a finance director during most of the audit period and the county manager was away on sick leave part of that period, the time extended well beyond the company's expectations and its work extended well beyond the realm of its contract. The new finance director, Litha Hahn, was unfamiliar with county records and other finance staff members had not previously been much involved in the audit process.

In what was considered a "reasonable" arrangement by the parties involved—the county manager, the county's new finance officer and the audit firm, the audit firm agreed to absorb 60 percent of the added cost, with the expectation that it would have no problem obtaining the remaining 40 percent, or \$8,000 from the county, which would bring the company's pay to more than \$38,000.

However, when the item was first

presented in January, it was tabled. Then in February, to the consternation of County Manager Billy Carter, commissioners voted against the request.

Under Touche Ross' contract, Price said, the county was to have completed reconciliations of ledgers, trial balances and budget amendments. Also, insurance and investment papers and other documents needed during an audit were to be available.

Instead, his staff took care of many routine bookkeeping duties as well as identifying problems such as non-compliance with the county's water bond ordinance.

"Nobody was monitoring it properly," he said.

In all, he said, auditors found 15 non-compliance items, with multiple instances in several cases, and over 100 year-end adjustments had to be made.

Third Bidder

A third agency came before commissioners Monday night with an interest in taking over administration of programs previously handled by Sencland Community Action in Brunswick County.

Director Sherman Davis said the Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC) in New Hanover County is interested in operating weatherization assistance, block grant (job training, housing rehabilitation, etc.) and Head Start programs here. Two county residents, Eugene Gore and Rev. Winston Brown, serve on OIC's board.

Commissioners said they would review that proposal and those of two other agencies before making a decision at their April 21 meeting.

Four County Community Service of Laurinburg, the largest agency of its type in the state, has offered to take over administration of the programs

only until a new agency can be established to serve Brunswick, Columbus and Pender counties, the area previously served by Sencland.

New Hanover Community Services has also asked to be considered as a provider for all three programs.

Commissioners in Pender and Columbus counties Monday endorsed Four County as their agency of choice for assuming administration of the programs. Both boards designated Four County as their county's community action agency to receive block grant funds.

Commissioners were urged by former Head Start employees Peggy Limos of Leland and Faye Gore of Columbus County to act quickly, so that Head Start grant applications could be prepared for submission by June 1, the deadline if classes are to resume in September.

Drainage Issue

Commissioners told Lynn Petch of Farwinds Stables at Thomasboro that their answer remains the same regarding the former CawCaw drainage district.

James Bellamy, chairman of the Brunswick County Soil and Water Conservation District, has asked the county to assume maintenance of the former district, which served what is now one of the more heavily developed areas of the county. More recently, in a letter commissioners received Monday, he threatened to seek an injunction to stop development in that area.

The county, in turn, has recommended that Bellamy's board take steps to have the district re-established.

"There are only two ways we can help from the county commissioners," Chappell said. "One the people in our area would not like—forget CawCaw and set up a new district and assess the property owners. I don't think any commis-

sioner here tonight is ready to go that step."

Rather, he thinks reorganization is the best answer. Then the district could either assess its residents or even seek a contribution from the county.

Only someone with the legal right to do so, such as James Bellamy, can petition the Clerk of Brunswick County Superior Court to re-establish the district, said County Attorney David Clegg.

Chappell said the parties concerned should be working together to find a solution, rather than "everyone trying to run in different directions." Before Chappell reiterated the board's stance, District 2 Commissioner Benny Ludlum said he thought the board should take action "one way or the other" Monday night.

"I don't think we should jeopardize building in Shingletree and CawCaw," he explained.

Other Business

In other business, the board:

- Authorized contributing \$500 from contingency to a Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway project along I-85 between Greensboro and Lexington which includes planting a tree and erecting a plaque identifying the county, as well as general monuments to all veterans who died or were missing in action in Vietnam.

- Approved a reduction in retainage from 5 percent to 3 percent for Bryant Electric, now conducting pressure tests on the county water mains.

- Approved bid specifications for a horizontal bore machine, which would allow the water department to bore holes up to 14 inches in diameter under roadways.

- Approved budget amendments to accept \$18,900 in three grants for three community-based alternative programs, a \$21,900 increase in the planning and building inspections department to come from permit revenues; and to establish a book-keeping system to monitor expenditures of \$4.09 million in Brunswick Technical College construction bonds.

- Authorized the operations services department to advertise bids for a backhoe loader instead of an end loader and to informally bid for a trailer.

- Subject to approval of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, approved a major drainage project in the Bethlehem Missionary Baptist Church community near Town Creek that Operation Services Manager Darry Somerset said "needs to be done bad," as well as six minor maintenance drainage projects scattered across the county.

- Accepted \$84,800 in additional funds from the state for the Department of Social Services.

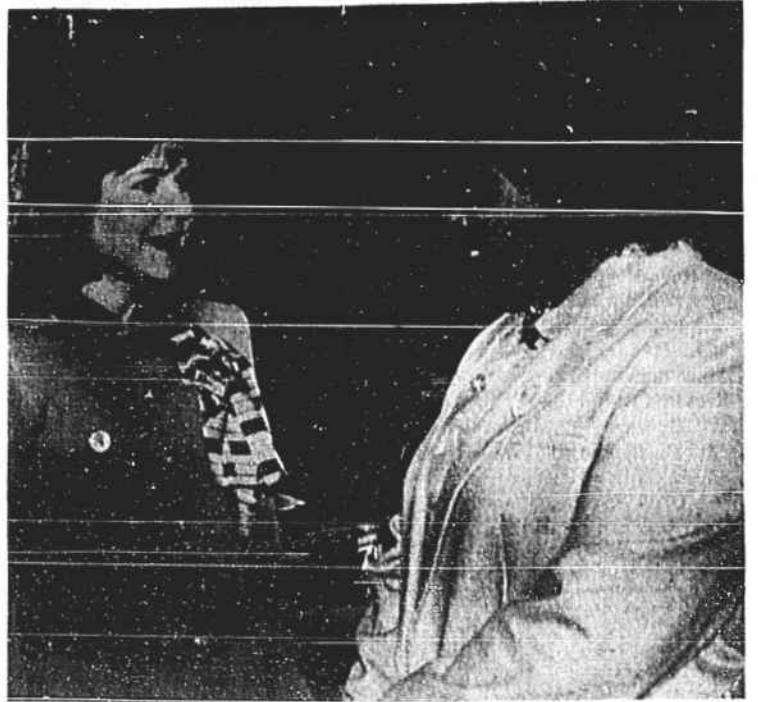
- Approved a change in the bad debt write-off policy for the Health Department so that the health board receives a list of the total amount written off in each program rather than an itemized list.

- Agreed to allow one year's educational leave without pay for foster care social worker Mildred Bellamy, who is pursuing a master's degree in social work and had asked for paid leave. Said Commissioner Frankie Rabon, who is chairman of the social services board, "I don't want to deny anyone the right to get an education, but I don't think it's fair to the citizens of Brunswick County to pay for it."

Zoning Killed

(Continued From Page 1-A)

He said he thought most responsible developers favor zoning, which he suggested would protect county residents from "con artist" types who move into the county to buy, develop and sell property and then move on.



TALKING PARTY BUSINESS are (in the foreground) Democratic State Executive Committee member LaDane Bullington, who is considering a run for the lieutenant governor's seat, and Sandra Robinson, outgoing county party officer.

Rep. Redwine Responds To Harrelson Speech

(Continued From Page 1-A)

"get things done" approach.

Delegates re-elected immediate past chairman Rex Gore of Shallotte and LaDane Bullington of Ocean Isle Beach to the State Democratic Executive Committee. Chairman Stanley will serve on it automatically.

Other resolutions adopted by the delegates were as follows, in brief:

- Support of a speeded-up, December 1988 completion date for the Shallotte bypass and the four-laning of U.S. 17 from Bell Swamp to the South Carolina state line.

- Support of Sen. Terry Sanford's efforts to obtain a more equitable return of highway tax dollars to North Carolina.

- On a called vote, support of legislation to allow law enforcement agencies to request medical facilities for urinalysis and blood tests for subjects whose driving appears impaired by controlled substances, but do not register as intoxicated on breath analysis. In discussion, Grissetown Precinct member Odell Williamson noted that the proposal would be costly and time-consuming.

- A request of Rep. David Redwine and Sen. R.C. Soles Jr. to represent the interests of the county's low-income citizens before the North Carolina Utilities Commission regarding rate increases and similar issues.

Spring's In The Air

After a chilling start for April, near-normal temperatures and precipitation are in the forecast for the next several days, local meteorologist Jackson Canady said Monday.

Temperatures should range from the upper 40s at night into the upper 60s during the day, with about one-half inch of rain.

For the period March 31 through April 5, Canady recorded a maximum high of 68 degrees on the 3rd and a minimum low of 28 degrees on April 1st.

An average daily high of 60 degrees combined with an average daily low of 36 degrees for an average daily temperature of 48 degrees, about 10 degrees below normal.

Canady recorded 0.38 inch of rainfall, just a hair below normal.

- Support for a continued emphasis on recreational use of the Southport Small Boat Harbor and its possible acquisition from the State Ports Authority by the City of Southport. Rep. Redwine will introduce legislation seeking its transfer to the city, he said.

- Dedication of the Brunswick County Democratic Women's cookbook to a past member, the late Sally Long.

- Congressman Charles Rose will be the guest speaker at a fundraising event in Southport on May 1, at 7:30 p.m. at the Ship's Chandler Restaurant. Tickets for the dinner are \$10 per person.

- Also, tickets are available from Rex Gore for events slated in connection with the annual Jefferson-Jackson Day on April 25 in Raleigh. Tickets are \$50 per couple for an April 24 dinner honoring Commissioner of Agriculture Jim Graham, while tickets are \$100 per couple for the Jefferson-Jackson Day seminar and dinner April 25 at the Raleigh Civic and Convention Center. The seminar will be led by Sen. Dale Bumpers of Arkansas and Sen. Terry Sanford. Bumpers is also the dinner speaker.

- The Wake County Democratic Women's breakfast on Saturday at the Brownstone Hotel is \$15 person.

- Two events are free, a reception by the Council of State and Speaker of the House Lister Ramsey at the Goodwin House from 3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. and a 5 p.m. reception by Lt. Gov. Bob Jordan and his wife Sarah at the civic center.

It's Not Just Any Old Job

It's not your usual Help Wanted ad, but then it's not an ordinary sort of job.

Monday night, Brunswick County Commissioners voted to begin advertising immediately for a new county manager to succeed Billy Carter.

His eight-year term officially ended March 31, when he took disability retirement, though he is expected to continue to work part-time on a consulting basis to help prepare the 1987-88 budget.

According to the ad, the new manager will be expected to administer a \$20 million budget, supervise a 200-plus work force that includes employees of a county water system, and provide administrative skills for the state's "fastest growing" county. A basic requirement is three years experience in public administration and an appropriate educational background.

The application deadline is May 11 for the job, with pays between \$38,000 and \$42,000, depending on the candidate's experience.

"We hope to have someone in place in June," Commissioner Chris Chappell said Tuesday.

The board will hire the new manager, but will rely on Robert Hester, field representative for the N.C. Association of County Managers, to help in screening applicants' backgrounds.

With the pay scale offered and the county's growth record, he continued, "Hester said it was probably the

best job to come available in a good while. He thought we'd get some of the top applicants in the state."

Chappell said the commissioners are looking for an energetic candidate "who has Brunswick County at heart and can continue us on a growth pattern. We need someone to make us more aware of what we need to do and where to go."

Meanwhile, the former county manager will be available to work as a consultant for the county at a proposed salary of \$25 an hour. Chappell said commissioners would consult with David Clegg as to what areas Carter's help would be needed, such as budget preparation. He expected this to come up Wednesday, April 8, during an 8:30 a.m. continuation of Monday's commissioners meeting. Carter had been asked to sit in on that session.

Clegg, county attorney and assistant county manager, was appointed acting county manager Monday night in addition to his duties as counsel. He received no pay increase, having received a larger increase earlier this year to reflect his added responsibilities of assistant county manager, said Chappell.

With Hester in attendance, commissioners met in executive session to discuss personnel one hour prior to Monday's regular meeting. They also met for two hours afterwards to discuss personnel and attorney-client matters with Clegg and Carter.

Former Sheriff To Be Released August 15

BY ETTA SMITH

A former Brunswick County sheriff convicted in 1983 of participating in drug smuggling operations is scheduled for release from a Wilmington halfway house in August.

Herman Strong, who was the sheriff here from 1974 until his conviction, is scheduled for release from the Bannon House in Wilmington on August 15, according to a spokesman at Butner Federal Correctional Institute.

According to Bill Willingham, Strong was transferred from Butner to Wilmington on Feb 17.

Strong was convicted in 1983 for conspiracy to possess, with intent to

distribute, controlled substances.

The Bannon House is a private work release facility that contracts with the federal government, according to Director Kathy Swain. She said the facility has 24-hour supervision and persons spend the last six months of their sentence there.

Strong could not be reached for comment.

Swain said he is employed at this time, but would not say where.

Strong was one of several public officials convicted in 1983 for drug-related offenses, following a joint FBI and Federal Drug Enforcement Administration investigation named "Operation Gateway."

Post Egg Hunt Is Easter

American Legion Post 247 in Shallotte will hold its annual Easter egg hunt on Sunday, April 19, at 2 p.m. at Shallotte Township Park.

Local children through age 10 are invited to participate, said Duncan R. St. Clair II, Post entertainment chairman.

Prizes to be awarded in each of three age groups are as follows: ages up to 6, a tricycle; ages 6-8, a 16-inch bicycle; and ages 8-10, a 20-inch bicycle.

Courtesy of the Brunswick County Parks and Recreation Department, the "Easter Bunny" will be on hand to award prizes.

The park is located about 1½ mile south of Shallotte on U.S. 17.

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