

SALARIES REVISED

# Shallotte Adopts New Budget With Three-Cent Tax Increase

BY DOUG RUTTER  
Shallotte Aldermen adopted a town budget and a three-cent tax increase for the year that begins July 1, but not before revising the proposed salaries of town employees.

Board members took \$3,000 of the \$10,000 designated for administrative expenses of the fire department, plus several hundred dollars from the capital outlay for the water fund and used it to increase salaries in the inspection, street, and water and sewer departments.

The only other change from the original budget was the transfer of \$5,000 from street utilities to street improvements. This will reduce the number of street lights the town can purchase next year, but will allow for more grading and paving.

The realignment of employee salaries followed a 25-minute executive session called to discuss personnel. Alderman David Gause requested the closed session after just a few minutes of open discussion on the budget and later made the motion to adopt the original budget with the above exceptions.

Mayor Pro Tem Paul Wayne Reeves, who raised the issue of unequal salaries during the town's June 8 budget workshop, was absent this week along with board member Jody Simmons.

In adopting the budget town board members approved the original proposal of \$107,450 for salaries in the police department. That money will be divided among the police chief, a detective and four patrol officers.

Prior to the salary adjustments, however, the water and sewer department, which has been budgeted funds for an eighth employee in the coming year, would have received \$85,324 in wages. And the three town employees paid in the streets department would have earned a combined \$35,360.

Given those proposed figures, water and sewer department employees next year would have earned an average of \$10,665 while street department employees would have earned an average of \$11,786 each. Police department members, meanwhile, would have earned an average salary of \$17,908.

The wages approved Monday night will mean an average salary of \$10,860 for water and sewer department employees, \$12,133 for street

employees and \$15,080 for the inspections department, up from \$14,560.

The approved tax increase, from 47 cents to 47 cents per \$100 of property valuation, met no opposition during the budget hearing earlier this month. Board members speculated that town residents were more concerned about the large increase proposed in the county tax rate.

For the average homeowner in Shallotte, with property valued at \$60,000, the rate increase will mean another \$18 in town taxes next year, from \$264 to \$282.

With an estimated valuation of \$56.3 million and collection rate of 95 percent, the town expects to collect \$251,332 in taxes.

**Plant Expansion**

The major expenditure included in next year's budget is \$118,950 for improvements of water and sewer service. This represents more than 10 percent of the total \$1.1 million budget and will be used primarily for expansion of the wastewater treatment plant.

Also, the town has appropriated: \$75,000 for trash pickup, up from \$60,000, a 20 percent increase resulting mainly from town growth.

\$65,000 for a fire truck. The town is accepting bids through noon Thursday for a ladder truck.

General fund revenues are expected to increase almost \$140,000

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—Wilton Harrelson  
Shallotte alderman

next fiscal year to \$597,579. This is mainly due to the increase in taxes, which should bring an extra \$30,000 to the town; inclusion in the budget, for the first time, of the fire department's \$40,000 in savings and certificates of deposit; and an additional \$25,000 in county revenues.

In the water and sewer fund, revenues are expected to increase nearly \$150,000 next fiscal year to \$111,465. In addition to \$118,950 from the capital reserve fund, extra revenues are anticipated from two other sources.

Sales tax revenues are expected to be \$27,000, an increase of \$15,000 over the current fiscal year, while water charges should bring in \$278,104 in the 1988-89 fiscal year for an additional \$30,000. The budget reflects no change in water or sewer rates.

**Insurance Discussed**

In other business Monday, aldermen postponed a decision on

whether to change health insurance companies following the report of Pan-American Life representative R.W. Cheers.

The town board discussed insurance about 40 minutes, reviewing policies and estimated costs to the town, before setting the matter aside and beginning its discussion of the budget.

Although Cheers admitted that he has little experience with the insurance company, he added that he was acting as a concerned citizen and trying to save the town whatever money it could.

The town budgeted \$14,110 for health insurance this year for all town employees and has projected next year's cost at \$18,535 with the addition of one employee in the streets department.

Board members, uncertain whether they could get a policy with the benefits they presently have with

Blue Cross/Blue Shield at a less expensive price, decided to wait until they have more answers before making a decision.

"If there's any way we can save money for the town, I'm all for it," said Alderman Wilton Harrelson. "But I don't feel I can make a decision on that tonight."

Aldermen also voiced concerns about employees having to fill out questionnaires to qualify for the insurance, something they did not have to do for coverage under the present plan.

"I'm suspicious when it comes to spending my money and more suspicious when it comes to spending somebody else's," added Harrelson.

**Budget Amended**

Also this week, aldermen amended

various line items in this year's budget to finish off the fiscal year in proper accounting order.

Transfers amounting to \$8,900 were made in the police, streets, public buildings and fire department.



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## Accident Results In \$5,750 Damages

A one-car accident Friday near Bolivia resulted in more than \$5,700 in property damage, but no injuries, according to the N.C. Highway Patrol.

According to Spokesman Ruby Oakley, Randall Breunich Houghton, 40, of Chesapeake City, Md., was southbound on U.S. 17 about four-tenths of a mile south of Bolivia when his 1984 Dodge truck ran off onto the right shoulder of the roadway.

It continued south along a ditchbank and struck a road sign, according to the report filed by Trooper

R.V. West. The boat and trailer being pulled behind the truck continued south along the ditchbank and struck a telephone switchbox.

Houghton pulled the truck across U.S. 17 and stopped on the left shoulder of Midway Road, S.R. 1500.

According to West's report damages to the boat and trailer were estimated at \$5,500, with another \$250 in damages to the Department of Transportation signage.

No citation was issued in the 12:05 p.m. accident.

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**Yaupon VFD To Sell Hot Dogs**

The Yaupon Beach Volunteer Fire Department will hold a hot dog sale at the station this Saturday, July 2, beginning at 10 a.m.

Also expected at the fire house is a dunking booth, which will feature Sgt. Wesley Sewell of the Yaupon Beach Police Department.

The fire station is located at 515 Yaupon Drive in Yaupon Beach.

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