

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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PAGE 4-A, THURSDAY, MAY 27, 1993

County Board Should Hold Line, Study Need For Change

The Brunswick County Board of Commissioners acted appropriately Monday when it turned thumbs down on the 1993-94 budget proposed by Interim County Manager John Harvey.

The board agreed to go back to the drawing board and hold the line on the current 68-cents-per-\$100 valuation property tax rate. The commissioners literally said "thanks, but no thanks" to Harvey's controversial recommendations to dissolve the Brunswick County Library Board of Trustees, the Resources Development Commission and the Parks and Recreation Department.

This is not to say that some type of county government reorganization is a bad idea. But there were troubling fundamental problems with Harvey's proposal, not least among them that it was too much, too late. Sticking with the plan Harvey outlined would have given the board only six weeks to make the most profound kinds of changes—ones for which the budget proposal simply did not make a strong enough fiscal case and which in some cases appeared motivated more by politics and personality than by good governmental sense.

The commissioners would have been hard-pressed to sell the people of Brunswick County on a budget in which the so-called streamlining process—whose realities would have included dismissals, demotions and deep cuts to some popular programs and services—would have been accompanied by a 10-percent tax increase. "Where's the extra money going?" was the question taxpayers were asking all week, but to which they were no substantive answers.

Furthermore, it would have been ill-advised to allow anyone in an interim leadership position to foist on the next county manager the type of administrative turmoil which inevitably accompanies changes of the magnitude Harvey proposed. It should be the privilege, as well as the responsibility, of the new county manager to work out a direction and management structure in concert with his board of commissioners.

Holding the line at 68 cents will be tougher than it sounds, and the board is sure to face intense lobbying at its public hearing tonight (Thursday) from citizens, many with very strong cases, who want their favorite programs or causes spared the knife. But even if it hurts, avoiding a tax increase is a good idea for now.

As soon as this budget is finalized, the board should begin taking a close new look at county government with an eye toward some of Harvey's concerns about waste, inefficiency and redundancy. That way, there will be plenty of time to separate the wheat from the chaff and carefully plan for a truly beneficial reorganization, if such a move is indicated.

The public hearing on the proposed Brunswick County budget for fiscal year 1993-94 begins at 7 p.m. tonight (Thursday) in the Public Assembly Building of the County Government Complex in Bolivia.

Memorial Day Glorifies Peace Won By Patriots

BY ROGER A. MUNSON

The observance of Memorial Day offers an opportunity for all Americans to stop and reflect on the unique history of the United States and our rights and responsibilities as citizens.

As the national commander of the American Legion, I represent more than 3.1 million men and women who have served this nation during a time of war. We know first-hand the sacrifices that all of America's veterans have made to preserve our way of life.

Make no mistake, Memorial Day doesn't glorify war, for no one hates war more than those who've fought the battles. To the contrary, Memorial Day glorifies peace by reminding Americans that we are entrusted with remembering those who paid the ultimate price so that our great country would endure.

Their selfless sacrifice spans the history of America, from the Revolutionary War to Desert Storm. These patriots left their homes and families when their country called and gave their last full measure of devotion in defense of freedom.

Today, in tens of thousands of homes, a carefully folded and lovingly presented American flag rests in a place of honor—a token of a loved one's sacrifice for their country.

That flag, which once draped the coffin of a service man or woman, holds tears and a lifetime of memories. It offered pride to accompany the pain and sorrow of those whom the fallen had left behind.

It is fitting that we celebrate on Memorial Day the freedom that has been won and sustained by these fallen heroes. They answered their country's call, put themselves in harm's way, placed the welfare of their comrades ahead of their own safety, and put duty ahead of personal interests. Their sacrifice must never be forgotten.

As we pay tribute to America's fallen sons and daughters, let us realize that the United States remains the envy of the world.

What is it about America that has drawn citizens of foreign lands for more than two centuries? Why do people to this day leave their homelands and risk death aboard rickety boats on the high seas to reach our shores?

The answer, of course, is freedom. It's the freedom which the patriots of this country established with their lives. Freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of the press, and our rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are unique throughout the world.

Our Constitution, our great democratic process, have survived over the centuries while the unsound governments of many other lands are but the dust of history. Our country has endured because it was founded on principles that are right and true and worth dying for.

Let us never forget that Americans have given their lives in defense of these fragile freedoms that we, in America, have the luxury of referring to as "rights." Let us never take for granted what America's patriots have died to preserve. Let us humbly celebrate these freedoms today. That is the best memorial.

Roger A. Munson is national commander of The American Legion.



MUNSON

Schools: Getting On With Business

There are probably some observers out there who are disappointed that Brunswick County Superintendent of Schools Ralph Johnston didn't "clean house" last Wednesday night. And there are a lot of relieved educators.

After months of speculation, Johnston unveiled the first stage of an administrative reorganization plan. It wasn't a radical plan by any means, and there was no wholesale shuffling of personnel, as some had feared and others had hoped for.

He could have done that, very easily, achieving only a limited amount of good, even if his people aren't all performing to their potential where they are.

The reasons are the very ones Johnston named Wednesday night: (1) change can only happen so fast and be effective, people can only deal with so much at one time; (2) he's been so busy trying to (a) fight fires and (b) lay the framework needed to support system-improvement (discipline and personnel policies, performance plan, etc.) that in seven months here he hasn't had the time to be out in the schools and observing administrators as much as he would have liked; and (3) he is willing to give people and programs

Susan Usher



enough time to show if and how they work.

Change is a constant in education; there's always a fad or a trend coming through. Veteran educators stop getting excited. Before an entire school staff has gotten comfortable using one "program" another has replaced it. Could the other have worked? Who knows? It never had a chance.

So it's good, I think, that Johnston left generally intact administrative teams that have recently embarked on school improvement plans of their own design. Let's see how their ideas work and then let them take the credit or the blame, whichever is appropriate.

Where changes were made, they seemed to reflect a great deal of thought and with sensitivity to the people involved. I'm thinking par-

ticularly of Freeman Gause, a former elementary school principal who has been under-utilized (and frankly, overpaid) as a community schools/extended day coordinator.

Gause, who is also a pastor, will be taking on a new challenge as the attendance counselor in the western school district. It isn't a throwaway job. Attendance counselors under the new plan are (and this is good news) going to be much more than simply truant officers. They are charged with acting as counselors, working with students with chronic absenteeism problems and their families. This is a job where Gause can—and I hope will—do a great deal of good helping parents understand why they should send their kids to school, and what will most assuredly happen if they don't.

If you are out and about during the daytime, then you know there are entire neighborhoods where parents tend to keep their children at home. We're talking not about high school kids who are old enough to get themselves ready and to school if they chose to, but little kids who can't do for themselves. Whether the parents can't be bothered getting up early or what, I don't know. But the problem definitely exists. If you have eyes, you can see it.

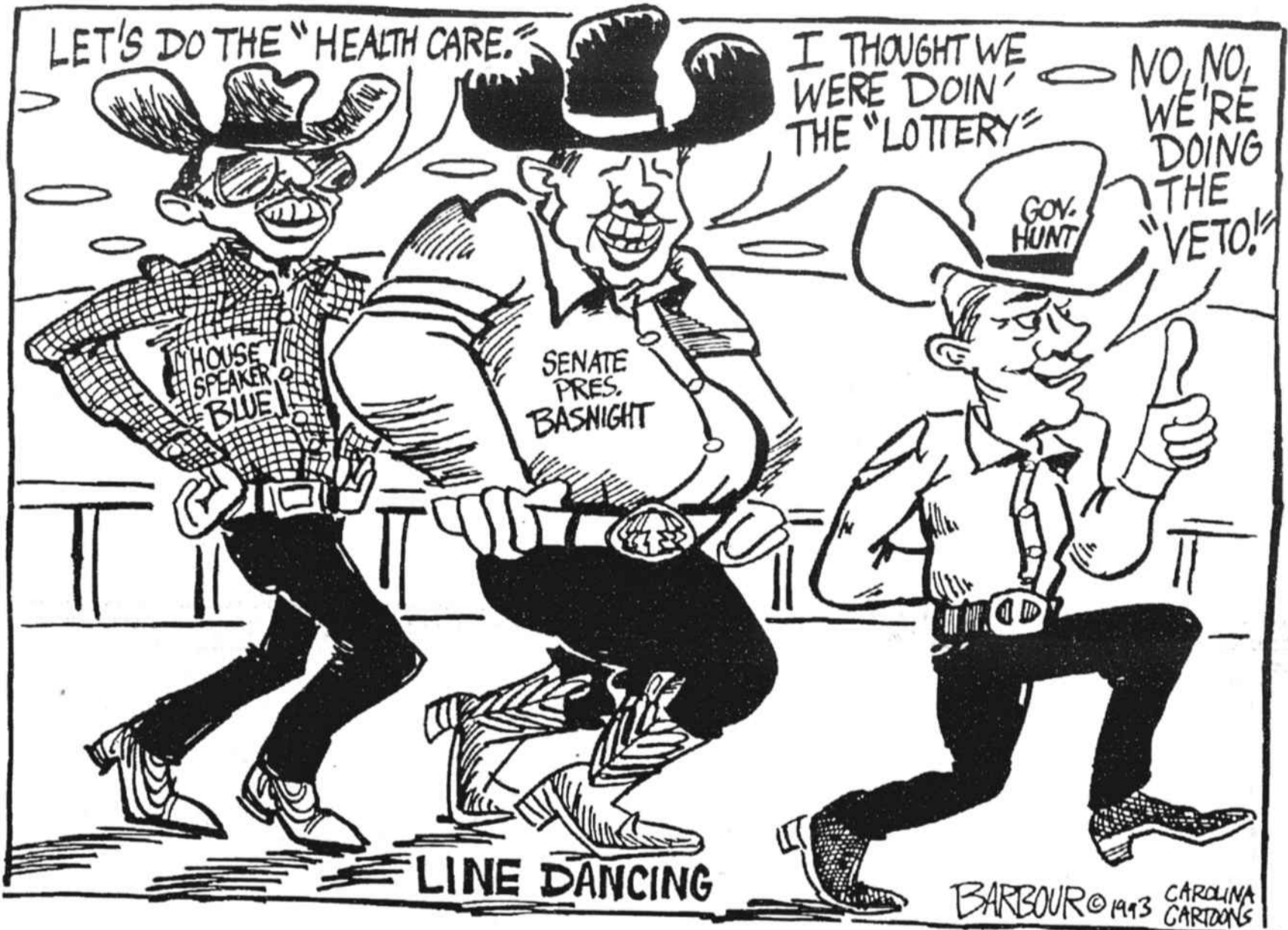
There's reason to be optimistic about the new administrative talent coming into the system. Based on their resumes and interviews, incoming principals Pat Carney, Richard Lawson and Dean Peterson appear to be dynamic individuals who will bring fresh ideas, high energy levels and the proven ability to deliver. They're not likely to get bogged down in the "this, too, shall pass" syndrome that afflicts any institution, and particularly school systems.

There are more changes to come, and we don't know Johnston's timetable or thought processes. There are still people and responsibilities in the central office not accounted for on the charts laid out for us last Wednesday.

But the people who needed to be in place before schools are staffed for the coming year are now in place and can get on with the job of faculty assignments for the coming year.

If the schools are going to deliver, while there must be movement and momentum and all those "go" words, there also needs to be stability. Otherwise people cannot get on about their business.

Last week's decisions are a good step toward that goal.



It's In Them And It's Got To Come Out

The other day somebody asked me, "Why don't you write something about all those loud radios?"

By this I assumed he meant those 5,000-watt stereos in the cars that stop at the traffic light outside the Beacon and rattle the walls with a bank of 15-inch woofers blaring some rap "song" that sounds to me like an auctioneer selling pile drivers.

My first reaction to his question was, "Yeah. There ought to be a law against that!" And the next time I hear one of those mega-decibel thumpmobiles, I ought to snatch the driver by the collar and scream:

"Just because you feel so good, do you have to drive me out my head?"

Then I remembered. Those were the exact words to one of my favorite tunes of teenhood—"Get Off My Cloud" by the Rolling Stones.

For those of you who missed the 1960s, this was a story song about a guy who just wanted to be left alone and play his music real loud, when the phone rings and someone tells him to turn it down. The above comment is made by a neighbor, who precedes it with the following observation:

"It's 3 a.m. There's too much noise! Don't you people ever want to go to bed?" To which the singer responds:

"Hey, you. Get off of my cloud. Hey, you. Get off of my cloud. Hey, you. Get off of my cloud. Don't hang around because two is a crowd."

You will be shocked to learn that these lyrics did not win a Nobel prize for poetry. But they did a pretty good job of describing a conflict that has raged since the dawn of the age of rock 'n' roll.

Anyone who passed through adolescence after 1953 (the year Elvis cut his first record) feels differently about loud music than those who were previously pubescent.

Correct me if I'm wrong, but I can't recall seeing any of you Glen

Eric Carlson



Miller or Artie Shaw or Benny Goodman fans riding around in your customized cars blasting "In the Mood" out the windows.

But rock 'n' roll (and evidently rap) is meant to be played at significantly higher volumes. Sometimes to extremes. Like the proto-punk garage band "The Ramones" used to describe their live performances: "Too loud to talk. Too fast to dance."

The obvious reason is technological. Les Paul's development of the solid-body electric guitar gave stringed instruments the ability—some would say the obligation—to play as loudly as possible.

The other reasons are sociological. Adolescence is the period when young people define themselves. A time when they choose a tribe to identify with—jock, preppie, surfer, skater, rapper, hippie, redneck, etc. Each group has its own style of clothing and its own music.

Like songbirds announcing their species and location, kids play their music loud so others will know—at a significant distance—who they are and what they're into. It invites fellow tribe members to make contact and warns others to stay away (i.e. Get Off My Cloud).

When a long-haired skater in baggy "grunge" clothing walks through a mall parking lot, he knows from a quarter-mile away that he's likely to have more in common with the kids sitting in a little hatchback covered with surf-shop stickers and blaring the "Red Hot Chili Peppers" than the occupants of a tinted-window

5.0 Mustang thumping out "Public Enemy" or the guys in the big-wheeled pickup truck rocking to Billy Ray Cyrus.

We "grown-ups" need to cut kids a little slack during this phase of development. We want them to stay out of trouble and not take drugs. Then we pass laws to prevent them from burning off their excess energies in other ways.

Towns across the country are outlawing "cruising," the classic American tradition of teenagers riding up and down Main Street showing off vehicles they have spent hours customizing (or at least washing) for the occasion.

The City of Wilmington, like many others, is making more and more areas off-limits to skateboarding. Which is a real shame, since this is a sport invented by kids, that they can afford, that gives them boundless opportunities for exercise and self-expression and which costs the adult community nothing except

a little tolerance.

Now "boom boxes" and loud car stereos are targeted for regulation. Which isn't going to stop kids from playing their music. It will merely drive them out of our sight, where they might be inclined to break other laws as well.

To paraphrase a favorite slogan of firearms enthusiasts: If you outlaw fun, only outlaws will have fun.

Besides, there is nothing you can say to convince a son or daughter that they ought to turn off that blaring "Jane's Addiction" tape and learn to appreciate "good music" like Mozart or Pete Fountain or Tony Bennett.

As the old bluesman John Lee Hooker said in one of his story songs about the inevitable clash of musical generations:

"I heard papa tell mama,
 To let that boy boogie-woogie.
 It's in him
 And it's got to come out."

Worth Repeating...

■ Such was the war. It was not a quadrille in a ball-room. Its interior history will not only never be written—its practicality, minutiae of deeds and passions, will never even be suggested.

—Walt Whitman

■ At times he regarded the wounded soldiers in an envious way. He conceived persons with torn bodies to be peculiarly happy. He wished that he, too, had a wound, a red badge of courage.

—Stephen Crane

■ There was only one catch and that was Catch-22, which specified that a concern for one's own safety in the face of dangers that were real and immediate was the process of a rational mind. Orr was crazy and could be grounded. All he had to do was ask; and as soon as he did, he would no longer be crazy and would have to fly more missions... If he flew them he was crazy and didn't have to; but if he didn't want to he was sane and had to... "That's some catch, that Catch-22," he (Yossarian) observed. "It's the best there is," Doc Daneeka agreed.

—Joseph Heller

■ War is hell.

—William Tecumseh Sherman