

Schools Awaiting Word On County's Financial Commitment

BY SUSAN USHER

County school officials are waiting to learn from Brunswick County Commissioners if any expansion items such as computer technology or lead teachers will be restored to the school system budget following last week's budget hearing.

Following the public hearing on the county budget last Thursday, County Commissioners' Chairman Don Warren said he will propose a shift in funds so that the school system can continue a computer technology program begun this year. He said he will ask fellow commissioners to delay construction of a county warehouse and allocate that additional \$1.1 million to the schools strictly for technology-related expenses.

"I'm going to make the motion and they'll either vote

"Somebody, sometime has to stop thinking about the voters and think about what these children need."

—School Board Chairman Donna Baxter

it down or not," he said.

Warren expects no funding for school construction from property tax revenues, saying that money "would have to come" from a bond referendum. "That's the only way," he said.

The school board had asked for \$9.4 million in operating funds and another \$7.8 million in capital outlay, including a \$6 million installment on construction of a

new elementary school in the Leland area and expansion/renovation of West Brunswick High School.

The budget proposed by acting County Manager John Harvey provided no money for growth or construction, but did include an additional \$401,000 (5 percent) for continuation of existing programs.

Board of Education Chairman Donna Baxter is optimistic about the possibility of getting the technology

funds, but is disappointed that it appears funds won't be provided for 10 new "lead teacher" positions called for in the schools' performance-based accountability plan and other needs.

"I understand that the commissioners have to deal with funding requests from everybody, but it is frustrating when our budget is cut year after year, yet we're still held accountable."

"I wish they would fund our requests and then hold us to the fire," she said. "Somebody, sometime has to stop thinking about the voters and think about what these children need."

The 5-percent budget increase isn't expected to be enough to cover even a status-quo budget. The schools need to cover the 2- or 3-percent salary increases and re-

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STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

Mission Accomplished

The crew of the Tern watches as the M.B. Coppedge sinks at an artificial reef site off Lockwood Folly Inlet last Thursday. The Coppedge, a tug boat built in 1883, was 83 feet long and 19 feet wide and weighed 63 tons. For the story and more photos, see Page 9-C.

BUTLER REASSIGNMENT BRINGS PROTESTS

Personnel Policies On Education Agenda

BY SUSAN USHER

Superintendent Ralph Johnston planned to unveil more of his proposed central office reorganization at a special meeting of the Brunswick County Board of Education Wednesday night, June 2.

The board was to meet at 6 p.m. at the conference room at the school system offices in Southport for a work session on proposed personnel policies with consultant Richard Schwartz, renewed discussion of the 1993-94 school calendar, and personnel and attorney-client matters including staff reorganization.

"What I hope to present, what you're going to see, is further decentralization of administrative staff to North, South and West," Johnston said Tuesday afternoon. "Among other things we're trying to revamp the central office physically and get everybody under one roof."

As presented earlier, one effort of the plan is to get more administrative support into the schools themselves, working with principals and teachers. Another is to bring in new people with fresh ideas.

The first element of Johnston's reorganization plan, approved by the board earlier this month, brought in three new principals from outside the system and also brought heated protests from black community leaders and some Leland area residents.

About 30 people representing both groups appeared before the board at its April 19 meeting, asking the board to reconsider its reassignment of

"This isn't racial, this isn't anything personal against Joe Butler. It is a question of supporting efforts to improve the school system."

—Lee Harrison
Lincoln PTA President

Lincoln Primary School Principal Joseph Butler to the central office staff as migrant education and parent involvement coordinator.

Several speakers from the black community, including former school board member Franklin Randolph, questioned the loss of a black administrator and the hiring of three new principals, all of whom are white.

Another black administrator, Sandra Robinson, an assistant principal of West Brunswick High in Shalotte, was named to succeed Mark Owens as principal of Shalotte Middle. Owens plans to sometime during the coming year, but has not set the date.

The school board also heard from several Lincoln Primary School parents who attested to Butler's love of the children at Lincoln School

and asked that he be given an opportunity to carry out the performance-based accountability plans developed by Butler and his staff this year.

Melissa Padgett, a third grade teacher, also spoke on Butler's behalf. The board also received a petition of support signed by most faculty members and several hundred other community residents.

Meeting in special session last Wednesday to consider tenure and probationary teacher status, the board took no action on the request.

Butler is to be replaced with Pat Carney, an assistant principal at Dogwood Elementary School, Fairfax, Va., since 1990. Other new hires are Richard Lawson, who will serve as principal of South Brunswick Middle School, where Assistant Superintendent Mose Lewis had been filling in for Les Tubb, who is on leave from the school system with the N.C. National Guard. Lewis is retiring this month.

Dean Peterson of Leland, assistant principal of Blair Elementary School in Wilmington, has been offered the Waccamaw School principalship in Ash, but as of Tuesday had not accepted it.

School board member Thurman Gause, the only black on the board, was on vacation when the board approved the reorganization plan.

Tuesday he said the plan approved by the board was not like the earlier drafts he had seen, that "at first they were planning to transfer everybody," but it didn't happen that way.

Gause said he had been willing to accept the

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NO SECOND HEARING PLANNED

Large Crowd Protests Agency Cuts, Tax Hike

BY ERIC CARLSON

A crowd of about 175 turned out for a public hearing in Bolivia to voice their opinions on a proposed budget that Board of Commissioners Chairman Don Warren had already declared "unacceptable."

But although radical changes are planned for the budget plan, Warren said he won't schedule a second hearing to allow citizen input on the revised spending package.

The hearing was scheduled to hear comment on Interim County Manager John Harvey's budget package, which calls for a 10-percent tax increase and would eliminate the Brunswick County Library Board of Trustees, the Resource Development Commission and the Parks and Recreation Department.

The proposed budget also discontinues county allocations to many agencies and organizations that have traditionally relied on some level of county funding including volunteer fire department districts, the volunteer information center, the Brunswick County Literacy Council and the Hope Harbor Home domestic violence shelter.

Warren last week issued a series of statements indicating that many of the budget proposals would be rejected. However, the board had not voted to make any changes in Harvey's budget before the Thursday public hearing.

Forty-six people addressed the board during the nearly three-hour hearing. Most speakers asked the board to continue supporting various eliminated departments and de-funded agencies. Others criticized the board's handling of the budgeting process. No one spoke in favor of the budget as proposed.

"We need to get politics out of the budget," said Carson Durham of

Shalotte, a member of the Hope Harbor Home advisory board. "We need to do what's good for the citizens of this county, not what's good for the party!"

Durham asked the board to reinstate its previous year's donation of \$15,000 to the domestic violence shelter and to consider adding another \$5,000. Warren has indicated that last year's appropriation will be returned to the budget.

"I label this so-called budget as Budgetgate!" said Eileen Kellagher of Long Beach. "Please don't use vindictiveness or petty jealousy to phase out Kelly (Barefoot) or 'B.J.' (Jones). You're making Kelly a victim of seedy politics."

The proposed budget would delete the two protected county positions held by Clerk to the Board Kelly Barefoot, paving the way for her expected removal from her appointed post, thereby terminating her employment after 14 years in county government. Brunswick County Parks and Recreation Director Jones and two of his assistants also would lose their jobs if their department is eliminated as proposed.

Warren has said that Jones and his department will remain along with nearly all personnel slated for elimination, except Barefoot. The budget includes a new position of secretary to the county manager—a job Barefoot performed for two years under former County Manager David Clegg—but she has not been suggested for the position.

Don Hughes, chairman of the Resources Development Commission, defended the RDC's track record of attracting business and industry to Brunswick County. He expressed concern that the board is

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Tear Gas Subdues Gunman Charged In Taxi Kidnapping

BY ERIC CARLSON

Stephen Lewis Willoughby had been living with his mother at Shell Point for only a few weeks when his recurring bouts of depression apparently got the best of him.

Diagnosed with a degenerative

skin and bone disease at the age of three, Willoughby had tried to deal with his condition by drinking alcohol. Now 18 years old, he had been talking about going back to Vermont to live with his father. He had also talked about committing suicide.

That's how police believe Willoughby reached the breaking point last Thursday when he hijacked a taxi outside Shalotte, tried to rob a Winnabow couple at gunpoint and fired more than 80 bullets at police, at an occupied home, at a passing motorist and even at his mother.

Several times during his three-hour standoff with about 50 law enforcement officers, Willoughby put the muzzle of a pistol into his mouth, into his nose and into his ear, threatening to pull the trigger.

All the while, a police sniper kept Willoughby's head in the cross-hairs of a high-powered rifle as another detective tried to persuade him to surrender.

Willoughby finally tossed his two pistols out of the car and gave up after three tear-gas canisters were fired

through the taxi window.

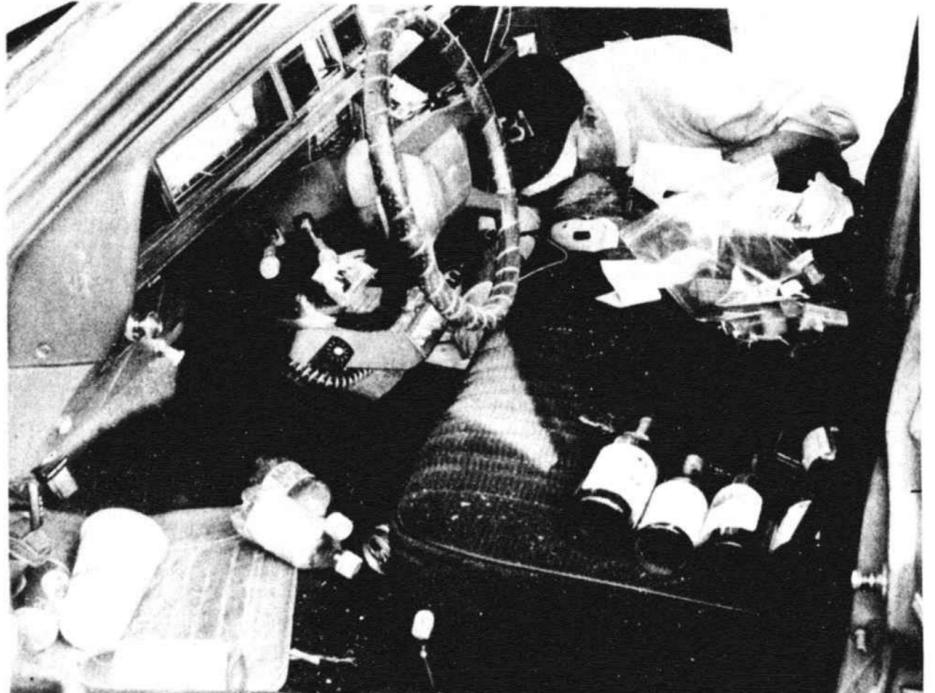
"From what we can determine, he was having a really bad day," said Brunswick County Sheriff's Detective Ken Messer, who interviewed Willoughby and his mother after the incident. "He wasn't particularly communicative. But his mother said he'd been depressed about his condition, that he had been drinking and that he wanted to go back to Vermont."

Apparently, that's what Willoughby had in mind when he called the Oak Island Cab Company at around noon Thursday and arranged for a taxi to pick him up in Shell Point. After stopping at a Shalotte convenience store, the cab headed north on U.S. 17 with Willoughby and a female passenger on board.

"Just outside Shalotte, Willoughby pulled a gun and told them they were hostages," Messer said. "He said he wanted to go to Vermont."

When they reached the Bolivia area, Messer said Willoughby

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STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC CARLSON

BOTTLES AND BULLETS are among the items recovered as an SBI crime scene investigator searches through the Oak Island taxi used in a standoff with police in Winnabow last week.

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