

FIRE GETS INCREASE

Varnamtown Aldermen Pass 1993-94 Budget

BY DOUG RUTTER

Varnamtown Aldermen last week unanimously approved a \$120,416 budget for next fiscal year, but only after a lengthy discussion about funding for the fire department.

The town will increase its annual donation to Tri-Beach Volunteer Fire Department by \$500 next year to \$3,000. Aldermen say that might be the last hike in a few years.

Board members have pledged to increase the contribution to Coastline Volunteer Rescue Squad in the future to even things out. Coastline will receive \$1,800 next year.

Funding of the two volunteer units was the only item discussed during the town budget hearing last Thursday. Herbert "Midget" Varnum, a long-time rescue squad member, was the only resident who attended.

Varnum said the town shouldn't give more than \$2,500 to the fire department. He objected to Tri-Beach's request for \$5,000 from a community as small as Varnamtown.

"You can give them anything you want to, but I'm saying give them \$2,500 or go back to the \$2,000," Varnum said. "They better take what they can get and be happy."

Varnum said he wasn't looking for more money for the rescue squad. "We don't ask for nothing and you gave us \$1,800 out of the goodness of your heart and we appreciate it."

Mayor Judy Galloway said she already told the fire department it

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—Alderman Ada McDonald

would receive \$3,000 before last week's hearing because that was the figure in the town's proposed budget.

Looking over the department's \$88,000 proposed budget for next fiscal year, Galloway said Tri-Beach will need the town's money. Holden Beach has proposed giving \$26,700 to the fire department of the \$46,000 requested.

"If their expenditures are as high as this budget says, they're going to need every bit of our \$3,000...plus about \$30,000 more," Galloway said.

Mayor Pro Tem Ennis Swain supported the \$3,000 proposal, saying the fire department served the community for many years without receiving much in donations.

Alderman Ada McDonald said she would like to see the donations to the fire and rescue squads more balanced in the future.

"In terms of usage, we use the rescue squad more than the fire department. I would like to see us try to even it out. The county does that." Brunswick County gives \$14,500 to each fire and rescue squad.

Although the town calls the rescue squad more than the fire department, McDonald said both are vital services. "You may hardly ever need the fire department, but when you need them you want them there."

The 1993-94 budget is balanced using a tax rate of 5 cents per \$100 of property, the same as last year. The owner of a \$50,000 home will pay \$25 in town taxes.

The nickel rate will generate an estimated \$5,295 in taxes, based on

a property valuation of \$11.7 million and 90.2 percent collection rate. Other revenue sources include \$44,700 in state sales tax, \$5,400 in franchise tax and \$1,600 in alcoholic beverage tax.

Major expenses next year will include \$10,000 for the purchase of the park property, \$8,000 for street lights, \$4,000 for town hall improvements and \$4,250 for insurance and legal fees.

The board also has budgeted \$9,320 for community projects. Uses for that money could include improvements to the park or rebuilding the boat ramp on Lockwood Folly River.

The total budget of \$120,416 includes a \$61,471 reserve fund, which town officials don't plan to spend.

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Three Injured When Car And Deer Collide

Six people were injured on Brunswick County highways last week in two unrelated accidents involving three vehicles, according to a spokesperson at the N.C. Highway Patrol's Wilmington office.

Dale Leon Warren, 41, of Hendersonville and two passengers sustained moderate injuries when the 1985 Chrysler in which they were travelling was struck on the left side by a deer Thursday afternoon.

According to a report filed by Trooper B.L. Wilkes, the incident occurred on Lakewood Drive about 3.4 miles west of Ocean Isle at about 3:15 p.m.

Injured along with Warren were Cara McCrain, 14, and Becky Warren, 15, also of Hendersonville. All were taken to the Brunswick Hospital.

Wilkes estimated the damage at about \$1,200.

On Sunday at about 5:15 p.m., three people were moderately injured when a 1993 Ford operated by Patrick Stonich, 16, of Wayne, Pa., ran a stop sign and struck a 1988 Oldsmobile operated by Ramona Averett, 51, of Wilmington.

According to Trooper C.E. Ward's report, Stonich was travelling southwest on SR 1115 and failed to stop at the intersection of N.C. 211, struck the side of Averett's car, which spun and ran off the road while Stonich's car overturned twice.

Also injured was a passenger in Stonich's car, Alexandra Jaick, 15, of Austin, Texas. They were taken to the Brunswick Hospital. Stonich was charged with failure to yield.

Ward estimated the damage at \$19,000 to the Ford and \$5,100 to the Oldsmobile.

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