

# Schools' Budget Dispute To Be Settled Through Mediation

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school board members if they had chosen to seek only funds for a new north-end elementary school, rather than the full difference between their budget request and actual allocation.

"There will be other times we need their help and support," he said, noting he had wanted the school board to use a less confrontational approach in seeking additional funds from the county commissioners, to meet with the other board informally.

Peterson said that was the approach the school board as a whole would have preferred, and had sought during the regular budget development period this past spring. However, commissioners were involved in other matters at the time and this year, for the first time in a number of years, the school board was not scheduled to present its budget request to the commissioners. Instead several board members and school supporters spoke during the budget hearing.

"The needs we have are real," said Peterson. "We are viewing this as a process by which we can continue to discuss with

the commissioners all the needs of the Brunswick county Schools, particularly the need for the new north end elementary school."

"An ongoing dialogue is personally what I would like to see result from this."

However, Gause is convinced the opposite will happen, even if the school board succeeds in getting more money this year. He predicted Tuesday that the commissioners' position will harden, and the school board lose out again next year when it presents its budget request.

While Peterson and the majority of the board consider legal costs of the appeal an "investment," Gause said he thinks it is "money thrown away." The matter is expected to cost approximately \$5,000 if handled quickly, more if it drags on.

The school board sought \$14.25 million in county tax dollars this year and is to receive \$9.43 million. Commissioners gave the schools a 5 percent increase in funding, then added another \$1 million for a new technology program, for a total increase of

17 percent over last year. Midway through the previous budget year it had granted the schools additional money to meet energy expenses.

However, the sum is well short of what the school board said it needs to carry out a school improvement program and to meet pressing construction needs. As a result, earlier this month the school board voted to begin a formal process of appealing its local budget. The first step was a joint meeting with commissioners last Friday night in which the two parties were to make a "good faith effort" to resolve their differences.

The session ended with sudden adjournment by Don Warren, commissioners' chairman, shortly after Peterson sought continued discussion and Ramos advised the school board that the county had met its legal obligation.

A series of speakers defended the school board's request for more funding and the county's relative ability to meet that request without hardship.

Speakers cited plans for a new lead teacher program to improve instruction in

areas state testing has identified as weak and to revamp salary schedules of additional classified personnel. Speakers also noted the need to begin immediate construction of a new elementary school in northern Brunswick County, where Lincoln Primary and Leland Middle are overcrowded and substantial growth is expected, and to plan for additional construction to relieve overcrowding. The school system's population is expected to increase from nearly 9,000 students this year to 11,300 by the year 2000.

"If we started construction today it would be two years before a new school opened, and that would have nominally averted a crisis," said board member Bill Fairley of Southport. "If it is not funded, we will have a crisis."

School Finance Officer Rudi Connor noted that Brunswick County is ranked 11th in the state in ability to pay, based on property valuation and other resources, between two other coastal counties, Dare and Currituck, but ranks 42nd out of 133 school systems in actual per pupil expenditures.

While the county has a fund balance of

approximately \$14 million for use in emergencies or natural disasters, Commissioner Wayland Vereen questioned the schools' setting aside \$1.8 million, including \$500,000 unappropriated funds to maintain cash flow.

While recognizing that the schools have unmet needs, Don Warren, chairman of the commissioners, said the school system is just one of the agencies and departments it funds, and that there other short- and long-term needs to be addressed, such as water system expansion, a sewer system for southwest Brunswick and industrial development to create more local jobs.

Speaking only briefly, County Manager Wyman Yelton told the school board it had "a revolving fund balance that is much larger than it appears." He also recommended the school board switch to a line item monitoring of spending "and hold people to it, otherwise people will overspend."

Warren questioned the relationship of money spent to student performance in Brunswick County, and asked, "Can they reallocate the resources they have and spend them more wisely?"

## Auditorium Rates Are Set, Though Decision Is 'Tough'

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from the college's operating budget. "This first year it is really tough to decide what is fair, but I don't think in the long run we can afford to cut the rates a lot."

"But at the (auditorium) board of directors' meeting the other day, I can assure you nobody believed this was for forever."

During a typical booking of a four- to six-hour block, Auditorium Manager Michael Sapp said that the building would be "running hard" during three to four of those hours, at an estimated cost of \$100 an hour for electricity alone.

"But it's hard to tell until we have it up and running," he added. "We don't really know what it will cost to open the facility."

"I would love for every group to come into the auditorium whether they can afford it or not," said Sapp. "But we have to be able to pay the electricity."

"We can't ask the county commissioners—or maybe we can—but so far we are not getting that kind of money."

Trustee Jamie Milliken pointed out another practical concern, saying, "You can't crank up a combine to shuck one row of corn."

Nodding agreement, Sapp said that while there may be occasional events that will draw smaller audiences than anticipated, "you can't crank up the auditorium to have 200 people show up if the sponsors know that's how many they can expect."

The fee schedule is expected to remain in place for at least a year. That will give Sapp and the auditorium's board of directors a good idea of how much it costs to operate the new facility year-round, and facilitate booking events at least one year in advance.

The college is attempting to "break even from the start" on audi-

torium operations, which could be "a tough thing to do," Kelly admitted.

Except for interest earned on an endowment being established over a five-year period by Odell Williamson to help cover management costs, he said funding for the auditorium comes strictly from the college's allocation from the Brunswick County Commissioners.

In other areas community groups turn to grants or corporate sponsorship of events to make use of an auditorium more affordable. Sapp plans to pursue that route and suggested other groups could too.

The base fee is just that—the starting point. It doesn't include the cost of cleaning up the auditorium after an event, or hiring a sound or light technician, a flyperson to operate the curtains or security personnel. Those costs will be added on to the base fee as required, said Sapp.

College officials are anticipating the auditorium will be ready by Aug. 18, in time for BCC's commencement Aug. 20, but has contingency plans ready in case it is not.

Sapp and Ken Phelps, project architect, said the major work is done and that most of the work remaining is primarily "cosmetic," such as repairing imperfections in the interior sheetrock, repairing ceiling tiles, putting on a final coat of paint, replacing steps of the wrong brick, grading the site and seeding for erosion control. Lighting and sound systems are completed and plumbing "essentially" complete, with some mechanical work to be finished.

Once those punch list items are complete, then the state office of construction will conduct its own inspection and come up with a punch list of its own.

On the advice of board attorney Jim Prevatte, BCC has rejected a proposal from the builder to take "beneficial occupancy" based on substantial completion of the interior. "He recommended we not take occupancy or accept anything until the auditorium is finished entirely," said Kelly.

At the suggestion of Trustee Al Wooten, the Building and Grounds Committee is looking into the possibility of erecting an entrance with sign for BCC on U.S. 17 similar to the existing entryway on U.S. 17 Business.

## New Candidates File In Beach Towns

Two more candidates had filed for office at both Holden Beach and Sunset Beach as of Tuesday afternoon.

At Sunset Beach, Herb Klinker and Therese Regan are seeking seats on the town council, as are all three incumbents.

Holden Beach Commissioner Sid Swarts is the first commissioner there to file for re-election. Larry Vogt has filed also for a seat on the board.

Alvin L. Leisey of Carolina Shores became the second candidate to file for a District 2 seat on the town board.

Filing for municipal seats remains open until noon Aug. 5.

Meanwhile candidates continue to come forward across Brunswick County: Fred P. Seltzer III, councilman, Leland; Franklin D. Squires, councilman, Sandy Creek (the council elects the mayor from its membership); Robert Charles Spake, commissioner, Caswell Beach; Timothy L. Jones, commissioner, Long Beach; and Leonard H. Moore, alderman, Ward II, Southport.

Previously filing are these candidates:

**Calabash:** George Anderson, mayor; Theodora "Teddy" Altrueter, District 2 commissioner. She lives in Carolina Shores now, not Carolina Shores North.

**Sunset Beach:** incumbent Mason Barber, mayor; incumbents Edward M. Gore Sr., D.G. "Bud" Scramton and Julia Thomas, council.

**Ocean Isle Beach:** incumbent Betty Williamson, mayor; incumbents Bill Benton and Terry Barbee,

commissioner.

**Holden Beach:** incumbent Wally Ausley, mayor; and Nash Greene, commissioner.

**Varnamtown:** incumbent Judy Galloway, mayor; Chris Lancaster, Charles McDonald and incumbents George Ennis Swain and Ada McDonald, alderman.

**Boiling Spring Lakes:** incumbent Mark Stewart, mayor; Raymond Hicks, commissioner.

**Southport:** incumbent Norman Holden, mayor; Phil Joyner, Ward II; and incumbent William Crowe, Ward I.

**Long Beach:** Rupert Riley, Johnny Vereen and incumbent Joan Altman, mayor; Frances Allen, Dave Drummond and incumbents Danny Leonard and Jeffrie Ensinger, commissioner.

**Yaupon Beach:** Jackie Slockett, commissioner.

**Caswell Beach:** incumbents William A. Boyd Jr. and Robert (Bob) Terry, council.

**South Brunswick Sanitary District:** incumbent Ginger Canady.

**Dosher Board of Trustees:** incumbents Bill Kirby and C. William Newnam.

**Sandy Creek:** Danny Canady, council.

**Belville:** incumbent Kenneth D. Messer Sr., mayor.

**Leland:** incumbent S.L. Doty and Franky Thomas, mayor; Jimmy Cooke, Donald T. Sellers and incumbents Sadie Richburg and Lucille Blake, council.

**Leland Sanitary District:** Joe Gaaney and incumbents Edison Moore and Julius Adams.

**Navassa:** incumbent Louis "Bobby" Brown, mayor. All candidates pay a \$5 filing fee.

## State Rests Its Case In King Murder Trial

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the jury box pointing to King.

"That defendant murdered Ronald Evans," Gore said. "Not alone, but with a friend. Together they kidnaped, robbed and killed Ronald Evans. That man, the defendant, should not get away with murder."

Gore said the state would prove its case with circumstantial evidence indicating that King was "involved to the max," and with the defendant's own statements as he "bragged and boasted" about the killing.

Yount, in his opening remarks, asked the jury to consider the believability of witnesses "who have lived on both sides of the fence" and "whose lifestyle is not what you are accustomed to." He suggested that some of the state's witnesses were friends or relatives of King's co-defendant William Earl Hill who might want to help him by implicating King.

In closing, Yount stressed to the jury that "the mere presence" of King at the scene of the murder would not be enough to convict him. He said the 12 would have to agree that they were "acting together with a common purpose."

Assistant District Attorney Lee Bollinger, who has handled most of the questioning, said Tuesday that he was satisfied that the state's evidence had proven its case.

The trial was scheduled to continue at 9:30 Wednesday morning, with no indication as to whether the defense would offer evidence or rely on perceived weaknesses in the state's case.

## Parker Resigns At Board's Request

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"Since it's all in executive session, I'm afraid I can't tell you anything," Swarts said. "We just can't announce ethically what goes on in there."

Bass also declined to comment on the board's reasons, but indicated that it shouldn't have come as a surprise.

"This is not something new. Gary's performance has been discussed for some time," Bass said. "If we were going to do anything now's the time to do it. There's never a right time for something like this."

Parker, 46, said Monday he doesn't know what he will do in the future. "It's too sudden to have any plans. I've got to take some time to decide what I'm going to do next."

Several commissioners said they like Parker and think he will do well if he accepts a job in another town.

Bass said Parker has some very good qualities as a manager. "He's been good for Holden Beach in a lot of ways. He's made some mistakes, but everybody makes mistakes."

Said Atkins, "I hate to see him go. I'm sure he'll find another job in another town...I like Gary. He's worked hard on some of the projects

that he's done. He's a nice person and we wish him well."

Before taking the manager's job at Holden Beach, Parker was town manager in Erwin. He also has held municipal government positions in Franklinton; Newington, Conn.; and North Lauderdale, Fla.

Parker is the third town manager at Holden Beach to resign in the past three years. The first manager, Gus Ulrich, resigned in August 1990 citing "personal reasons."

Blake Proctor was pressured by the previous board of commissioners to resign in January 1991 after less than six months as manager. Parker was hired following a six-month search process.

Ulrich, back for his second stint as interim manager, will start working Aug. 5 and continue until the town board hires a new manager.

Commissioners have started searching. They are looking for someone with a master's degree in public administration and at least five years of governmental experience, according to an advertisement in today's *Beacon*.

Fournier said the town needs someone with good communication skills who understands Holden Beach and can help town commissioners plan and prepare for the future.

"We're amateurs. We need a professional," Fournier said. "We need an activist, not a reactivist."

Added Sandifer, "I just think whoever it is needs to be part of the town and be responsive to the peo-

ple. We are a small town and the town manager needs to be in touch with the people."

Bass said he doesn't know if the current board will choose a new manager or wait until after the November election. "If a very good person comes along that can do a good job I suggest we hire him. If not I suggest we leave it to the next board."

## More Heat, Some Rain Said Ahead

For the next few days the South Brunswick Islands can expect temperatures to continue above normal, averaging from the mid-70s at night and into the lower 90s during the day.

More rainfall is also in the forecast, said Shallotte Point meteorologist Jackson Canady, with about three-fourths of an inch expected.

"The good news is that computer models are suggesting a significant shift in weather patterns by next week," he said. The extended outlook calls for temperatures to be closer to average or even below average, with more precipitation.

That break, said Canady, "will be good for us and good for the folks in the Midwest who don't need any more rain."

For the period July 20-26, Canady recorded a high of 96 on both July 20 and 21, and a low of 73 degrees on the mornings of July 24 and 26.

A daily average high of 94 degrees combined with a nightly average low of 76 degrees for a daily average temperature of 85 degrees, which is about 4 degrees above average.

Canady recorded 1.06 inches of rainfall at his Shallotte Point area residence.

## Correction

An article about grand jury indictments in last week's edition of *The Brunswick Beacon* incorrectly stated the age of John Henry Duboise Jr., who is 24.

John Henry Duboise Sr., 49, of Shallotte was not indicted by a Brunswick County Grand Jury.

The *Beacon* apologizes for the error and regrets any misunderstanding which may have been caused by it.

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