

Constitutional Amendment, \$740 Million In Bonds On Ballot

In statewide questions on the Nov. 2 ballot, voters will be asked to decide separately on five issues totalling \$740 million in general obligation bonds and to decide on a state constitutional amendment which would let local governments undertake economic development bond financing without holding referendums.

Here is a brief synopsis of the issues in the order they will appear on the ballot:

■ FOR or AGAINST a Constitutional Amendment to enact general laws permitting issuance of bonds without a referendum to finance public projects associated with private industrial and commercial economic development projects, with the bonds to be secured in whole or in part by the additional revenues from taxes levied on the incremental value of the property in the territorial area.

Proponents of the amendment, chief among them the N.C. League of Municipalities, say economic development financing would be another tool local governments could use to recruit new industries or expand existing ones.

"This type of bond would be an appropriate way to finance improvements directly related to a particular project," a league pamphlet states. "The local government would use tax revenues from a new or expanded business to pay for infrastructure improvements that particular industry needs. The entire community would benefit from the new jobs created."

The league says "this financing method would require

less time than a referendum, which might require up to a year's time to hold. Finally, when the debt is paid off, all of the increased tax revenues go to the municipality's general fund."

Opponents, like N.C. Taxpayers United and United We Stand America, say the amendment would permit taxation without representation.

NCTU says citizens should maintain their control over approving local bond packages. It also says local government officials might abuse their new authority.

"The General Assembly has refused to allow the people to vote on constitutional amendments for the veto, term limits, or to require voter approval of tax increases, measures that would limit the power of government over politicians," said NCTU Advisory Board Member Art Pope of Raleigh. "Now the General Assembly puts a constitutional amendment on the ballot to increase the power of government by allowing local governments to increase their debt by issuing bonds without the approval of voters."

The Bonds

Less controversial are the \$740 million in bonds that proponents, like N.C. Senate President Pro Tem Marc Basnight, say address a backlog of vital statewide needs while interest rates are at their lowest in 15 years and the state's debt burden is at a 10-year low.

Basnight also says the bond will stimulate the state's economy, solidify the state's AAA bond rating and lead to a better allocation of tax dollars.

"By having future users of capital projects share in the financing costs, needed projects can be completed far sooner than would be the case if sufficiently current revenues had to be accumulated," he said.

The proposals include:

■ \$310 million in bonds for UNC System improvements. Each of the 16 campuses would have its top capital improvements priority addressed by the bonds. In addition, there is funding for Area Health Education Centers across the state, facility improvements for public television, and a facility for the N.C. of Science and Mathematics. Another \$12 million would be available for "other critical needs" to be identified by the UNC Board of Governors.

Backers of this bond say there has been little money available for capital construction and that the projects are needed to keep up with enrollment growth and to compete technologically with other institutions.

■ \$250 million in community college bonds. Each community college would receive funds, including \$4 million for an allied health building at Brunswick Community College. (See story, Page 1-A.)

"The community colleges have experienced rapid enrollment growth as citizens throughout the state turn back to local colleges for new skills and retraining," a N.C. General Assembly press kit states. "The community colleges are a key link to North Carolina's economic

future by training a workforce capable to compete in world markets."

■ \$145 million in bonds whose proceeds will be used for grants, loans and revolving loans to local government units for water supply systems, wastewater collection systems, wastewater treatment works and water conservation projects.

The state will set aside \$100 million to loan to local governments for water and sewer capital projects—pass-through, one-time loans at the state's lower interest rate. The local governments' loan payments will pay off the state bonds.

The remaining \$45 million will go into the state's Clean Water Revolving Loan and Grant Fund for lower interest loans and grants to the neediest towns or counties. After initial loans are repaid to the revolving fund, the money will be loaned out again.

■ \$35 million in state parks bonds for repairs, renovations, new construction and land acquisition and new and existing state parks. Land acquisition is limited to 30 percent of the amount of the bonds issues.

North Carolina currently ranks 49th of the 50 states in per capita spending on its state parks. "From Mount Mitchell to Carolina Beach, our state has natural parks as varied and beautiful as any in the nation," says Dan Besse, chair of the State Parks Bond Referendum Committee. "Unfortunately, our parks are badly threatened by the decay—or even absence—of adequate facilities for public use of the parks."

OIB Candidates Say Orderly Growth Is Campaign Priority

Controlled growth and underground utilities are priorities for candidates at Ocean Isle Beach, where Mayor Betty Williamson is unopposed in seeking another term.

Incumbents Terry Barbee and Mayor Pro Tem Bill Benton face a challenge by Planning Board Member Ken Proctor for two seats on the board of commissioners.

Barbee did not respond to the *Beacon* questionnaire.

Williamson

Betty S. Williamson has been mayor since 1987, and was a town commissioner from 1980 to 1987.

She is self-employed in the real estate business. A graduate of Whiteville High School, she attended Southeastern Community College.

Williamson serves on the boards of Camp United Methodist Church, the Brunswick Island Board of Realtors, United Carolina Bank, the Museum of Coastal Carolina, the Ocean Isle Property Owners Association and the Ocean Isle Beach Chapel.

"I would like for Ocean Isle Beach to have controlled growth in order to preserve our island and continue property appreciation," she said. "I will work toward keeping our tax rate as low as possible and still provide our necessary services. Through proper planning and zoning, our property values will be maintained and our beautiful beach will keep the low-key family-oriented atmosphere we try so hard to preserve."

She lists as key issues continuing the underground utilities and sidewalk-building projects and establishing a long-term erosion control plan.

Benton

Benton has served as commissioner from 1980-83, 1986-89 and 1990 to the present. He is general manager of Lockwood Golf Links. He attended N.C. State University and Kings Business College and has a degree in accounting.

A past president of the South Brunswick Islands Chamber of Commerce, he serves on the board

of the Museum of Coastal Carolina at Ocean Isle Beach.

"I have served three terms as commissioner...and during this time we originated our present water system, sewer system, cable television, sidewalk and other projects maintaining a low tax rate," he said. "I want to be involved with orderly growth."

Benton lists as priority issues reducing the sewer rate, continuing to have a fine police department, speeding up underground wiring and maintaining the canals and inlet.

"I enjoy making myself available to the people of Ocean Isle," he said.

Proctor

Ken Proctor, a first-time office-seeker, is manager for Carbide Alloys Inc. He holds degrees from

N.C. State University and the University of South Alabama in engineering and metallurgy and has served in the U.S. Air Force.

Before moving to Ocean Isle Beach seven years ago, Proctor served on the Western Piedmont Council of Governments, Alexander County Planning Council and Alexander County Challenge Commission.

He currently is on the board of directors of the Museum of Coastal Carolina and the Ocean Isle Beach Property Owners Association. He was appointed to the Ocean Isle Beach Planning Board in 1992.

"As I have met and talked to many residents since making my decision to run, the paramount concern has been the unknown growth of our town," Proctor said. "Growth must and will come, but it must also be orderly."

His priorities include holding the current tax rate and continuing town services and getting more residents involved in the municipal government process.



BENTON



PROCTOR



STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC CARLSON

Guys And Gulls

Whether you dress in feathers or flannel, fall fishing is a favorite pastime on the South Brunswick Islands. These anglers enjoyed a quiet sunrise together on Holden Beach last week.

Voter Stats Reflect Changing Brunswick County

BY SUSAN USHER

A voter in Brunswick County next Tuesday is more likely than ever before to be a white female Republican, based on the latest Brunswick County Board of Elections voter registration data.

When registration books closed this month, the number of people eligible to vote in Brunswick County

had increased by 1,060 over the past 18 months to 30,981, a gain of 2.8 percent.

According to Lynda Britt, supervisor of elections, the largest single source of new registrations are newcomers to the county who are registering to vote when they obtain their new driver's licenses from the Department of Motor Vehicles.

That concurs with findings of the 1990 census, in which 28.6 percent of county residents indicated they had lived outside the county in 1985.

Democrats still outnumber Republicans in the county 1.6 to 1, but the margin is growing slimmer. In October 1988 the county had 18,046 Democrats, compared to 17,691 in

April 1992 and 17,041 in October 1993.

Republican registrations are moving steadily upward, from 9,267 in October 1988 to 10,783 in April 1992 to 11,041 in October 1992.

Also showing gains are Libertarians, 12 strong now, and unaffiliated voters, 2,170 compared to 1,033 in 1988.

Brunswick County now has 14,528 men registered as voters and 16,453 women. That's the equivalent of 113 female voters for every 100 male voters.

While the overall number of registered voters continues to increase in the county, black voters continue to lose ground.

In April 1992, 4,697 were registered to vote. Now only 4,525 are registered—1 black voter for every 5.8 white voters.

United Way Campaign Nears Home Stretch In Brunswick; \$7,000 Raised

More than halfway through Cape Fear United Way's 1993 campaign, it's still too early to assess how the effort is going in Brunswick County as pledges begin coming in.

"Overall, we're getting into the home stretch," said Brad Bruestle, the UCB executive in charge of the countywide local business campaign out to raise \$50,000 in pledges and contributions. "Efforts are still at a high level."

"We're getting a pretty good response from our people, but it could be a little better."

Bruestle's area teams are making

a special effort this year to involve businesses that have not participated before in the campaign, in addition to regulars.

The local business campaign thus far has brought \$7,000 in contributions and pledges, or about 14 percent of goal, according to Michael Griggs, executive director of the three-county agency.

That doesn't include major businesses and industries such as Exide, CP&L, DuPont, Atlantic Telephone Membership, Brunswick County Government, Brunswick County

Schools, Victaulic, The Brunswick Hospital, Doshier Memorial Hospital, and others with employee campaigns in progress. It also does not include the individual solicitations handled through mailings from Griggs' office.

United Way raises money to support health and human service agencies in Brunswick, New Hanover and Pender counties, including those involved in scouting, literacy, supporting victims of domestic violence, serving senior citizens, the handicapped, children, the homeless and others.

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