

# Firm That Sued County Still In Running For Water Project

BY ERIC CARLSON

County Commissioners Chairman Don Warren says he would still consider hiring Houston and Associates to design the county's next big water project despite the engineering firm's continued effort to obtain \$346,202 more than a jury awarded it in a successful breach of contract suit against the county last year.

In an interview Tuesday, Warren said he was unaware that the Shallotte engineering firm was fined \$2,000 and reprimanded by the N.C. State Board of Registration for Professional Land Engineers and Surveyors last spring for "misrepresenting the qualifications of a non-registered employee and principal of the firm."

Houston and Associates also was fined \$500 for "issuing a brochure which included within a professional corporation an entity not allowed" under the provisions of North Carolina law, according to the state licensing board's May and November news bulletins.

"I was not aware of that," Warren said in an interview Tuesday. "We will have to consider it now that I am aware of it."

Houston and Associates is one of six engineering firms being considered for design work on a \$2.6 million project that will extend water service to the Shell

Point, Civictown, Sunset Harbor and Mt. Misery Road areas.

It will be the county's largest capital improvements project since the \$6.5 million Shallotte Point water project in 1991, for which Houston and Associates was hired to do the design work. In August of that year, the board of commissioners voted to fire the company, alleging that Houston and Associates had fallen seriously behind schedule.

In a November 1992 civil trial, a jury decided that the county was wrong when it terminated the contract. It awarded Houston and Associates \$50,000 in damages. The company appealed the award to the N.C. Court of Appeals, claiming that Brunswick County owes Houston and Associates \$396,202 plus legal fees. The appeal is still pending.

Warren said that while the ongoing court action "gives me some problems," it would not cause him to drop Houston and Associates from consideration on the new contract.

Warren also said he "wouldn't tie together" the contract award and the civil action.

"I'm not interested in making any deals," he said. Design proposals from Houston and Associates and

the other five engineering firms were reviewed by a committee comprised of County Manager Wyman Yelton, County Engineer Robert Tucker and Utilities Operations Director Jerry Webb.

"We collectively met as a committee on Oct. 28 to review our independent analysis of the proposals," Tucker said in a memo included in the commissioners Nov. 15 agenda packet. "It was collectively agreed that the firm Camp, Dresser and McKee had submitted the most responsive proposal and that a recommendation would be made to the board of commissioners...to negotiate a contract for these services."

After Tucker made his recommendation to the board, Warren asked that a decision be deferred to give the commissioners time to review all the proposals. He also asked Tucker if CDM had "met the deadline" on their last contract with the county.

"Yes, they did," Tucker said.

It was CDM that took over the Shallotte Point water project after Houston and Associates was fired. Tucker was one of the many county officials called upon to testify in the resulting lawsuit.

Warren also asked Tucker how many of the applying firms were based in Brunswick County. Tucker said only

one of the other five, Andrew and Kuske Consulting Engineers, has an office in the county. Camp, Dresser and McKee is based in Raleigh.

Although local ties will be a factor in his decision, Warren said he will consider all the applicants equally.

Warren said he has heard that the City of Wilmington recently "got into a squabble" with CDM over its cost estimate for design services. He has asked Yelton to look into the matter.

"I have some doubts in my mind about getting involved with them (CDM)," Warren said.

Tucker said in an interview Tuesday that after reviewing all six proposals, the committee found CDM's to be "clearly above and beyond" the rest.

"It is my opinion that, based on the presentations of the firms capabilities to complete the project, Camp Dresser and McKee's far exceeded the others," Tucker said.

The other engineering firms that applied were McKim and Creed of Wilmington, the Wooten Company of Raleigh, and Boney and Associates of Raleigh.

Warren said he expects the commissioners to consider awarding the engineering contract at the board's next meeting Dec. 20.

## Five Administrators' Positions Are Eliminated In Schools' Restructuring

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education as the system continues implementing Tech Prep, a cooperative program that affects students in grades eight through their second year of community college training.

Also, Steve Skillman will continue to oversee the schools' cultural arts program while teaching band. His title will be changed from supervisor to coordinator, his five-class teaching schedule reduced to three classes to make the job a more even 50-50 split between administration and instruction, and his contract shortened from 12 to 11 months.

Calhoun said he anticipates filling all five new positions from within the county system, at an estimated cost of \$232,639.

He plans to establish two new 12-month administrative positions, hiring directors of elementary (grades pre-kindergarten through 5) and sec-

ondary (grades 6-12) education. These two people would assist him in developing and implementing curriculum and instructional services, help implement site-based management concepts and carry out other assigned responsibilities. In addition to their regular salaries they would receive extra duty pay equal to that earned by the director of exceptional children's programs, and the established local supplement.

Three teachers with at least five years' experience (minimum of two in the county system) will be placed on special assignment for up to three years as school improvement specialists, similar to the "lead teachers" recommended by a countywide committee last year. They will work 11-month contracts and be paid teachers' salaries plus assistant principals' supplements.

Spending "80 percent" of their time in the schools, their role will be

to help principals and teachers develop and implement school improvement plans and help teachers analyze test results and select suitable teaching strategies for each child.

"It has great promise," said Calhoun. "Every school may eventually have a position like this."

Principals have too much to do, he said, as they are expected to be instructional leaders as well as managers and administrators. "I think they need more help."

"We need more experience in school improvement planning and more help for principals and teachers in doing it, and I think teachers are the best people to help teachers."

The plan also calls for extending assistant principals' contracts from 11 months to 12 months to help meet administrative needs of the system.

## CP&L Says Mine Would Jeopardize Brunswick Nuclear Facility Safety

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Martin Marietta's mining operation could pose to the continued operation of the plant. He points out that the NRC has licensed the plant to operate based on "certain analyzed conditions" including ground water quality and the availability of power lines connecting the plant to the rest of the CP&L transmission grid.

"Should these pre-existing conditions or assumptions be changed, the continued operation of Brunswick Nuclear Plant could be required to be reevaluated by the NRC," Cavanaugh said.

Local opponents of the proposed mine applauded CP&L's action, calling it a "vindication" and "validation" of their concerns about the quarry's effect on neighboring properties.

"When I read the letter, it looked like something I could have written myself," said Bob Quinn, a co-founder of the Brunswick Mining Awareness Committee. "Their engineers raised the same concerns we had. It adds another source for the same information and identifies the same environmental and economic

### Special Meeting Called

The Brunswick County Commissioners will hold a special meeting Thursday, Dec. 16, at 5:45 p.m. in the board's chambers to consider an ordinance aimed at regulating the proposed Martin Marietta limestone mine near Southport, Chairman Don Warren said Tuesday evening.

Warren refused to give any details on what the board plans to do, saying only that a notice sent to the Beacon at about 5 p.m. "tells everything there is to know."

The notice said the board will meet to consider "enactment of an ordinance prohibiting acts or conditions detrimental to the health, welfare, safety and peace and dignity of Brunswick County and its citizens."

At the board's last regular meeting, Commissioner Wayland Vereen said he planned to work with County Attorney Mike Ramos to draft an ordinance aimed at stopping the Martin Marietta mining project.

Vereen could not be reached for comment Tuesday evening. However, Warren confirmed that the special meeting was called to consider Vereen's proposal.

and social and physical problems we have been presenting all along.

"It also focuses the spotlight on who has the ability to do something about this and raises the question of why aren't they doing it?," Quinn said.

"It points out the nonsense of the Economic Development Commission calling this a good thing. It

shows how wrong (Brunswick County Planning Director) John Harvey was when he said that state regulations would protect us from this.

"The only thing that can protect us is ourselves and our county officials," Quinn said. "The county commissioners ought to have the will to make things happen. So far, I haven't seen it."

Late Tuesday afternoon, the county commissioners announced that a special meeting will be held Thursday, Dec. 16, at 5:45 p.m. in the board's chambers for the purpose of considering an ordinance aimed at regulating mining operations in Brunswick County.

The Brunswick County Planning Board was scheduled Wednesday (Dec. 15) to consider an amendment to the county zoning ordinance that would prohibit mining.

## Seasonal Weather Expected

South Brunswick Islands residents can expect near normal temperatures and precipitation over the next few days.

Shallotte Point meteorologist Jackson Canady said Tuesday he expects temperatures to average from the upper 30s at night into the upper 50s during the daytime, with about one-half inch of rainfall.

For the period Dec. 7 through

13, he recorded a high of 67 degrees on Dec. 10 and a low of 25 degrees on Dec. 13.

He recorded a daily average temperature of 46 degrees, about 2 degrees below average, based on a daily average high of 58 degrees and a nightly average low of 35 degrees.

Canady measured forty-three hundredths inch of rainfall.



STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC CARLSON

### Solid Green Dancers

West Brunswick High School's dance team, attired in Trojan green sequined dresses and caps, smile for the crowd during the annual Shallotte Christmas parade Dec. 2. Pictured (from left) are Rachel Pearce, Nancy Smith and Erin Redwine.

## Longwood Man Is Shot Near 'The Shed'

A 38-year-old Longwood man was taken to New Hanover Regional Medical Center in serious condition Tuesday night after being shot down in the road during an argument with an 18-year-old, a Brunswick County sheriff's detective said.

The victim, William Anthony Stevenson, was hit in the upper leg with what appeared to be a 9mm handgun bullet, according to Det.

John Ingram, who is investigating the incident.

"It looked like it might have hit an artery," Ingram said. "He had lost a lot of blood."

At press time Tuesday, Ingram was interviewing Alfred Lamont Butler, 18, of Longwood, who allegedly turned himself in after the shooting. He is expected to be

charged in the assault, which occurred at about 6:45.

Ingram said the two men apparently got into an argument in the middle of the road near "the shed," an abandoned tractor dealership in Longwood known for open-air drug activity.

The detective would not speculate as to whether the shooting might have been drug-related.

## Agency Turns Down Towns' Sewer Grant; Other Funds Remain Options, Officials Say

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Council about two years ago to discuss sewer funding said Tuesday he is certain he told council at that time about the executive order which states that federal funds cannot be used to encourage flood plain development.

Ronnie Pope, who did not attend Tuesday's meeting, said the order has been in effect for several years. He said he could not recall the date of his 1991 meeting at Sunset Beach.

Engineers Joe Tombro and Jim Billups last week delivered to the towns a draft facilities plan outlining the current and future need for cen-

tral sewer service and the proposed means of funding construction and servicing the system's debt.

Sunset Beach Town Council has scheduled a special meeting for Dec. 28 at 7 p.m. in the town hall to discuss that document. At that meeting, the engineers are expected to present revised funding options in light of

Tuesday's news.

The Calabash Board of Commissioners was scheduled to meet Wednesday night (Dec. 15) and to hear a report from the engineers.

Tombro and Billups had not returned from Raleigh by the Beacon's press time Tuesday night and could not be reached for comment.

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