

Top Ten Taxpayers, 1993

	Value	Total Tax
CP&L	\$681,966,915	\$4,909,067
duPont	244,965,460	1,665,765
N.C. Eastern Munic. Power	170,296,547	1,226,135
Archer Daniels Midland	109,086,404	785,422
Cogentrix of N.C. Inc.	35,066,214	252,477
Odell Williamson	30,584,610	207,975
Bald Head Island Ltd.	27,596,756	202,024
Brunswick Electric	27,256,485	187,250
Federal Paper Board	24,684,200	167,866
International Paper Co.	20,839,859	141,830

SOURCE: BRUNSWICK COUNTY TAX ASSESSOR

Tax Office Busy With Receipts, Listings, Revaluation

BY ERIC CARLSON

The ghosts of taxes past, present and future are keeping the Brunswick County Tax Office busy these days, as workers began counting last year's tax receipts, mailed out more than 17,000 personal property tax listing forms and conducted informal hearings with people who have questions about their new tax revaluation.

As the deadline for paying personal property taxes passed last week, Tax Collector Nancy Moore estimated that about 85 percent of Brunswick County property owners will have paid on time and avoided a penalty. She said that collection rate was "about average," and expects another 10 percent to pay their taxes by June.

Those who missed the deadline will be charged a 2 percent penalty during the month of January. Taxpayers who file returns after Feb. 1 will face an additional 1/2 percent each month until taxes are paid.

As a first step toward enforcing tax payment, the names of everyone who fails to pay their taxes will be published in local newspapers in April. Under a policy adopted in 1991, the county has the right to garnish the wages of delinquent taxpayers or attach their bank account to recover the money. No warning of such action is required.

With minor exceptions, the names and order of the county's ten largest taxpayers remained the same for 1993, with the area's large industrial

firms dominating the roster. This year, Bald Head Island Ltd. jumped from ninth to sixth on the list, while Federal Paper Board fell from seventh to ninth. Again, Ocean Isle Beach developer Odell Williamson was the only individual taxpayer to make the top-ten list.

Carolina Power and Light Company last week brought Moore a check for just under \$5 million, which she expects to be about one-sixth of the year's total tax levy. The value of the company's holdings at the Brunswick Nuclear Plant jumped by more than \$22 million this year, increasing its tax bill by more than \$150,000.

Meanwhile, tax officials want people to re- (See DEADLINE, Page 2-A)

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Hospital Lease Good For 40 Years, Judge Rules

BY SUSAN USHER

After 10 years of uncertainty, a judge ruled Tuesday morning in Brunswick County Superior Court that the company managing The Brunswick Hospital has a 40-year lease.

Tuesday morning, Judge Bradford Tillery of Wilmington directed attorney Henry Foy of Southport to draft an order to that effect for his signature.

Since the order had not yet been signed, Mark Gregson, new chief executive officer of The Brunswick Hospital, was hesitant to comment on the ruling's impact Tuesday, but confirmed the judge's favorable ruling.

The authority and HealthTrust decided last summer to seek the ruling, in order to clarify their relationship and provide a sounder legal footing for future decision-making.

The hospital's administrator at that time, Earl Tamar, said that there were numerous capital improvements needed at the hospital that HealthTrust was hesitant to invest in, given that a 10-year lease would end in less than a year, on May 17, 1994.

The lease issue was the second of two motions Tillery ruled on after hearing oral arguments Monday.

On Monday he granted a motion filed by Brunswick County, dismissing it as a second defendant in the suit.

Sharing news of both rulings, county attorney Michael Ramos said, "That sounds pretty good for both the county and the authority."

Ramos is also the regular attorney for the Brunswick County Hospital Authority, which hired Foy as special counsel for what was termed a "friendly" legal action.

The hospital authority was created by the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners as a separate legal entity to own and operate the hospital. By law it has sole control over hospital affairs and is not responsible to county government, though its members are appointed the county board of commissioners.

Initial hospital construction was financed by general obligation bonds issued by the county in the mid-1970s, with approximately \$925,000 still outstanding.

If Tillery had ruled that the hospital lease was for only 10 years, the lease would have expired May 17, 1994. Under the terms of that lease the authority would have had 30 days in which to pay Hospital Corporation of North Carolina for the lessee's assets or capital improvements, accounts receivable, cash or cash equivalent investments, supplies and other expenses. HCNC assets alone had been valued in excess of \$4 million.

Even without the judge's dismissal of the county as a defendant, Ramos said he didn't believe the county held any liability for the authority's obligations under the lease.

An unfavorable ruling would also have launched the Brunswick County Hospital Authority into a bidding (See HOSPITAL, Page 2-A)

Offices To Close For King Holiday

The Brunswick County Government Center in Bolivia will be closed Monday in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Brunswick County Schools, Brunswick Community College, local banks and post offices also will be closed Monday.

All town halls in the South Brunswick Islands area will be open normal business hours.



Blaze Destroys Shalotte Home

Civietown Fire Chief Richard Evans (front) leaves a Madison Street mobile home that was destroyed by fire last Thursday. A local service club is raising money to help the burned-out family. Another home almost directly across the street was damaged the same day, and both originated as kitchen fires. Story on Page 3-A.

STAFF PHOTOS BY DOUG RUTTER

TASK FORCE FAVORS BOLIVIA

Crowd Opposes Proposed Landfill Sites Near River

BY DOUG RUTTER

A new county landfill needed by 1998 won't be built anywhere near the Lockwood Folly River if the crowd that showed up at a public meeting in Bolivia Tuesday night has its way.

Residents of the Supply and Bolivia areas flocked to the Public Assembly Building to tell the Landfill Siting Study Committee in no uncertain terms that they don't want the new dump near their homes.

"In a county of 650,000 acres there should be some site that's not next to somebody's back yard," said Maynard Owens of Shalotte.

Owens and others suggested the county build the new landfill in a less populated area and forget about the five sites in the Supply-Bolivia area that are being considered.

Besides protecting their neighborhoods, audience members said they object to situating the landfill in the expansive Lockwood Folly River watershed.

Residents fear the landfill might leak, contaminating their drinking water and adding more pollution to the river. Lockwood Folly has been closed to shellfishing frequently over the past decade because of pollution.

"I plead with you folks, seek an alternative," said John Holden of Holden Beach. "Preserve what you got. I have seen too many things depleted in my lifetime. We don't need any more."

In addition to hearing comments from 20 of the estimated 100 people who packed the meeting hall, the committee received a report from a state task force Tuesday night.

The Inter-Agency Solid Waste Task Force studied the five sites in central Brunswick County that the local committee had earlier recommended for further investigation.

Tom Austin, project manager with consulting engineers Dewberry and Davis, said the task force is made up of officials from various agencies

that review permit applications for new landfill sites.

The group visited the five Supply-Bolivia sites in October and completed its report last week. Austin said the task force did not rank the sites, but did list positive and negative points for each.

Based on those comments, Austin said the state panel thinks the most suitable site is a 570-acre tract bordered on the north by a tributary of the Lockwood Folly River along Gilbert Road and about 1.8 miles east of Antioch.

Rated as the second-best site was a 300-acre tract located north of U.S. 17, west of N.C. 211 and south of Little Macedonia Road. It is bordered on the west by the Middle River and on the south by Royal Oak Swamp.

"Beyond that there was a break-off," Austin said of the task force's findings. "They felt those two sites were desirable and the other three sites were somewhat undesirable."

The five centrally-located sites were among 13 potential sites identified last year by the committee based on a set of criteria that took into account various engineering, socio-political and environmental issues. The eight other sites were located in the northeast section of the county near Leland.

The Landfill Siting Study Committee made no decisions Tuesday night. The five members present said they wanted to consider the public comments and new information presented by the task force before making a final recommendation to county commissioners. The committee will meet again Jan. 25.

"I think it's something that we need to study," said committee member Wilton Harelson of Shalotte. "I'm deliberate in my thinking, and when I make a decision I like to think I'm right and it's something I can back up."

"We're gonna have to build one somewhere," said Paul Austin of (See LANDFILL, Page 2-A)

Report Card Signals Need For 'High Expectations, Bold Action'

BY SUSAN USHER

How do you turn an entire school system around?

That's the question Brunswick County School officials were trying to answer even before receiving another below-standard report card from the state last week.

The report card is prepared annually by the N.C. Department of Public Instruction to meet the reporting requirements of the School Improvement and Accountability Act, an effort to hold school systems more accountable for how well they serve children by looking at overall performance.

Jan Calhoun, assistant superintendent for instruction, is convinced the answer lies in a goal embraced this past year by school system leaders—a unified effort to upgrade standards and expectations, but by "taking bold actions," focusing on fewer priorities and recognizing that change begins in the school system and at the top, and can be painful.

"It's really important that we come together and decide what's important," he told school board members Monday night.

He said the school system needs to stop using a "shotgun approach," stop doing some things and become more efficient.

"I'm pretty sure this board agrees

with that," school board Chairman Donna Baxter told Calhoun. "You need to bring those things to use. You've got to tell us what these things are."

"A lot comes from the parents, but I think we need to be proactive," Calhoun explained in an earlier interview. "We need to focus on what one thing we could do to improve schools the most. What behaviors do school administrators have that communicate higher expectations?"

Any effort to improve student performance "in one sense comes down to the number and quality of teachers in the classrooms and what they are doing to challenge students," Calhoun said last week. "But there are things we can do to help or support that."

These include encouraging "good, solid" innovations based on sound planning, implementation and evaluation rather than "shots in the dark."

Calhoun said he sees his job "as giving principals and teachers a chance to do some things that are innovative and bold" through site-based management plans. Some schools may be looking at year-round school, schools within schools, apprenticeship opportunities, or new ways of grouping students.

"We're not unique," he said. "Other schools are doing different things than before because students are different."

Other ways to move the system forward include continuing the higher level of in-services to help teachers improve in the classroom, providing teachers time for planning, and aligning the curriculum—making sure that what is actually taught in Brunswick County classrooms is the same material that students must be tested on at year's end.

It also includes providing alternative learning experiences for middle and high school students who aren't successful in school.

The most "telling" fact, Calhoun said last week, is the low number of county graduates earning N.C. Scholars recognition—12.3 percent compared to 24.2 percent statewide. Scholars receive a seal of recognition on their diplomas for completing an academically challenging high school program.

"That indicates we need to raise our expectations," he said. "The state is dismally low, and we're even lower, and have dropped even from last year." Fifteen percent of 1992 graduates were N.C. Scholars.

The push for higher expectations by and of students needs to begin not at the high school level, but

much earlier, he said, at least sixth grade. "It takes a coordinated effort of guidance counselors, teachers and parents to channel students into the most difficult classes they can take." One effort in that direction is a new systematic guidance plan being developed for all schools under the leadership of Assistant Superintendent Oscar Blanks.

The 1993 state assessment uses a different format, making a direct comparison with the 1992 report card impossible. But Calhoun said he thinks the new approach is better.

Before, average performance for each school system and the state was recalculated every year. That meant a school system needed to make gains in achievement at rates greater than the state as a whole in order to show improvement on the report card.

No more. Starting this year information about student performance is presented in terms of a set standard—"grade level" for elementary and middle school end-of-grade test indicators and "proficient level" for high school end-of-course test indicators. Those performance standards were based upon the collective judgment of teachers who administered the tests in 1993, and are expected to continue as a constant standard for comparison purposes for several

years.

On the 1993 Report Card, Brunswick County Schools showed improvement in only three categories, while performance on other indicators fell. In all three major testing areas (core high school courses, reading and math in grades 3-8) performance was below the state standard, and all writing scores were below the state standard.

Reading scores are improving, he (See SCHOOLS, Page 2-A)

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