

County School Board Takes First Step In Tracking Goods' Location, Movement

BY SUSAN USHER

All major pieces of equipment, furniture or other fixed assets known to school system's finance department have been logged onto a computer, but Finance Officer Rudi Connor said Tuesday more work will be needed to keep track of all forms of school-owned property.

Meeting Tuesday night at Supply Elementary School for more than four hours, the Brunswick County Board of Education accepted for immediate use a fixed assets inventory procedures manual developed by Pam Deans. Deans was recently hired as a temporary assets/inventory control coordinator.

Policies will be adopted in the near future to give staff the authority or "teeth" needed to insure compliance with those procedures—something that's missing now, said Connor.

The greatest weaknesses in the existing system isn't in logging in newly purchased or donated items, but "keeping up with them once they're here" and in employee compliance.

The policy covers both real property such as buildings, land improvement and land, as well as personal property valued at \$500 or more.

Having more detailed procedures available to all employees will help, she said, as will having a chain of responsibility and enforcement options to follow when school-owned property can't be located. She emphasized that the cooperation of all schools is "imperative" for the fixed assets system to work.

The manual addresses school check-out of computers for use by parents and staff, but not employee "borrowing" of other equipment; and clarifies the process used in disposing of all surplus items.

"Surplus items are no longer fair game," said Connor. The handbook details how items declared not usable by the school system must be disposed of according to law, "not just taken home."

Questions were raised by the board about fixed assets accounting and sale of surplus property this fall after an employee sold surplus cafeteria to a local restaurant owner in violation of state law. The board later fired an employee for his alleged role in the sale, then reinstated him, saying it had acted hastily.

In a related matter, Assistant Superintendent Bill Turner that all Auxiliary Services employees are getting handbooks that contain job descriptions, salary range lists, and policies and laws relating to their work area. The material will be reviewed with them page by page and employees will sign off that they have received the informa-

tion. Connor said her staff identified needs in several other areas while working on fixed assets. These include bar coding and/or a software program so individual schools can track inventories of supplies and equipment of lesser value; and the need to establish centralized purchasing and receiving, and centralized storage of new and retired items.

Developing an alternative "learning center" for students whose needs are not being met in a regular school setting will be the top priority of a new Children in Crisis Planning Committee.

The committee, which first planned a county-wide forum on Children in Crisis last month, intends to expand its membership as well as changing its name. The larger panel will include greater representation by agencies, civic groups, churches and businesses, and will be charged with seeking incorporation as a not-for-profit Communities in Schools affiliate.

Oscar Blanks, assistant superintendent for support services in the Brunswick County Schools, said the group will develop a more detailed proposal for establishment of an alternative school, for example identifying what age and grade levels would be served.

He invited any interested person or group to contact him at either 754-9282 or 457-5241 about participation.

Other Business

In other business the board:
 ■ approved a fundraising effort proposed by West Brunswick High School Principal Ed Lemon and school athletic program boosters to finance a field house that will include a concession area, public and team restroom facilities and team shower/locker areas. Lemon said the facility is expected to cost between \$80,000 and \$100,000.

■ accepted the Minority Recruitment Task Force report and authorized the superintendent to begin implementing its recommendations and seeking resources for that purpose. A key recommendation of the plan is hiring a minority recruitment specialist to coordinate implementation. Rev. Walter Welsh, a member of the Southport-Brunswick County NAACP's Education Committee, commended the work of the task force and school board and urged re-election of current school board members because "this work needs to continue".

■ approved the superintendent's school system achievement objectives for the coming year, and approved a budget schedule and a new "bottoms-up" budget development process that will create a

one-year operational budget as well as a five-year plan to coincide with the county's long-range planning. Superintendent Ralph Johnston said the individual school budgets will be "driven" by needs and goals outlined in each schools' performance-based accountability plan (PBAP) with parent involvement, and refined in consultation with central office support staff.

■ adopted the 1994-95 high school course of study as recommended by Assistant Superintendent Jan Calhoun, incorporating course additions and deletions recommended earlier. Additional "distance-learning" courses may be approved later for West Brunswick High School, which will link to the N.C. Information Highway and a learning network this fall.

■ agreed to ask the N.C. Department of Transportation to consider installing a controllable signal at the intersection of N.C. 87 and Cougar Drive, the access road to South Brunswick High and South Brunswick Middle schools, and on Old Fayetteville Road near Leland Middle School.

■ received a packet of proposed hiring procedures for discussion in a policy workshop at 1 p.m. today (Thursday). Proposed changes include requiring criminal record or driver's license checks for all candidates; racial, ethnic and gender equity in make-up of screening and interviewing committees at the school and central office levels; a new application form; and creation of a continuously-renewed "pool" of applicants available for interview for teacher assistant positions.

Board members may also discuss whether to change current practice and give existing employees first consideration for vacant positions. Present practice is to give qualified applicants from within the system an opportunity to be interviewed for any opening, along with top candidates from outside the system.

■ approved use of \$10,950 in state funds for "JumpStart," an intensive remediation program slated June 15-30 for South Brunswick Middle School sixth and seventh grade students who score below passing on end-of-grade tests in communications and/or math skills, have an average of 55 to 65 for the year or have missed more than 10 days of school. The students will also receive an intensive three day review of basic skills and concepts before school starts in the fall.


■ heard from member Polly Russ, current president of the Cape Fear Area United Way Board of Directors, that nine schools and the central office increased giving to the United Way campaign by 15 percent or better this past year.



STAFF PHOTO BY LYNN CARLSON

Hospice Fundraiser

Laney Blanton, volunteer coordinator and community relations person for Lower Cape Fear Hospice in Brunswick County, shows a print of artist Vic Gillispie's "Miss Nora." Gillispie painted the coastal scene whose 1,000 signed and numbered prints will be sold for \$45 each to benefit the activities of Hospice. The painting is named for Nora Brown, one of the founders of the local Hospice chapter in June 1980. Hospice is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve the quality of life for the terminally ill and their families. Lower Cape Fear Hospice has grown from a caseload of 202 in 1980 to more than 700 currently, Blanton said.



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RAMP UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Varnamtown, Landowners Still Working On Parking Lot Lease

BY DOUG RUTTER

Construction is under way on Varnamtown's new public boat ramp, but town officials and land/owners are still working out the details of a lease for an adjacent parking area.

Town aldermen and property owners Nicky and Jackie Varnam met behind closed doors for just over an hour at Monday night's town meeting to discuss the lease arrangement.

In open session and without discussion, the town board voted unanimously to postpone the signing of the lease until several issues are resolved.

"The lease was discussed and there's a couple of things that need to be cleared up," Mayor Judy Galloway announced following the lengthy executive session.

Town officials plan to lease property next to Garland's Seafood House to serve the ramp at the end of Fisherman Road. A parking plan approved by the town board last month would provide space for 20 vehicles and boat trailers.

Aldermen said late last year that the Varnams had agreed to lease the property for 15 years. The town would pay \$2,190 per year, with an increase possible after the first five years.

Varnam's Docks and Bulkheads is building the new concrete ramp, which will be 16 feet wide and 72 feet long. A 3-foot-wide pier between the ramp and Garland's Seafood House is included in the project.

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission will give the town up to \$25,000 to build the ramp and improve the parking area. The ramp is expected to cost about \$19,500.

Town officials hope to put a fence around the parking lot and install lights.

Stormwater Management

Varnamtown officials said Monday they're concerned about stormwater runoff and supportive of the county's plan to take the lead in a

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—Mayor Judy Galloway

stormwater management plan.

However, aldermen weren't prepared to commit to spending any town funds for a proposed engineering study.

Brunswick County Engineer Robert Tucker recently met with the mayors of eight local towns to gauge interest in forming a regional stormwater management plan.

As proposed, the county would pay half the cost of a preliminary study to determine the scope of the proposed project and the towns would pay the other half. It is estimated that each town would pay between \$3,000 and \$4,000.

Varnamtown officials indicated Monday that they don't think it's fair their community should have to pay the same as other towns because Varnamtown is smaller and has less money.

"I'm very much in support of a study for stormwater management," Alderman Ada McDonald said. "I just question the amount we have to pay."

Alderman John David Dawson said state agencies have studied stormwater runoff near Lockwood Folly River for years and have little to show for it.

"The only conclusions they could come to was they needed more study," Dawson said. "So I question the validity of what they're talking about. These studies can go on and on and on."

McDonald said if the town commits to anything, it must be with the understanding that it is only for an initial study. Further studies could

cost the town much more than \$3,000.

Other Business

In other business Monday, aldermen:

■ Voted to adopt a resolution opposing the construction of a new county landfill in the Lockwood Folly River watershed. County officials are studying possible sites for the landfill, including five in Supply-Bolivia area that are within the river basin. Some area residents are concerned the landfill might leak and contaminate the river.

■ Adopted a resolution supporting the routing of Interstate 73 through southwestern Brunswick County. The highway will run from Detroit, Mich., to Charleston, S.C. Some North Carolina officials want the interstate to swing along the coast and through Myrtle Beach on its way to Charleston.

■ Transferred \$252 from the contingency fund to pay for the 1992-93

audit report. The audit cost \$1,452, and the town had only included \$1,200 in the budget.

FEB., 1994



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