

STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

Mobile Home Burns

A Brunswick Electric Membership Corp. employee disconnects electricity Friday afternoon to the Pea Landing Road home of Ronnie Gore after a smoldering fire blackened the interior. Calabash, Waccamaw and Grissetown-Longwood Volunteer Fire Departments responded along with Calabash EMS. Calabash Fire Chief Jerry Prince said this was the fifth time Gore has lost a mobile home to fire.

MINIMUM PAY WOULD BE \$12,092

Proposed Schools Budget To Include New Teacher Assistant Salary Plan

BY SUSAN USHER

A proposed 1994-95 budget for the Brunswick County Schools will include a new pay scale designed to eliminate wage inconsistencies for the Brunswick County Schools' 152 teacher assistants.

After some confusion over their intent, school board members agreed Monday night to forward the plan on to the budget committee, specifying it intends a new wage scale for teacher assistants to become part of its proposed budget.

The proposed scale would give consideration to an assistant's experience and education, while starting beginning assistants at the same pay grade as a beginning clerical employee. A new pay scale for clerical employees adopted by the school board last spring puts clerical wages generally higher than those of teachers assistants. The proposed scale would raise the minimum salary for an assistant from \$1,126.59 to \$1,209.21 per month, or \$12,092 for a 10-month work year.

"This proposed salary scheduled addresses all of our concerns. It provides a fair and equitable salary to all teacher assistants," said Lynn Ellis, president of the Brunswick County Teachers Assistant Association.

In 1986 the pay scale for assistants was to have been redesigned to recognize college education, but to date that hasn't happened, said Ellis. Instead a state study indicates Brunswick County teacher assistants are underpaid in comparison with their peers statewide. While the state provided more funding in 1990 to compensate for previously "frozen" salaries, Ellis said most of the money went instead to newer employees.

Of the 152 teacher assistants, 119 are paid out of regular state funds. Another seven are paid from county funds, five from federal funds and 21 from special education funds. Ellis said it appeared no effort had

been made in recent years to keep salaries in line with the automatic step increases provided for in the old schedule based on experience or educational attainment.

Personnel Director Ward said the state gives a minimum (\$1,120.76) and a maximum (\$1,703.50) monthly wage for teacher assistants. "Beyond that, it is up to the local system to work out its scale," he said. Presently local teacher assistants are paid anywhere from \$1,126.59 a month to a high of \$1,452.99, with broad discrepancies.

Tables provided by Ellis show that one person with seven years of experience and a teaching certificate earns \$1,135.77, as does another assistant with one year of experience and no college education. An assistant with 29 years of work experience receives \$1,397.91, less than someone with 14 years of experience who earns \$1,438.71 a month.

Board member Polly Russ, who served on the salary study committee, said the panel also talked about developing a better teacher assistant job description and looking again at hiring procedures to make sure attention is paid to verifiable experience, especially work with children.

Voting against the plan, Bill Fairley expressed his concern to fellow board members that the school system would be going into the new budget year with no reserves to fall back on, which means more money will be needed from the county commissioners to meet a continuation budget, much less any increases.

"If we're going to have to fight for the other money, we'll just have to add this to the list," said Chairman Donna Baxter.

It was the second pay increase request heard by the board in as many meetings. On Feb. 14, the board agreed to ask for higher local pay supplements for teachers in its budget request to commissioners. Implementing the first phase of that plan

would cost the county from \$101 to \$182 per teacher next year, depending on experience and education.

To implement the teacher assistant pay plan next year will cost an additional \$136,000 in wages and related costs, Personnel Director Ralph Ward estimated Monday night.

Rose Office To Visit Longwood

Congressman Charlie Rose's mobile office will be stationed at Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church, Longwood, Thursday, March 17, from 9 until 11 a.m.

Rose's constituents is welcome to meet his staff and express any concerns or ask questions, said Joseph Butler, chairman of the 7th Congressional District Black Leadership Caucus.

Leland Demos Sponsor Forum

The Leland Democratic Precinct will sponsor a candidates' forum at the Leland Community Building Saturday, March 26, from 1-3 p.m.

Light refreshments will be served, and the public is invited. The community building is behind the Leland Post Office.

For more information, call Mike Holmes at (910)371-3511.

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BCC Trustees To 'Retreat' With Scott

What will Brunswick Community College be in 2003?

That's just one of the topics on the agenda of a weekend retreat for BCC trustees that begins Friday evening and continues until around 2:30 p.m. Saturday at The Winds Clarion Resort at Ocean Isle Beach.

Area legislators and county commissioners have been invited to join the trustees for dinner and discussion Friday night at Tavern-on-the-Tee at Sunset Beach. Back at The Winds, a brainstorming session on the college's future begins at 9:30 p.m.

Department of Community Colleges President Robert W. Scott, who has announced plans to retire, will

open the Saturday morning session at 8 a.m. He is expected to discuss trends affecting the community college system and the roles and responsibilities of trustees.

Trustees will hear and discuss reports on "desktop reviews" of various campus programs and recommendations relating to those programs; diversity; planning and budgeting; and a new vision statement for BCC.

After lunch, starting at 12:30 p.m., the trustees will hold their regular March business meeting, rescheduled from Wednesday.

All sessions are open to the public, though seating may be limited.

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