

Public Was To Comment Wednesday On Schools' Proposed \$12.1 Million Budget

BY SUSAN USHER

County residents were to get a chance Wednesday night to look at the school system's proposed budget for 1994-95 before it goes to the Brunswick County Commissioners.

Meeting last Friday, the Brunswick County Board of Education set the hearing for May 11 at Supply Elementary School starting at 7 p.m. and asked local schools to notify parents since there was no time to advertise the forum.

Since few people will have seen the budget, administrators planned to present an overview before opening the floor for comments and questions. Principals of all 12 schools were to be available to answer questions relating to their schools.

The school board was to meet today (Thursday) at 1 p.m. to adopt its proposed budget, which is to be submitted to the county before May 15.

Commissioners will be asked to provide \$12.1 million in operating or current expense revenues, of which \$11.3 million would come from property tax revenues, up from \$8.7 million this year. The schools are asking for another \$2.88 million in capital outlay funds for site improvements, vehicle replacement and repair and replacement of items such as carpeting and air conditioning units. Of that \$2.88 million, \$2.5 million would be needed from county funds and \$385,000 would come from available state half-cent sales tax revenues.

The request reflects the absence of any carry-

over money from this year's budget, a projected increase in salaries for state-paid teachers that must be matched for locally-paid teachers, plus \$1.1 million in expansion items.

"With all the expansion items we have I think this offers a lot for the money," said Johnston.

Last summer the board allocated its remaining \$600,000 in reserves. "We're not in the hole \$600,000," said Finance Officer Rudi Fallon. "We were just required by the county to use all of our fund balance this year."

Johnston says the proposed budget is "school driven" and reflects the "bottoms-up" approach by which it was developed.

Expansion items are related to instructional goals. They include adding an 11th month of employment for high school and middle school assistant principals; a new salary schedule for teacher assistants; \$200 salary supplements for bus drivers; increased local supplemental pay for teachers; salary adjustments for custodial salaries to meet state requirements, plus two new custodial positions at Lincoln Primary School; and 22½ teachers. Those include a computer coordinator at each school, 3½ exceptional children's teachers, another physical education teacher at Waccamaw Elementary; and six new classroom teachers.

Also included are hiring a principal for the new Leland school this year to begin planning for the 1995-96 year while assigned to a "dual" principalship at Lincoln; a site facilitator for the

Information Highway project; and \$94,000 to continue the extended day program. JTPA funding of \$118,000 won't be available next year because the extended day program doesn't include a job site component.

Shorter Financing Sought

The board also voted to ask county commissioners to agree to a five-year financing plan for the new Leland Elementary School that would eliminate an estimated \$800,000 in debt service, and to commit to using county resources to help meet school construction needs.

In a cover letter, the school board asked commissioners:

■ to recognize that the project represents only a small portion of school system building needs and that county ad valorem tax money will be needed if any other school projects are undertaken such as a proposed elementary school in the southwest area;

■ to agree to pay the debt service on the Leland project regardless of how much state half-cent sales tax revenue is available; and

■ to create a separate reserve fund for school capital outlay needs using the bulk of funds now set aside in a joint school/sewer fund; and to agree to continue it by contributing not less than \$1 million a year.

After the school board questioned the long-term financing plan that was the county's first choice, commissioners provided three other alternatives for financing over five to 10 years.

Budget Talks Under Way In Varnamtown; Public Input Sought

BY DOUG RUTTER

Although they have one of the smallest governmental budgets in the county, Varnamtown officials have wasted no time getting started on their 1994-95 spending plan.

Mayor Pro Tem Ennis Swain reported at Tuesday night's town board meeting that the finance committee held its first meeting April 18 and will meet again next Monday at 7:30 p.m.

"If you have any input, let some of our members know," said Swain, who serves as chairman of the committee. "We're looking for suggestions."

Alderman Will Mumford recommended the town set aside \$60 next fiscal year for a telephone answering machine for town hall. While working there one recent morning, Mumford said the phone rang a dozen times in 90 minutes.

"Every time it was some different legislative agency calling to talk to the mayor or town clerk, and I told them I was just the maintenance man," Mumford joked.

Varnamtown's finance committee is expected to present a proposed 1994-95 budget to town aldermen at their June 13 meeting. A public hearing has been tentatively planned for June 27.

One major item that may or may not be considered as part of the new budget is trash pickup.

Mumford reported Tuesday night that Waste Management of Bolivia would charge the town \$10,200 per year for once-a-week, door-to-door trash pickup.

For \$1,500 extra, the company would provide a 90-gallon trash container for each home so residents wouldn't have to buy their own garbage cans.

Based on an estimate of 200 homes, Mumford said the cost per homeowner would be \$51 per year without the container or \$58.50 with the container. Either way, the cost per family would be less than \$5 per month.

Mumford said Waste Management would bill the town. It would be up to town officials to collect money from each resident, unless the board decided to pay for the service with town funds.

A/C Unit Installed

King's Heating & Air Condi-

tioning of Shallotte recently installed a new five-ton package heat pump at town hall, which should help keep things cooler this summer.

Mumford said King's submitted the lower of two bids the town received. The unit cost \$4,500, and the town will have to pay an electrician about \$100 for wiring.

Aldermen had included \$4,000 in this year's budget for the air-conditioning unit. They voted Tuesday to transfer \$600 from the reserve fund to cover the extra cost.

Town Too Noisy?

Mayor Judy Galloway said several residents want the board to adopt a noise ordinance, but town officials took no action Tuesday night.

"The biggest problem with an ordinance like this is we have no way to enforce it," Mumford said.

"To establish an ordinance that can't be enforced is worse than no ordinance at all, because if you can't enforce it, your other ordinances become a joke," he said.

Board Supports Parks

Aldermen adopted a resolution Tuesday night supporting Senate Bill 733, which would earmark part of the state excise tax for development of parks.

Town officials are in the early stages of planning development of their three-acre park off Varnamtown Road.

Aldermen said Tuesday they want it to include a softball field, playground equipment, restrooms and parking area.

Howard Capps of Wilmington, a professional planner who is working on the town's land use plan, has agreed to design the park at no charge.

Toilets For Sale

In other business Tuesday, aldermen voted to sell an old door to Midget Varnum for \$30. Varnum had purchased a storm door from the town a last month for \$10.

The town board also is interested in selling two large fans for \$15 each, one small fan for \$10, two toilets for \$15 apiece and a sink for \$10.

Planning Board Meeting

Alderman Ada McDonald said the planning board will meet Monday, June 6, at 7 p.m. to work on the land use plan.

Citizen Tip Leads To Two-State Cocaine Bust

BY ERIC CARLSON

More than \$6,500 worth of cocaine was seized and four people have been charged with drug offenses in a cooperative investigation with South Carolina authorities that is expected to yield at least two additional felony arrests.

Detective Lt. David Crocker of the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department narcotics squad on Tuesday said his officers, with help from State Bureau of Investigation agents and Horry County narcotics detectives, were able to shut down a major source of drugs to the area thanks to information provided by a concerned citizen.

In an operation organized by BCSO Detective Billy Hughes, nar-

cotics officers arrested Allen Dale Brooks, 31, of Hideaway Avenue, Seaside, Friday in the parking lot of a Seaside grocery store with a small amount of powder cocaine, Crocker said.

As a result, Det. Hughes obtained a search warrant for Brooks' home, where a package containing about one ounce of cocaine was seized.

Acting on information uncovered there, Det. Hughes set up a surveillance operation that led to the arrest of Rupert Lee Edge, 42, of North Myrtle Beach, S.C., who was apprehended Monday night in the parking lot of a Calabash shopping center with about two ounces of cocaine, Crocker said.

Both men have been charged with

one count each of trafficking cocaine by possession of between 28 and 200 grams of the drug, trafficking cocaine by manufacture, trafficking cocaine by transport and maintaining a vehicle for the purpose of keeping controlled substances.

Narcotics officers also seized a 1987 Oldsmobile owned by Brooks and a 1981 Ford pickup truck belonging to Edge.

Working their way "up the ladder," Crocker said the officers followed leads developed in both cases to assist Horry County authorities in the arrest of a man and woman in Conway on charges of conspiracy to sell and deliver cocaine. Approximately \$7,200 in cash—be-

lieved to be the proceeds from drug sales—was confiscated in the arrest.

Brooks and Edge face a minimum of 26 years in prison if convicted on all counts. Crocker said the two also will be charged with similar offenses in South Carolina. At least two more arrests are expected in the case there.

Brooks is being held in Brunswick County Jail in lieu of a \$500,000 bond. Edge's bond was set at \$400,000.

Crocker expressed appreciation for the tip from a local resident that set the successful investigation into motion. He encouraged others who have information about illegal drug activities to call the narcotics squad at (910) 253-4797.

Calabash Votes Yes, No On N.C. 179 Re-Zoning

BY ERIC CARLSON

Should residential property along N.C. 179 in Calabash be re-zoned to allow commercial development?

That depends on where it is.

In back-to-back split votes Tuesday night, the Calabash Board of Commissioners approved one request for commercial zoning on the highway while denying another.

Responding to an outpouring of opposition from residents of Calabash Acres and Clariday Woods, the board voted 4-to-2, with Commissioners Keith Hardee and Ed Schaack dissenting, to deny a request to re-zone a strip of lots on the north side of N.C. 179 between Georgetown Center and the NAPA store from residential to commercial. The town's planning and zoning board recommended the change.

However, the board was told last month that 140 out of a possible 150 residents of the area had signed petitions opposing the change.

Speaking in support of the re-zoning Tuesday night, Schaack restated his opinion that the state's plan to widen N.C. 179 from Shallotte to the state line will dramatically increase traffic on the highway. Re-zoning it commercial would reduce the number of allowable entrances to the road and would require businesses to plant vegetative buffers to reduce street noise in the neighborhoods, he said.

At its April meeting, the board tabled consideration of the re-zoning because Commissioners Alvin Leisey and Teddy Altreuter were absent. Both members opposed the zoning change.

Tuesday night, Commissioner Forrest King was absent and Hardee recommended that the board likewise put off the vote until a full board is present.

"I think a precedent was set at that meeting and we have to give both sides equal consideration," said Schaack, who was the only commissioner to support Hardee's motion for a delay.

"That's crap," said Leisey, who voted with Jon Sanborn, Robert Noe and Altreuter to oppose the delay. The zoning request was denied with the same split vote.

The second request for commercial zoning came from Bob Crocker, a former planning board member who asked the commissioners to change the zoning of four 50-foot lots on N.C. 179 beside the NAPA store from MFH-2 residential to "central business." Crocker said he has a potential buyer for the property who wants to build a real estate office.

Altreuter pointed out that no ad-

joining property owners have opposed the zone change.

Sanborn noted that the NAPA store and a convenience store across the street are on property that is already zoned commercial.

Noe also said that Crocker's proposal was different from the previous request because it was "just extending an existing commercial zone."

But Leisey voiced opposition to the idea of re-zoning any property in the town from residential to commercial, calling such changes a "reduction" in land use that "violates a cardinal principal of zoning."

Schaack also opposed the change, saying the board was not being consistent in its policy on such zoning changes.

"How can we all of a sudden do something different a mile or two up the road?"



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