

**PUBLIC HEARING IS JUNE 28**

# Ocean Isle Beach Eyeing 3-Cents Reduction In Property Tax Rate

BY SUSAN USHER

Property tax revenues would go up about \$25,000 and the tax rate would drop 3 cents at Ocean Isle Beach under a proposed 1994-95 budget.

Commissioners will hold a public hearing on the budget June 28 at 9 a.m. at the town hall as part of a continuation of their June 14 meeting.

The proposed budget is based on an estimated tax base of \$382.37 million, up from a year ago by \$67.4 million following county revaluation and still subject to adjustment, said Mayor Betty Williamson. It calls for a tax rate of 17 cents per \$100 of real property valuation and a 99 percent collection rate.

Of that 17-cent tax rate, 3 cents, or roughly \$114,712, is designated for the beach restoration and erosion control fund.

The overall budget reflects two new positions, one in administration and one in the sewer department; a move to handheld units for meter reading; two police vehicles and one vehicle for the water/sewer departments; adding to town hall a separate wing to house the police department; and expansion of the town's emergency headquarters into a substation for the Shallotte Volunteer Rescue Squad (See related story in this issue).

Personnel costs reflect a pay plan revised with the help of the Cape Fear Council of Governments and a new 401K plan for all employees, with the town contributing 5 percent. A 401K plan, which the state already requires be provided for police officers, allows employees to set aside money for retirement from their wages before income tax is calculated.

Broken down by fund, the 1994-95 budget looks like this:

- general fund (day-to-day operations), \$1.05 million;
- water fund, \$458,000;
- sewer fund, \$613,007;
- accommodations tax, \$425,500;
- airport, \$27,500, reflecting a \$25,000 contribution from Brunswick County.

General departmental totals are as follows: administration, \$147,577; building inspections, \$58,930; professional services, \$2,000; police department, \$315,962; first responders, \$9,350; mosquito control, \$6,930; sanitation (including recycling), \$105,200; street and right-of-way, \$78,857; municipal buildings, \$166,500; canal dredging, \$5,000; planning and zoning and underground utilities, \$36,000; beach renourishment, \$114,712; fire department, \$5,000; cleaning and mowing lots, \$1,000.

**Reserve Funds Boosted**

Reflected in the fund balances are the proposed addition of nearly \$235,000 to reserve accounts to address future needs such as beach re-

nourishment and expansion of water, sewer and street services.

The \$114,712 contribution from the general fund and \$90,000 in accommodations tax revenues will increase the beach restoration and erosion control reserve fund to \$655,694; while another \$20,000 in general fund revenues and \$25,000 in accommodations tax revenues will bring the streets and right-of-way reserve fund to \$95,000. Another \$5,000 in accommodations tax revenues will increase the sidewalks and bike path fund to \$62,836, for work expected to be done once the underground utility project is completed.

In the enterprise departments the town will add \$25,000 to the sewer capital project reserve fund, for a cumulative total of \$140,749, and \$45,000 to the water capital project reserve fund, for a cumulative total of \$62,836.

The town also has set aside \$359,739 to pay principal and interest on its sewer project debt; \$136,283 for the underground utility project; and \$50,329 to cover meter deposit refunds.

**Accommodations Tax Fund**  
Accommodations tax revenues will also be used to support police and administration, \$39,000; trash collection, \$98,000; park management, strand cleanup, causeway beautification, \$17,000; Shallotte Volunteer Rescue Squad, \$5,000; Ocean Isle Beach Volunteer Fire Department Association, \$10,000; South Brunswick Islands Chamber of Commerce, \$14,000; canal dredging, \$25,000; lighting, \$57,000; public parking, \$2,000; signs and public relations, \$2,500; and \$5,000 for contingency and miscellaneous administrative purposes.

**Other Business**

In other business Tuesday, with Commissioners Debbie Fox and Kendall Suh absent:

■ commissioners met in executive session with attorney Elva Jess over a legal matter relating to accessways and a property owner's efforts to withdraw dedication of part of an accessway from public use. The attorney was directed to investigate further.

■ Police Chief Curt Fritchard reported officers responding to 129 calls during May.

■ Building Inspector Druied Roberson reported issuing seven building permits in the extrajurisdictional area for construction valued at \$179,980, and 43 permits in town for construction valued at \$546,390.

■ Utilities Commissioner Odell Williamson reported that rust and turbulence in water over the Memorial Day holiday was caused by a drop in county water pressure. Increased water flow shook loose rust in the water mains.

■ Mayor Williamson announced that the Ocean Isle Beach POA had completed a handi-

capped access ramp at Raeford Street, the Pilot Club of South Brunswick Islands had donated a beach chair that will allow the disabled to enjoy the beach, and Janet Sanders had hosted a party for town employees.

■ also, she reported town employees will soon begin regular raking of the heavily used strand between the Ocean Isle Motel and The Breakers, and will begin installing new street signs next week.

■ commissioners approved change orders and payment of \$144,687 to MAC Construction Co. for a major street resurfacing project completed a week ahead of schedule.

■ citing uncertainty over the cost of water and over the town's enforcement ability, the board took no action on a proposal to allow property owners to install a second water meter for lawn irrigation and other non-residential uses. Water committee members Mayor Williamson and Commissioners Debbie Fox and Janet Sanders will consider the proposal as well as review water rates and fees in relation to the county's new wholesale rate for water.

■ Mayor Williamson named Commissioners Debbie Fox and Kendall Suh to look into a request from a group of property owners to provide short-term and long-term relief from erosion on the east end.

■ She told Ron Speakman, who asked about the town's vacant lot cleanup policy, that town staff is slightly behind schedule because of other projects such as debris pick-up on the east end.

■ Commissioner Ken Proctor advised Jack Clements, who was questioning efforts by the volunteer fire department to improve its fire insurance rating, and in the process, reduce premiums for homeowners, that the volunteers are working as hard as they can to qualify for a lower rating. They have encountered additional criteria that must be met before the current rating of 8 can be dropped.

■ commissioners agreed to donate one surplus computer monitor and keyboard each to the fire department and to the Museum of Coastal Carolina; and approved advertising of a new secretary/receptionist position available July 1, and for bids on a used police vehicle.

**Library Dedication Sunday**

The new Leland Branch of the Brunswick County Library will be dedicated in a ceremony Sunday, June 19, at 2 p.m. The dedication will be followed by an open house.

Weekly operating schedule for the library is as follows: Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, 9 a.m. until 6 p.m.; Wednesdays, 9 a.m. until 8 p.m.; Saturdays, 9 a.m. until 1 p.m.; Sundays, 2-6 p.m.

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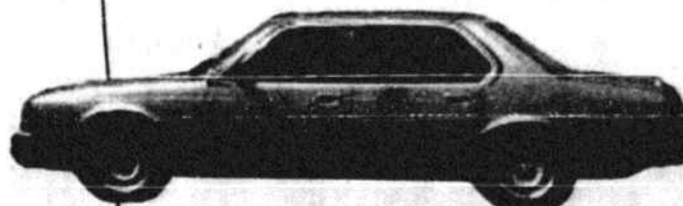
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