

Commission OKs Budget With 11-Cent Tax Rate

BY DOUG RUTTER

Holden Beach Commissioners have approved a \$1.57 million budget for next fiscal year featuring a 4-cent reduction in the tax rate and a \$1 increase in the minimum monthly water charge.

Funds to complete sidewalk construction on Ocean Boulevard, \$50,000 for town hall renovations and \$5,000 to study water pressure problems at the west end of the island are among the items included in the 1994-95 spending plan.

Commissioners adopted the budget with little discussion last Wednesday after only 12 people showed up for the budget hearing.

"I can't believe y'all are so quiet," Mayor Gay Atkins remarked after hearing no public comments. The new budget takes effect July 1.

Town Manager Gus Ulrich said the 27-percent tax rate cut—from 15 cents to 11 cents per \$100 of property—was made possible by the recent revaluation in Brunswick County.

The property revaluation added approximately \$60

million to Holden Beach's tax base, which is estimated at \$295 million. With the 11-cent rate, town officials expect to collect \$318,010 in taxes next year.

The \$1 million general fund includes \$225,684 for police, \$195,767 for administration, \$145,650 for public works and \$75,600 for sanitation.

With the \$50,000 set aside for town hall renovations, Ulrich said town officials are considering converting the meeting room into office space and turning the old public works garage into a meeting room.

"It's obvious to everyone that we need space for our personnel," the manager said last week.

Ulrich said the \$45,600 budgeted for sidewalk construction will allow the town to complete work along Ocean Boulevard by May 1995.

Town employees are doing the work instead of contractors. Ulrich said the town saved about \$6,700 on the stretch recently completed between Blockade Runner and Jordan Boulevard.

Budgeted contributions include \$10,000 for Coastline Volunteer Rescue Squad, \$2,000 for the South Brunswick Islands Chamber of Commerce and \$500

each for the Brunswick County Literacy Council, Hope Harbor Home, Lower Cape Fear Hot-pice and Brunswick County Volunteer and Information Center.

Holden Beach officials have increased the monthly base charge for water from \$12 to \$13 because of an anticipated rate increase by Brunswick County, which sells water to the town.

Starting in July, people who use more than 2,000 gallons of water per month will be charged an additional \$1.70 per 1,000 gallons over the base charge. The old rate was \$1.65 per 1,000 gallons.

"It's anticipated the county will raise its rate so we're protecting ourselves from that," Commissioner Sid Swarts said.

A 2.5-percent pay raise for all town employees was included in the budget, and town officials do not plan to increase the number of employees in the coming year.

Appointments Coming

Commissioners will make four appointments to the town's planning and zoning board and four appoint-

ments to the board of adjustment at their July 5 meeting.

Nominated for re-appointment to the planning board last week were regular members Roger Williams and Johnny Craig and alternate members Myra Burke and Leonard Froehlich. There were no other nominations.

On the board of adjustment, Commissioner David Sandifer nominated Crawford Hart for re-appointment as a regular member. Swarts nominated John Weller for the seat now held by Hart.

Swarts also nominated Diane Clark and Dwight Carroll nominated James Hartman for the regular seat currently held by Allan Dameron. Dameron has served two consecutive terms and is not eligible to serve another term.

Jack Vorndran was nominated to fill the alternate seat now held by Larry Boyte.

Dan Harmor was nominated to serve the rest of the unexpired term of Marlane Thomas, who resigned her alternate seat when she was appointed to the board of commissioners.

Commissioners will make final nominations before voting on appointments at the next meeting.

Holden Building Inspector Resigns, After Only Four Months On The Job

BY DOUG RUTTER

Holden Beach Commissioners put \$50,000 in the 1994-95 budget for town hall renovations. Maybe they should spend some of it on a revolving door in the building inspections office.

In the past 14 months, four building inspectors have either retired or resigned. The latest, Claude Spellman, stepped down June 14 after four months on the job.

"I think he just didn't find what he was looking for down here," said Town Manager Gus Ulrich, who is accepting applications for a new inspector and hopes to start interviewing candidates this week.

Mayor Gay Atkins said the three resignations by building inspectors in the past year were not related. One resigned because he preferred a different occupation, and two others left because of personal or family problems.

Dwight Carroll, now a town commissioner, served more than nine years as building inspector before retiring last April due to a back injury. Since his retirement, Holden Beach has been through three inspectors.

"I think he just didn't find what he was looking for down here."
—Gus Ulrich, Town Manager

Jim McSwain replaced Carroll but left six months later to run his own construction business. Bill Goodman resigned after just five weeks on the job for personal reasons.

Spellman, who previously worked three years as chief building inspector for the Pamlico County Inspections Department, left Holden Beach after serving just over four months.

Despite the high turnover rate, Atkins said there are no problems in the inspections department.

"There's no undercurrent of anything happening in the town," she said last week. "There have been no personality conflicts or town conflicts with any of the inspectors. It's

just the way it's worked out."

The mayor said Spellman decided to leave mainly because his wife started having health problems shortly after he took the Holden Beach job. She never did move to the area from their home in Arapahoe.

"Jim (McSwain) thought that's what he wanted to do and when he got into building inspections it ended up being more paperwork than he thought...I think he wanted to get back into building," Atkins said.

"With Bill (Goodman) there were some personal problems that arose and he went back to the town he had been living in (Hickory)," she said.

Ulrich said Spellman had been commuting between Holden Beach and Arapahoe every weekend to visit his wife.

"Frankly, I think he was getting tired of the inspection-type work," Ulrich said.

Commissioner Carroll said last week he doesn't think there's more pressure placed on building inspectors at Holden Beach than there is in other places.

"I had a lot of pressure put on me at times, but the job was not that im-

portant to me as far as the money," Carroll said.

Asked to explain the type of pressure he was under as inspector, Carroll said, "People want to get by without following the code. They want to take shortcuts, and the building code is the very minimum."

Carroll pointed out that there's a big difference between building code enforcement inland and along the coast.

"Between the mainland north of the waterway is a completely different code than south of the waterway," he said.

While Ulrich searches for a new inspector, Ocean Isle Beach building inspector Drueid Roberson is working part-time at Holden Beach.

Town commissioners voted last week to pay Roberson \$20 per hour during his temporary stint. Roberson comes to Holden Beach after his work day at Ocean Isle Beach and has been working some weekends.

Holden Beach's public works superintendent, Russell Hickman, has a probationary building inspector's certificate and has been doing some minor inspections with Roberson, Ulrich said.

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