

# School Board Seeks \$1.25 Million More From Commissioners

BY SUSAN USHER

It's just not enough. That's the budget message Brunswick County Board of Education members hope they can get across to Brunswick County Commissioners in the next few days and avoid a legal confrontation like the two boards experienced a year ago. Tuesday evening, with District 1 member Thurman Gause absent, the school board voted unanimously to seek a joint meeting with the commissioners to discuss the schools' \$9.26 million allocation for 1994-95. Finance Officer Rudi Connor said the appropriation isn't enough to maintain existing programs at current levels and meet expenses over which the schools have no control.

**How Far Apart?**  
Just how far apart are the two boards? At first glance, \$4.5 million, the difference between the schools' allocation and the \$13.78 million initially requested. However the schools say they can squeak by with another \$1.25 million, though that will leave many school needs for personnel and equipment unmet. If the school board isn't satisfied with its county funding, state law provides that a joint meeting of the two boards "shall" be called within seven days of the county adopting its budget. However, if the two boards are agreeable, the dates are flexible. Board attorney Glen Peterson set the joint meeting process in motion

immediately after Tuesday's meeting with a call to county attorney Michael Ramos. The meeting would be the first step in a formal appeal process that could result in a court-mediated settlement like that negotiated between the commissioners and school board last August, and a continued chilling of relationships between the two boards. That's not what school board members want. They want to discuss their needs with the acting county manager and commissioners, and not through a mediator if that can be avoided. **'We Can't Stop Now'**  
During the budget preparation period county officials were simply too busy to sit down and discuss

school system needs with school board members, said school board Chairman Donna Baxter. "Maybe this way they'll have time," she said. "We hope by just meeting with them and presenting a lot of the information we've presented tonight we can show them where we are, how we're moving forward and that we can't stop now." But if that doesn't work, she at least is prepared to pursue the money she believes the schools need to operate. "I'm ready to help move us forward, to take the next step if that becomes necessary. It could go to that, but that's not what we're hoping will happen."

School system administrators sat down this week to determine what items the county's 4 percent operations increase would cover, and what other items they consider absolutely necessary that still aren't covered in the local budget or through other sources such as state and federal grants. This year's school budget doesn't include a repeat of the \$1 million one-time county allocation for technology, or the \$200,000 balance the school board transferred from its steadily diminishing reserves to balance the 1993-94 budget.

Continuation Budget  
The conclusion: Another \$954,408 to meet its \$10.55 million continuation budget and maintain programs at current levels, Connor said, and \$297,500 in "expansion" money to fund 3.5 teaching/technology positions (\$135,000), to support an alternative schools program (\$150,000), and to continue the A+ arts program at Southport Elementary and a clinical teaching program operated in conjunction with UNC-Wilmington (\$12,500). The arts and clinical teaching programs are multi-year contractual commitments that required increased financial support from the schools next year. It will take about \$216,000 of the county's 4 percent increase of \$337,203 in operating money to give locally-paid school system employees the 4 percent salary increase their state-paid peers expect to receive. Another \$22,900 is needed just to meet current teacher supplement costs, without increasing the supplement as teachers have requested. It costs \$590,000 to pay the current supplement. Another \$43,500

## THREE ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS SHIFTED

### Turner's Job Eliminated One Week Before Contract Expired

BY SUSAN USHER

William Turner lost his job as assistant superintendent for auxiliary services last week when the Brunswick County Board of Education voted 3-2 to create a new position in its place.

Turner had been employed with the Brunswick County Schools for 21 years and had been working under a one-year contract that ended today (June 30).

He could not be reached for comment at his office or his home in Wilmington.

"All I can say is I thought it was in the best interest of the school system," said Superintendent of Schools Ralph Johnston, who recommended creation of the new school facilities and maintenance director post as part of an overall restructuring of the central office staff. The position requires a high school diploma with additional technical training preferred, knowledge of construction, building supplies, management of custodial services and purchasing of custodial supplies.

As assistant superintendent for auxiliary services Turner oversaw the areas of child nutrition, transportation, facilities (maintenance, construction and planning), warehousing and distribution, and reported to Johnston.

Under the new arrangement, Johnston said the directors of transportation and facilities will report directly to him, with the child nutrition director reporting to the finance office.

Board members Polly Russ and Thurman Gause, who opposed the change, accused supporters of the action of making Turner the fall guy for mistakes made by employees under his supervision.

Gause said Thursday he's afraid the schools' construction program will suffer and fall behind schedule, since no one but Turner was familiar with the projects, additions at West Brunswick and North Brunswick high schools, construction of a new elementary school in Leland and repair of Supply Elementary School's wastewater treatment system.

"I feel like he was treated wrong," said Gause, questioning why Turner "lost his whole job" when others involved in a recent controversy received only short-term suspensions.

According to Gause, Johnston followed personnel recommendations stemming from an investigation conducted by Brian Shaw of Richard Schwartz & Associates into the sale last summer of Southport Elementary School cafeteria equipment to a local restaurant owner, who in turn sold many of the items to a nephew's food service equipment company.

After hearing Shaw's recommendations, the school board had asked Johnston to come back with his own, based upon his observations and knowledge of the system. He returned to the board with the same recommendations.

In that report investigator Shaw found no evidence of intentional wrongdoing on the part any employee or of school property having been disposed of improperly in the past.

Earlier last week, also on Shaw's recommendation, Johnston suspended Rebecca Brandon, director of child nutrition, for 30 days and William "Bunny" Babson, a maintenance supervisor, for 15 days. Another maintenance supervisor, Odell Benton, was earlier fired, then reinstated. Since he had already gone 23 days without pay, he was suspended for seven days, for the equivalent of a 30-day suspension.

Typically contracts for assistant superintendents are scheduled to end at the same time as the superintendent's contract, allowing a new educational leader to create his or her own administrative team.

However, Brunswick County school boards have bought off the contracts of three of the last four

county school superintendents. The fourth, Johnston's predecessor, P.R. Hankins, retired after the start of the 1991-92 school term, throwing contracts out of synchronization.

When Turner's contract came up for renewal last spring after he and Johnston had worked together for only six months, it was extended for one year only, at the recommendation of the superintendent.

The cafeteria equipment sale was not the only controversy or situation in recent months involving the areas of Turner's responsibility.

Two years ago, Turner, a series of state and private consultants and school system employees worked for more than a year in an effort to correct air quality and cleanliness problems at Lincoln Primary School that parents and teachers claimed was exacerbating allergies and other respiratory problems.

Gause says he is convinced the Schwartz investigation, which cost about \$13,000, was simply a vehicle for removing Turner. The decision to have an outside agency conduct an investigation came after Johnston and the school board attorney had already conducted an in-house investigation and acted on the findings.

"The investigation was supposed to be over when Benton was returned to his job," said Gause.

Earlier this year five other senior posts were eliminated and replaced with new job descriptions. One person resigned, three have been hired in new positions created within the system, and a place is expected to be found for the fifth, according to Assistant Superintendent Jan Calhoun, eliminating the need to put into effect the school system's reduction-in-force policy.

In other personnel actions last

Wednesday, the school board named former middle grades supervisor Robert Rhyne of Long Beach as principal of a planned alternative school that would serve students whose needs cannot be met in a "traditional" school.

Rhyne had served as principal of South Brunswick Middle School immediately prior to joining the central office staff.

Plans for the Brunswick County Learning Center are indefinite, with its location, size and scope depending in part on available funds from the county and state, including grants, according to Assistant Superintendent Oscar Blanks.

Three assistant principals were reassigned effective July 1. Wanda Frazier moves from Bolivia Elementary to Southport Elementary, where Phillip Tate has retired. Harry Martin, assistant at Union Elementary, is going to South Brunswick High School, while former South assistant Gene Bowden moves into Frazier's former slot at Bolivia.

Assistant principalships at Union Elementary, Martin's current assignment, and Shallotte Middle, where William Detrie is presently the assistant, will be advertised as vacancies. Detrie's assignment for the 1994-95 school year has not been announced.

Administrative assignments at Waccamaw and Supply elementary schools and West Brunswick High are unchanged. Rumors of the possible reassignment of Waccamaw Assistant Principal Terry Chestnut sparked protests from the Ash community last week.

Waccamaw School is the only one of the county's 12 schools where the assistant and assistant principal are of the same race, an arrangement that has been criticized in past years by some black community leaders.

### School Board Fills Slots

Brunswick County school board members filled seven jobs and accepted two retirements at the board's June 22 meeting in Southport.

Leamon Clemmons of Supply and Judy Robinson of Wilmington were hired as middle grade teachers at Shallotte Middle, and James Cox Jr. of Long Beach, Bonnie Smith of Lawrenceville, Ga., Kristin Crook of Hamptonville and Carolyn Doshier of Southport were hired as middle

grade teachers at South Brunswick Middle.

Two Chapter 1 teachers announced their retirement. Bernetha Holmes, at Leland Middle, retired effective June 30, and Doris Wilson, at Union Elementary, as of July 1.

The board also hired Patricia Mims, formerly a secretary at the central office, as administrative assistant at Bolivia Elementary School.

support that technology, or else the initial investment will be lost, Director of Technology Gene Zuck suggested. The revised expansion budget request from the schools doesn't include hiring a computer coordinator at each school or a facilitator for West Brunswick High School's N.C. Information Highway interactive learning site that is being developed with REA grant funds.

Last year, to stretch available funds, the three high schools each used one of their two locally-paid teaching positions to hire computer coordinators and another school used half of an existing position. Without additional funds they'll have to make that choice between computers and another program again this year.

Zuck is optimistic that West Brunswick will receive state funding of one kind or another to pay its on-line telephone charges, roughly \$4,300 a month, at least the first year. He's obtained \$83,000 in grant money to help, but doesn't know where any on-line money will come from after the site's first year of operation.

The budget also doesn't include 10.5 other teaching positions, a principal to begin planning for the new Leland Elementary School, an 11th month of work for some assistant principals, a new salary schedule sought by teacher assistants, increased salary supplements sought by teachers and bus drivers, two new custodial positions at Lincoln School, or the \$193,722 needed to bring custodial salaries in line with new state requirements before the start of the 1995-96 fiscal year.

Continuing funds are needed to

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