

Department Heads Complimented For Central Permit Plan

(Continued From Page 1-A)

ship, the exact location and the zoning of the property involved.

Then the applicant can expect to fill out the same information several times on forms for numerous inspections certificates before visiting the department of environmental health to apply for a septic tank permit.

"Part of the problem is that you can't give anyone a firm answer about the exact process they will have to go through," McGinnis said. "Different types of structures and properties require different permits and a person might have to go back to the same office several times before he's through."

"Hopefully we'll be able to eliminate most of that," he said. "I'd say at least 95 percent of all permit applications will be handled at one location, usually in one visit. You may not be able to begin work the same day, but

you won't have to run all over the place and come back over and over again."

The idea seems so simple—to link all the computer data banks at all the permitting agencies so the information, not the customer, can travel back and forth across the complex. Making it happen turned out to be a much more difficult undertaking.

First the government buildings had to be linked by a system of state-of-the-art fiber optic cable. Next, computer software had to be custom designed to allow the various data entry systems to communicate and exchange information. Then a central permitting office had to be constructed and wired for the new computer terminals and telephone lines.

To get it done, McGinnis called together all the department heads involved and instructed them to meet regularly to plan and implement the system.

"I've got nothing but compliments for the staff here,"

McGinnis said. "They really got on the fast track with this. They had the skills. All they needed was a conductor. I'm hoping the experience of working together on a project like this will carry on into other areas."

Planning Director Wade Horne agreed, praising his staff for carrying on with regular planning and zoning duties while taking on the additional burden of implementing the central permitting concept.

The new system will call for two full-time "property development technicians" and a supervisor to assist the public and to man the three computer terminals, which will be used to initiate all the necessary permits a customer needs by filling out a single application. While it won't exactly be "one-stop shopping," Horne said it will be about as close as you can get.

"There's no way you can do everything in one stop, because some of the permits require inspections that have to be scheduled at another time. And you have to

come back to get your permits," Horne said. "It might even take a little bit longer from start to finish. But from now on, we'll be doing all the work instead of the customer."

Horne is already talking about a "phase two" of central permitting. He hopes the system can eventually be expanded to handle utilities applications and to serve as a collections office for taxes and fees.

"We're looking at becoming the most innovative system in the state," Horne said. "I see it as just a beginning. It's already brought the department heads together and gotten them to cooperate toward a common goal. I think it's going to work."

The new central permitting office will have three regular telephone lines that can be reached at (910) 253-4362, along with a toll-free number for long-distance callers at (800) 621-0609.

Governor Praises Auditorium, Benefactor During Ceremony

(Continued From Page 1-A)

will be."

The auditorium, which Hunt described as "one of the finest, prettiest auditoriums there is to be found anywhere in this state," reflects community support for BCC and the community college system in general and a commitment to the children of the community, and should be a major asset in selling Brunswick County to business and industrial prospects and increase job possibilities at home for local young people.

"It says 'We are going forward; we believe in our children and we're going to provide the best for them,'" said Hunt. "I believe you are right on the verge of springing off to a high future, but not as good as it ought to be for some."

"You need to reach out to every-

one and that requires leaders with vision, leaders like Mr. Williamson. Our state and this county need more people like Odell Williamson."

Hunt, who appointed the World War II veteran, former legislator and Ocean Isle Beach developer to his Economic Development Commission during his last term as governor, and to the Board of Transportation in this his third term, praised Williamson's tenacity and vision.

"This is a man of spirit—not a tall man, but full of drive and energy. He has worked hard in his bulldog-like way to see that you in this county and in this region have what you need—roads, jobs—always pressing for his people."

"I'm thankful and I think you're fortunate that this is one of his causes and one dear to his heart."



STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG BUTTER

Three Little Pigs

There's nothing like a sand sculpture to bring a family together at the beach. Or in this case, three families. The Shieldses and Moores of Roanoke, Va., and the Hummels of Kansas City, Mo., all had a hand in creating this masterpiece at Holden Beach. It took the group about three hours to complete "Holden Hog Heaven." Pictured are John Whitaker (left) and Robert Moore.

County Says Board Of Education Mised Public About Closing Schools

BY ERIC CARLSON

Brunswick School officials knowingly released false information to manipulate public opinion last week when they suggested schools might have to be kept closed because of court motions filed by the county, Interim County Manager Charles McGinnis said Thursday (Aug. 11).

Schools Superintendent Ralph Johnston last week told the *Beacon* "the Brunswick County Schools do not know what their budget is" until a judge rules on the county's request to set aside a July 28 jury verdict that awarded the board of education a \$14 million budget, which is \$4.8 million more than the county commissioners planned to spend.

On Aug. 29, Superior Court Judge Jack Thompson will hear both sides argue over the county's request for a new trial. If the motion is denied, the board of commissioners will have to decide whether to appeal the case. A decision from the N.C. Court of Appeals could take a year or more.

The school board called a special meeting last Thursday (Aug. 11) to consider delaying the start of school for two weeks due to uncertainty over the budget, but decided not to postpone school. McGinnis said talk of postponing the first day of school was unnecessary.

"They absolutely don't have to delay school for one day. We've done nothing to stop it," McGinnis said Thursday morning as the school board was meeting to discuss the proposed change. "They get all their teacher salaries from the state. There is absolutely no reason to do that—none whatsoever."

"It's becoming apparent that this is an intimation to stimulate public opinion so the board of commissioners won't file an appeal," he said.

Until the matter is resolved, state law requires that the board of education continue to receive the same amount of county money it used to operate the schools last year.

Even if the county decides not to appeal the jury award, the additional \$4.8 million would not be available to the schools until January, 1995, McGinnis said. That's when the county would begin receiving money from the 10-cent supplemental property tax that will likely be implemented to pay the additional cost.

"They knew all that from the beginning. I don't think there's any doubt about it," McGinnis said. "All this was discussed (in closed sessions) by the two boards before the legal action began. They have attorneys representing them. They have an attorney on their board. I'm no attorney and I understood it."

McGinnis said he was surprised by news accounts in which education officials blamed the county for putting the school system in a financial bind. The interim manager said he was not contacted by reporters to inquire about the county's side of the story, so he decided to issue an official statement on the matter Thursday afternoon.

"Statements or intimations by the board of education that the actions of the commissioners in appealing the verdict—or in not paying the sum awarded immediately—are responsible for the delay in school openings or teacher pay adjustments are incorrect," the prepared statement said. "The delay of school openings or not fully paying teachers are decisions made by the board of education and are separate and distinct from any action of the board of commissioners relating to this legal matter."

McGinnis also questioned claims

that the school board has been forced to draw down its unappropriated fund balance to keep the schools running. He blamed the shortfall on poor financial planning.

"They made a bad decision when they dipped into their surplus to give more money to teachers and administrators," McGinnis said at his office Thursday. "They did it in the middle of the year, which committed them to funding it the next year without any guarantee that they would have the money."

The school system has predicted a fund balance level of \$250,000 as of June 30. That money, along with the county's regular allocation to the board of education, should be enough to continue operating the schools, McGinnis said.

The county pays its share of the board of education budget in 12 monthly installments. McGinnis said the school system's July allocation included the additional money approved in the newly adopted 1994-95 budget. But due to state laws governing such court actions, the August payment will have to be reduced.

County Finance Officer Luthia Hahn said Friday the schools received \$772,046 in July (reflecting the new 1994-95 budget). Beginning this month, the schools will receive regular payments of \$727,506 (funded at the 1993-94 level).

If the county appeals and the higher court upholds the verdict, the county will be required to pay the school system enough additional money to make up the difference between current allocations and the \$14 million awarded by the jury.

Commissioners say it is likely the 10-cent surtax will have to be included in this year's tax bill to make sure the county has enough money to pay the schools after a decision is reached. The money could be refunded to taxpayers if the county appeals and wins.

BCC 14th Commencement Set Friday In Auditorium

Related Articles, Pages 9A, 4B

The 14th annual commencement exercises for Brunswick Community College will take place Friday, Aug. 19, at 7:30 p.m. in the Brunswick Community College Odell Williamson Auditorium.

Family and friends of BCC Class of 1994 are invited to attend the ceremonies and reception following in the Student Center.

E. Rhone Sasser, chairman and CEO of United Carolina Bank, will be commencement speaker. He will be introduced by BCC President W. Michael Reaves.

Student awards will be presented by Beth McLean, vice president for student development. Graduate equivalent diploma (GED) candidates will be presented by Jerry Thrift, vice president for community and continuing education.

Candidates for degrees, diplomas and certificates will be presented by Johnnie Simpson, vice president of instruction. The degrees, diplomas and certificates will be conferred by BCC Board of Trustees Chairman David Kelly and Reaves.

There are 213 curriculum and 116 GED graduates eligible to participate in the commencement program, according to Lynn Morgan, BCC registrar.

Schools Open Tuesday

Brunswick County schools will open on Tuesday, Aug. 23, as set out in the school board's calendar adopted earlier.

Teachers began work this week.

Students' hours have been slightly extended in some schools to make room for early dismissals on Wednesdays to give teachers additional meeting and planning time. The half-day Wednesdays will begin in September in some schools in the Shallotte area; individual school spokesmen contacted by *The Brunswick Beacon* on Tuesday said full plans will be announced at student/parent orientations scheduled this week and on students' first day of school.

scheduled for Thursday, Aug. 18.

- Supply Elementary School, 8 a.m. until 3:15 p.m. except Wednesdays, 8 a.m. until 12:30 p.m.
- Union Elementary, 8:15 a.m. until 3 p.m., except Wednesdays, 8:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. No early Wednesday dismissals in August and December.
- West Brunswick High School, 8:15 a.m. until 3:05 p.m. Half-day Wednesdays begin in September. Students enrolled in early classes begin at 7:15 a.m. Orientation for freshmen scheduled for Wednesday, Aug. 17, and Thursday, Aug. 18.

For more information, call the schools.

Clarification

The Richard Frink whose name appeared recently in a Brunswick County District Court docket is not the Richard Barry Frink of Shallotte, owner of Coastal Tire Co.

The following school hours were reported to the *Beacon*:

- Shallotte Middle School, 8 a.m. until 3:15 p.m. except Wednesdays, 8 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. Orientation

Corps Funds Go Toward OIB Project

(Continued From Page 1-A)

Small said the corps is studying possible sources of suitable material both inland and as far as one to two miles offshore.

"North Carolina is very strict about what you can put on the beach here," said Small. "It has to be beach quality and there has to be enough of it not just to construct the project but to replenish it over a 50-year lifetime."

"It can run into a lot of money. You have to factor in that cost in the benefit/cost ratio."

According to U.S. Rep. Charlie Rose's office, the final Energy and Water Development Appropriations bill for fiscal year 1995 included nearly \$34 million for corps projects in the Seventh Congressional District, \$1.3 million more than included in President Clinton's original budget request.

The total includes \$21.3 million to continue construction on the deepening of the Wilmington Harbor entrance channel to allow port access for larger vessels; \$6.7 million for Wilmington Harbor operation and general maintenance, including \$437,000 to study a protection program for Bald Head Island; \$900,000 to begin construction a seawall to protect Fort Fisher State Historic Site; \$2.8 million for a beach protection project at Carolina Beach; \$560,000 to widen the Wilmington Harbor channel; \$300,000 for a study involving the Cape Fear and Northeast Cape Fear River; and \$714,000 for maintenance of the Cape Fear River above Wilmington.

Forecast Calls For Wet Stuff During Week

The South Brunswick Islands area should receive at least one inch of rainfall over the next week, according to Shallotte Point amateur meteorologist Jackson Canady.

Canady said Tuesday he expects above average rainfall to go along with normal temperatures, which should range from the lower 70s at night to the upper 80s during the day.

For the period Aug. 9-15, Canady did not measure any rain at his residence. The maximum high temperature during the period was 93 degrees and the minimum low was 63 degrees.

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