

# Financing, Sewer, Contractors Must Gel Before Construction Can Start On Grade School

BY SUSAN USHER

More delays in breaking ground for a new elementary school to serve northern Brunswick County emerged this past week as various aspects of the project refused to gel.

Though Architect Charles Boney Jr. of Boney Architects, Wilmington, had anticipated a minimum of four bidders on each contract, that's not what happened when bids for the new K-5 school were opened last Thursday.

Brunswick County Superintendent of Schools Ralph Johnston said the board received five plumbing bids and three bids each on electrical and mechanical contracts. But not one general contractor submitted a bid.

"We're at a quandary as to why no general contractors came through," he said. "Apparently a lot of these companies are in the middle of projects that will be wrapping up in a couple of months."

Johnston said he anticipates a quick re-advertising for bids so that contracts can be awarded as soon as possible.

"We've got to get on with this," he said. The school system began working on the project 18 months ago with expectations of opening the new school in 1996.

Monday night, Brunswick County Finance Director Lithia Hahn said the N.C. Local Government Commission had delayed approval of project financing pending further review. On Nov. 30, county commissioners voted to place \$8 million in debt with NationsBank, at varying

interest rates, using the school as security. The county expects to use a variety of state monies to repay the loan.

Also, school system officials are continuing to confer with the Town of Belville as they try to resolve a sticking point that could delay award of construction bids. Plans call for the new school to be served by Belville's new sewer treatment plant, but the town hasn't brought the plant into operation or begun laying a sewer collection line along River Road to which the school could connect.

V.A. Creech Jr., chairman of Belville's sewer committee, said there are "two or three small technicalities" beyond the town's full control that must be worked out before it can issue the letter of commitment the school system must have in hand before construction begins.

Two of the pieces that need to fall into place before the town is in a position to make that commitment: state approval of Belville's application for a permit to run the sewer line out N.C. 133 to Brunswick Cove, now under review by the Division of Environmental Management; and completion of negotiations with the contractor on the project, Carmichael Construction.

"Once we get these two or three little roadblocks out of the way, we can sit down with the school board and talk," said Creech. "In a couple of weeks maybe we'll be in a position to tell the school board we can provide them service."

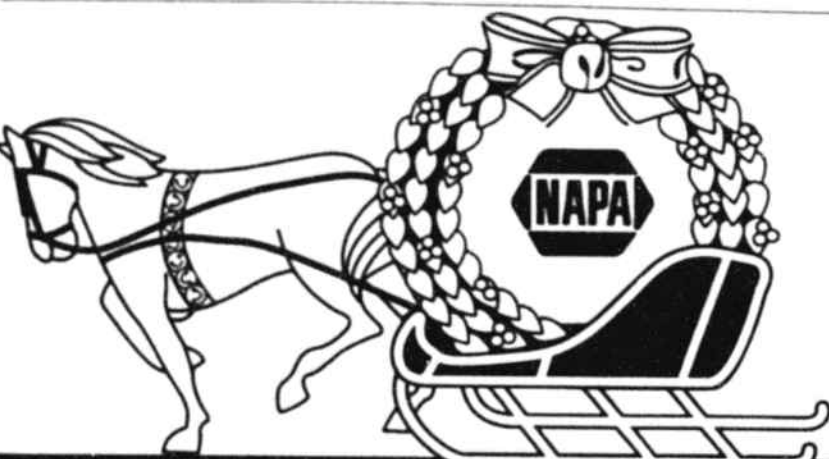
"We're very optimistic this will materialize as hoped for and on time."



STAFF PHOTOS BY ERIC CARLSON

## Moving Day!

Architect John Sawyer (above) goes over a list of final touch-up work at the newly completed Rourk Branch of the Brunswick County Library in Shallotte with librarian Felicia Hardy Monday morning. Volunteers from the Friends of West Brunswick Library (in photo below) moved truck loads of books from the temporary library the group maintained while the permanent branch was closed for expansion and renovation. Both libraries are currently closed, with the new Rourk Branch scheduled to re-open Jan. 9. The library will be open Mondays 9 a.m. to 8 p.m., Tuesdays through Fridays 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturdays 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and Sundays 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. Shown unloading another truck are Walter Schmidt (left) and Friends President Tom Bonniol.



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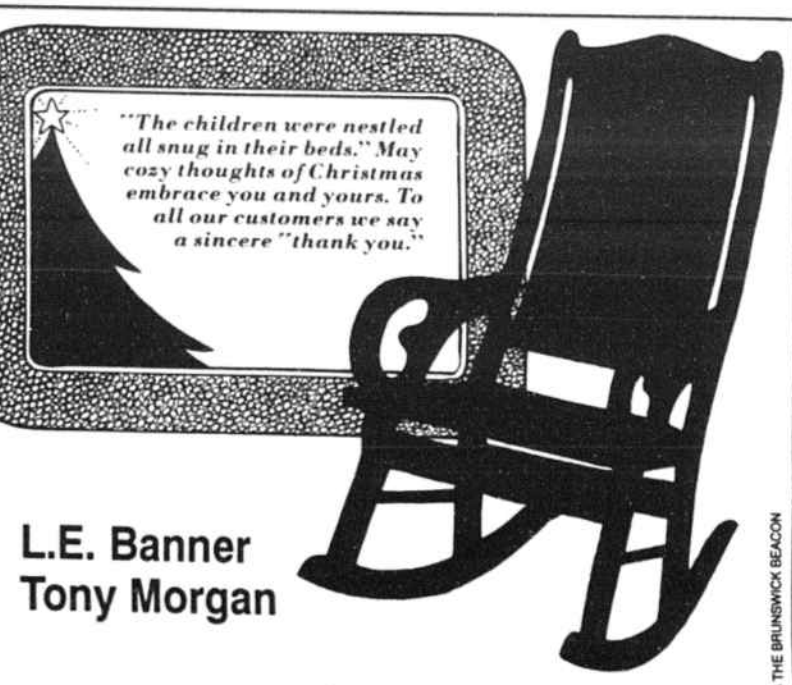
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