

Town struggling

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recreation program if it (the town) is in the red?" asked Hertford resident Julian White. "With money from light bills," answered councilman Jesse Harris. "Then dispense with it!" said Grace Coston.

Cox reminded the group of the town's anticipation that the county fund the recreation program next year. But Herbert Nixon indicated his disagreement with that plan. "What do you think is going to happen to the county then? I think the town is going to shove something off on the county that they can't handle either," said Nixon.

Hertford resident Miriam Haskett voiced her approval of the recreation department and offered some suggestions to decrease its cost.

"The recreation program has its drawbacks, but it also has its assets," she said. "And it could operate on 1/2 of its

budget because there are enough people in this county who are convinced of this program and would volunteer their time."

Mrs. Haskett said she did not approve of paying all recreation workers. "We can get by with paying one director and one secretary," she said, "not every scorekeeper and referee."

She pointed out that both the county rescue squad and the various fire departments were manned by volunteers. "And the recreation department could operate the same way," she concluded.

Nixon mentioned that a privately operated recreation program and playground once offered organized athletics to town and county youth. "We had Little League, Pony League, all of that, and it didn't cost the town or the county," he said.

The town bought the privately owned playground (now the recreation park on Grubb St.) from its trustees in the 1970's.

Bernice Glover, who served as the private park's treasurer, said that membership had dwindled "down to almost nothing" at the time of the sale, but added that no membership drive had been tried.

Cox said there had been problems with the playground when it was privately operated. "It had to be cleaned by volunteers, and they didn't keep it up," he said.

Also under fire was the recent 10 percent salary increase to all town employees. "In light of all this (the town's deficit), how could you have given yourselves a 10 percent raise?" asked Mrs. Dorcus White. Cox answered that the raise had been instituted before audit figures were available.

Utility rates were discussed next. Cox told the group that much of the town's

shortfall was due to the fact that the town had not passed all of Vepeco's rate increases on to its customers.

"Vepeco increased their rates, under (their customers') protest by 18 percent in July of '78," said Cox, "and we, in our effort to keep utility bills down, did not pass all of this along." Cox added that the rate increase was presently being contested in court and that the town could stand to get a refund.

"That is a good thought, and I appreciate your effort to keep rates down," said J.T. Lane, "but it's just not good business."

J.P. Perry inquired about the possibility of buying electricity straight from the company, instead of through the town. "Aren't there towns that are not in the business of buying and selling current, and if so, why don't we get out (of selling electricity)?" he asked.

Cox said that the town of Williamston was the only example he knew of, and added that if money were not generated through utilities, taxes would have to increase considerably.

"We're certainly not here to raise the electric bill, but that is something we may have to look at in the future," said Cox.

Harris said he disagreed with raising any revenues. "The answer is in cutting expenditures," he said and produced a list of proposed budget cuts which he

estimated could decrease the budget by some \$60,000. Included were cutting out \$500 to the Chamber of Commerce, cutting \$30,000 from the recreation department, cutting \$900 in town sign rental, closing the ice plant, limiting trash pick up to two or three days, selling some town property, and utilizing 4-cylinder vehicles in the police department.

Harris' suggestions were met with applause from the crowd. It was later acknowledged that many of his proposed budget cuts were ideas that all the councilmembers had investigated at a recent budget workshop, though the council did not think that all of the cuts would be feasible.

"What Jesse is saying has been said by all of us," said councilman John Beers, "but we can't move until we get the auditor's report."

Henry Sullivan then spoke to the crowd, both in defense of the town manager and in condemnation of the council.

"It seems some of us are trying to roast you (Cox) and it's not fair because you cannot do anything without the council's approval."

"Today I looked at the audit reports for '77 and '78. In 1977 the auditor recommended that something be done to increase revenues in the town."

"In '78 he repeated his recommendations again, but with more em-

phasis. The commissioners have the responsibility. So for three years you do not do anything about it?"

"For God's sake, let's make some changes!" he concluded to a cheering crowd.

Council member T. Eric Haste, Jr. reminded the group that the board was trying to correct the financial problems. "I am embarrassed this has happened," he said, "but I assure you that we have started on the path to mend the fences."

Cox added, "We were trying to do what we thought was right and we got caught in the middle."

Gradually the crowd dispersed and the council got on with its regular agenda. The board moved to:

- pay August bills totaling \$7,871.85
- investigate the possibility of buying town signs or sign sites in an effort to save a monthly leasing fee of \$80 for two billboards rented on Highway 17.
- meet with the county commissioners and the school board Sept. 10 at 8 p.m. to discuss the Winfall recreation site.

Cox also reported that the commercial lab recently commissioned to sample the fecal coliform count in the Perquimans River had reported that the river was above state requirements.

Hertford Police Chief Marshall Merritt reported a total of 47 arrests and citations for the month of August. He said the force worked a total of 145 hours of overtime during the month.

Hertford budget

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from \$8,320 to \$11,544 to four police officers (based on seniority).

The recreation department receives \$48,000, with \$28,737 going toward salaries and wages. Of that, \$11,000 pays the recreation director, \$6,600 goes to the recreation secretary, and the remaining \$11,137 pays for part time workers, referees, and maintenance workers.

Other recreation departmental expenditures include: \$3,500 for heat and electricity; \$2,125 for operational expenses; \$5,908 for departmental materials and supplies; \$3,130 for capital outlay and equipment; \$2,200 for maintenance and repair; and \$2,400 for vehicle expense.

The inspection department receives \$7,500 from the general fund, which is divided equally by the town and county (Cox said the town bills the county one-half of the total inspection department budget.) \$4,500 of that pays the electrical building inspector; \$1,000 goes toward operating expenses; \$500 goes to materials and supplies; \$500 goes to travel and schooling; and \$1,000 goes toward vehicle expenses.

The town ice plant receives \$33,500 which includes \$20,000 allotted to three employees with a salary range of \$7,000-\$10,000 (based on seniority) and seasonal part-time workers.

Other ice plant expenditures include \$1,500 for operating expenses; \$7,000 for electricity; \$3,000 for maintenance, repair, materials and supplies; and \$2,000 for capital outlay.

The cemetery is also run through revenue procured from the general fund. \$10,700 is the total cemetery budget, with \$6,500 divided between two part-time cemetery workers; \$1,000 for maintenance and repair of equipment, buildings, and grounds; \$1,200 for supplies and materials; and \$2,000 for capital outlay.

Although the general fund does not pay

any fire departmental salaries because it is manned on a volunteer basis, \$1,500 of the total \$16,800 budgeted for that department goes toward retirement expenses for those firemen who meet the criteria.

Other fire department expenditures include: \$4,500 for county communication (dispatcher); \$2,000 for operating expenses; \$500 for travel and training; \$500 for maintenance and repair; \$2,000 for vehicle expense; \$3,500 for departmental materials and supplies; \$1,300 for insurance; and \$1,000 for capital outlay and equipment.

The town street department operates under a budget of \$94,500, with \$62,000 of that paying employees. The superintendent of public works receives \$13,270.40 annually, and is paid partially from this fund. (His salary is also paid from the sanitation department.) The town manager's salary is also partially paid from this fund.

Cox said the 14 maintenance men who work for the street department also work within the sanitation and water-sewer departments, and that their salaries were based on an hourly wage and paid from all three departments. He said their yearly wages, which he estimated to range from \$7,000-\$9,000, were based on how many hours they work.

Other projected street department costs are: operating expenses — \$2,500; heat and electricity — \$10,000; vehicle expense — \$8,000; departmental supplies and materials — \$7,000; and capital outlay and equipment — \$5,000.

The sanitation department is budgeted \$73,000, with \$54,000 going toward salaries and wages. Part of this pays the superintendent of public works, the town manager, and the 14 maintenance employees. Four garbage collectors are also paid from this fund, with salaries ranging from \$7,000 to \$10,000, based on seniority.

The rest of the sanitation department's budget is: \$2,000 — operating expenses; \$500 — heat; \$2,000 — maintenance and repair of equipment; \$9,000 — vehicle expense; \$2,500 — departmental materials and supplies; and \$3,000 — capital outlay.

The water-sewer department is to operate within a separate fund (utility) of \$112,500, with \$58,000 of that going toward salaries and wages. \$12,240.50 is the annual income of the waste-water plant operator; \$12,584 goes to the water-sewer maintenance man; and the rest goes toward the 14 maintenance employees and the town manager.

Projected water-sewer expenditures are: \$12,000 for utilities; \$4,500 for operating costs; \$2,000 for maintenance and repair of equipment and vehicle; \$12,000 for materials and supplies (recently trimmed down from the originally projected \$18,000); \$3,000 for capital outlay and improvements; \$20,000 as contribution to the general fund; and \$1,000 for contingencies.

Other budgeted items include (under non-departmental): unemployment insurance — \$2,000; FICA expenses — \$23,000; group insurance — \$10,000; \$13,500 — retirement expenses; and \$10,000 — contingencies.

A \$31,970 contribution from the electric fund goes toward paying the debt service fund — \$20,000 for the bonded principal and \$11,970 for the bonded interest.

According to Cox, representatives of the Government Commission are expected to look over the budget sometime this week and make recommendations to the council on areas and departments that they think can be trimmed down.

Robbery workshop set

A man walks into your place of business, pokes a sawed-off shotgun into your back, and demands all of your cash. What should you do?

While most of us would say, "Give him the cash," that may or may not be the correct reaction.

In an effort to answer questions dealing with handling robbery situations, the Perquimans County Chamber of Commerce will sponsor a workshop on Tuesday, Sept. 9, at 9:30 a.m. in the Municipal Building on Grubb Street in Hertford.

Lecturing will be Jay Trivette, director of the North Carolina Department of Crime Control and Public Safety, out of Raleigh.

According to Hertford Police Corporal Robert Morris, who is coordinating

the workshop for the Chamber, the session will primarily be geared toward merchants. "But there will be parts that could apply to anybody in a robbery situation," he said.

Morris urged all merchants, business employees, and citizens to attend.



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Academy closes

Chowan Academy announced last Thursday it would have to close its doors for good because of a drastic decrease in student enrollment.

The school's board of directors met last Wednesday night and determined that because approximately 20 students had dropped from the rolls, it would not be economically feasible to operate.

Bingo set

Tuesday night bingo is coming.

The Perquimans County Jaycees have purchased a bingo machine from the Elizabeth City Coast Guard Base and will begin conducting games for cash prizes on a weekly basis beginning at 7:30 p.m.

The first games will be held this Tuesday night at 7:30 p.m. at the Lions Club building off Grubb Street extended near Hertford.

According to school attorney Jimmy Singletary, at least 100 students were needed to keep the school in business for the 1980-81 school year.

Although uncertain as to the sudden decrease in enrollment, Singletary ventured to blame the "poor farming year."

Singletary said he did not know the financial status of the school and that he was uncertain as to whether pre-paid tuition would be refunded.

Chowan headmaster Thomas Gregory, of Hertford, declined comment.

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