

RHC Decision Due In November

Acting County Manager Arthur Edward Jones discussed current issues facing county government in September 28 interview with the Chronicle news staff. Following are excerpts from his remarks.

Q-What can the citizens of Forsyth County expect during the next few months from their government?
 a-well, that's a good question. I would suggest you attend today's meeting of the Board of Commissioners. I gave the board a list of priorities last week. We're going to discuss that this afternoon and in addition to those priorities, at our department meeting this week, I got a page worth of additional kinds of concerns, that will also be given to the board. I think the answer to your question, will be determined this afternoon.

I think that priority list, although the board might have some additional ones and maybe reorder it a bit; I don't expect that there are going to be too many major additions or deletions.

Q-What are some of the concerns the department heads brought to your attention?

A- Some of theirs were internal, administrative things such as updating the administrative procedures manual. It's gotten to the point where it's really a little out of date. Some of the policies have been changed and the manual has never really been updated.

Mr. Fulp (environmental affairs director) mentioned that the implications of the Clean Air act of 1977 are upon us.

Someone brought up the question of group hospital insurance for county retired.

Mr. Roberts (library director) mentioned site selection for the branch libraries. There was a very strong feeling from the departments that they would like to review the budgetary process with the county manager.

Performance evaluations were another issue that was brought up.

Q-Could you briefly give an outline of the budget process when deadlines are and how people can have an impact on the budget?

Mr. Jenkins is going to be back, perhaps very soon, and that is something I would get into only if he isn't back by the first of December.

The budget process, as far as the budget and management office and the manager are concerned, really starts around the end of October and early November, in terms of developing a calendar for when the forms will go out to the departments and when they are expected to be back and all this sort of thing -- a whole calendar that would take you up to the day that the budget would be adopted by the board.

Within the next few weeks, the budget office will begin developing procedures and forms. I would hope that we can sit down with the department heads and get their feedback. It's a lot of work and I know they have issues that they feel need to be addressed.

Q-I understand the budget was a very exhausting one last time. Have you given any thought to ways to streamline the process so that there is not as big a workload on the staff?
 A- I think, again, it's a very little bit out of place for me to get into that too far because I think Mr. Jenkins will be here and it will be his process. I've got some

suggestions for him. I think Mr. Browning does too.

Also, last year the problems were unique -- a combination of decreasing revenues and inflation continuing to hit us in a number of things. That really made it a more difficult process than usual.

But the budget process is always a difficult one because the earlier you get started and the better the schedule you make, the more you can reduce the last-minute rush. One of the things that occurs and it's not anything you can ever do away with -- is that the closer you get to the time the budget is going to be presented to the Board of County Commissioners, your revenue estimates change.

You get better estimates on what money in the current year's budget isn't going to be spent. You get better estimates on federal or state revenues. That changes, at least on the revenue side, what you might have to do on taxes.

Even when that budget is adopted, those are estimates, just as expenditures side is an estimate. You don't know absolutely that you're going to spend \$500 for office supplies.

Q-What opportunities would citizens have before the actual adoption of the budget to input on the process?

A- don't think we've ever put the requests from the departments on file in the public library. We have in previous years, had public hearings along in February or March, which I think were very good opportunity for the public to have an impact and to have an opportunity to voice their opinions about what they do want and what they don't want.

Nobody wants taxes and everybody wants services. But, those hearings have been the time most traditionally used for public input. The commissioners have been present, and so have the manager and all the department heads.

If somebody says 'I wish the Clemmons Library could be open more hours, then the library director is there to hear it, as well as the commissioners.

We've never had anything like the city's Focus hearings. We've never had anything start that early.

Q-outside the public hearings, does the public really have much impact on the budget?

A- Well, I would say the public is always free to call the commissioners, to talk with department heads if they have some specific



It's just a matter -- in one sense, we're always here and there are those people who call us all the time, but it's limited basically to a few things that they can do that and they call.

What can happen is that get one person's point of view and he may speak for one person and maybe represents one or two other or five hundred, you never know.

But, in terms of real advertised type hearings, that's about it. I would hate to say that's the only way, but you would have to exercise your own initiative.

Q-What is the need in terms of ambulance service?

A- What I sent to the board was a report I had prepared in which I attempted to determine how many ambulances and crews it would take to assure that there would be an ambulance available to respond to any emergency 95 per cent of the time and 99 per cent of the time.

What I found was that in terms of emergency calls, six ambulances and crews available 24 hours a day would assure that 95 per cent probability.

I'm not making a recommendation right now, but it will be something to look at at budget time.

We are very close to that right now. The board approved an additional ambulance and crew in this year's budget and I'm not sure how soon they will be in operation. It primarily depends on how long it takes for that vehicle to be delivered. That's not a quick process.

Q-How many ambulances are on duty now?

A- When that one comes there will be five emergency units on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Monday through Friday, there are three non-emergency or convalescent units available nine hours a day.

Q-Is the response time significantly greater for people on the east side of town now that the hospital is on the west side?

A- When we're talking about response time we're

talking about the time for the ambulance to get to the patient. The time to the hospital, I don't look at that. That is not the significant time.

The significant time is the time it takes to have an ambulance and crew at the scene where the patient is ill or injured because they can do just a whole lot to stabilize that person.

The theory now in emergency medicine is to stabilize that patient before you ever move him. You won't find our ambulances very often running full blast with a patient in there. You'll see them running full blast to get there. Once they've stabilized him, it's much better on the patient to have a nice, smooth, calm ride to the hospital.

Q-I understand that you are looking to see whether a vacancy should be filled whenever one occurs. Have you saved any positions?

A- I don't know if we have or not. I would doubt at this time if there have been too many. Mr. Jenkins had already been doing that before the commissioners brought it up.

Q-Do you feel your effectiveness is limited because you are acting manager?

A- It makes it difficult to plan very far ahead. I don't want to make commitments over things about which Mr. Jenkins is going to have to decide.

There are some exceptions to that, for instance, the Reynolds Health Center/ Public Health situation. The board has been very supportive of me, very anxious to move on. The one area in which have been a little reluctant to get into has been in the manager's immediate staff. There are some vacancies.

It would be, especially in light of the newspaper article saying Mr. Jenkins has been released, unwise for me to go ahead with trying to fill.

If he were going to be out longer, I would probably just have to because we're just frankly short of people and that's hindering our ability to address the needs that exist.

Q-Has your staff come up with a process for dealing with Reynolds Health Center?

A- Yes. That's something we're going to be discussing with the board of commissioners, mostly just a time frame. I'll be meeting with Dennis Magovern and Tom Dundon next Tuesday morning.

I'll probably spend the entire morning with them, including a complete tour of Reynolds Health and the

Public Health activities there in the Ridge Avenue building.

Paul Fulton and Greg Bethea have compiled a list of things that we have sent to both Tom and Dennis, requesting information that they provide us including their own recommendations for what should take place.

Q-What kind of information are you seeking?

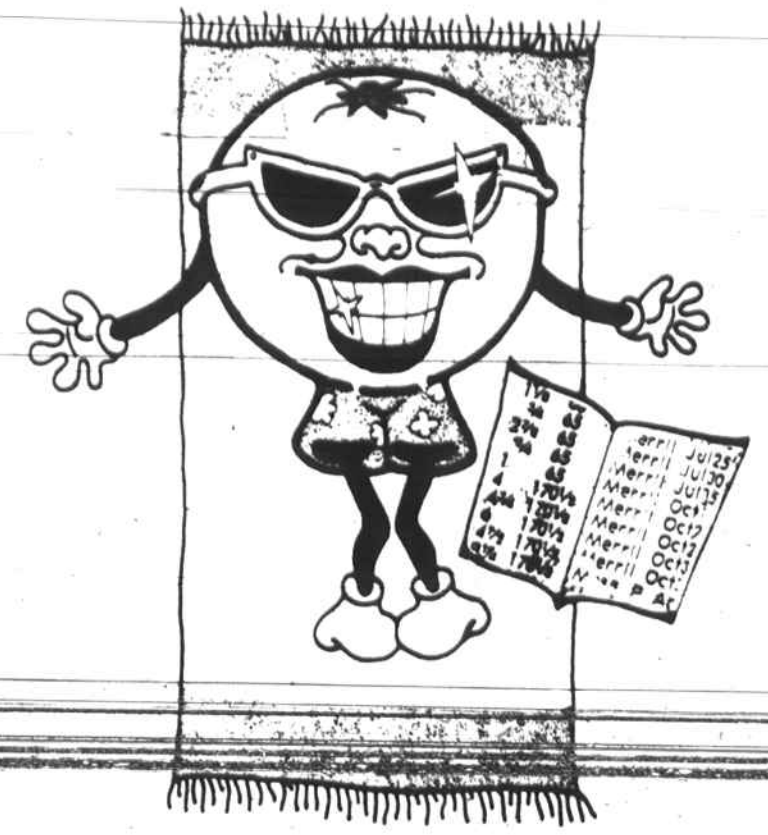
A- It's pretty basic information. One thing is what services are they providing, what's the purpose of the services. For me that's one of the most important things -- to inventory what we're doing -- to see if there are overlaps or gaps, the organizational structure. We'd like to be able to review the minutes of the two boards function and the kinds of issues they consider.

We've asked them for their recommendations and we've also asked them to explain or detail any interrelationships between the services and administration of the two departments.

Q-What deadlines are you operating under?

A- The board hasn't set any deadlines, but they're real anxious to do this. It's been a couple of years this has been hanging around. I've put a deadline on myself of having a recommendation by the first meeting in November.

That's really not very long. I've already sent this request for information to Tom and Dennis and I'd like to have it when I meet with them Tuesday. Certainly I would hope by the end of next week.



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