

Sound Of Surf *From Holden Beach*

By John Clarke

All members of the Town Council met in a working session at the town hall Saturday morning at ten and wrestled with the 1974 - 1975 budget figures through the lunch hour until long after two. By department, each commissioner presented his estimated expense needs, line by line (such as wages, contract services, office and equipment supplies, maintenance and repair of equipment and the town hall, insurance of all kinds, and capital outlay). After discussion, the line item figures were tentatively agreed upon, posted, and totaled to determine each departmental budget requirement.

The estimated revenues from federal, state, and county sources were also listed and, assuming a continuance of the present ad valorem tax on our growing tax - appraisal base supplied from Southport, the excess of estimated expenses over revenues was only a few thousand dollars. The Council will meet again to reconcile the difference and develop a balanced budget for the fiscal year 1974 - 75, beginning as of July 1.

According to "The Local Government Finance Act" (G.S. 159-12), "On the same day that he submits the budget to the governing board, the budget officer shall file a copy of it in the office of the clerk to the board where it shall remain available for public inspection until the budget ordinance is adopted ... (The clerk shall publish a statement that the budget has been submitted to the governing board, and is available for public inspection ... (and) shall also give notice of the time and place of the budget hearing required by subsection (b) of this section."

Section 13 of the same act states: "Not earlier than 20 days after the budget is presented to the board and not later than July 1, the governing board shall adopt a budget ordinance..." Fully recognizing the well - known limitations of a little knowledge, please be advised that the above was supplied to those of us who attended a five - day seminar last spring conducted by the Institute of Government at Chapel Hill, and it is possible that it may have been modified by

subsequent legislation. But the principal point is that those individuals who may be truly interested in taxes do have an opportunity to learn what needs are being provided for by the Council. If anyone has a question, he can discuss it with any elected member of the Council and can attend the public hearing, "at which time any persons who wish to be heard on the budget may appear," as provided by G.S. 159-12 (b).

Checking with our Building Inspector, Wade Coleman (1122 Ocean Blvd West, I think), I have been advised that he did not issue any building permits at all during the month of March. However, a total of seven were issued in April, exactly the same as were issued during the same month last year.

Reviewing the number of permits issued each of the four months from January through April both this year and last, it appears that the building business is either "feast or famine." In Jan - Feb - Mar - Apr last year there were 11-2-10-7 permits issued respectively, totaling 30; and during the corresponding months this year there were 1-0-0-7 issued, totaling 17. During the first four days of May through Saturday, Wade reports that four have been issued; but quite a few more will have to be written to equal the 13 recorded during the same month last year.

"April Showers" didn't materialize here on Holden Beach. It's been dry!

After I reported that here on the beach J. Hunter Barden (200 Ocean Blvd West) had some blooms on tomato plants literally screened from the ocean breezes (liberally fertilized with off - beach cow stuff, aged), Woodrow Russ in Shallotte showed me blooms beaucoup and quite a few tomatoes that'll be as large as golf balls (green ones) by the time you get to read this copy. But they sure could use some rain to fill them full of blood - red juice. (And you'll never believe what you hear happened Saturday night until you read it here next week.)

Last month only 1.38 inches of rain was accumulated in our gauge at 885 O.B.W. The year - to - date total is 11.73 inches, the lowest in the four years we have lived here and considerably less than the 17.0 inches reported by

"Southern Living" as normal for Wilmington.

Our high temperatures averaged 70.2 degrees, ranging between 60 and 80; while our lows averaged 51.8, ranging between 34 and 63 degrees.

As for May, the temperatures usually are some eight degrees warmer, with highs averaging about 79 and our lows at about 60 degrees. And our rainfall will total about 2.5 inches, according to "Southern Living."

Neighbor - to - the - West Phil Griffiths, from Raleigh, showed me an article titled "How the purple martin won fame and fortune through hard work, good publicity, and free housing," published in the Kiplinger magazine "Changing Times."

During the last few days, Steve and I have been watching three martins carrying "trash" into the white aluminum house set high over the dunes in front of our

"Sea Lark" cottage. It's a welcome sound to hear all the fussing and discussing — and occasionally what may be an (expletive deleted) drifts down from on high.

According to the article, the Choctaw and Chickasaw Indians in Mississippi used to attract martin colonies by hollowing out gourds and hanging them on poles for nesting sites, in order to rid their village of insects. The magazine reports how in 1962 the Jaycees of Griggsville, Ill., undertook an insect - abatement program. After consulting with an ornithologist, "J.L. Wade hand - built 28 houses with the following characteristics: They are made of aluminum, and therefore are less likely than wooden houses to harbor the mites that plague purple martins and kill baby birds. Shiny interiors repel starlings, who prefer nesting places that are dark and dingy. Little perches with

railings protect the baby birds from falling to the ground before they are ready to fly."

Continues the article, "The Jaycees erected their 38 houses at 100 - foot intervals along Griggsville's main street. The next spring a goodly number of martins arrived from Brazil (where they winter) to take possession, and Griggsville was able to hold its first mosquito - free evening street dance.

"The following year a more amazing thing happened. At the end of Griggsville's Western Illinois Fair, when the tents came down and the flies and mosquitoes descended on the wet straw - and manure - strewn grounds, a swarm of purple martins swooped down and within a week had eaten

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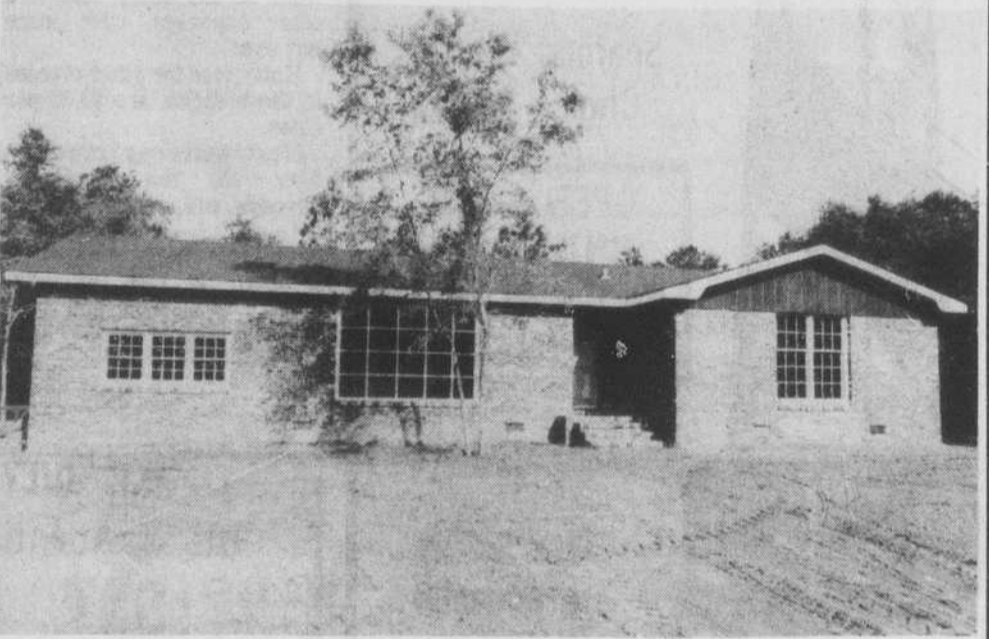
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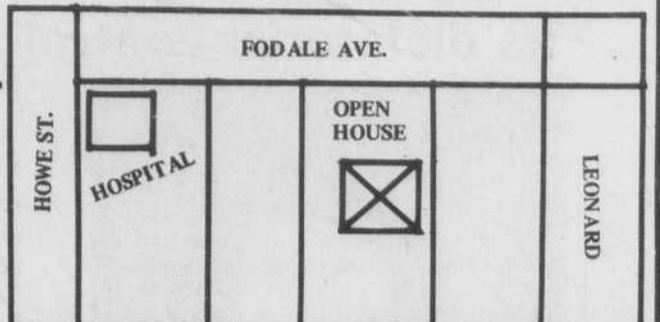
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