

## 'Tighten Belts,' Board Tells County Agencies

By BILL ALLEN  
Staff Writer

The Brunswick County Board of Commissioners took action to "tighten the belt on spending because anticipated revenues are down" during a special meeting Tuesday night.

The board voted unanimously to create a capital reserve fund of \$1,536,300. The money will come from revenue sharing trust funds in six departments, capital improvement and general improvement fund money.

County Manager Don Flowers, Jr., said county departments wishing to spend the money placed in the new fund will have to receive board approval.

The board unanimously adopted a new county policy on purchase orders designed to maintain existing levels of service at the March 15 period. Departments wishing to make additional purchases will have to obtain board approval.

The board discussed breaking down the Board of Education budget into per line items, but took no action until the school board can consider it. Supt. Ralph King expressed concern about the proposal during the meeting.

After conducting the business on the special meeting agenda, the board members decided to discuss other items with the approval of all commissioners.

The board voted unanimously to approve a "concept" concerning plans for the courthouse-complex, especially the school bus-maintenance garage.

The board voted unanimously to hold a closed "personnel" session at the request of Chairman Steve Varnam. The press was excluded and the board held a 71-minute meeting behind closed doors.

When the doors were re-opened, Chairman Varnam said the board "discussed personnel under our direct supervision. No decision was

made," he added.

During the financial discussion, Flowers said "further tightening of the belt or management control" is needed in the county. He said the action is needed because revenues are down and the county needs the capital reserve fund.

The capital reserve fund is being established for the acquisition and construction of new buildings and grounds, acquisition of new equipment scheduled in an approved

capital improvement budget and acquisition of other capital items scheduled in an approved capital improvement budget.

The board adopted a budget amendment to place \$1,536,300 in the new fund. A total of \$826,300 will come from the revenue in department budgets and capital improvements, all under the revenue sharing trust fund. The transfers include civil preparedness, \$4,000; tax supervisor, \$1,500; tax

collector, \$1,000; sanitary landfill, \$15,000; recreation, \$1,650; jail, \$3,150; capital improvements, \$800,000.

The other \$710,000 to place the total at \$1,536,300 in the fund will come from the general improvement fund.

County Planner Johnny Sutton said the new fund is needed "to put capital improvement assets in one fund to get a handle on it," and for future planning.

Although the cost of the complex has not been

determined, he said the estimated \$4 million discussed during the referendum campaign "is a heck of a big expenditure even over a period of time."

He said the county was facing other major capital expenditures, including putting more money in Phase 2 of the water system than was originally anticipated.

He said the county tax base, which is smaller than believed at first, is "a long way short of anticipated revenue" the county had planned to receive.

"The economic situation is not bad, but it could be worse without belt tightening," Sutton declared. "Economizing and belt tightening is needed to get a handle on things."

Supt. King told the board he was concerned about the proposal to break-down current expense and capital outlay in the Board of Education budget, based on the little information he had.

"The budget was approved last July," King pointed out. "Now you want to change line items. No other board has wanted to do this in the 11 years I have been superintendent."

King said he was not familiar with the changes since he was only informed about the proposal minutes before the meeting started, although he had talked with county officials during the day. Sutton said King was informed about the proposal once it was accepted to be presented to the board.

Flowers and County Finance Officer Regina McKeithan said the proposal makes no change in the amount of money the school board will receive.

King said it appeared that the county decreased line items and increased capital improvement funds in the school budget.

The superintendent told the board that work has started on the Lincoln project, plans are being developed for the new Leland school and an architect has been employed for the maintenance garage at the complex.

Chairman Varnam pointed out that the proposal contains no funds for the garage and equipment — new buildings section. But he said money can be transferred when construction is ready. He said the money is in the capital reserve fund.

Supt. King asked the board several times "why" the proposal was being made, but

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PRINCIPALS IN THE TOWN MEETING held Monday night at the Brunswick County Courthouse in Southport were Dr. High Holman, principal speaker (center); Charles Trott, drummer (left), and William Crowe, Town Crier. A portion of the audience is shown in the background.

## Town Meeting Series Opener Draws Crowd

More than 100 Brunswick County residents participated Monday evening in a Town Meeting — complete with a bell-ringing Town Crier in costume, and a Drummer Boy also decked out in clothing typical of the colonial period.

The scene was the county courthouse, a building more than 100 years old, situated one block from the Cape Fear River and tucked in beneath the live oaks.

This was the first of three

such meetings which have been arranged as part of the Bicentennial observance and Dr. C. Hugh Holman, Kenan Professor of English at UNC-Chapel Hill, was the speaker.

Also participating were Ray H. Walton, Southport attorney who served as moderator, and a panel which included Mrs. E.M. McEachern, historian from Wilmington; Mrs. LaVerna Hargrove, member of the faculty at West Brunswick High School; J.T. Keziah,

principal of Shallotte Middle School; and Joseph Wescott, member of the junior class at South Brunswick High School. Dr. Holman was introduced by Mrs. James M. Harper, Jr.

Subject of his address was "The Idea of America," in which Dr. Holman explored the ethnic and historic background of the early settlers in an effort to explain some of the paradoxes which

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## New Census For Long Beach, Workers Sought

Long Beach will soon find out just how much it has grown since the last Federal Census in 1970.

A Special Federal Census, being taken at the expense of the town, will begin March 29, it was announced this week by Mayor H.S. Crain. Mrs. Mary F. Garris, a regular U.S. Census Bureau employee from the Bureau's Charlotte Regional Office, has been designated to supervise the Census and will set up headquarters in Long Beach on March 29.

The Census will be taken by Long Beach residents, under the training and supervision of Mrs. Garris, and applicants for Census Takers are needed. Town Manager John J. Berry asked that interested persons come by the Long Beach Town Hall and complete an application.

He said he was advised that those employed could expect to earn between \$16 and \$24 a day through diligent work during an eight-hour day, to include evening calls. The availability for evening work is a prerequisite to employment.

Census Takers may expect to work about a week; they will need a car for which 15 cents a mile will be paid in addition to salary. Permanent residents of the town are preferred, although all within a reasonable community distance will be considered.

Berry said he has also been informed by the Census Bureau that all information gathered will

be held in strict confidence, as required by Federal law. "No information regarding any individual may be released," he pointed out. Questions on this Special Census will be limited to: Name, age, race, sex and relationship to the head of the household.

Mayor Crain urged the cooperation of all Long Beach citizens with the Census Takers, who will be sworn in as Bureau of the Census employees, and may be identified by an official red, white and blue identification card.

The same rules will apply for this Special Census as for the National Census. Excluded from Long Beach's resident population will be: Students away from home attending college, person stationed away from home in the military, visitors and vacationers, and those maintaining a residence in Long Beach on a part-time basis, but who spend the greater part of the year elsewhere.

The 1970 U.S. Census, taken as of April 1, reported 493 persons who called Long Beach their permanent residence. Local officials estimate that the town population has increased greatly in the past six years. "Just how many persons now call Long Beach their year-round home will be revealed shortly by this Special Census," the mayor noted.

notices to people who have not paid their 1975 taxes. The notices will inform the delinquent taxpayers that the county will advertise their names and amount owed in April if they have not paid.

## Tax Collections Are Catching Up

By BILL ALLEN  
Staff Writer

Brunswick County's 1975 tax collections are running behind last year's level, County Tax Collector Homer McKeithan reported this week.

The county department had collected 91.51 percent of the 1975 levy on February 27 as compared to 96.62 percent collections at the same time last year.

But McKeithan said the department is rapidly "closing the gap" between the 1975 and 1974 tax collections. "We were eight percent behind in January and only five percent behind last month," he pointed out.

The department has "accounted for" \$4,598,508.74 of the \$5,025,330.09 levy for 1975, according to the February monthly report.

The total accounted for includes \$4,267,687.12 in cash collections. Releases totaling \$330,698.72 and \$122.90 in discounts were allowed and included in the total collection.

The department deposited in the bank \$93,483.87 in February to bring the total during the fiscal year to \$4,298,753.26. The report showed that the department collected \$88,661.09 in 1975 taxes and an additional \$1,827.98 in penalties for late payment. The department also collected \$328.47 in pre-paid taxes for 1976.

According to the monthly report, the remaining amount outstanding for the department to collect in 1975 is \$426,821.35.

McKeithan said the department was in the process of sending out

notices to people who have not paid their 1975 taxes. The notices will inform the delinquent taxpayers that the county will advertise their names and amount owed in April if they have not paid.

"This usually helps collections since most people don't like their names to appear in the tax advertisements," McKeithan pointed out. "It impels payment."

McKeithan, who is one of the top tax collectors in North Carolina according to state records, said his job has been harder this year because of the revaluation which sent property values skyrocketing in the county. He has ranked in the top three in collections in the state the past several years.

He reported that some people have said they have not paid their 1975 taxes to protest the increased valuation. But he said the law requires all taxpayers to pay their taxes.

Under law, protesting citizens who have not paid can demand release by submitting to county commissioners a written statement in defense of payment and request release of the tax claim.

The law also allows protesting property owners to pay their taxes and, within 30 days, to submit a written statement in defense and request a refund.

Upon receiving a taxpayer's written statement of defense and request for release or refund, the county commissioners have 90 days under law to act on the matter. The action taken must be recorded in the minutes.



Mrs. Irene Hankins

## Mrs. Hankins In State Post

Mrs. Irene B. Hankins, counselor at South Brunswick High School, was chosen president-elect of the North Carolina Personnel and Guidance Association at the organization's 49th annual convention in Raleigh, February 27-28.

As president of the 1,300-member organization, Mrs. Hankins' major duties will be program planning, securing nationally-known speakers for the 1977 convention, and presiding over the 1977 convention.

Mrs. Hankins has been active in NCPGA for several years. In 1975-76 she was instrumental in the formation

of the Southeastern Chapter of the NCPGA and served as a member of the executive council during its first year of existence.

A native of Wilson County, Mrs. Hankins received a B.S. degree in mathematics from Shaw University and a Masters of Arts in guidance and counseling from Atlanta University. She has served Brunswick County schools as a teacher and a counselor for 27 years.

She actively participates in numerous church, civic and fraternal organizations, and is married to Jonathan Hankins of Brunswick County.