

Potential tax increase but no city power hike

By Jim Harper
Staff Writer

A potential tax increase of 81/2 cents but no hike in Southport's electric rate or water and sewer fee is the bottom line in the budget that city manager Rob Hites delivered to the board of aldermen last Thursday.

A week earlier Hites had predicted a 71/2-cent tax increase from the present 58-cent rate, but also said there would be increase in the electric rate for the first time in six years.

The 1991 tax rate was maintained by appropriating \$85,000 from the general fund balance -- savings -- and Hites explained to the board that the 58-cent tax rate could be retained by appropriating \$71,659 of the fund balance for the coming year.

Hites pointed out that with a spending freeze since winter, the city staff has cut budgeted costs by \$75,000, which money will roll back into the fund balance July 1.

In discussing the coming year's financial plan Monday, Hites said that an important element is anticipated increase in services from a revamped recreation department and a new building and grounds department (see related story).

Hites said he was proud that the electric rate could be held for the sixth straight year. This was accomplished by "absorbing 35 percent in price raises," Hites said. "Not many businesses can do that."

In the budget presentation on Thursday Hites commended alderman Bill Crowe, who was one of three members of a rate-making committee of the Eastern Municipal Power Agency, for helping reduce a proposed rate increase to the city from 4.1 percent to 2.5 percent. "So when you see him riding his bicycle around," Hites said, "you can thank him." Members of the board and audience applauded.

Hites noted that besides groundskeeping and recreation changes, the budget also envisions a new police reserve unit and reorganization of solid waste service along with curbside recycling (see related story).

The proposed electric budget is \$3,230,038, including \$72,420 in capital outlay to be raised by customer billing, plus interest. The water and sewer budget is \$795,885, including \$241,330 in capital outlay, raised by monthly charges, tap fees and interest.

The general fund budget, anticipating revenues of \$491,996 from the general tax levy, totals \$1,681,472, which Hites and his staff proposes to allocate in this way:

- Governing board -- \$40,970.
- Administration -- \$273,070.
- Police -- \$365,584.
- Communication -- \$62,567.
- Building and grounds -- \$107,463.
- City garage -- \$93,306.

- Fire department -- \$97,668.
- Streets -- \$196,755.
- Solid Waste -- \$151,683.
- Rescue squad -- \$81,518.
- Recreation -- \$84,346.

Under the general government heading, Hites has budgeted \$4,000 for cemetery survey; \$15,000 for Main Street matching grant for walkway; \$2,500 for Brunswick Concert and Theatrical Society; \$20,000 for Southport Maritime Museum; \$3,000 for Southport-Oak Island Chamber of Commerce; \$2,000 for Brunswick Adult Day Care; and \$25,000 for Community Building renovation.

Hites explained that the total cost of Community Building revamp, including rewiring, air conditioning and restoring the kitchen, would be \$125,000 over five years.

Budget workshops, which are open to the public, were set by the board for 6:30 p.m. May 26 and May 28, and the budget public hearing, at which citizen comment will be solicited, is set for 7:30 p.m. June 11, the regular monthly meeting time for the board.

Building, grounds department oversees city cemetery upkeep

By Jim Harper
Staff Writer

In an attempt to make city property -- and especially city cemeteries -- more presentable Southport city manager Rob Hites last week announced creation of a building and grounds department, under public services director Ed Honeycutt.

Groundskeeping previously had been under the direction of parks and recreation director Joe Medlin, who will retain responsibility for upkeep of Stevens Park. One of Medlin's two workers will go with the groundskeeping responsibility to the new department.

The reorganization came before mayor Norman Holden lambasted city upkeep of its cemeteries -- "It's a disgrace" -- in the Southport Board of Aldermen meeting Thursday night.

"I request that the city manager reorganize the city staff," Holden said, "and commence cleaning our graveyards starting tomorrow."

"That's already been done, sir," Hites told him. On Friday, Hites said that the reorganization will strengthen groundskeeping performance but will not add to the total city staff.

Eddie Davis, who has worked for Medlin, will be the new buildings and grounds supervisor under Honeycutt, and will be assisted by a transfer from the water department and hiring of a third worker

under an already authorized vacancy in the street department.

Davis will be responsible for upkeep of Southport, Northwood and Smith cemeteries, the Old Morse Cemetery (an inactive burial site), Waterfront, Caviness and Franklin Square parks and the City Hall grounds.

In all, that amounts to about 16 acres, Hites said. Medlin will retain responsibility for Stevens Park as well as the administration of city recreation programs.

"The board wants the city grounds to look like the grounds of Doshier hospital or Southport Baptist Church," Hites said.

"We bid it out in the private sector and the price was so great the board felt we should let the staff in place do it. If it doesn't work, we'll farm it out to the private sector."

But while the responsibility of the new department is broad it was the cemeteries, and public criticism about their upkeep, that fueled the engine of change.

"Basically we're going to groom and keep up our cemeteries in a manner which cemeteries are normally kept up," Hites said. "We are going through the cemeteries once or twice a week and pick up limbs and dead flowers, and mow when we need to mow."

Shoots open this week for 'Amos and Andrew'

Filming for "Amos and Andrew", starring Dabney Coleman, Nicholas Cage, Michael Lerner and Samuel Jackson, will be done in Southport over the next several weeks.

Location manager Shaw Burney said All Night Productions will begin filming at 7 p.m. Thursday, May 21, at the Southport-Fort Fisher ferry landing. The crew is expected to be at that location until midnight, when they will move to Howe Street, shooting a crowd of about 100 extras as they walk around the corner from Bay Street onto Howe toward Moore Street.

A similar schedule is planned for Thursday, May 28. On Friday, May 29, the crew will be filming on East Moore Street. Shops along the street will sport new exteriors for the duration of the shoot.

Filming will be done at the rear of the Doshier Flea Market, where the exterior will be transformed into a police station.

Shooting will be done primarily from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m.

Filming on Monday, June 1, will be done between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m.

Burney said All Night Productions is working in cooperation with Southport administration and the Southport Police Department.

The schedule may be changed in case of rain.

Good response reported to Founders Day invites

So far, 139 descendants of Southport's founders have said they will be in town May 30-31 to help residents celebrate the city's 200th birthday.

The Founders Day celebration will feature a Saturday afternoon program for descendants at the Southport Community Building. Speakers will include Eleanor Smith, chairman of the Southport Bicentennial Committee; Bill Reeves, historian and author of the two *Chronology of Southport* publications; Susie Carson, Southport historian; Joann Wesson, Southport 2000 director; and Rob Hites, Southport city manager. The evening will conclude with a covered dish dinner for founders' descendants provided by members of the Southport Historical Society.

The Southport Bicentennial Committee will have a cookout for the group on Sunday, along with local entertainment throughout the afternoon. There will be performances by the Sea Notes Choral Society, the Brunswick County Training School Choral Society, the Harmony Five and the Brunswick Concert Band.

Also scheduled for the two-day celebration is a visit by the *Diligence*, a Coast Guard ship with two-century-old ties to the city, and a Revolutionary War encampment at the Fort Johnston Garrison.

Another featured event on Sunday afternoon will be the gathering of all Southport residents along the city's waterfront for a photograph.



Jim McKee, continuing his excavation on the Southport City Hall lawn, looking for relics of Fort Johnston, last week found a musket ball and this artifact, which he identified as a musket barrel.

Founders Day official; sister city congratulated

Two resolutions that recognize Bicentennial events were adopted Thursday night by the Southport Board of Aldermen.

One designates May 30 as Founders Day in Southport. The other extends congratulations to the city of Southport, England, on the occasion of its 200th anniversary.

In its Founders Day proclamation, the board of aldermen said: "Whereas, the City of Southport celebrates its 200th anniversary in 1992 and;

"Whereas, the citizens of this community owe its existence to many prominent founders and;

"Whereas, Southport wishes to express gratitude to its founders by inviting their descendants to a special 'Founders Day' celebration;

"Now therefore let it be resolved by the Board of Aldermen of the City of Southport that May 30, 1992, be recognized as Founders Day in Southport and;

"Further, that the Board of Aldermen recognize the contributions made by all its citizens on this day by welcoming the descendants of its founders to the city."

The second resolution offers congratulations to the city of Southport, England:

"Whereas, the City of Southport, England, is celebrating her Bicentennial in 1992 and;

"Whereas, its sister city in the State of North Carolina, USA, is also observing its Bicentennial in the same year and;

"Whereas, both cities have thrived and prospered over the past 200 years and;

"Whereas, the citizens of Southport, North Carolina, feel a special kinship to its namesake in England;

"Now therefore let it be resolved by the Board of Aldermen of the City of Southport, North Carolina: That it congratulates Southport, England, on its 200th anniversary;

"That Southport expresses pride in sharing its name with its neighbor in England and;

"That the Board of Aldermen wishes an exciting and prosperous future for its sister city."

Southport alderman Bill Crowe, among others, will travel to Southport, England, on June 6 to present the resolution.

Aldermen appoint advisory members

The Southport Board of Aldermen appointed members to several city advisory boards and committees last week.

The Southport Beautification Committee includes Kay Barnes, Barbara Gray, Gwen Midyette, Carol Milliken, Ted Holth and Ludelfia Rogers. Alderman Meezie Childs will serve as an ex-officio member.

The Waterfront Development Committee includes Davey Herring, John Gorman, Hod Milliken, Karen Perry, Ori Gore and Lee Aldridge. Alderman Bill Delaney will serve as an ex-officio member.

The Southport Development Committee includes Charles Rogers, Wayne Berry, Fred Smartley, James Harper, III, and John Thompson. Alderman Jim Brown will serve as an ex-officio member.

The Recreation Advisory Committee includes Eddie Howard, Becky Sledge, Robin Schuster, Mary Tomlinson, Charlotte Hart and Anthony Davis. Alderman Bill Crowe will serve as an ex-officio member.

The Human Relations Committee includes John Shelton, Doug Pait, Virgie Davis, Mary Gore and Ivory Parker.

Appointed to the Planning Board were John Mulford and Barry Callari. Alderman Childs will serve as an ex-officio member.

Robert Nubel was named to represent Southport on the Brunswick County Airport Commission. Southport, along with Long Beach and Yaupon Beach, each names one representative to the commission; Brunswick County appoints four.

The terms extend to December, 1993, the occasion of the next board election. Chairmen will be elected within each committee following organization.


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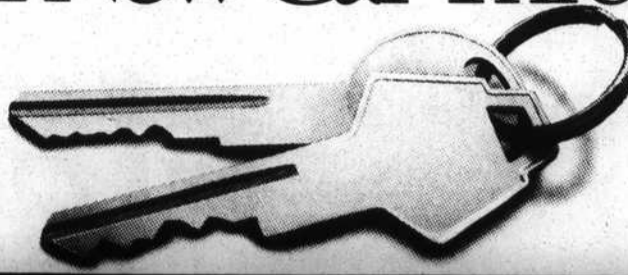


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