

Balancing the budget at 68 cents

County may parcel out garbage collection fee

By Terry Pope
County Editor

If budget cuts can't deliver a 68-cent tax rate, county commissioners are prepared to implement new fees.

Property owners may face:

- A jump from 50 cents to \$1 per month surcharge on telephone bills for 911 service;
- New water rates, a minimum increase from \$8.50 to \$10 per month; and
- A possible \$46 per year garbage fee for each lot that has a home or business.

Commissioners discussed possible fees at a budget workshop last week. They want to slice a proposed 74.75-cent tax rate to its current level of 68 cents per \$100 of property value.

By the end of last week commissioners had tentatively trimmed interim county manager John Harvey's proposed \$39.5-million budget to \$38.7 million. One cent on the county tax rate generates approximately \$400,000 in revenues.

"So we're getting close," said Don Warren, chairman of the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners.

A new garbage fee based on ownership of improved land or lots that have some type of structure or home would likely be the most controversial facing residents.

For county engineer Robert Tucker, it was the fourth time he has briefed commissioners in recent years on possible garbage fees. Past talks have focused mainly on tipping fees, or money paid at the dump site to dispose of trash based on its weight, a move that would also have a huge impact on town budgets.

"I'm not sure if that is the best way to go," said Tucker.

New legislation allows counties to impose parcel fees to collect for solid waste disposal if everyone is charged the same, both inside and outside

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Tom Rabon Sr.
County commissioner

town limits. Property owners would be assessed on their yearly tax statements.

Excluding its recycling program, solid waste disposal is expected to cost the county \$1.16 million in operating expenses alone for 1993-94.

The Supply landfill also needs a \$180,000 trash compactor, \$20,000 in building maintenance and more than \$400,000 over the next two or three years to develop plans for a new landfill. It needs an estimated \$135,000 to build a retainer wall and covered shelter area for disposal of appliances and old tires.

The county funded \$150,000 for a landfill siting study and may pay \$40,000 in consulting costs. An engineered landfill closure plan must be in place by April, 1994. Recycling alone will cost more than \$870,000 in 1993-94.

Parcel fees to help pay for garbage removal attempt to create equity between residential and industrial users, said Tucker.

In December, 1991, there were more than 50,000 improved parcels in the

county with an average of 2.2 persons per home. To raise the needed \$2.3 million, the fee would average \$3.85 per month, or \$46 per year.

An improved parcel fee is the fairest assessment method, said Tucker. Businesses would be charged the same as homes.

"There's no way it's 100-percent equitable across the board," he added. "Brunswick County unfortunately, or maybe fortunately, doesn't have that very large developed base of industrial wastes."

Instead, most household trash is generated from a heavy influx of tourists during the beach season.

"Personally, I'm not interested in tipping fees," said Warren.

Tipping fees would be charged at transfer stations, collection sites and convenience stations. Some commissioners say it would become an added and difficult task for workers at those sites and are leaning toward a parcel fee.

"It would be easier to administer," said commissioner Tom Rabon Sr. "There's no question about that."

Tipping fees would also drive some residents to illegally dump garbage in wooded areas rather than pay to use a dumpster.

"We have a lot of woodlands left," said Rabon, "but it would fill up overnight. I'm not ready to commit to it tonight, but it deserves consideration."

The county is still paying a heavy bill for development of its 911 emergency communications program, said Harvey.

An increase in the telephone surcharge would have to be approved by telephone companies and face a public hearing. For half of a fiscal year, starting January 1, an increase from 50 cents to \$1.50 would generate approximately \$90,000.

"If I wanted to do it, I'd go to a dollar," said Rabon.

In comparison, other monthly charges are: Bladen County, \$1; Columbus County, \$1.40; Pender County, 99 cents; and New Hanover County, 50 cents.

Commissioners rejected a possible ambulance user fee.

County may chip in \$1 million

Schools could get computers

By Terry Pope
County Editor

Brunswick County schools may receive an extra \$1 million to help purchase computer equipment.

Don Warren, chairman of the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners, says the money once set aside for a new office warehouse at the government center near Bolivia can be better spent on education.

"It would have the most immediate impact on our educational system," said Warren, "and help to bring our children into the 21st century."

Warren met with school superintendent Ralph Johnston and several school board members to discuss the deal.

The funds would be earmarked for the specific purchase of computer equipment and to implement a technology program. Commissioners would mandate that \$750,000 be spent on computer technology and \$250,000 for related items.

The chairman has asked fellow commissioners to consider the fund transfer. However, a vote is needed at a regular commissioners' meeting.

The office warehouse was funded for 1992-93 but no construction plans have been approved. It would create more storage space for all offices and agencies at the government center plus house the public utilities and parks administration offices.

Although no building plans have been approved, the county has already hired an architect for its design -- John Thompson of Southport. The previous board of commissioners included the warehouse in its long-range plan for construction needs, including work on the roofs of every building at the government center.

For 1992-93, the previous board set aside \$71,000 for planning and design work of the warehouse.

The Brunswick County Initial Capital Improvements Plan drafted by interim county manager John Harvey last month indicates that "storage needs are currently not being met by county facilities. Growth of county staff has created overcrowded office conditions."

Harvey recommends spending an additional \$19,000 in 1993-94 for planning and \$941,000 in construction for a total project cost of \$1.03 million.

If approved, the money would be transferred to the schools' "category II" capital improvements budget where commissioners can "tell them exactly where to spend it," said Warren. If placed in another category it could be spent at the school board's discretion.

The schools had requested \$14.8 million in local funds for 1993-94, an increase from \$8.02 million last year.

Harvey's proposed budget recommends the system receive \$8.43 million and that a bond referendum be held to finance school construction needs.

Complaint says black males left out of schools' leadership

By Marybeth Bianchi
Feature Editor

The Brunswick County Board of Education last week faced a group of disgruntled residents, unhappy about the lack of black male representation at the school administration level.

The previous week the board hired three new principals, all of whom are white. It also moved Joe Butler, black principal at Lincoln Primary School, to the central office where he will serve as director of migrant education and parent involvement.

Sandra Robinson, a black, was moved from her current job as assistant principal at West Brunswick High School to principal of Shallotte Middle, pending the current principal's resignation. The only other black principal is Zephia Grissett at Union Elementary.

Board chairman Donna Baxter said she agreed with the petitioners who requested more black representation in top school positions.

"We do know this is an area where we're weak, but they have to realize we have (blacks) in supervisory positions."

"I don't feel they lost any quotas," Baxter said, pointing to the many assistant principals who are black. She assured those present at the meeting that the board is trying to recruit more black educators for Brunswick County schools, including the assistant superintendent's position opened with the retirement of Mose Lewis.

Concerning the transfer of Butler from Lincoln Primary to the central office, Baxter said the board considered the overall picture of the school and where it is headed when making the decision.

She said as the board adjusts its budget to meet the allocation approved by county commissioners, "We'll have to do some regrouping," and that could include realigning some positions that have already been approved.

"We're waiting to see," she said Friday.

After meeting in executive session last week the board approved three area computer coordinators to carry out the countywide school technology plan. They include Leonard Jenkins of Leland, James Browning of Gastonia and William Langston of Alexandria.

Julian Bryant and Artis Hill, both of Leland, were given temporary jobs as therapeutic assistants at Leland Middle.

The board accepted the resignations of Sabrina Parish of Supply, therapeutic assistant at Union Elementary; Clifton White of Southport, driver education teacher at West Brunswick High; Hazel Holden of Four Oaks, English teacher at South Brunswick High; and Janet Stephenson of Long Beach, special education teacher at Leland Middle.

Also accepted was the retirement of Mary Corbett of Leland, cafeteria assistant at Leland Middle.

Jean Samek of Shallotte and

Sandra Davis of Leland were approved as substitute teachers.

The board also reviewed and approved the administration's recommendations for probationary contracts and tenure for teachers.

Teachers granted tenure include Christine Brown, Bolivia Elementary; Randy Fennell, Leland Middle; Lola Jackson and Judith Arnold, Shallotte Middle; Hugh Alltop, South Brunswick Middle; Paula Schmidt and Kimberly Royal, Southport Elementary; Shelly Ludlum, Debra Noble and Charles Snow, Supply Elementary; Sue Chapman, Tammy Pickard, Kimberly Briles, Michelle Ransom, Robin Randolph, Zephia Grissett and Susan Brown, Union Elementary; Michael Stanley, Waccamaw Elementary; Stirling Coward and Alphonso Zanders, North Brunswick High; Gene Bennett and Gary Noble, West Brunswick High; Judith Babcock, central office.

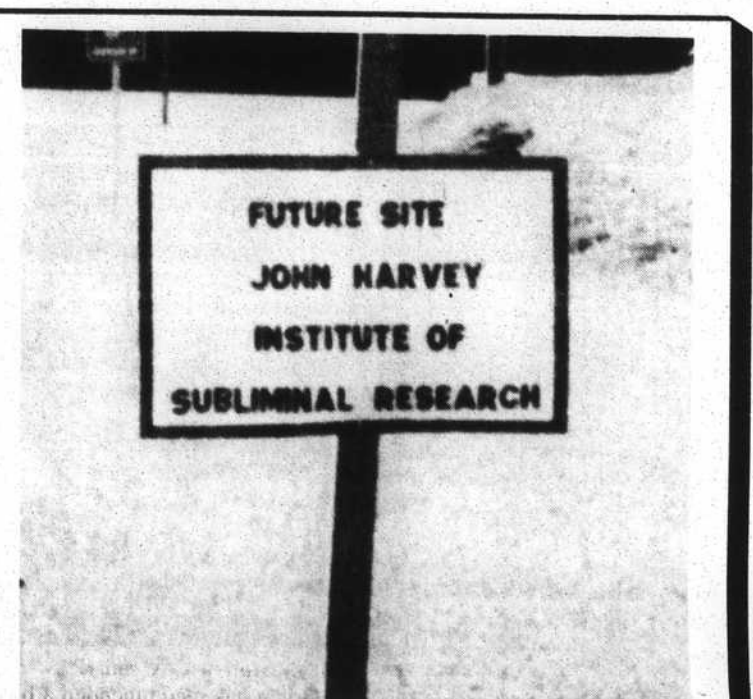
Atkinson wins schools' rodeo

Linda Atkinson won Brunswick County schools' annual bus rodeo last week.

The Waccamaw Elementary School bus driver was one of 37 competing in a test of driving and maneuvering skills. She earned 326 points out of a possible 340. For her efforts she was awarded a \$100 savings bond from United Carolina Bank.

Grover Hewett of Southport Elementary School took second place and Pam Lanier of Bolivia Elementary came in third. They were both awarded \$50 prizes.

Hewett, Lanier and Margaret Hughes, the fourth-place winner, participated in the district bus rodeo in Greene County.



Higher learning

Bolivia University?

A prank sign at the Brunswick County Government Center near Bolivia Friday poked a little fun at interim county manager John Harvey.

Thursday's public hearing on Harvey's proposed 1993-94 county budget drew a crowd of around 175 people, many upset over his recommended cuts to agencies and non-profit groups.

The sign stated, "Future Site John Harvey Institute of Subliminal Research," making reference to controversial comments in Harvey's budget message.

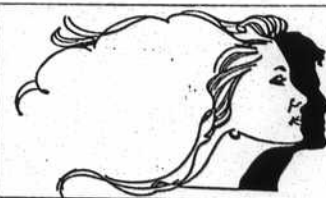
Mobile-home owners were stung by the remark that by "subliminal encouragement in the past" the majority of county homes "is composed of a disproportionate chain of mobile homes whose tax value does not bear adequate share even for those services rendered by mandate of the state."

His plan also criticized the Resources Development Commission for not attracting more "blue-chip industries with higher pay scales."

"What this county needs, Harvey said, is something like a major university.

An anonymous person already has it named.

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