

Caswell's 18-cent tax makes use of accommodations fund

By Holly Edwards
Municipal Editor

Following a brief public hearing Thursday afternoon, Caswell Beach commissioners unanimously approved the town budget for fiscal year 1993-94, to take effect July 1.

The budget is based upon anticipated expenditures and revenues totaling \$281,285 and a tax rate of 18 cents per \$100 of assessed property valuation, the same as the current rate.

An estimated \$111,600 of town revenues will come from ad valorem taxes, based upon an expected collection rate of 100 percent and a total estimated property valuation of \$62 million.

The most significant change in this year's budget is that for the first time the town will benefit from the \$56,000 in accommodation taxes collected last year. The tax is expected to generate nearly \$44,000 more this year.

The town began assessing the three-percent tax on all rental properties in January, 1992. The enabling law stipulates that the revenue generated must be spent on tourist-related expenditures, which are defined to include the criminal justice system, fire and rescue departments, public utilities, solid waste disposal and beach erosion control.

This year's budget specifies that all \$56,000 of accommodation tax revenue raised to date be contributed to: criminal justice (\$22,400), fire and rescue (\$3,640), refuse and recycling (\$5,880), beach access (\$500), beach conservation (\$10,500), Southport-Oak Island Chamber of Commerce (\$750), board of realtors (\$750), and phase II of the underground utility project (\$11,580).

"The town council worked very hard and very long to make sure it applied the accommodation tax revenue to those items deemed tourist-related," commissioner Bill Boyd said during the budget public hearing.

Commissioner Bob Terry agreed to coordinate the beach conservation program, which will include constructing sand fences along the oceanfront and planting sea grasses along the dune line to deter erosion.

Other expenditures authorized by the budget include: a five-percent cost-of-living and merit increase for the police chief, police officers and town clerk; \$6,500 to replace one of the town police cars; \$3,500 to replace police department equipment such as ammunition, bullet-proof vests, guns, radios and a new portable phone; \$17,500 for an additional police officer; \$2,785 to the Town of Long Beach for rescue services; \$13,883 to the Town of Yaupon Beach for fire protection services; \$2,100 to hire a new part-time assistant to the town clerk; and a new \$1,000 annual salary for the mayor.

In other business discussed by the Caswell Beach Board of Commissioners Thursday:

•Due to a previous injury, Roby Osborne, police chief Paul Osborne's brother, will be unable to assume his position as the town's new full-time police officer. Osborne was expected to begin work in early April. The board agreed to re-advertise the position.

•Commissioners unanimously approved a town seal drawn by Caswell Beach property owner and resident Bernard Case. The seal depicts the Coast Guard lighthouse in the background, with the beachfront, dunes and sea oats in the foreground. Once the seal undergoes a few minor alterations it will be placed on all town letterheads.

•The film company The Vineyard Inc. has requested permission to film segments of the motion picture "The Inkwell" in Caswell Beach. The company asked to use the residence at 515 Caswell Beach Road, the area in front of the Coast Guard station and portions of the beachfront. Commissioners agreed that more discussion with the film company concerning traffic control and public safety was required before they could give approval.

If approved, filming is expected to take place July 15, 16, 17 and 19.

The movie is reportedly a coming-of-age story about a teenager who visits his wealthy relatives at a seaside community. It is set in 1976, the Bicentennial year, and the film company notified the town that fireworks may be set off during filming.

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Bill Boyd
Town commissioner

House page

Jennifer Hardee of Winnabow recently served as a page in the N. C. House of Representatives.

She was sponsored by Rep. David Redwine (D-Brunswick).

According to Speaker of the House Dan Blue, "Pages play an important role in the General Assembly by assisting members of the House during committee debates and floor sessions."



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Clean-up Saturday

A citywide clean-up is planned in Southport this Saturday, and all residents who would like to volunteer for the effort should report to Waterfront Park between 8:30 and 9 a.m.

Plastic garbage bags and plastic gloves will be provided.

"Operation Southport Clean Sweep" is intended to help prepare the city for the N. C. Fourth of July Festival, and will involve collecting litter along the waterfront and along as many neighborhood streets as possible. The Boy Scouts, Brownies, Cub Scouts and local churches and civic organizations are expected to participate.

Free hot dogs and soft drinks will be provided for all volunteers between noon and 2 p.m. at Waterfront Park.

Also Saturday, beginning at 9 a.m., city officials and several volunteers will re-deck the city dock at the yacht basin. Anyone who would like to donate lumber to the project can do so at Pelican Building Center, a spokesman said.

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