

Sports

Cougars end lackluster season on a high note, 5-0, over West Brunswick -- 1C

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BUDGET PROPOSAL

Long Beach tax remains at 39 cents

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

In his capacity as budget officer, town manager Jerry Walters has submitted a proposed \$6.3-million budget for the Town of Long Beach in fiscal year 1997-98.

Here is the cost-of-living information:

- The budget proposal includes no property tax increase.
- The budget proposal includes no water rate increase.
- A solid waste fee increase is almost assured, but will be determined by council.

The budget contains a recommendation for Town Hall expansion and a commitment to expand the town recreation center

The budget proposed by Walters is about \$300,000 less than the budget approved by council for the current year and anticipates no increase in the town's present tax rate of 39 cents per \$100 valuation. It anticipates no increase in the present water rate, as water purveyor Brunswick County has proposed no rate increase. An increase in residential solid waste collection fees, now \$3.48 per month, could reach as high as \$7.28 per month depending upon how council opts to dispose of yard debris and what form recycling efforts take in the coming year.

Walters' budget proposal, with its zero tax increase proposal, was distributed to councilors Friday and will be the subject of upcoming budget workshops. While Walters said, in his budget message, that the proposal reflects council's budget wishes expressed at a March workshop, the manager's proposal of last year was drastically changed after presentation to council in May, 1996.

Council last year added over \$1.1 million to Walters' proposal of one year ago, at the same time adding

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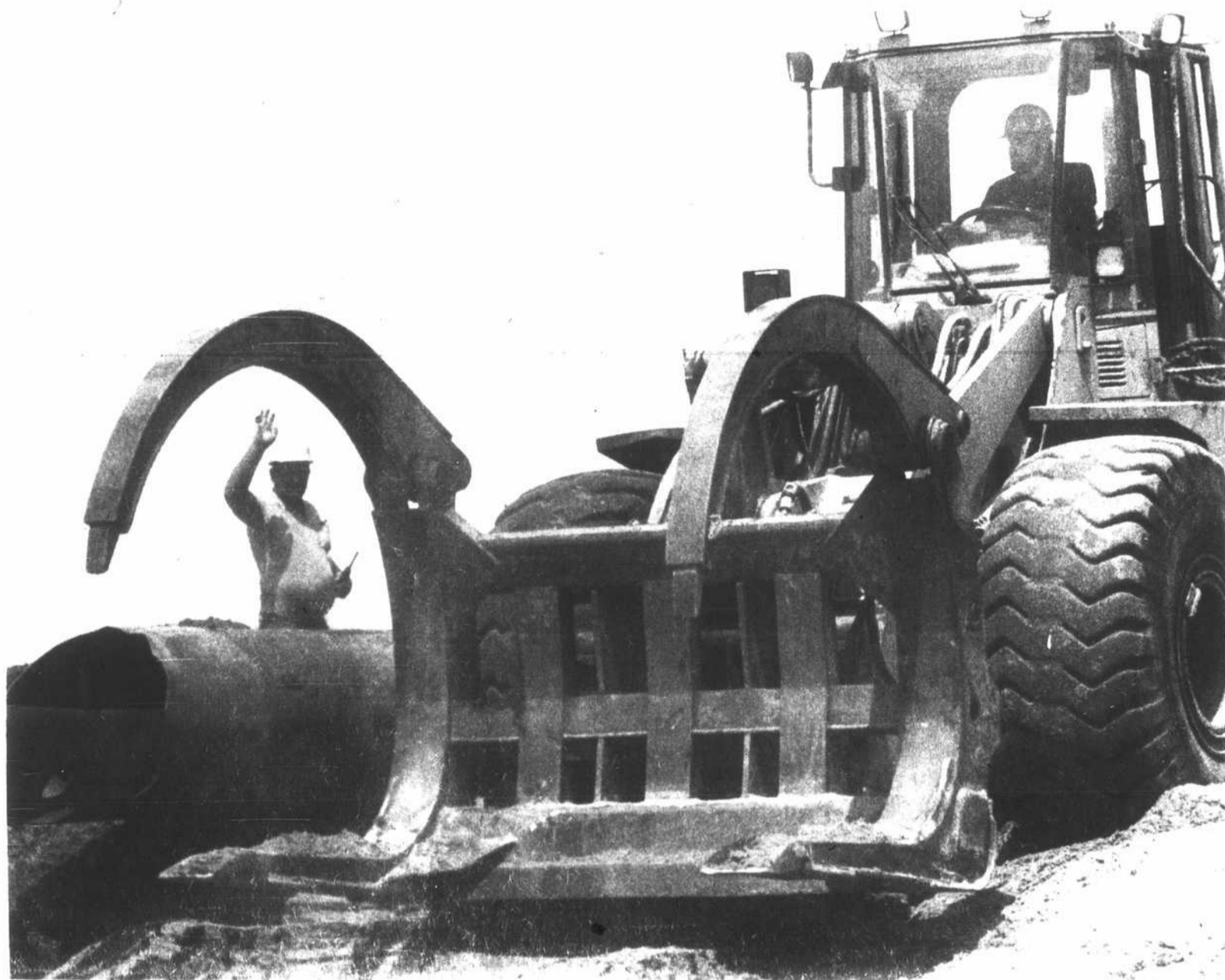
What about turtles?

Town manager Jerry Walters' lean budget proposal of this week leaves to town council one important and controversial question: How will Long Beach raise \$330,000 for a Sea Turtle Habitat Restoration Project if the opportunity arises?

Walters' proposal indicates the need might be there, but is silent on how to raise the money.

The Sea Turtle Habitat Restoration project -- under design by the U. S. Army Corps of

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The shore crew of Great Lakes dredgers install a deflector nozzle on the end of pipeline as renourishment of Bald Head Island's South

Beach (and deepening of the Smith Island channel) goes into the second week. The project is expected to end around June 1.

Photo by Jim Harner

Rate stays same

County budget figures \$5 million for schools

By Terry Pope
County Editor

County manager Jim Varner proposed 1997-98 county budget sets aside \$5 million for classroom additions to South Brunswick Middle School and Bolivia Elementary School and funds to build and staff an emergency medical services sub-station in the Southport/Oak Island community.

The property tax rate will be the same as last year -- 68.85 cents per \$100 valuation -- if the proposed \$84.3-million budget is approved by Brunswick County commissioners

Thirty-four new positions are proposed, mostly in emergency medical services, solid waste and public utilities

Varner presented the proposal Monday which will go to public hearing on Tuesday, June 10, at 6:30 p.m.

County commissioners will hold their first budget workshop Tuesday, May 27, at 6:30 p.m.

Varner was instructed by commissioners to hold taxes at the same rate but 34 new positions are being proposed, mostly in emergency medical services, solid waste and public utilities. Eight positions are scattered in other agencies.

As the county's population has grown it has led to a growing demand on county services, said Varner, sparking the need for more employees to finance the needs without raising

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Flat-rate for fire, rescue

By Terry Pope
County Editor

Funds generated by a proposed flat-rate fee schedule to benefit volunteer fire and rescue departments are figured into the proposed 1997-98 county budget.

A fire and rescue funding committee's proposal was presented Monday to the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners but no formal action was taken. The flat-rate plan would assess 38,000

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Erosion problem More beachfront areas threatened

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

Erosion threatens property destruction in once safe sections of the Long Beach waterfront if no beach nourishment program is undertaken, council heard Tuesday night.

Erosion control committee chairman Russ Morrison told council areas west of 40th Street SE could be threatened to the extent eastern areas of the beachfront are now if nothing is done to bolster frontal dunes.

Morrison's presentation came at the request of councilor Frances Allen, who scheduled debate of beachfront conditions, asking if homeowners had applied for exemptions from Coastal Area Management Act provisions to replace decks and if any sea turtles had yet nested in Long Beach.

Allen reported no turtle nests as yet and said Division of Coastal Management officials were expediting exemption permit requests, taking applications by facsimile.

Morrison said the Long Beach waterfront was in "very serious condition and threatened to become worse."

"West of 40th Street East could be as bad as the east end," Morrison said. "If we don't get a nourishment program going, we will be in the same situation as in the east. If erosion breaches the dune in the west, we will have severe property loss."

Morrison's comments come as town council prepares to debate town manager Jerry Walters' budget proposal for the fiscal year to begin July 1. That proposal calls for establishment of a capital project ordinance which would govern a proposed fund of \$330,000 -- the town's share of a sea turtle habitat restoration project now under design by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers.

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Explanation in writing

County defends tap policy

By Terry Pope
County Editor

Until now, few people have publicly criticized a mandatory tap-on policy county commissioners adopted earlier this month for the county water system.

After several residents at the commissioners Monday to mention the new ordinance is uncomfortable, the board defended its policy. District 5 commissioner David Sanditer put Marshall to put in writing the necessity of forcing residents to pay of-service fees and tap fees so that home can access a county water system.

"I don't think people realize the amount of money that goes into maintaining our water system," said

What we're trying to do is get this system on an equitable basis so that those who benefit from it pay for it.

Bill Sue
District 5 commissioner

commissioner David Sanditer of Eden Beach. "It's \$4 million a year figure, and I assume that's a good figure, then seven cents of the tax goes to supplement the water system. I'd that's insane. During a public comment period"

Monday, five residents opposed the policy and asked why it was passed so quickly without any public hearing. Reacting to concerns raised by large municipal customers, commissioners took steps they said were needed to make the system equitable

to all. Rate increases to municipal customers has been the answer in the past because of a lack of county water users.

Since 1987, no mandatory tap-on policy has existed for residents who live along county water lines or in special assessment districts (SADs). Property owners in SADs are assessed the cost of extending lines into their neighborhoods, but property owners along county capital improvement lines have never been assessed for having county water available.

Now faced with fees that may range from \$900 to \$1,100, residents who say they have good well water don't see why they must pay for county water.

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