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Southport to charge city rescue

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Bid is 50 percent over budget

Community Building gets a second look

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

With lowest construction bids exceeding \$1.1 million, Southport's Community Building Reconstruction Committee has sent its architect back to his drawing board to design a more modest structure.

For months, members of the reconstruction committee have been about the community soliciting contributions from individuals and corporations in an attempt to raise a targeted \$720,000, the believed cost of a one-and-a-half-story building on the waterfront at Fort Johnston to replace the old USO Building burned in early 1995. When a second round of construction bids was opened June 3, that anticipated cost had been exceeded by \$380,000.

Aldermen have scheduled discussion of the Community Building cost overrun tonight (Wednesday) after completion of a public hearing on the city's budget proposal for 1997-98. Aldermen Meezie Childs, Paul Fisher and Jim Brown are members of the Community Building Reconstruction Committee. Its chairman and only other non-salaried member is Ken Mabe. While the committee has been accepting private donations and pledges for the reconstruction project, aldermen have said they were willing to borrow needed

The committee wants 'to avoid any misunderstanding by the community -- lest anyone think their pledge is not needed now.'

Architect John Thompson

construction money up front as the committee awaited delivery of pledges made, in some instances, over five years.

The committee's architect, John Thompson, Tuesday said the committee "felt that an explanation was needed to avoid any misunderstanding by the community -- lest anyone think their pledge is not needed now."

As a result of the high bids for construction, the committee Wednesday night intends to recommend rejection of current bids to the board of aldermen, Thompson said.

Further, the committee will "instruct the architect to delete the planned upper story (of the building) including dormers, roof terrace, stairs (and other improvements) related to the future use of the second floor."

The architect and the committee say they will also attempt to "reduce overall costs to a range that will encourage greater involvement by smaller contractors. The need for a structural steel frame will be eliminated and all but absolutely necessary steel framing will be eliminated in favor of other materials. The group will seek to design work which can be done locally and will eliminate from the bid specifications landscaping and site improvements not essential to the building.

"The committee has directed us to go back to the drawing board and make the above adjustments without altering the building lay-out and general appearance, except of course for the deletion of the dormers," Thompson wrote.

Prior to this month, the city had sought construction bids for the community building reconstruction project, but received only one response. When

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County budget Board says \$1 million cut needed

By Terry Pope
County Editor

County commissioners voted Monday to allocate \$20,000 in start-up funds for the Family Emergency Teen Shelter near Southport in the proposed 1997-98 county budget.

They also instructed county manager Jim Varner to trim another \$1 million from the budget before next Monday, June 23, when the board meets at 5 p.m. for another work session. The budget must be approved by July 1.

Varner's original \$84.3-million proposal was trimmed by \$3.2 million last week when commissioners voted to delete two water line projects near Leland and Sandy Creek and to look into options of connecting to existing county lines or lines owned by the Leland Sanitary District.

Also cut from the proposal were five new positions and four vehicles that the water department requested to handle new customers as a result of the county's recently approved mandatory hook-up policy.

The Brunswick County Utility Operations Board has discussed contracting that service out to a construction company instead. Commissioners say they are not sure what to expect in the water department for next year until positions are reevaluated, matching staff with workloads.

The board voted Monday not to exceed \$3.5 million in money taken from the county's general fund balance, or savings account, to help pay for reoccurring items in the 1997-98 budget. Varner's recommended budget sought \$5.1 million from the fund balance for reoccurring needs and

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Photo by Holly Edwards

Every two years, Don Frink of Southport spends a day at the Old Smithville Burying Grounds cleaning and painting the monument to river pilots and crew members killed in shipwrecks or lost at sea. The marble obelisk was dedicated in 1872.

Just like other ones

County wants to add EMS substation here

By Terry Pope
County Editor

New emergency medical services substations are running above original cost estimates, and it may force county commissioners to allocate more in the 1997-98 budget so three identical centers can be built at Leland, Southport-Oak Island and Ocean Isle Beach.

"If three were executed at once, you'd get a better cost per unit," said J. Clark Hipp, architect for the project. "There is economy in the steel, block and labor -- over just building one unit

at a time."

In the 1996-97 budget, commissioners set aside funds for two substations at a cost of \$210,000 each -- one on the northern end and one in the southern part of the county.

But recently, commissioners have indicated they want to build a third station in the Southport area, all three of the same design.

Officials are negotiating to purchase land along Old Georgetown Road for a station near Ocean Isle Beach, inside the Leland Industrial Park to service the northern communities and along N. C. 211 to assist

the Southport-Oak Island community. The Southport-Oak Island building has not been budgeted and would be part of the 1997-98 capital outlay spending plan.

The stations would house paramedics and county rescue vehicles as part of director Tracy Jackson's county emergency medical services and 911 response program.

Hipp gave commissioners an artist's rendering of the model satellite building that would be built of concrete block with accent striping and standing seam metal roof. The

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Long Beach okays budget

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

When it came time for the public to speak, there was silence in Long Beach Tuesday night.

Not one among the 50 or so gathered at the Long Beach Recreation Center offered the first comment on the town's then-proposed \$6.348-million budget for the fiscal year to

begin July 1. Then council, sensing the unanimity of the public, ended the session.

But the split of council members made clear that only two budget workshop sessions this year, the mayor and five council members present -- councilor Helen Cashwell was unavailable Tuesday because of illness -- were well-attended with the budget proposal

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Southport Electric Rate structure has shaky start

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

With 2,564 load management switches installed at homes and places of business served by the Southport electric system, the new electric rate structure designed to reward participants in the city's load management effort has to be considered a popular success.

But, mild weather and start-up costs the city chose to absorb, rather than pass on to customers, teamed to deal the city's electric fund a shaky financial year in 1996-97.

Yet Southport should stay the course with its load management effort

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"The worst thing we could do is panic and pop those rates up without seeing if the program will work under normal conditions."

Ed Honeycutt
Public services director

Caswell considers water alternatives

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

Arboretum and OceanGreens homeowners associations pay 23.5 cents more than the town pays for each gallon of water Caswell Beach buys from Brunswick County, but those homeowners don't receive the same services other residents of the town are provided.

That isn't fair, Caswell Sewer Service Inc. director Jim Hinkhouse

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