

THE STATE PORT PILOT



New AD, coach
South athletics have new look

Natural causes
It was old age that did whale

Hospital sale
NHRMC to buy county facility

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Volume 67, Number 39

Published every Wednesday in Southport, NC

County tax rate is same

By Terry Pope
County Editor

It will be business as usual for the next 12 months if a proposed \$97.1-million county budget is adopted next month.

In fact, Brunswick County manager Jim Varner labels it a "continuation" budget with little expansion. Just two new full-time employees and the same funding levels as last year for most departments are included.

"This is the third budget that I have had the opportunity to prepare for Brunswick County," said Varner, "and I can assure you that the task does not become easier through repetition."

The ad valorem tax rate will remain the same at 68.5 cents per \$100 of property valuation, under the proposal, and the schools will receive a three-percent increase in funding but still about \$750,000 short of what was requested. A public hearing has been scheduled Tuesday, June 9, at 7 p.m. in the public assembly building at the Brunswick County Government Center.

The Brunswick County Board of Commissioners must adopt the budget before July 1 and has set workshops to finalize the document at 3 p.m. on three consecutive days, June 10-12.

The total amount requested from department heads, schools and community college was \$111.6 million, which represents \$15.1 million more than last year's budget. With new homes and businesses built in the county that add about \$150 million to \$200 million to the tax base annually, more tax dollars are usually generated to expand programs and keep the tax rate steady.

"This year, as we all know, things are different," said Varner.

While the tax base has continued to grow, the difference is that some public utility companies have received a fourth-year adjustment to their taxable values to equalize rates in the midst of an eight-year revaluation cycle. It means Carolina Power and Light Co.'s Brunswick Nuclear Plant will be assessed at 77.8 percent of market value and will reduce its annual tax payment by about \$1.5 million.

Overall, the county can expect an estimated \$222-million tax valuation reduction for public utilities. County commissioners have set in motion the process of conducting a more frequent revaluation to ease the adjustments starting next year.

The total budget, including all funds, is up from \$96.4 million in 1997-98 to \$97.1 million for 1998-99. Approximately half of the revenues will come from property taxes on an anticipated \$6.1-billion valuation. New revenues that will be reflected in the budget for the first time include tipping fees at the county construction demolition and yard debris landfill near Supply effective July 1, water availability

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GATOR GAMES



Athletes with experience ranging from 55 to 92 years participated in the Gator Senior Games across the county last week. They were hoping to qualify for the September North Carolina Senior Games in Raleigh, and the possibility of playing in the 1999 Nationals in Orlando.

Photo by Jim Harper

Racism again charged

Aldermen delay action on developers' appeals

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

A proposed subdivision ordinance amendment which may allow aggrieved land developers to present appeals of planning board decisions to the city's board of aldermen was returned Thursday night to the planning board for additional comment.

But, River Drive property owner Ron Thompson again rose to charge racism in the city's dealings with him.

The planning board will once again review a proposed subdivision ordinance amendment which will allow potential subdividers to appeal preliminary subdivision rulings of the planning board to the board of aldermen. The only avenue of appeal now available to subdividers is to sue the city in Superior Court.

Thompson, owner of 106 River Drive, gave rise to the proposed amendment when he appeared before aldermen in February to rebut the six reasons on which planning board members had denied his proposed subdivision preliminary plat. He proposes to create five lots on the one parcel he owns extending from River Drive to the Cape Fear River.

Although the ordinance allowing the board to hear his appeal was not adopted by aldermen Thursday, Thompson insisted on addressing the board anyway, along the way demanding aldermen Paul Fisher and Meezie Childs "recuse" themselves from discussions of his proposal, calling a comment by mayor Bill Crowe racist, and accusing code enforcement officer Wayne Strickland of "snatching" a book from

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Long Beach

Town budget plan suggests three-cent hike

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

Calling a municipal budget a "road map or guide for the upcoming year..." Long Beach town manager Jerry Walters late last week distributed a proposed budget for fiscal year 1998-99 calling for hikes in both property taxes and service fees.

The manager's budget proposal calls for a three-cent increase in the ad valorem tax rate charged property owners and a \$1.37 monthly increase in residential solid waste fees. The budget proposal also anticipates an unknown increase in water rates next year, reflecting the town's belief Brunswick County will raise its wholesale water rate.

Walters said the proposed increase in the municipal property tax rate from 39 cents to 42 cents per \$100 valuation reflects community demand for additional and better services. The proposed tax rate has been based on an estimated town-wide property valuation of nearly \$484 million -- over \$10 million more than last year's estimated total valuation.

"Our community is growing, without question; however, the demand

'Our community is growing, without question; however, the demand for services continues at a rate that is greater than what pure residential growth can accommodate by itself on an annual basis.'

Jerry Walters
Town manager

for services continues at a rate that is greater than what pure residential growth can accommodate by itself on an annual basis," Walters said in

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Public favors town purchase of 'The Point'

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

Citizen direction to Long Beach Town Council was clear Tuesday night: Yes, the town should use grant funds to buy some 30 acres of land on "The Point" as a preservation measure; No, the town should not build elaborate amenities on that land or provide extensive paved parking facilities.

That message was sent at a public hearing on a proposal to submit a grant application to N. C. Division of Coastal Management for funds to purchase the 30 acres bordering Lockwood Folly Inlet at the terminus of Kings Lynn Drive.

In other business brought before council Tuesday night, staff was authorized to take whatever steps are necessary to contract with an Ocean Isle Beach firm which will issue CAMA minor permits on the state's behalf. The town itself used

to serve as CAMA local permitting officer, but halted the practice when state reimbursements for local CAMA permitting fell below costs of issuing permits and making inspections.

Also, council approved a resolution to county commissioners, asking Brunswick County to consult with the town before seeking local legislation relative to fire and rescue districts. Town manager Jerry Walters warned Brunswick County was embarking on a course of action which could limit municipalities' ability to provide local funds for emergency services.

'The Point'

While most residents addressing council favored purchase of the land with grant funds, many opposed construction of restrooms, parking areas, bathhouses, and other elaborate

See 'Point', page 6

Caswell annex?

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

Will Caswell Beach catch annexation fever?

Now that neighboring Oak Island town Yaupon Beach has announced its resolution of intent to annex 483 mainland acres to facilitate its own growth and development, there are some who believe Caswell Beach should be staking out its own claim in areas adjacent to Long Beach Road. "Apparently the state wants existing towns to expand in this way," planning board member Michael Kemp told Caswell Beach commissioners Thursday. "I'd like to see Caswell Beach get involved in this." He said

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County land use plan update

Growth issues at hand

By Terry Pope
County Editor

Brunswick County is starting to feel the effects of nearly three decades of rapid growth, and that growth is more often felt on county roadways, said Glenn Harbeck, con-

sultant who has drafted the county's land use plan update.

During peak summer months, county roads become overloaded and clogged with congestion. A good land use plan can remedy the situation and serve as a planning tool as the county approaches the

year 2000 and a projected population increase of more than 30 percent.

The final draft of the long-awaited land use plan was approved by the Brunswick County Planning Board last month and reviewed Monday by

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