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Fire tax district sought

By Terry Pope
County Editor

Should property owners pay by tax account number or by parcel? It's the burning question that divided the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners Monday over establishment of a special fire and rescue district by special legislation.

The board voted 3-2, with commissioners Bill Sue of District 5 and David Sandifer of District 2 voting against the motion, to proceed with asking state legislators for a special bill to establish a five-member countywide tax authority which would manage fire and rescue funds. A flat fee would be charged on tax bills for homes, businesses and vacant lots.

"When you do it on an account basis," said Sue, "it may be simple. It may be quick. But it's not fair."

Property owners or developers can consolidate all of their land holdings into one account per township at the tax department. It means such property owners would have to pay just one fee per township and not a fee for every home or lot owned in that township.

Most tax bills have been consolidated by the department for easier handling, with one tax account for each business, since commercial accounts cannot be consolidated into one billing. Commission chairman JoAnn Bellamy Simmons' motion calls for a flat fee per home, business or lot but does not indicate what those fees would be. It can be decided later if the bill passes the short session of the 1998 N. C. General Assembly.

"There's no fair way, but if you can, you should come up with a way to say everyone is going to pay for services," said Ms. Simmons. "We have delayed in the past of being prepared. Let's realize that Brunswick County is going to fill up in the county, that areas are going to be developed that are not already. It does say, 'I'm doing something. I'm trying.'"

Sandifer was the most supportive commissioner of fire and rescue fees but could not vote on a plan that would limit charges by tax accounts. Prior to the vote, Ocean Isle Beach businessman, volunteer fireman and town commissioner Ken Proctor warned that unless the special fees are set up to handle 100 percent of the fire department's capital needs, the volunteer units would hurt from a lack of donations.

"We've got to look at this a little more closely," said Proctor. "I think if we approve this situation, we

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SHOWTIME

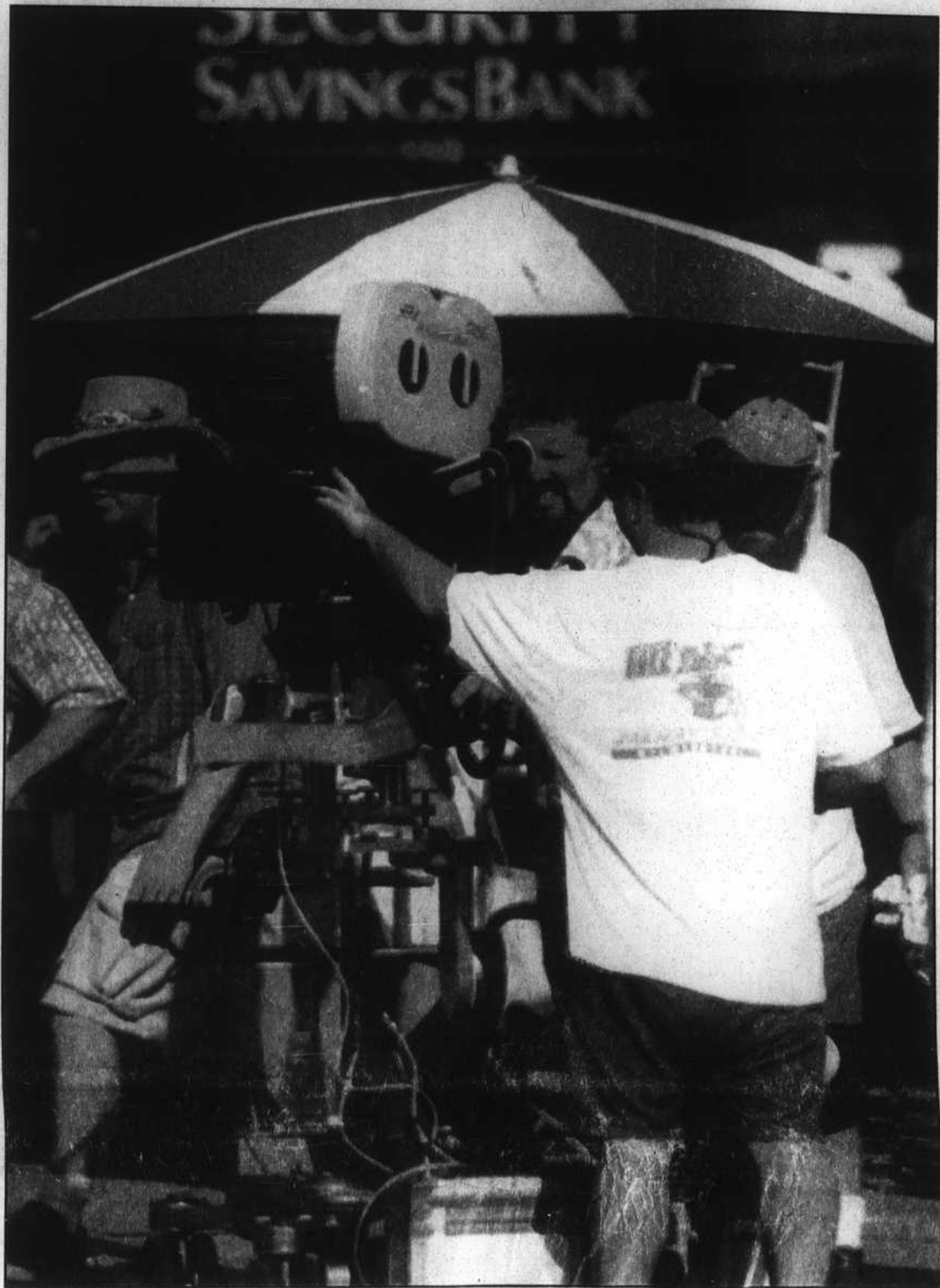


Photo by Jim Harper

Scenes for "Holy Joe," starring John Ritter as the pastor of a church in a small southern town, were filmed in Southport on Monday.

Playing the role

Movie extras have time to read all about it

By Laura Kimball
Feature Editor

After only an hour-as a movie extra, I thought I had it made.

I was lounging under a shady tent in the back of Taylor Field, chatting with some of the other 20 or so extras who were chosen to be in scenes of "Holy Joe," a CBS movie-of-the-week for which several scenes were shot in Southport on Monday, and getting paid for it.

After arriving at 7 a.m., we had eaten a big

breakfast, had our clothes approved by the woman in charge of wardrobe and waited to be called for a scene.

The crowd under the tent was a diverse mix of people. Two school teachers, a preacher's wife and son, a young, good-looking couple, several very experienced extras and a handful of people who, like me, had never been an extra before and didn't know what to expect.

It was easy to tell who had done it before. Experienced extras brought lawn chairs, books and

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Long Beach

No objections to 3-cent hike

Rescue squad paid positions part of reason

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

Long Beach taxpayers will pay three cents more for each \$100 worth of property they own in the year to begin July 1.

But, if property owners are concerned about that tax increase, they didn't let town council know it Tuesday night. Not one person offered comment on the nearly \$7-million spending proposal for fiscal year 1998-99 at a state-mandated public hearing on the budget.

"I don't think we've ever done that

before," mayor Joan Altman said when no one rose to comment.

The mayor theorized the public was well-informed on the content of the budget document -- adopted unanimously by council -- through newspaper reports. The budget also calls for a \$1.37 monthly hike in solid waste fees which will pay for a curbside recycling program and curbside collection of yard debris, services residents demanded in a series of confrontations with council last year.

During a break in the meeting, several councilors said most Long Beach residents realized the tax increase in the coming year would support a higher level of service by the town's rescue squad. The town's portion of the rescue squad budget will swell to nearly \$200,000 as the squad takes on four professional emergency medical technicians who

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What for is unclear SBSD imposes 30-cent tax rate

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

All agree with plans to build a sewer system, but municipal-like services should stop there.

That was the message several Southeast Brunswick Sanitary District residents gave their commissioners Monday at a public hearing on a proposed \$912,000 district budget for 1998-99. The budget proposal -- which was adopted by commissioners after the public hearing -- enacts a first-time property tax for residents of the Long Beach Road corridor. For the first time next year, residents of SBSD will pay a district property tax of 30 cents per \$100 assessed valuation. That tax comes in addition to the county property tax of 68.5 cents per \$100 assessed valuation.

According to the proposed budget, the 30-cent district tax rate is expected to generate \$162,000 based on a total district property valuation of \$54 million.

Many of those attending

"The manager provides the budget. I cannot explain everything on there because the manager does the budget."

James W. Smith
SBSD chairman

Monday's hearing questioned what the \$162,000 would buy. Several of those questioning the \$162,000 revenue source left frustrated when district chairman James R. (Bubba) Smith read from a lengthy bond order and from statutes giving the district the authority to tax. Smith claimed he had no specific knowledge of how the \$162,000 would be

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Yaupon Beach Rescue call for funding unanswered

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

With plans to adopt a 1998-99 budget on Thursday, Yaupon Beach commissioners have still not decided whether that town will contract to receive emergency medical services from neighboring Long Beach.

Commissioners Monday did, however, decide to short Yaupon Beach's payment to Long Beach for rescue service in the current fiscal year. Commissioners said Long Beach Volunteer Rescue Squad had only responded

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Southport board leaves plat review to planners

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

Apparently dismissing the advice of counsel, Southport aldermen Thursday said they will not hear appeals of preliminary subdivision plat decisions made by the city planning board.

In an unrelated land use matter, aldermen agreed to allocate 2,500 gallons of sewer flow daily to Bald Head Island's proposed new ferry and barge landing at Deep Point.

City attorney Mike Isenberg in March told aldermen they could amend the city's subdivision ordinance to hear appeals from property owners who wished to contest planning board rejection of preliminary subdivision plats. The only recourse for a property owner now is to seek relief from the Superior Court.

Isenberg said the board could elect to set itself up as

"The whole idea is, if you guys are not going to review anything, then the planning board decision is final."

Mike Isenberg
City attorney

one last avenue of administrative relief before the city were sued over a planning board preliminary development

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Students at Bolivia Elementary School celebrated Super Kids Day, along with Accelerated Reading Recognition, with games and races, and top accelerated readers -- second grader Daniel Brown (pictured) and fifth grader Amanda Hughes -- won a chance to throw pie at principal Jim McAdams. Brown's pie found its mark.