



Norlina notary public Jean R. Frazier prepares to congratulate new Norlina mayor Bill Delbridge following the administering of the oath of office on Monday night. At right is Mayor Delbridge's wife, Esther. Less than an hour after administering

oaths, Mrs. Frazier was hired as the new town clerk, replacing Mrs. Mae Gums, who had held the post for four decades. See other photos and stories on page 13. (Staff Photo by Howard Jones)

Mayor, Commissioner Take Oaths

Veteran Town Clerk Dismissed As Norlina Board Meets Monday

By HOWARD JONES
Editor

Mrs. Mae C. Gums's 39-years of service as clerk of the Norlina Board of Commissioners came to an abrupt and unceremonious end Monday night following a 45-minute executive session of a newly installed town board.

A hint that a change in personnel was in the offing came as the town's five commissioners, Mayor Bill Delbridge and town attorney Julius E. Banzet huddled in a conference room of the town hall. Mrs. Gums was advised at the onset that he presence was not required in the conference room, a break with normal practices.

The executive session was one of several held in recent weeks, billed as gatherings to discuss "personnel."

When the meeting was over, commissioners filed into the room and voted 4-1 to discharge Mrs. Gums, replacing her with Mrs. Jean R. Frazier, a Norlina native who has served since August 1984 as water clerk. Voting for the change were Commissioners James Vaughan, William Leonard, Dwight Pearce and newly installed Commissioner James Knight. Commissioner Walter Newman cast the dissenting vote.

Commissioners agreed to give Mrs. Gums severance pay and have her remain covered by health insurance until age 65. No mention was made of the salary Mrs. Frazier will receive, or whether a second clerk will be hired to handle the water accounts.

Monday night's meeting began on a festive note as Mrs. Frazier, a notary public, gave the oath of office to the mayor and full board. It became more of a somber occasion after Mrs. Gums turned over her seat to Mrs. Frazier and quietly left the room.

Mayor Bill Delbridge told those in attendance that only urgent matters would be discussed Monday night, and that routine business will be dealt with at a called meeting later this month. The new mayor said he hoped to have a written agenda for each meeting, and that he plans to get out a newsletter to fully inform town citizens of municipal activity. Delbridge said he will also insist that commissioners receive a financial statement at each meeting.

Delbridge announced that he had signed up for the first class in municipal administration at the Institute of Government, and that he wanted a contingency plan for snow removal in the town put in writing.

As the session wound down, following reports from the town's auditor and community block grant supervisor covered elsewhere in this paper, Delbridge made committee assignments. William Leonard was made fire commissioner, Dwight Pearce was named police commissioner, Walter Newman was named trash, water and sewer commissioner and James Knight was made street commissioner. James Vaughan was re-elected mayor pro-tem.

Per Pupil Spending Rank High

By THURLETTA M. BROWN
News Editor

Warren County has been ranked in the top 31 percent of the state's 140 school systems in a comparison of the county's tax base and per capita income to what is actually spent per pupil attending schools here.

Receiving an overall ranking of 43rd, Warren County ranked lower overall than nearby Vance County, which received a ranking of 22, but higher than neighboring Northampton, Halifax and Franklin counties, which received overall rankings of 48, 62 and 64 respectively.

The rankings were released at the end of last month in a report

prepared by the Raleigh-based Public School Forum of North Carolina, a private, non-profit agency.

The study was done following the establishment this year by the N.C. General Assembly of a "critical needs fund" to help local governments to fund school construction. Legislators had appropriated \$98 million of a \$3.2 billion school building plan, and had agreed to add \$10 million each year.

A commission charged with the task of dividing the money and setting criteria for determining which school systems were most deserving was also created.

Norlina Road Work Included

Green Light Expected For Warren Projects

Six road resurfacing projects in Warren County are expected to be approved by the state Transportation Board at its Dec. 11 meeting in Raleigh.

Department of Transportation spokesman Bill Jones, a Warrenton native, said the contracts are expected to total \$390,655.20, and barring an unforeseen snag, will be awarded to S. T. Wooten Construction Co. of Wilson.

Wooten is also expected to be confirmed as the low bidder for resurfacing 9.6 miles of road in Vance County, amounting to \$186,220.

Among the Warren County projects, none of which is expected to be begun before April 1, 1988, are the following:

—Resurfacing of .3 mile of N.C. Highway 4 between the southern town limits of Littleton and the Halifax County line.

—Resurfacing of 6.8 miles of U.S. Highway 1 between the northern town limits of Norlina and the Virginia state line.

—Resurfacing of .45 mile between Hyco Street and the east city limits of Norlina and the resurfacing of 1.75 miles between the Norlina city limits and State Road 1305.

—Resurfacing of 5.85 miles of State Road 1344 between State Road 1318 and State Road 1357, north of Vaughan.

—Resurfacing 1.6 miles of State Road 1311 between U.S. 1 and State Road 1305 east of Wise.

Contracts involving the resurfacing of 193 miles of roadway in Wake, Durham, Vance, Warren, Franklin, Granville and Person counties are to be considered when the board meets at 9 a.m. in Room 150 of the Highway Building in Raleigh, Jones said.

Better Watch Out!



Three of hundreds of Warren County youngsters who crowded into Warrenton on Sunday afternoon strain to catch a glimpse of what's coming down Main Street. To see for yourself what the youngsters saw, see pages 6 and 7. (Staff Photo by Dianne T. Rodwell)

Developer Said Shopping For Location For Center

A Raleigh real estate company, interested in developing a shopping center in Warrenton, is shopping for a parcel of land on Warrenton-Norlina Road, The Warren Record has learned.

According to Bruce Whitten with Drucker & Falk Realty, his company is looking at between 10 and 22 acres in the area.

"We were interested in the Warrenton area because there is no retail business there to speak of," Whitten, a Henderson native, said in a telephone interview this week.

Plans, Whitten said, are "extremely preliminary," but discussions are under way with two retailers interested in locating in the center.

Whitten said his company hoped to have something definite worked out within three months.

Meek Is Named New Chairman

Oscar L. "Butch" Meek has been elected chairman of the Warren County Planning Board and Karl Hehl has been elected secretary, replacing Meek in that office.

Meek succeeds realtor Selby Benton, who had held the office of chairman for a number of terms. The elections were held on Dec. 2 following words of welcome from the board to Jim Elam, newest member of the group.

Discussion continued on procedures for review of minor subdivisions, which contain five lots or less and will not create any new roads. When completed, the new policy and procedures will be submitted to the Warren County Commissioners for approval.

In other business, the board gave approval to:

—A final plat submitted by Amos L. Capps for continuation

of White Rock. Lot No. 19 will be enlarged and three lots, Nos. 32, 6B and 2B, will be created in the Fishing Creek Township Subdivision.

—The recombination into three lots of .75 acre each of lots 24-40, belonging to Mrs. Cora T. Watson, contingent upon health department approval. A variance was also granted for the three new lots, which did not meet the 200-foot building depth requirement.

—A final plat submitted by A. K. Mustian for eight one-acre lots on S.R. 1600 in Warrenton Township, subject to health department inspection.

—A final plat submitted by Ralph Gibbon Willey for a 49,378 square foot lot that had been a part of the old Salmon development in River Township, subject to health department approval.

SBI Helping Investigate Two Warren Fires

Several fires occurred in Warren County this week, as firefighters found themselves needed once again in various areas of the county.

The first fire call came at approximately 3:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 1. The fire was at the home of General Williams, Sr. of Rt. 2, Warrenton.

Apparently, Williams left his home that morning at 6:30. Later that day, a passer-by noticed that the house was on fire and immediately called for help. The Afton-Elberon Fire Department responded to the alarm and called for assistance from Warrenton Rural Fire Department.

After firefighters were assured that they had put out all of the flames, they returned to their respective stations. But at 7 p.m.,

another call brought them back to the same residence.

The fire apparently had started in a room where there had previously been no fire. Although firefighters were sure that they had completely put out the fire, they were uncertain why the blaze had ignited in another room.

The next morning, Afton-Elberon firefighters were again called to the Williams residence. The fire had rekindled and destroyed more of the house and its contents. Firefighters were becoming suspicious about the cause of the flames, and Sgt. Lawrence Harrison of the Warren County Sheriff's Department and SBI Agents Steve Jones and Patricia Johnson were called to the scene to investigate.

Damages to the house and its contents have been estimated at \$35,650.

Another fire on last Tuesday required the attention of Norlina Fire Department firefighters. Apartment 701 of the Pines Apartments in Norlina, occupied by Brenda Alston, was in flames.

Firefighters received the call at 8:06 p.m. and immediately responded. Al Bennett, chief of the Norlina Fire Department, said that upon their arrival, they could see the intensity of the fire. He noted that a lot of flame was in the back bedroom of the apartment, and it appeared to have been moving toward the hallway and living room area.

After putting out the fire, Bennett said he became suspicious when investigating inside the

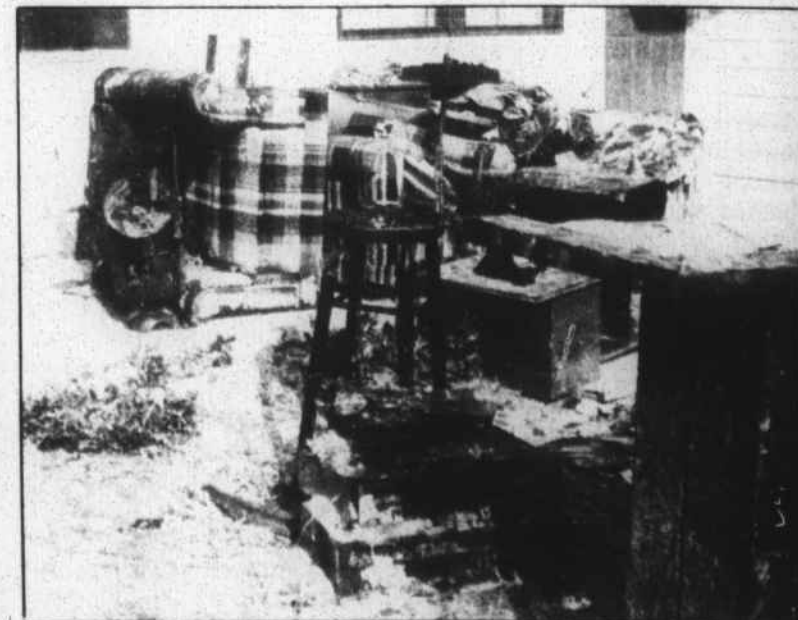
apartment. He stated the area with the heaviest amount of damage was the back bedroom, an area where there was nothing to burn and no apparent cause for fire. This caused Bennett to call the Sheriff's Department. He contacted Sgt. Lawrence Harrison, who in turn called on the SBI to investigate.

At last report, the investigation proved the fire was started from a flammable liquid located in the bedroom.

The apartment and its contents sustained heavy smoke and fire damage, estimated at \$22,000 to the apartment structure, and \$6,000 to the furnishings.

The investigation is still under way.

(Continued on page 7)



Shown here are the charred furnishings that remained following last Tuesday's fire in a unit at the Pines Apartments in Norlina. The apartment, being occupied by Brenda Alston, sustained \$22,000 in damages. An additional \$6,000 in damages has been reported for the contents. (Photo by Brenda Clarke)