

Four-Cent Tax Hike Approved By Board

County Budgets \$7.8 Million For New Fiscal Year

By THURLETTA M. BROWN
News Editor

The first day of July brought with it a new fiscal year for Warren County and a four-cent tax hike for county property owners.

Following a 4-1 vote cast last Wednesday night by the Warren County Board of County Commissioners, the county's tax rate increased from 76 cents to 80 cents per \$100 valuation.

Dissension and Debate

The dissenting vote was cast by Commissioner William Skinner, who characterized the Wednesday evening meeting as the annual "tax heist." Skinner called some programs "questionable" and voiced his support of area

citizens. "Taxpayers ought to get a break once in a while!"

"Like everyone else, I don't like taxes either," Commissioner Francis Alston said. "But, we want to meet the needs of the citizens in this county... (and) there is no way to have services without paying for them."

In addition to the affirmative vote cast by Alston, commissioners J. T. Fleming, George Shearin and Chairman Eva Clayton also endorsed the increase.

"We honestly did not want to raise taxes this year, but we had

to keep ourselves above water," Commissioner Shearin said.

Commissioner Fleming called the 1988-89 budget the "fairest" there had been. "We started out with requests that were much higher and (we) tried to come out with the fairest budget that we could," he said.

Pared-Down From Requests

Requests submitted to County Manager Charles Worth totaled \$8,055,263. The budget request submitted by Worth to the board last month was a pared-down \$7,714,203.

The budget adopted for 1988-89, upon the motion of Commissioner Fleming and seconded by Commissioner Alston, is \$7,815,010, an increase from the 1987-88 budget of \$7,144,288.

"The budgeting process is always perceived as a win or lose proposition, but this was our best effort to respond to the list of needs we received," Chairman Clayton said.

A Modest Increase Now

According to the chairman, three cents of the tax rate increase is "directed toward ac-

crual for the new bond indebtedness we anticipate." Chairman Clayton said the plan of the board was to "accrue, save and spread out (the increases) so the burden would not be so great." She also explained that the remaining one-cent increase was due to operational costs.

Commissioner Fleming said the anticipated bond indebtedness would result in a nine-cent increase, but "not all in one year."

A "Bare-Bones" Budget

"But, that's really a worst-case scenario," County Manager

Charles Worth said Friday in a telephone interview. "If the General Assembly gives us funds, that will have a significant impact." The county has applied for \$750,000 for the Warren Medical Facility and will apply for assistance on other projects.

"It's really a bare-bones budget," Worth said, explaining that the 1988-89 budget does not differ significantly from that of the last fiscal year.

Few Changes

The manager said only three new positions have been added: a new soil conservation technician, a social worker for the health department and one social worker supervisor for the department.

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Wise Resident Is Arrested On Murder Charge

By THURLETTA M. BROWN
News Editor

A former Warren County employee awaits trial on charges of murder in Orange County after a three-year investigation by law enforcement officials there.

Charles Antonio Buchanan, 34, an attendant for the Warren County Emergency Medical Service (formerly the Warren County Ambulance Service) from Sept. 1, 1983 until May 25, 1984, was arrested on Friday at a Granville County rest area off I-85 and confined to the Orange County Jail without bond.

The suspect was charged with two counts of first-degree murder in the disappearance of two Orange County men, Thaddeus Hayes and Curtis Bane, according to reports released last week by the Associated Press.

The bodies of Hayes and Bane have continued to elude officials, but the two men are believed to be dead. The two men disappeared in July of 1985.

Buchanan, a resident of the old Wise Tourist Court on US 1, had been employed recently by a pet shop in Durham. Prior to his position in Warren County, Buchanan had worked as a jailer in Durham County until 1982.

In a telephone interview Tuesday, a spokesperson at the Orange County Jail said no court date has been scheduled and bond remains unset.



A short circuit in the late-model Toyota on the left was the cause of this car fire last Wednesday at the Warren County Health Department on Ridgeway Street. According to Warrenton Rural Fire Department Chief Kenny Clayton, sparks from the Toyota

were blown into an open window of the Camaro that was parked beside it. The interior of the Camaro was gutted and both cars were determined a total loss. (Photo by Brenda Clarke)

Many Area Lawmen Summoned To Assist In Arrest Of Motorist

By DIANE DAVIS
Staff Writer

A Warren County man whose escapades brought law enforcement officers from surrounding counties to aid in his capture is being held in the Warren County Jail under a \$25,000 bond.

On Friday, July 1 at approximately 11:30 p.m., Trooper R. J. Hedgepeth of the N. C. Highway Patrol stopped a 1969 white Dodge van that was heading west on S. R. 1001 for suspicion of drunk driving. When he asked the driver to step out of the van, the

driver refused. Trooper Hedgepeth then called for assistance from Trooper Al Bennett.

Troopers Hedgepeth and Bennett approached the van, one going on either side of the vehicle. Hedgepeth, located on the driver's side, once again asked the driver to step out of the van. When he refused again, Hedgepeth asked to see his driver's license and vehicle registration.

Hedgepeth said that it was then that he noticed a .357 Magnum resting on the passenger seat. He believed that the driver was attempting to reach for the gun, so he stepped to the rear of the van. Trooper Bennett then noticed that the driver had picked up the gun and also went to the rear of the vehicle.

As the troopers tried to coax the driver into turning himself in, he attempted to drive away from the scene.

The driver headed back east toward Warrenton on S. R. 1001, and both troopers followed the vehicle as it turned onto S. R. 1100 and then onto S. R. 1129. They stayed in pursuit of the vehicle until it stopped at a residence on U. S. 401.

The suspect went into the house and refused to leave. Law officers from Vance, Franklin and Warren counties were at the scene and surrounded the residence. After an hour and a half, the suspect came out of the house unarmed and without a struggle. Two other men who had been inside the house with the suspect also came out unarmed after another 30 minutes.

Arrested was Laurin Layton Desso, 34, of Rt. 2, Warrenton. He was charged by Trooper Hedgepeth with driving while impaired. (Continued on page 9)

Charges Brought In Norlina After Marijuana, Paraphernalia Found

A stash of marijuana characterized by Chief Deputy Bobby D. Bolton as "a little over an ounce" and assorted drug paraphernalia on July 1 was confiscated by Warren County Sheriff's personnel from the Kearney Street residence in Norlina of Frank Jonathan Alexander.

According to Chief Deputy Bolton, sheriff's department personnel and members of the Norlina Police Department acted jointly on a search warrant that had been issued for the Alexander residence. Area law officers had been working on the case for over one month, the chief deputy said.

A search of the Kearney Street residence revealed assorted drug paraphernalia and about 26 small manila envelopes of the weed that was "packaged and ready for sale," Bolton said. No street value for the marijuana has been reported.

Alexander was arrested on Friday and charged with possession with intent to manufacture, sell or deliver marijuana. He has also

been charged with maintaining a dwelling for drugs.

According to Bolton, the magistrate allowed Alexander to sign a written promise to appear in court.

Warren County sheriff's personnel who investigated the case were Deputy Scott Bisette,

Deputy Harold Seaman and Deputy J. M. Alston. Norlina Police Department personnel were Police Chief Charles Galantis and Lt. James Champion.

Alexander, 35, is scheduled to appear in court on July 20, Bolton said.

Review Committee Is Formed

After a realization months ago that the subdivision approval process of the Warren County Planning Board needed simplifying, the board Tuesday established a technical review committee at their regular monthly meeting.

The technical review committee was established after the realization that there was increased residential development on both Kerr and Gaston lakes, along with other areas of the county. The purpose of the committee is to review minor subdivisions to ensure compliance with the standards established in the subdivision ordinance of Warren County.

Minor subdivisions are those that consist of no more than five

lots, which abut a public or private road, and require no new road construction or water/sewer extensions.

Named to the board at the Tuesday afternoon meeting were Oscar L. "Butch" Meek, chairperson of the Warren County Planning Board; Paul Gower, sanitarian at the Warren County Health Department; and Chester A. Forrester, III, Warren County zoning administrator and building inspector.

It was recommended by the board that the positions on the committee would rotate every couple of years.

The next meeting of the Warren County Planning Board is scheduled for August 2.

Suspect Nabbed After Robbery Of Warren Store

By THURLETTA M. BROWN
News Editor

A Warrenton man—incarcerated since Sunday in the Warren County Jail under a \$50,000 bond following arrest as a suspect in an armed robbery at an area business that left a Norlina woman injured—has been scheduled for a 96-hour hearing today (Wednesday) in Warren County District Court.

Derrick Tito Grant, 23, of Rt. 2, Warrenton has been charged with assault and robbery with a dangerous weapon.

According to Chief Deputy Bobby D. Bolton, Ms. Brenda S. Lynch of Norlina, a Best Bet employee, Sunday morning was pistol-whipped by a male who had entered the establishment and taken her at gunpoint into the storage room of the facility.

The weapon used in the beating was a large pellet gun that, to the untrained eye, was virtually identical to a .357 Magnum.

The pellet gun bears the numerals "357" on its barrel.

The area behind the checkout counter had been ransacked and the electronic cash register there removed from the store before the alleged suspect fled in a 1968 green Ford station wagon, the chief deputy said.

Ambulance personnel had been summoned to the Best Bet store at 10:50 a.m. and after arriving at the crime site at 10:54 a.m., transported Ms. Lynch to Maria Parham Hospital in Henderson for treatment. "She was conscious and alert when we arrived," Warren County Emergency Medical Service Supervisor Dennis Paschall said.

The victim required stitches for a small laceration on the back of her head. "The head of the human body is such a vascular area, that even small cuts can bleed profusely," Paschall explained.

Warren County Sheriff's personnel initiated an intensive search of the area for the alleged escape vehicle and for the suspect.

Because the suspected escape vehicle had borne Indiana tags, area law officers contacted the Indiana State Police to ascertain its owner.

The station wagon was found to have been given as a gift to Derrick Tito Grant.

According to Chief Deputy Bolton, about one hour into the search, the Ford station wagon was found by Deputy Harold Seaman, about 2.2 miles from the Best Bet store on SR 1145, near the Snow Hill community.

Warren County deputies had received information that a male matching the description of the

suspect had been seen walking and had been given a ride by a passerby. The officers backtracked from the point at which the man was reported to have exited from the vehicle of the passerby, Bolton said. "That helped to lead us back to him."

When Deputy Seaman arrived at the location of the station wagon, which had been parked at the end of a dirt road, two males were found "standing under a tree," Bolton said.

Following a search of the vehicle, the pellet gun, housed in a mock suede leather case, was retrieved, along with the missing electronic cash register.

SBI agents were summoned to assist in a thorough search of the vehicle for fingerprinting and other investigations. Because of other commitments, the SBI agents did not arrive until Monday for their examination of the evidence.

The cash register will be sent to Raleigh for more intensive examination, Chief Deputy Bolton said.

Assisting Bolton in the investigation were Norlina Police Chief Charles Galantis, Warren County deputies R. A. Coleman and Harold Seaman and Warren County Auxiliary Deputy Ronnie Baskett.

Pending the outcome of the 96-hour hearing that was to have been held today, Grant will remain in the Warren County Jail to await a court appearance on July 20, the chief deputy said.

Jobless Rate Down Locally

The jobless rate for Warren County slightly decreased from April to May, reports from the Employment Security Commission of North Carolina indicate.

Warren had a labor force of 6,900 in April, with 6,610 employed. The number of unemployed persons was 290, with a rate of 4.2 percent.

May figures for Warren County differed slightly. The work force rose to 7,100, with 6,810 employed. The unemployment figure for May remained unchanged at 290, with a jobless rate of 4.1 percent.

Unemployment rates for surrounding counties are as follows:

- Franklin, from 5.0 percent in April to 4.3 percent in May;
- Halifax, from 5.3 percent in April to 4.8 percent in May;
- Northampton, from 4.8 percent in April to 4.1 percent in May;
- Vance, from 7.1 percent in April to 6.8 percent in May.