

Merchants, Customers Are Warned

A warning to postal patrons and merchants alike has been issued by Warrenton Postmaster Sherwood Knight in the aftermath of a rash of thefts of governmental checks from rural mail boxes.

Knight said Monday that thefts have been reported in recent weeks, primarily of income tax refund checks. However, he noted, a number of complaints were received Friday by local postal workers indicating that Social Security checks had been taken.

Knight indicated that the majority of calls had come from patrons living along Rt. 3, Warrenton. He said that while customers complained of not receiving their checks, the carrier distinctly remembered placing them in the mail boxes.

The postmaster said persons stealing the checks had been reported operating in Warrenton and South Hill, Va. One Warrenton merchant was tricked into cashing a check without requiring proper identification, Knight said. A merchant in South Hill, Va. reportedly sold a television set to a person possessing a stolen check. The merchant cashed the check and gave the customer the change. The customer left, saying he was going to get his car and load the newly-purchased television. The customer never returned, it was reported.

Knight said merchants should require positive identification before cashing checks issued by the federal government, and he advised rural postal patrons to check their boxes as soon after the mail carrier arrives as possible.

"The carriers generally run about the same time each day," Knight noted.

Rise Of 5 Cents Is Forecast For Town Budget

A proposed budget for the Town of Warrenton calling for a five-cent tax increase has been presented to town commissioners by finance officer V. R. (Pete) Vaughan.

Despite savings of almost \$18,000 to be realized in the next fiscal year because of a switch-over in insurance carriers, the town budget will require a tax increase, commissioners have been told.

The public will be given an opportunity to formally comment on the budget on June 12 during a 7:30 p.m. public hearing held prior to the regular June meeting of the town board.

Following the meeting, the proposed budget must be left open for 12 days for public inspection. Commissioners will adopt a final budget prior to July 1.

A major item in this year's budget is a five percent raise for town employees.

Principal new expenditures will be for a pickup truck and pipe locator for the water department, and two walkie-talkies for the police department.

The commissioners seemed pleased to learn that a switch from Blue Cross/Blue Shield to the League of Municipalities had resulted in a savings of almost \$18,000 for insurance coverage for town employees and councilmen. However, the board was told that state funds to offset the loss of the inventory tax would be less than half the amount originally expected. The state funds in this area are expected to total only \$19,000.

The tax rate for 1989-90, if unchanged, would be 60 cents per \$100 valuation, up from the 55 cents in effect since revaluation at the start of this decade.



This cow's looks are meaner than her bite, according to the Warren County couple which owns the animal. The cow, which is gentle and will eat from your hand and has a good temper, and her owners treat her as a pet. She is a cross between a Charolais and a Brahma. (Staff Photo by Phyllis H. King)

No Tax Hike Is Seen In New Norlina Budget

By THURLETTA M. BROWN
News Editor

If the proposed budget for the next fiscal year is approved, Norlina residents will be spared a tax increase and town employees will receive a five-percent raise.

According to Norlina Mayor Bill Delbridge, the town's citizenry will continue to enjoy a tax rate of 50-cents-per-\$100-valuation. That rate has held constant in Norlina since 1985.

Norlina's budget for this fiscal year is \$435,684.

The budget proposed for 1989-90 is \$430,369. Of that amount, general fund expenditures have been estimated at \$206,761; administration—\$44,371; police department—\$93,088; streets/sanitation—\$38,037; and fire department—\$31,765.

To the general fund expenditures have been added water/sewer costs of \$195,508 and Powell Bill costs of \$26,600.

The mayor said the five-percent raise has been proposed for town employees to help offset a cost-of-living increase of over four percent. In addition, the increase will help to offset an expected increase in health insurance next year.

Also included in the new budget will be expenses for training for the police department.

A public hearing on the proposed budget will be held at Norlina Town Hall on Monday, June 12, at 5 p.m.

Although not included in the proposed budget, the \$515,000 Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG) sought by the town was discussed. If approved, \$15,000 of that amount would be used for administrative costs. In addition, the town will make a \$500,000 loan to Glen Raven Mills for its planned land acquisition, building and equipment purchases. That loan would be repaid to the town in quarterly installments by Glen Raven at a rate of \$100,000 per year for five years, plus eight-percent interest.

According to Delbridge, if the UDAG grant is approved, the first-quarter payment of \$25,000, plus eight-percent interest, would be made Jan. 1, 1990. "It sounds too good to be true," he said.

Delbridge said notification of the decision on the UDAG application is expected by July 17. No decision has been made on the use the town will make of the "windfall," but, if awarded, the UDAG funds will become a part of the 1989-90 budget.

The mayor predicted a similar "windfall" for Warren County. After completion of the work at Glen Raven, the ad valorem base there will increase. At the current rate of 83-cents-per-\$100-valuation, that would net an additional \$59,021.30 in county property taxes, he said.

In other business, the board received a report concerning hazardous wastes stored at an area business. Although no action was taken, a review of existing ordinances and the need for advice from the county emergency management coordinator were discussed.

Persons with knowledge of Greene's whereabouts or of events surrounding his disappearance are asked to call the Warren County Sheriff's Department at about midnight Sunday, Deputy Alston said. Perry had been reported missing on May 30.

But at press time, the search to determine the whereabouts of Paul Perry Greene, 55, of Route 1, Warrenton, had not borne fruit. Greene was reported missing on May 3. Since that time, area ponds have been dredged and massive searches conducted.

Persons with knowledge of Greene's whereabouts or of events surrounding his disappearance are asked to call the Warren County Sheriff's Department. "All information will be kept in confidence," Sheriff Williams said.

County Would Spend \$8.74 Million Manager Proposes 9-Cent Tax Increase

County Manager Charles Worth on Monday made public a proposed Warren County budget for fiscal 1989-90 that would require a nine-cent increase in the county's property tax rate.

The proposed budget which was presented to Warren County commissioners Monday morning calls for expenditures of \$8.74 million during 1989-90.

If left unchanged by commissioners during a budget work session on June 12 and after a public hearing on June 21, the new budget would take effect July 1.

A nine-cent increase would generate an additional revenue of about \$387,000. A county taxpayer with a \$50,000 home would pay an additional \$45 next year on that piece of property if the new tax rate is approved.

Major sources of revenue in the new budget are property taxes of \$4,112,264 (provided the proposed tax rate is adopted) and intergovernmental revenues of \$1.9 million of which \$1,379,000 will come from local sales taxes of two percent. (The state keeps the other three percent collected from taxes on retail sales.)

The proposed increase is needed, Worth indicated, because of almost identical increases in the budgets of the Warren County Board of Education and the Warren County Department of Social Services.

In the proposed budget, school costs are up over last year by \$248,937. Welfare costs have increased in the new budget by \$248,245.

In his budget summary given commissioners, Worth noted that the property tax rate of 89 cents per \$100 valuation is based upon an estimated total valuation of \$453,041,289 in property and an estimated collection rate of 95 percent.

Worth is recommending that commissioners approve a cost-of-living adjustment of 4.6 percent for county employees. Additionally, he suggested that commissioners wait until after the June 30 audit which will determine the actual amount of undesignated fund balance before addressing the implementation of a merit system.

New personnel who would be funded by the proposed budget would be a telecommunicator for Central Communications, a new deputy for the Warren County Sheriff's Department, and an income maintenance caseworker for the Department of Social Services.

Worth said the Sheriff's Department budget also in-

cludes funds to purchase three new patrol cars, while funds are also provided to purchase a new ambulance for the Emergency Medical Services.

The county manager said that the appropriations for Warren County Schools includes an amount to be retained by the finance officer as a capital re-

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Evacuation Is Talked At Meeting Of Board

By THURLETTA M. BROWN
News Editor

Staffing needs and an inevitable relocation of personnel and programs from the Warren Medical Facility were topics of discussion in Monday night's meeting of the Warren County Board of Health.

Plans were made last year by the county for a \$1.3 million renovation to the old hospital building, known now as the Warren Medical Facility. Included will be renovations of the existing facility, the construction of a 2,354-square-foot addition, and site preparation for those projects, as well as access drives and parking areas. In February, an Offices of Human Resources Form of Agreement with the Charlotte-based firm of Gantt Huberman Architects was executed by the board of county commissioners.

In his report to the board of health Monday night, Dennis Retzlaff, local health director, said that current plans call for the Warren Medical Facility to be evacuated by Sept. 1 at the latest. The evacuation will be done to allow for necessary pre-construction activities.

Retzlaff told the board that plans are now being made to relocate the 10 health department employees currently housed in the former hospital building. Three of those employees work in the environmental health division. Three others have responsibility for adult health programs

and six are employed in the home health division.

In addition to those activities, the department's wellness center occupies space in the old hospital building.

"We will make arrangements to house some of these employees

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Funding Probe Lacking Agent

An SBI agent has still not been assigned to investigate the alleged financial improprieties in the Quick City Revitalization Project, a spokesperson in the agency's financial crime unit said Monday.

According to the spokesperson, Claude H. Greene, former crime unit supervisor, has retired. He has been succeeded by Curtis Ellis, who serves as acting director. A large backlog of cases was the reason given for the delay in assigning an agent to conduct the investigation.

The investigation had been requested by NRCD and concerns rehabilitation work in both Warren's Quick City project and a similar venture in Mecklenburg County.

In both projects, Reedy Carter served as director and contracts had been awarded to ARC Construction.

At press time, no additional information was available.

Rumors Of Funeral Home Prompt Local Residents To Seek Action

Reports that the former W. R. Baskerville home on South Main Street might be converted into a funeral home has prompted neighborhood residents to air their concerns to members of the Warrenton Planning Board.

A special planning board session was held here Thursday night, although chairman Bernard Thompson said the gathering did not constitute an official meeting of the board.

The gathering, held at the Town Hall with all seven members of the local planning board in attendance, was called at the request of Mrs. Ann Spence, who lives next door to the Baskerville home.

Mrs. Spence and a number of other South Warrenton residents expressed their concern that a funeral home might be located in their midst, but were told that the town's zoning ordinance, as amended in 1985, allowed funeral homes to be established in medium density (R-12) residential areas.

Mrs. Grace Miles, a Warrenton real estate agent and member of the planning board, acknowledged during the meeting that she was attempting to sell the property for the current owners to an unnamed individual. She said the deed for the house and .95-acre lot had not been signed.

Mrs. Spence, told by Thompson that the provision governing R-12 land uses had been changed in 1985 to allow funeral homes, said "we're all guilty of not coming to the hearing in 1985" when the ordinance was changed.

Attorney Jules Banzet, who said he was acting as a private citizen and resident of South Main Street, said he wished to request an amendment to the ordinance which would restore permitted uses that had been allowed prior to 1985.

Town resident Ann Allen told those present that the proposed funeral home site was in a "dangerous location," and Mrs.

Spence said she plans to be in attendance at the June town board meeting to request that parking be restricted on both sides of South Main Street in the area of the Baskerville house.

Thompson told concerned citizens that the town ordinance now required funeral homes to have one parking space for each three seats in use when a body was displayed, and one space for each 100 square feet of assembly area.

He said town rules of occupancy, including the parking provision, would have to be met before a business would be allowed to operate in the residential area.

Following the session, Mrs. Miles said she was going to inform the prospective buyer of the neighborhood opposition to a funeral home, and Mrs. Spence, who said that she understood two funeral homes in Warrenton are for sale, said she would spearhead a meeting of concerned residents and announce the time and location of the gathering.