## Moubry

(Continued From Front Page)

year.

This ominous piece of news seemed almost gloomier as a mild storm moved through Carthage at that point, causing the sky to darken and winds to quicken. The weather scene appeared as a symbolic match to the mood of the commissioners.

Moubry added that it would take a 61-cent tax rate to fund the proposed county budget and to hold the schools and college to the 1981-82 level.

The board's dilemma is a tough one. There is the need to provide the basic services required of county government. Then there is the problem with campaign promises made last year not to raise taxes.

Although the county tax base has climbed some $66 million, this is not enough to match the county's needs. The tax base is being projected at about $1.5 billion.

With this tax base, one cent will generate about $109,000 in revenue, provided the 95 percent collection rate is retained. And tax officials believe the collection rate will be about this high by the end of June.

The trouble is that revenue resources do not equal the county's spending needs.

Moubry said that of the projected $13,599,740 budget, only $8,629,490 would be derived from property tax funds. Appropriation from fund balance amounts to $41,840. Various fees and licenses are projected at $373,690, federal revenue sharing $401,910, state shared revenues from intangibles, ABC and sales taxes $2,306,940.

### Nothing New

Moubry told the board that the budget proposal contains no new programs or services.

It does upgrade those budgets which were under-funded this year and adds four positions, two to replace building and grounds personnel formerly provided through the federal CETA (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act), one additional employe for the child support enforcement program (IV-D), and a deputy for the airport (half of this salary to be paid by airport authorities).

Included are a few pieces of equipment: a new compactor for the landfill, costing $180,000, and an engine analyzer machine for the garage. And provision is made for school capital outlay and a data processing system.

The only raises are a $500 lump sum for each employe, plus limited merit raises. This decision was made by the commissioners earlier in the spring.

"The past few fiscal years have seen our county eaten by inflation, undermined by recession and shorn of our resources," Moubry said in his budget message.

"We have seen the best and worst of possibilities become realities. Once carefree and spendthrift, we must now be restrained and conserving. Where once everyone joined together to be a part of our government, now many turn away. Where we once knew what we wanted, we now only know what we do not want," he continued.

Moubry warned that the close of the 1980-81 budget year "brings to our county an age of reality," in which plans must be formulated for coming decades not just on a year-to-year basis.

Calling the budget preparation task "an intense and arduous process," the county administrator recommended that the federal revenue sharing money expected for the new year, plus the balance from this year, be divided with the School Capital Project Outlay fund receiving $420,520, the remaining $401,910 to go into the General Fund.

The $822,430 in revenue sharing includes the $234,020 fund balance from this year, plus interest but minus approximately $90,000 already appropriated toward repair of roofs at Sandhills Community College. The fund balance is available because Congress was late in acting on revenue sharing for this year, and funding came in late. The county expects $602,280 in revenue sharing for 1981-82.

By transferring the revenue sharing money to the General Fund, the county could designate $213,640 for debt service and $95,000 for the octennial tax reappraisal fund and use the rest for such things as the compactor.

### Everything Breaks

Basically there was little good news to share at the Thursday session.

Moubry told the board that a major piece of equipment used at the landfill had broken down again, the fan had broken in the new courts facility, and the mapping equipment used in the tax office had also broken down.

Then Finance Officer Kai Nelson estimated that the county will end the fiscal year with a fund balance of $200,000, or maybe $300,000 – "if we're lucky."

Thus there will be no hefty fund balance which may be drawn to help balance the new budget. In some years the surplus has been in the $1 million category, providing the county not only with the desired revolving fund for operational purposes but also with funds which could be used toward the new year's budget.

"There's no fund balance we can use as a cushion to start off the new year," Moubry admitted dismally.

Dr. Charles Phillips, board chairman, noted that the budget proposal does not contain a capital reserve fund. He expressed the opinion that the county needs such a fund, whereby it may work toward the building of new facilities, such as the health department.

Commissioner Lee Williams added his agreement.

Nelson also agreed that "good management calls for this," but explained that in the current financial squeeze, such a fund simply does not seem practical, not this year at least.

Noting that some revenue sources did not come through as expected this year, Williams asked for more details. He was advised that local sales taxes fell short by about $40,000, as did state and federal revenues.

Although departmental recommendations exceed available revenues by more than 74 percent, Moubry said most departments had submitted requests at reasonable levels.

Five factors were pinpointed for consideration in reviewing the general fund:" mounting inflation, a virtually stagnant revenue base, living beyond our means, unrealistic tax rate, and no available surplus."

Moubry made no recommendations for the public schools' current expense request, which totals $5.9 million. But he did recommend $420,520 to meet the school system's long range capital improvement needs.

Nor did his budget message contain a recommendation on the college budget.

"Our work force is contained and our employes provide services efficiently. Our skilled employes are part of our scarce resources and they must be provided with economic tools to survive," Moubry said in the message.

"Although there have been cost of living increases over the past seven years, they have not matched inflation."

Moubry then recommended that the board adopt the National Association of Counties deferred compensation program for county employes, an advantage which will cost the county nothing. He added that the present group health policy is being reassessed to determine if this burden can be eased. The county now pays the individual's share, about $40 a month.

### How Much?

If the tax is raised to 79 cents, how much will it cost the taxpayer?

Moubry had some figures.

If the property has an assessed value of $20,000, the difference would amount to about $58. For property valued at $70,000, the higher rate would cost an additional $203 in taxes. And for property valued at $100,000, it would cost $290 a year more.

Aware that many people want to hang on to the 50-cent tax rate, Moubry had a warning that the solution is simple but not easy: reduce his recommendations by $3.1 million.

"Such action would significantly alter and reduce local programs and may include terminating probationary and permanent employes," he said.

"Each service now provided by county government is essential to someone," he continued. " Our residents would have to make sacrifices as well as our employes. Would it be possible to equitably distribute these sacrifices? Some would bear the brunt of service reductions while some would be temporarily inconvenienced. Any recommendation of cuts must be considered as being permanent rather than temporary."

In spite of the fact that it is expected to mean the elimination of his own job, Moubry commended the board for taking steps toward implementation of a county manager form of government.

"Moore County has prided itself in efficient government. Government itself has always attempted to reconcile its expenditures with the community's ability to pay. Both government and its residents are now being whipsawed by our nation'economy and its energy problem. Energy has increased our cost 17 percent in one year alone," he declared.

The commissioners were advised to keep an eye on pending legislation which would allow an optional increase in the local sales tax levy.

Other suggestions broached by the administrator were: identify the levels of services needed to retain the community's present residential and industrial mix and to attract new business, industry and people; develop a priority among governmental services so that future deliberations could be held without such economic trauma; and monitor management efficiency to maintain high productivity and sound management approaches.

The cost of government is not the only thing to climb.

"These long years have seen prices ricochet. In 1962 a four-door car cost $2,529; today it costs $7000. Social Security deductions were $150; today they are $1500. Yearly auto insurance was $87; today it is $300. A haircut was $1 instead of $3.50 and even Hershey bars increased from five cents to 25 cents. The production worker in 1962 earned $5,000; today $14,000."

# Being Overprivileged Has Its Problems Too

It has long been recognized that not having enough money for necessities may destroy a secure family atmosphere. But we have not been aware that having too much money may have the same affect, says Dr. Leo Hawkins, extension human development specialist, North Carolina State University.

There are many children in this country who are overprivileged, Hawkins observes. These children have too many toys, take too many trips, are given too many lessons and are encouraged to have too many friends, he adds.

They are given electric trains before they have the coordination and attention span to play with them. They go to the museum and concert hall before they understand what these places mean. They spend their time taking all sorts of lessons when they should be in the backyard running free. They are constantly surrounded with friends, when time spent alone could be enriching and maturing.

Why are young children flooded with these things?

One reason may be that parents have the money to provide them. Or perhaps it is a way of compensating for being inadequate as parents. Or it could be an easy way for a parent to make up for his inability to meet his children's emotional needs.

What most parents want is an emotionally secure child who will grow into adulthood being able to cope with the challenges of a dynamic, changing society, Hawkins believes. To encourage this, parents must surround a child with warmth, love and understanding, not just "things."



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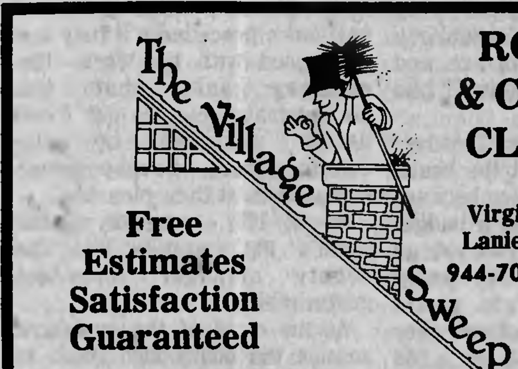

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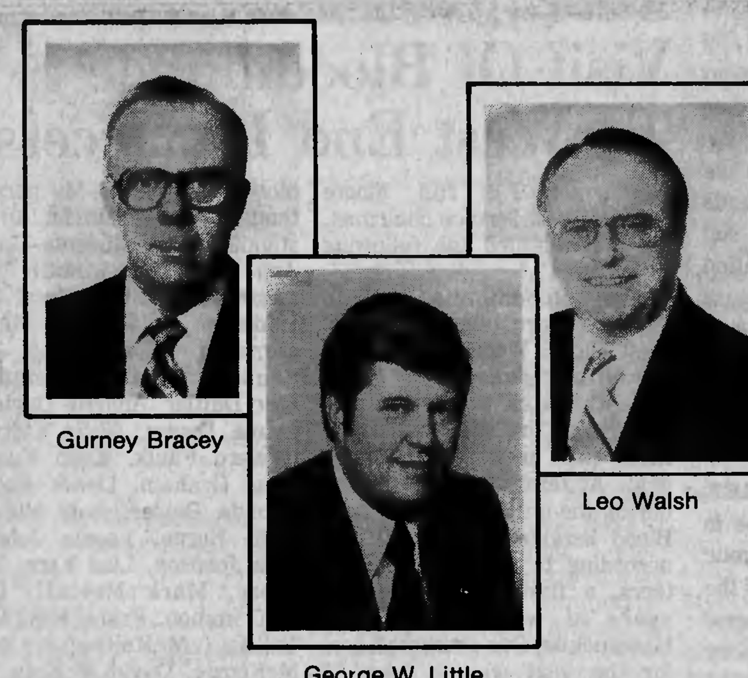
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