

LENOIR COUNTAINS FACING BIGGEST TAX BOOST IN COUNTY'S HISTORY FOR HOSPITAL

by Jack Rider

Inflation and over-design have combined to confront Lenoir Countians with the biggest single tax boost in the county's history to build a 285-bed county hospital.

In 1965 when preliminary planning began for the badly needed medical facility a projected cost of the project was placed at \$5,910,500. A year and a half later when the hospital trustees retained an architect for preliminary planning and cost estimates the price tag had climbed to an estimated \$8,612,448.

And it was on this latter estimate that plans were thrown into motion and for which a county bond issue was held in late 1967.

The overall plan called for a \$3,000,000 grant from federal sources to be matched by \$5,

775,000 in county funds for a hospital expected to cost something less than \$8,775,000.

Last week when bids were opened and canvassed for the new facility Jesse Pugh Wooten, chairman of the hospital building committee, told the press and members of the board of county commissioners that something very close to \$10 million was going to be necessary to do the job.

When the bond election was held it was necessary to ask the voters of the county to approve an issue in the amount of \$7,775,000, since federal funds would not all come in one fiscal period and in order to let bids it would be necessary to have ample funds to cover the entire cost.

But every assurance was repeatedly given every voter in

the county that the approval of \$7,775,000 was only a technical necessity and that no more than \$5,775,000 of that amount would be spent.

Now that promises had already been broken, by a wide margin since the board of county commissioners some months ago gave the hospital building committee permission to exceed that \$5,775,000 by \$600,000 and now they are being asked to kick that permission considerably higher.

At the time the architect made his original projections in March of 1967 inflation was very much a part of the problem and it was talked about at great length, yet no weight was given to this inflationary factor in the planning of the facility, since last week when the bids were opened the architect assured all who had

assembled that the bids were very good bids and were "within one per cent of his firm's projections"; which obviously means that his firm had deliberately planned to spend a lot more than the \$8,775,000 that had been committed for this project.

As usual expediency is the argument that persuades men noted for the personal conservatism when they are spending their own money to be as loose as a drunk sailor on Saturday night when they start spending the taxpayers' money.

The argument, a valid one, is that the county would surely lose at least one of the three million dollars of federal grant money if the project were held up at this late date. And, of course, inflation is still very much a part of the picture.

But inflation was a part of the picture before the first line was drawn, and a year ago when the first preliminary drawings were presented to the building committee this issue was once more forced to their attention.

In the same week these Lenoir Countians were asking permission to over-spend their project by \$600,000 it was called to their attention in writing by this writer that the June 1968 bid letting of the 300-bed Nash County hospital had totalled only \$8,495,627, which indicated there was some fat in the design, or the estimates of the plans for the Lenoir County hospital since its designer was at that time putting a price tag of \$9,375,000 on a much smaller hospital than Nash County is getting.

This was evidenced by the fact that the 300-bed Nash County hospital had less square feet in its design than the 285-bed Lenoir County hospital. The trustees of the hospital agreed to take judicious notice of these discrepancies but they apparently ignored those reminders completely since the estimates less than a year ago that had already risen by \$600,000 over those made six months before have

now risen by another \$700,000.

The Tax Bite

And what does all of this mean to pay for the mistakes made in the design of this facility?

Very simply it means the biggest tax boost in the history of the county. Whether as additional sales tax or as a real estate tax the income of the county will have to go up by at least \$557,000 in the first full year of amortization, and this estimate is based upon the county being able to sell its bonds for 4 per cent, which is another area in which inflation has also taken its toll.

If this amount of money has to be raised by taxes on real estate and private property the county tax rate will have to go up about 43 cents on the \$100 valuation.

It has also been estimated that the much-talked-about additional one-cent sales tax for Lenoir County would return to the county about \$470,000 per year, which is almost \$100,000 short of the amortization cost of \$10 million in 25 year bonds at four per cent. A variation of one-quarter a per cent over the life of \$10 million bonds costs \$500,000.

On the basis of the most recent bond sales there is little real reason to expect that Lenoir County will be fortunate enough to sell these hospital bonds for as little as four cents.

The latest summary sheet of the Institute of Government shows AAA rated bonds selling at 4.3 per cent for 10 years and 4.6 per cent for 20 years. And Lenoir has an "A" rating in this category and the latest reported sales in this "A" rating area were in the range of 5.15 to 5.20 per cent interest.

This interest rate makes all of these earlier projections fall far short, and what it really means is that the county is confronted by the immediate prospect of well over a 50 - cent tax rate increase if the additional one-cent sales tax is not passed and about a 15 cent tax increase even if the additional sales tax levy is authorized.

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Gross Inequities Tabulated in Distribution of Tax Monies

System	Pupils	For Schools	Per Pupil	Local	State	Federal
Craven	8122	\$3,677,203.98	\$452.74	\$23.23	\$289.93	\$139.58
New Bern	5448	2,154,356.09	395.42	67.63	277.26	50.53
Lenoir	7981	3,898,498.52	488.46	69.88	303.90	114.68
Kinston	6000	2,716,603.43	452.76	102.74*	286.24	63.78
Jones	3039	1,364,907.54	449.11	23.79	302.30	123.02
Wayne	11,911	5,277,656.91	433.07	30.72	292.98	119.37
Goldsboro	7949	3,313,808.62	424.42	61.02*	281.44	81.96
Wilson	4646	2,167,013.44	466.41	39.03	323.21	104.17
Wilson City	7576	2,956,062.90	390.17	54.65	277.42	58.10

*Includes special 21-cent levy in Kinston Graded School District and 35-cent levy in Goldsboro school district.

Paul Meadows Charged in Wednesday Night Shooting of Deputy Provost

Special Deputy Sheriff Everett "Tony" Provost suffered painful but not serious injuries in a Wednesday night shooting incident in Maysville.

Sheriff Brown Yates said Provost was called to a disturbance and found Paul Meadows, a native of Maysville, who has recently been making his home in New Bern, waving a high powered rifle around.

Provost, who knew Meadows, asked him to give him the rifle. Meadows instead fired it at the ground and when it hit the pavement the bullet splintered and a good many fragments from the shattered projectile hit Provost in the upper body.

Provost is reportedly in satisfactory condition at Craven County Hospital in New Bern and Meadows has been charged with assault with a deadly weapon with intent to kill.

And the Rains Came

Things were getting a trifle dry but Monday the rains came, and came and came and when the clouds parted slightly Weather Observer Douglas Rouse reported 3.74 inches as the official rainfall for Kinston and numerous unofficial weather watchers reported as much as eight inches in some parts of the county. Rouse said the 24-hour period ending at 6:30 Tuesday morning saw a dramatic rise in Neuse River, which stood at 3:51 feet when the rain started and had risen to 6.67 feet 24 hours later.

Jones Arrests

Wilbur Metts of route 2, Trenton, and David Williams of Pollocksville were arrested over the weekend and charged with being publicly drunk. David Rouse of route 1, Trenton was also arrested over the weekend and charged with not having an operators license while driving

Escaped Convict is Caught After Three Break-ins Locally

Leroy Johnson, who gave a Kinston address of 213 South East Street, but who more correct address was the Union County prison camp, is being held on numerous charges following his arrest by Lenoir County authorities over the weekend.

He is charged with breaking into the homes of Dick Whaley and Dewey Johnson in the Lakeside Community of eastern Lenoir County and in Jones County he is charged with breaking into the home of Bruce Waters of the Wyse Fork section.

In Union County he is wanted for prison escape and for theft of the car he was driving while contributing to the local crime wave.

ACC Graduates

Six from Jones County are among 289 Seniors to receive degrees in the arts and sciences at the 67th Commencement to be held at Atlantic Christian College Friday, May 30, at 7 p.m. Those to graduate are: John Robert Foscoe and Rosemary Mallard of Pollocksville; Linda Sue Andrews, Gerald Edward Dixon, Celia Noble Smith, and Frankie Greene Penny all of Trenton.

NFO Having Area Rally Monday Night At ECU With Dignitaries Expected

Knight to Attend Governor's School

Robin Knight, son of Rev. and Mrs. R. N. Knight of Wendell has been selected to participate in the 1969 Governor's School of North Carolina in both academic and the performing arts fields.

Robin is a former student of Maysville Elementary School and Jones Central High School. Rev. Knight was formerly pastor of Maysville Methodist Church.

Robin also received a scholarship to Andover Summer Session at Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts. He is also an alternate for the National Science Foundation Summer Science Training Program at UNC at Chapel Hill.

He chose to attend Governor's school which will be held from June 22 to August 9 on the campus of Salem College in Winston-Salem. His main studies there will be in French.

Governor Bob Scott, Commissioner of Agriculture Jim Graham, Congressman L. H. Fountain and Walter Jones are among the high state and federal officials planning to be on hand Monday night when an area meeting of National Farmers' Organization chapters is being held in Wright Auditorium on the campus of East Carolina University at Greenville.

All members of the NFO in Eastern North Carolina are invited to attend both the dutch supper which begins at 7:30 and the regular program which is scheduled to begin at 8:15.

A national officer of the organization is to be on hand and thousands of interested farmers from every part of North Carolina are expected to attend to learn more about this organization which is preaching collective bargaining as the only answer to the pressing problems that confront a majority of the nation's farmers today.

Non-Support Case

David F. Chapman filed a non-support suit against Nellie Fay Chapman Carroll during the past week in Jones County Superior Court. Chapman, grandfather of Mrs. Carroll's three children, is asking for \$100 a month to help support the children.

folk where he had stolen the checks and a check writer.

Shady Grove Sunday

Homecoming Services will be held at the Shady Grove Methodist Church, Route 1, Trenton on Sunday, May 25. Sunday School will be at ten o'clock, worship services at eleven o'clock and a picnic dinner will be served at noon. Rev. J. A. Williams of Leland, a former pastor of this church, will be bringing the morning message. All members and friends of the church are invited.