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PHOTO BY JOEL EDGE

Lightning Illuminates Ocean Isle

Fireworks demonstrations are planned at Holden Beach and Southport for the 4th of July, but Mother Nature has already staged quite a few spectacular light shows recently. This is how Ocean Isle Beach looked through the lens of Joel Edge's camera during a June 17 thunderstorm. Edge, 15, shot the photograph from the point at Sunset Beach, where he lives.

Williamson Claims Revaluation 'Conspiracy' Aimed At Islands

BY SUSAN USHER

Brunswick County set out to deliberately "gouge" coastal property owners with its 1986 revaluation, the county's largest non-industrial taxpayer alleged Monday as he recommended property owners in "deliberately overvalued" areas not pay their tax bills.

Visibly angered, Ocean Isle Beach developer Odell Williamson protested the 46.5c ad valorem tax rate set last week by county commissioners. He told reporters he had "kept quiet" until now under the impression the tax rate would not exceed 40c.

"It's a dirty trick," said Williamson, "one Brunswick County will be a long time overcoming."

At the other end of the county, Mary Strickland of Southport, a spokesman for the Brunswick County Taxpayers Association, called the new rate "extremely high" Tuesday and said it would create a burden for many local taxpayers.

With an estimated \$3.2 million tax base after revaluation, the new rate is expected to bring in \$2 million more in revenue than the previous tax rate.

Alleging a "conspiracy" involving "former county commissioners" he would not identify, Williamson claimed Monday morning that the ap-

praisal firm, W.P. Ferris Inc., "evidently did what they were instructed to do—to gouge the people along the coast and particularly the Town of Ocean Isle Beach." He added the alleged effort might also have been targeted at the island portion of Sunset Beach.

Williamson said Ocean Isle represents \$251 million of the county's \$2.3 billion in land and buildings, or a disproportionate share, in his opinion and that of the mayor and board members present.

At his urging, Commissioners Debbie Sloan, Betty Williamson and Terry Barbee directed Town Clerk Alberta Tatum to have town attorney

Elva Jess investigate alternatives available to dissatisfied property owners.

"What they've done is kill the goose that laid the golden egg," Williamson said, predicting harm to local development efforts. He also objected to \$1.5 million, or 5c of the tax rate, being used to run water laterals "to developments" and to pay "for mistakes by people making decisions regarding (water system) engineering."

Developers should install the lines or landowners be assessed for them, he said. "The people who use the water are the people who should

(See WILLIAMSON, Page 2-A)

46.5-Cent County Tax Rate Includes 5 Cents For Water

BY MARJORIE MEGIVERN

In a final 11-hour session, Brunswick County Commissioners agreed last Thursday on a new tax rate of 46.5 cents per \$100 valuation, with five cents of that earmarked for the new water system's trunk and lateral lines.

The \$24.5 million budget adopted is \$2 million larger than that of last year. The new rate means taxes on a \$50,000 home will be \$232.50.

Although the tax rate was dropped from last year's 58.5 cents, most taxpayers will pay more this coming

year because of increased valuation.

About 8:30 p.m. Thursday, commissioners wearily came to agreement about the rate, after Commission Chairman Chris Chappell had polled them on rates they would prefer. The suggestions ranged from 40 cents to 48 cents, and Chappell said his own recommendation was 44.5 cents. "I believe that would meet our needs," he said.

Earlier in the day, they had approved a five-cent water rate to be included in a total tax rate, with Commissioner Grace Beasley voting

against it.

She was also the only commissioner voting against the final tax rate, and for the same reason. "I voted against the total tax rate because of the water rate included. I would like to see some priorities and policies (about extension of the water system)," she said. "Water is needed, granted, but I'd like to have some priorities in place first. We should have a plan that flows for the next ten years."

Mrs. Beasley quizzed her colleagues when water policy chairman,

Commissioner Franky Rabon, asked for the five cents to support \$1.5 million to be spent on laying trunk and lateral lines during the next fiscal year.

"What is that \$1.5 million based on?" she asked. "Is it a drop in the bucket? What research went into it? Who will administer it? What is the policy on returns from users?"

Rabon's reply was that "We don't have a crystal ball, and don't know how returns will come in. The \$1.5 million is definitely a drop in the

(See 46.5-CENT, Page 2-A)

School Board Challenges County Funding Decision

BY SUSAN USHER

Brunswick County Board of Education members said Monday at a special meeting that the public schools were short-changed in the 1986-87 county budget and they intend to try to change that.

Voting unanimously after a 30-minute closed-door session with their attorneys, the board approved District 1 member Doug Baxley's motion for an immediate joint meeting with county commissioners to discuss their budget differences.

County Manager Billy Carter and Board of Commissioner Chairman Chris Chappell met with Board of

Education Chairman James Forstner and Superintendent Gene Yarbrough Tuesday afternoon to try and set the meeting date.

Carter said it could be next week before they meet, though state law calls for the meeting to be held within seven days of the county's appropriation decision.

"Effort Made"

Carter said he was "very surprised" at the school's board action. "The county commissioners sat there 12 hours trying to meet (the school board's) needs. They made an effort," he said.

The joint meeting is the first step

outlined in public school law procedures for resolving disputes between the two boards when the school board decides the county has not provided enough money "to support a system of free public schools."

Superintendent Yarbrough said the school system's only alternative would be to drop its expansion budget and attempt to salvage programs now in operation.

Asked his opinion of seeking more county funds, Attorney E.J. Prevatte told school board members. "The chances are extremely remote you would be successful. The die, unfortunately, has been cast," with an in-

crease in the county budget requiring an increase in the tax rate.

Route Of Appeal

If not resolved to both boards' satisfaction, the dispute procedures could lead to the state appellate court, which could force the levying of a supplemental tax for support of the schools. The immediate next step, however, would involve one of the board's asking, within three days of their meeting, for Clerk of Court Greg Bellamy to arbitrate the dispute.

'Not Enough'

Forstner said Monday the \$5.83 million allocated by the county isn't

enough to continue improving the schools and may not be enough to continue services at the current level, especially in light of the system's increasing enrollment.

Forstner said the system expects to add 400 to 500 new students next year. At the county budget hearing, Yarbrough had estimated an increase of about 200 to 300 students.

The county's allocation includes \$1.54 million for current operating expenses, or 10 percent more than appropriated for that purpose last year, and \$1.32 million for capital outlay.

County commissioners said they thought the current expenses fund would be enough to continue existing programs and cover salary increases for county-paid employees to match increases provided to state-paid employees. However, they did not specify the specific purposes for the

allocation, leaving it to the school board to set priorities in funding.

School board members said Monday this allocation leaves \$5,000 for expansion of existing programs or addition of new programs.

District 5 member James Clemmons asked that the \$157,000 in salary supplements be the first need taken care of. "We do the best we can and if we run out of money, we cry to the commissioners for help."

Addressing Clemmons, Forstner said, "We can pay somebody to babysit in the classrooms and keep the lights on."

"But that's not good enough for your kids and my kids. We need to get better every year."

The schools had asked for an additional \$407,000 in current expenses to expand existing programs, increase supplements and hire an athletic coach. (See SCHOOL, Page 2-A)

Calabash To Request Its Own Post Office

BY MARJORIE MEGIVERN

The Calabash Town Board voted Monday to ask Congressman Charlie Rose to assist the town in getting a regular post office.

The decision came after Commissioner Robert Webber reported that a Shalotte address would be mandatory for Calabash residents in about a year. Commissioners said this would be confusing and inconvenient for businesses in the town.

All mail is now sent to Shalotte for sorting, and residents have used several addresses in the past, in-

cluding Little River, S.C. and North Myrtle Beach. Calabash is used at present by most of the 200 residents.

Some commissioners expressed dissatisfaction with services provided by the contract post office that has been in Calabash seven years.

"They close in the middle of the day and won't do anything for you even when they're there," Commissioner Patti Lewellyn said. "And mail from Calabash to Calabash or to Shalotte takes a minimum of eight days."

Commissioner Sonia Stephens sug-

gested the town is large enough to have its own regular post office. "We're bigger than Longwood," she said.

Mayor Doug Simmons said, "Let's ask Charlie Rose to help us." The board agreed to authorize Town Clerk Janet Thomas to make this request of Rose's office.

The contract station, owned by Katherine Whitley, posts hours as 10 to 5, weekdays, and 10 to 1, Saturday. Services include everything offered by regular post offices except second class mail, bulk third class and ex-

press.

The Monday board meeting served also as a public hearing on the Calabash budget for the new fiscal year, but no members of the public appeared to offer comments or ask questions. The \$184,152 budget was adopted unanimously, along with a 17-cent tax rate per \$100 valuation. One penny of this rate is earmarked for a water system the town hopes to construct.

Last year's tax rate was 28 cents, but most property in the town doubled. (See CALABASH, Page 2-A)

North Holden Beach Bill Abandoned

BY SUSAN USHER

Citing community uncertainty over the proposal, Rep. E. David Redwine said Tuesday he has no plans to push through the General Assembly a bill that would have created a new town in the area of the Holden Beach causeway.

And one opponent of the bill said Tuesday the incorporation controversy may have had a beneficial side effect—a unified township.

Redwine explained the incorporation bill, H.B. 1689, would not be carried over to the 1987 session. Bills not

acted on in the short session automatically die, he said.

"One thing I don't want and the proponents don't want is to do anything hastily or anything that would hurt the community or not be something the community wants," said Redwine, leaving the door open for future action.

If there continues to be community interest in incorporation, he is recommending proponents settle on potential boundaries and "feel out the people a little better," meeting with residents to discuss the idea. "If

the area desires it, maybe something could be done in the future," he said.

A leader of opposition to the bill, Herman Faircloth, said these are the exact sentiments of many of his opponents: "If there's enough interest in it, let them call another meeting and let them (the legislative delegation) introduce it next year."

Faircloth said he is satisfied a majority of people in the community are "greatly enthused" over news the bill won't be pursued.

Also, he philosophized, "Maybe what will come out of this is the en-

tire township will be drawn closer together in unity."

The bill had been introduced June 13, at the request of area residents J.W. Robinson, Benny Ludlum, Alfonso Roach, Cletis Clemmons, Philip Robinson and Robert Robinson.

While there was little advance public awareness of the bill, proponents said they expected the legislative process to allow time to change specifics of the bill based on the community's reaction. A week (See REDWINE, Page 2-A)

Legal Fireworks On Tap Friday At Holden Beach

Rather than lighting up their own Roman candles, sizzlers, whistlers and firecrackers, visitors to Holden Beach this Fourth of July can relax and enjoy a legal holiday fireworks display.

Depending on wind direction, the display mounted by Carolina Seaside Retreat campground may be visible along the strand. The campground is located at the west end of the beach.

"It's really a first for us," said campground operator and town commissioner William Williamson. "We're not sure what we'll be able to do."

"We're starting off small, it's mainly something for the kids at the campground. We'll have 150 families there. But anyone can watch who wants to."

The fireworks will be mounted by professional pyrotechnicians from Wilmington, along about 9 p.m. to 10 p.m. Friday. Wind direction will determine the location, said Williamson.

"We would like to be able to do it on the strand side," he said. That would require cooperation from the prevailing west winds.

In any case, viewers should be able to see the display from "pretty much anywhere."

If all goes well, the display could open the door for similar events in the future, town commissioners suggested last month when they approved a special fireworks permit.

"It's the Fourth of July," said Williamson, noting that most people want to enjoy fireworks that day even though it's illegal in North Carolina.

"Rather than shooting their own" said Williamson, "we hope they will enjoy ours."