

# School Board Expected To Drop Funding Challenge

BY SUSAN USHER

Following a meeting of county and school officials last Tuesday night, the Brunswick County Board of Education isn't expected to continue its appeal for more local funds.

"With the (two) members I talked to, the feeling was to let it slide," said Dr. James Forstner, school board chairman. With the July 4th holiday interfering, he said had been unable to contact two members.

"We were serious about it when we voted to appeal. But on further investigation it looked less and less likely it would be productive."

Last Tuesday night, the day after the school board's vote, Superintendent Gene Yarbrough and Forstner met with Board of Commissioners

Chairman Chris Chappell and County Manager Billy Carter. Ostensibly the session was to set up a joint meeting of the boards to discuss their differences, but instead the session took the place of such a meeting.

"We had a cordial and frank exchange of views," said Forstner, "and we all came away with a better understanding of each group's needs and priorities."

Carter spoke similarly, also pleased with the outcome, and said the four plan to begin meeting on a quarterly basis to discuss mutual concerns.

"They submitted a good budget," he said, but added commissioners had funded what they thought was necessary to meet the schools' basic

needs this year, while not providing funds for program expansion.

He said immediate and future capital outlay needs of the schools were discussed. These include reconstruction of three schools and construction of a new elementary school. Forstner both groups committed to following the schools' four-year plan for capital improvements.

They also talked about ways the county could help prepare to meet those needs—including the possibility of a bond referendum.

"They said that if the county funded it (school construction) directly, they would give us enough to get by on, cutting corners, but that with a bond referendum we could get enough money to do it right," said

Forstner, adding that the county could possibly be right.

If so, he said, "We should be able to get a bond referendum passed. I think people support funding for the schools."

After news of the board's intent to appeal its funding became public, commissioners got several calls in support of more funding, as did Forstner.

"I got a bunch of calls, with people saying, 'Anything I can do...'" continued Forstner. "I was amazed."

One possible source of funding that had not been approved at the time by the General Assembly was an optional half-cent local sales tax which

designates that a certain percentage of the proceeds be used for financing school construction, with the percentage decreasing from year to year. It can be used to build new schools or to pay off existing bond obligations.

If adopted by commissioners, the tax could generate \$1.4 million for Brunswick County, according to Rep. David Redwine, including in the first year about \$300,000 for school construction. He said legislators are encouraging counties to use the money to supplement, not to replace, local contributions to the schools.

In predicting that the appeal would be dropped, Forstner said there were several reasons, including that the commissioners are not prepared to provide more money at this time;

that an appeal to the Clerk of Court would most likely fail given that the schools received an increase in operating funds this year and given that the clerk's seat is up for election in November.

Also, he said, if the appeal were to advance to the State Supreme Court, operating funds would be held at last year's level and no capital outlay funds would be provided until the appeal was resolved.

That would have stopped renovations planned at Lenoir and Union primary schools.

Plus, he said, the appeal would have generated "bad blood" between the two boards that could make working together harder next year.

## THE WICK BEACON

Volume 24, Number 35

Shallotte, North Carolina, Thursday, July 10, 1986

25c Per Copy

26 Pages



WITH REGINA WHITE administering the oath of office, Benny Ludlum joined the county commissioners Monday, filling the District 2 seat vacated by Herman Love. In November, he will run for the seat as a Democrat. After adopting the county budget on June 25, commissioners sent word to Ludlum that "if he wanted the job, to be here July 8th." He was nominated in mid-June by the Democratic Executive Committee and appointed on commissioners' unanimous vote Monday night.

## Leland Dixie Youth Parents Demand Answers From League

BY SUSAN USHER

Parents from the Leland Dixie Youth Baseball League appealed to Brunswick County Commissioners Monday night for help in getting answers to questions they have about that organization's finances.

In particular, the parents said they want to know why youngsters are required to pay the league a \$10 fee each season or else not be allowed full participation.

Spokesman Patti Coston said League President Donald Ray White has told parents and players the money is used to pay someone to run a concession stand during the games. Imposed for the first time last season, parents said the fees are a hardship, especially when there is more than one player in the family.

White could not be reached for comment.

"We just want to know how much money the league has, where it is, whose name it is in—and why, if there is money, they're not spending it on the players," said Mrs. Coston.

After eight years of coaching, William Cook was told this year he

didn't qualify. "I think it was because I didn't make the children pay the fee," he said.

Bad and Brenda Cook said their children were told "no pay, no play—period," while Gracie Watson said she was told her son would not be eligible for the All-Stars team if the fee were not paid.

Linda Dover, a former concession stand volunteer whose college-age son once played in the league, questioned charging children for a concession stand operator's salary and suggested the stand be closed if other arrangements could not be made.

Commissioners Grace Beasley and Frankie Rabon, who represent the districts where the league operates, agreed to attend a meeting the parents had scheduled today (Thursday) with state Dixie Youth officials.

Addressing the Dixie League parents, Chairman Chris Chappell said, "I don't want to step on anyone's toes, but this league may need revamping." Since the league is a private group, he said commissioners would wait to hear what league officials had to say before taking any action.

Regular season Dixie Youth games are played on county-owned fields in Leland.

Several of the parents said White had refused to disclose league financial statements and had told them the league was a non-profit corporation.

However, checks by League members and County Attorney David Clegg with the Secretary of State's Office show that the league is not listed as a non-profit corporation.

Coston said the league had not been listed as non-profit for the past five years.

County Parks and Recreation Director Bobby Jones said he had tried to encourage the league to follow the suit of several other leagues in the county that charge fees—to tell players what the fees are for and to make them voluntary.

Unless the county were to adopt a new policy, Jones said the only question that actually involves the county is whether the league is non-profit. That would affect the fees charged the league for use of the county playing fields. Currently, said Jones, the

county takes an organization's declaration that it is non-profit, not requiring any proof.

### Other Business

In other business, commissioners:

Voted unanimously to appoint Benny Ludlum to the District 2 seat vacated in May by Herman Love. Ludlum was sworn in immediately following the vote.

"Met for more than two hours behind closed doors to discuss attorney-client matters, property acquisition and a personnel matter brought by animal control employee Sharon Russ Carter. Afterwards, the board voted against entering an agreement with Pender and New Hanover counties to guarantee—in the event the annual payment schedule is not met—repayment of a \$5 million loan by Southeastern Mental Health for the proposed construction of a detoxification center to serve the three-county area. Commissioner Beasley, a member of Southeastern's board, said the commissioners did not want to obligate the county and future boards in that

(See DIXIE YOUTH, Page 2-A)

## Stevenson Falls Short In Bid To Make Ballot

BY SUSAN USHER

A third candidate's name will not appear on the District 2 Board of Education ballot in November.

Brunswick County Board of Elections members determined Tuesday afternoon that Supply resident Joe Stevenson's petition was inadequate.

"He just didn't have enough signatures," said Board of Elections Supervisor Lynda Britt.

Stevenson was seeking a spot on the ballot as an unaffiliated candidate against Republican Jane Causey, the incumbent, and Democrat Dorothy Worth.

He had submitted 117 pages of petitions with 2,349 signatures, just ten more than the minimum 2,339 required.

However, during the certification process, it was determined that he had collected only 1,826 valid signatures, said Britt.

"A lot of people were not registered to vote. Several had signed twice. And some had signed several people's names to the petition" in addition to their own, she said. Those signatures weren't valid.

Stevenson was one of two independents to try for third-candidate spots on the ballot. Harry Rickenbacker of Ocean Isle Beach had not collected the minimum number of signatures before the deadline. He had wanted to run for clerk of court against Greg Bellamy, the Democrat incumbent, and Republican candidate George Ball.

Stevenson could not be reached for comment Tuesday evening.

## Traffic Was Major County Problem During Holiday

BY MARJORIE MEGIVERN

Communities in the South Brunswick area reported a safe, uneventful Fourth of July, but one beset by traffic problems, especially on causeways.

At Ocean Isle Beach, Police Chief Jerry Gurganus said he and other officers spent all day July 5 alternating on duty at the intersection of Highways 904 and 179, the entrance to the causeway, directing traffic. "I issued lots of traffic citations, but no arrests were made," Gurganus said of the weekend. "There were even more people on the beach this year than last, and the traffic moved better except for the intersection."

That trouble spot has been acknowledged by the state Department of Transportation as a priority for installation of a traffic light.

Gurganus reported one accident on the island, when a pedestrian visitor was struck by a vehicle Saturday and taken to Brunswick Hospital.

Otherwise, Ocean Isle enjoyed peak crowds on the beach. Don Lewis of Beach Traders realty office said he worked 24 hours a day. "All our places were rented, and we had not one complaint about anything from visitors. This is always our biggest holiday of the year."

Holden Beach also experienced record crowds and a similar bottleneck at the causeway intersection. Ray Simpson, police officer, said, "We've got a \$5 million bridge and a

(See TRAFFIC, Page 2-A)

## Charges Against Middle School Teacher Dropped

The case of assault on a child under 12, brought against Leland Middle School teacher, Kathy Rublein, was dismissed Monday in Brunswick County District Court.

Wanda Bryant, Assistant District Attorney, said she reviewed charges brought by Mildred Ward, whose son Brandice was paddled by Ms. Rublein June 11. "I determined that this is not a case to be criminally prosecuted," Ms. Bryant said. "The

state law allows leeway to teachers in administering corporal punishment. If there is no permanent injury to the child, and if the teacher does not use unreasonable force, then paddling is permitted."

Bryant said neither of these factors were present in this case.

Mrs. Ward and her son were in court, with photographs of his bruised buttocks. She had charged that the boy was struck with a wooden paddle

a foot long and an inch thick.

Clara Carter, Leland Middle School principal, said Ms. Rublein would "absolutely" be teaching there next year. "She followed the guidelines of the local school system, and we felt from the beginning everything would be alright," Mrs. Carter said.

Brunswick County school requirements regarding corporal punishment are that a witness must

be present and that other efforts to discipline a child must be used first. Superintendent Gene Yarbrough said parents are made aware of school conduct codes at the beginning of the school year.

Neither Mrs. Ward nor Ms. Rublein could be reached for comment, but Ms. Rublein's attorney, Bill Fairley of Southport, said "We were confident all along that she was not doing anything she was not legally entitled to do."



NOT EVERYONE DRAWN to area beaches over the long July 4th holiday were out-of-towners. Enjoying the sun and sand at Ocean Isle Beach were

(from left) Nicole Prince, Michael Price, Angela Crawford, Sara Gaddley of Monroe, Joey Stanaland, Kurt Hardee and Ken Prince.

STATE PHOTO BY MATTHEW FLYLER