

Crime Dog 'Hired'

Brunswick County lawmen have added a second crime-fighting canine. Read about McGruff's efforts to "take a bite out of crime" on Page 15-C.

Island Living

Supplement included in this issue.

Lands Big Fish

During a week of overall fine fishing, a Sunset Beach Pier angler landed the biggest king of the season, a 32-pounder. The fishing report's on Page 14-B.

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STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

Sandbagging To Protect Road

Shoreline Erosion Control workers were jumping up and down at Holden Beach Tuesday morning, but it was all in a day's work as they filled sandbags. The Ocean Isle Beach company, owned by James Russ and Dave Harrell, was hired by the N.C. Department of Transportation to construct a sandbag and fabric barrier to protect Ocean Boulevard East from erosion. Harrell said he expects to complete the job this week. Working 12-hour days his crew and another from Nag's Head will place approximately 300 of the tan, porous, sun damage-resistant bags along a 440-foot area. Each bag

holds about three tons of sand, and while retaining sand inside and behind them, the bags allow receding waters to filter through, helping to build the beach, said Harrell. In the fall, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is expected to add more fill to the area, followed by construction of an east-end public beach accessway by the town. From the left above are Mark Garrett of Nag's Head, Tucker Cully of Brick Landing, Steve Brinsfield of Ocean Isle Beach, Kirk Knaffle and John Saunders of Nag's Head. Estimated cost of the project is \$75,000.

Lawmen Find No Signs Of Foul Play After Shallotte Man Drowns In Virginia

BY RAHN ADAMS

A Shallotte man who was indicted last month on cocaine trafficking charges in Brunswick County apparently drowned last week in Surry County, Va.

According to Surry County Sheriff W.C. Andrews, the body of Robert Dale Clemmons, 35, was found in the James River about five miles from Surry, Va., Sunday around 9:30 a.m.

Andrews said Tuesday that a couple walking on the shore found Clemmons about two-tenths of a mile down

river from the mobile home park where the victim lived. Clemmons and his brother, George M. Clemmons of Shallotte, were working at Virginia Power Company's Surry Nuclear Plant, the sheriff said.

On Sunday, the body was sent to the state medical examiner's office in Richmond, Va., for autopsy. Andrews said the autopsy report, which was not available Tuesday morning, may take up to two weeks to be completed.

However, the sheriff indicated that lawmen have found no signs of foul play in their investigation. Drowning was the apparent cause of death, he said.

Andrews said Clemmons was last seen last Thursday night at his residence, which was located on a bluff overlooking the river. George Clemmons reported his brother missing on Saturday evening.

Last month, Robert Dale Clemmons was among 48 individuals indicted on drug charges by a

Brunswick County investigative grand jury. He was charged with conspiracy to traffic in cocaine, possession of cocaine and transporting cocaine—all three counts involving more than 28 grams of the controlled substance. The offenses allegedly occurred in Jan. 1985.

Funeral arrangements for Clemmons were incomplete Tuesday, according to a spokesperson at Coble Ward-Smith Funeral Service in Supply.

Democrats Must Choose School Board Nominee

Brunswick County Democrats who didn't bother to vote on May 3 get a second chance on May 31, when polls open for voting in two second primaries.

Seeking the Democratic nomination for the District 3 seat on the Brunswick County Board of Education are the board's current chairman, James R. Forstner, and a retired educator, Jonathan Hankins. The winner of the primary will face Republican Robert Slockett of Yaupon Beach in November. Hankins led a three-man field in the May 3 primary, with Mack Aman trailing, but failed to obtain a majority of the vote.

The second question on the ballot determines the Democratic nominee

for a seat on the N.C. Court of Appeals. Both William L. Davis III and John B. (Jack) Lewis Jr. are seeking the seat for a term that will expire Dec. 31, 1992.

All county polls will be open from 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. The deadline for one-stop voting at the Board of Elections office is May 27, while absentee ballots must be returned no later than May 30, according to the Brunswick County Board of Elections.

Only those voters who were eligible to vote in the May 3 primary can cast ballots on May 31. The registration books are closed until after the primary.

Forstner, a 41-year-old general practitioner from Long Beach, has

served as chairman of the school board since his election to it in 1984. In seeking re-election, he has said he wants to continue focusing the system's attention on children and their education through continued strengthening of the curriculum, increased professionalism of staff and elimination of such problems as drugs and weapons on school campuses.

The current board has tackled such concerns as AIDS education, drugs on campus, teacher performance, transition to adult-only bus drivers and implementation of the state's Basic Education Plan. Requirements of the plan are reflected in the expansion of the Union and Lincoln

Primary campuses and plans for both a proposed primary school in the Supply area and the proposed expansion of South Brunswick High School.

Hankins, 61, a Southport native, is a former teacher and served as principal of various county schools for 26 years. The former Southport alderman said he has the time to continue contributing to education in Brunswick County. He advocates improving public relations and securing adequate personnel, which he said would result in upgraded standards and better education.

He is also concerned about student discipline and funding for the schools, as well as adequate controls on how those funds are spent.

Prosecutor Outlines Investigations Into Williamson's Drug Trafficking

BY RAHN ADAMS

"Drug traffickers cannot cover their tracks. We usually uncover their paper trail," Special Assistant District Attorney Bill Wolak said last week of the investigations that led to the conviction of DeCarol Williamson for drug of-

fenses that occurred four years ago in Brunswick County.

Williamson, 37, of Ocean Isle Beach, pleaded guilty last week in Brunswick County Superior Court to conspiracy to traffic in more than 400 grams of cocaine and trafficking by possession of more than 400 grams of cocaine.

On a recommendation by the state, Williamson—a former Ocean Isle Beach town commissioner and the son of Ocean Isle Beach developer Odell Williamson—was sentenced to

a \$10,000 fine and two years in prison.

But according to a Department of Corrections official, Williamson could possibly be granted work release within the next several weeks and return to the Brunswick County area to serve what could amount to no more than nine months in jail.

"I believe that sentence was warranted," Wolak said in an interview Friday, three days after Judge Giles R. Clark sentenced Williamson and seven other defendants who were involved in the same conspiracy.

Williamson received the longest active prison term.

Wolak, who prosecuted Williamson, defended the state's recommendation in the case by pointing out that the offenses occurred four years ago; that the defendant "got in and out of (cocaine trafficking) on his own;" and that Williamson provided "substantial assistance" to investigators.

In fact, Williamson helped set up a "sting" operation last December at his Calabash golf course, Pearl Golf

Links, that resulted in the arrest of his supplier from Florida, Wolak said.

"DeCarol was cooperating with our investigation, and he called his supplier," Wolak explained. He added that Williamson tape recorded telephone "negotiations" with Larry David Andrews of Starke, Fla., for several months before Andrews delivered a kilogram of cocaine to Williamson at the Pearl on Dec. 19, 1987.

"DeCarol was there, but all of the

other men in the room were federal and state agents," the district attorney said of the sting operation that led to the arrests of Andrews and two other men, Larry Charles Green and Robert Darrell Carter, both also of Starke.

Andrews, Green and Carter all pleaded guilty to cocaine trafficking charges in January and are now awaiting sentencing. Wolak said those arrests led to the April indict-

(See PROSECUTOR, Page 2-A)

County Manager Proposes Big Tax Rate Hike

BY RAHN ADAMS

With just over a month to make their decision, Brunswick County Commissioners must either raise property tax rates by a staggering 16½ cents or find some other means to balance the county's proposed \$31.8 million budget.

During a 1½-hour special meeting Monday in Bolivia, County Manager John T. Smith presented commissioners with his proposed 1988-89 budget—a document he also referred to as a "working budget," admitting he was "not so naive to think you (commissioners) will adopt a 67-cent tax rate."

All five board members apparently agreed by indicating they did not support the proposed tax rate increase. "It's a starting point," Chairman Grace Beasley commented after the meeting. "It's a proposed budget for us to work on."

That work will begin June 1 at 10 a.m. in commissioners' chambers, when the board holds an initial budget work session. At Smith's recommendation, commissioners also scheduled a public hearing on the proposed budget for June 7 at 7 p.m. in Bolivia. A copy of the budget is open for public inspection at the county administration offices.

Problem Outlined

Responding to questions from board members and the public, Smith explained that his 16½-cent rate hike request is directly related to a shortfall in county revenue, not greatly increased expenditures.

Last year, commissioners adopted the current \$30.3 million budget and 50½-cent (per \$100 of property valuation) tax rate by allocating \$4.68 million from the county's fund balance—monies which were carried over from the previous year.

"It is my opinion that when a fund balance is appropriated, it should be only for a one-time expenditure item and never for operations or other expenditures that require annual appropriations," Smith told commissioners in a three-page, prepared budget message.

Smith warned that if a sizable portion of the county's current \$3.2 million fund balance is appropriated in the 1988-89 budget, the county "will have serious cash flow problems from June through December 1989," because each fiscal year begins in July and property tax payments aren't due until the following January.

He also noted several large expenditures that are not listed in the proposed budget, including improvements to the county water system, a new landfill and convenience sites, expansion of facilities at the county complex and renovation of the county-owned Bolivia Shopping Center.

In addition, the county's debt service will increase by \$1.1 million in 1988-89, while a decrease in utility values next year will cost the county more than \$1 million in revenue, he said.

Smith suggested that commissioners "explore" other means of producing additional revenue, such as increasing user fees where service is provided on request; implementing new user fees for specific services being provided; and implementing a real estate transfer fee with revenues to be shared with towns where the transfer takes place.

Proposal Explained

The county manager's proposed 67-cent tax rate per \$100 of property valuation would provide an estimated \$24.5 million in ad valorem taxes, with each cent of the rate producing \$366,520 for budget purposes, he said. Brunswick County's estimated property valuation is \$3.85 billion.

According to Smith, the proposed budget reflects only a five percent (\$1.5 million) increase in expenditures over the current budget. Over the past few weeks, Smith whittled \$35.1 million in departmental requests down to the \$31.8 million proposal.

He said the largest percentage increase is the 50-percent rise in the county's group insurance premiums, which increased by \$467,166.

The proposed budget also includes a 2.5 percent, across-the-board pay increase for the county's more than 400 employees. A total of 40 new part- and full-time employees are recommended, including nine positions in the health department; five for social services; and four each for the jail, landfill and water department. Some 51 current positions would be reclassified, with 40 of that number

(See TAX RATE, Page 2-A)

School's Out On June 10

The Brunswick County Board of Education is reminding parents that the last day of school for county students has been changed.

Because schools were closed for several snow days this winter, the board had extended the end of school to Monday, June 13.

At their May board meeting, however, the board changed the last day of school to Friday, June 10.

This was possible, said Jean Parker, public information officer, because of current legislation that allows a third day to be excused for hazardous weather conditions if the last day of school is on a Monday.