

Health Department Shifts Duties In Environmental Health Section

BY RAHN ADAMS

In an effort to keep up with the demands of development and to improve its public image, the Brunswick County Health Department has made some temporary changes in its environmental health section.

According to Health Director Michael U. Rhodes, the department's sanitarians are now concentrating solely on site evaluations for septic tank permits, while supervisors in the environmental health section handle all other field duties. The shift in duties began June 27 for a three-month trial period.

"The only thing they (sanitarians) will be doing is lot evaluations," Rhodes said, adding that sanitarians also will meet with property owners as lots are checked, if the meetings are requested.

"It's the hope that it'll increase the awareness of the individual having the lot evaluated of the reasons for checking soils in regards to sewage effluent treatment," Rhodes said. "It's also to allow people to give input on site inspections."

According to a joint legislative study committee co-chaired by State Rep. David Redwine of Ocean Isle Beach, Brunswick County led the

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—Michael U. Rhodes
Health Director

state last year in the number of site evaluations that were done, as well as in the number of septic tank permits that were both issued and denied.

About 5,000 site evaluations were done last year in Brunswick. Some

2,700 septic tank permits were issued here, while 1,100 permits were denied.

Rhodes said the local environmental health section employs five certified sanitarians, one sanitarian trainee and two supervisors. Each

sanitarian does about 90 site evaluations per month.

In February, the sanitarians were swamped with 841 site evaluations—the most ever done by any county in North Carolina, Rhodes said.

Before duties were shifted last week, sanitarians were assigned to specific sections of the county. Their jobs included doing site evaluations, inspecting septic tanks as they were installed, examining repairs to existing septic systems, checking mobile homes that were moved to different sites, collecting water samples and inspecting restaurants and lodg-

ing facilities such as motels.

As a result of sanitarians' heavy workloads, the waiting period for a site evaluation averages about four to five weeks, although the waiting period "varies greatly" in different sections of the county, Rhodes said.

"We're hoping to cut that (waiting period) drastically," he said. "The main purpose (of the shift in duties) is to educate the public on what we're doing and decrease the amount of time for a site evaluation."

In addition to handling field duties other than site evaluations, the two supervisors—John Crowder and (See HEALTH, Page 2-A)

THE DRAG NET WICK BEACON

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19 'White Tide' Defendants Plead Guilty; Seven Get Probation

BY RAHN ADAMS

Nineteen defendants who were indicted on drug trafficking charges in April's "Operation White Tide" entered guilty pleas last week in Brunswick County Superior Court.

So far, 27 of the 48 individuals indicted in the state's second investigative grand jury probe have pleaded guilty.

According to the Brunswick County Clerk of Court's office, seven of the 19 defendants who appeared before Judge E. Lynn Johnson of Fayetteville last week were sentenced to probationary prison terms. Sentencings for the other 12 defendants were delayed until the July 27 term of Superior Court.

Defendants who pleaded guilty and were sentenced last week included: James C. Edwards, 31, and Cindy Ann Harrell, 22, both of Ocean Isle

Beach; Sandra Coker, Myrtle Beach, S.C.; Terry D. Phelps, 28, Shalotte; Joseph Craig Lewis, 19, Wilmington; Gregory Lee Robinson, 29, and Tony Glen Lewis, both of Route 2, Supply.

Those who entered guilty pleas and are awaiting sentencing include: Clinton Stanaland, 31, Shalotte; Wendell Evans, Route 1, Shalotte; Douglas Evans, Wilmington; Kevin Benz, 28, Key West, Fla.; Mark Berry, 28, Sugarloaf, Fla.; Darrell C. Stephens, 24, Hallsboro; Freddie Carroll, 32, Keystone Heights, Fla.; Carlton Jeffery King, 29, and Gary Phelps, 27, both of Supply; Christopher Corbett, 20, Route 1, Supply; Jeffery Kermit Evans, 23, Route 3, Supply; and Charlotte McCumbee, 25, Route 1, Ash.

Court records show that Edwards and Ms. Harrell both pleaded guilty June 27 to conspiracy to traffic and

trafficking in more than 50 pounds of marijuana. Each was sentenced to a \$250 fine and a three-year prison term, suspended for five years, with five years of supervised probation. In addition, Ms. Harrell was ordered to perform 100 hours of community service work.

Also on June 27, Ms. Coker pleaded guilty to conspiracy to traffic in more than 28 grams of cocaine. She was sentenced to a \$200 fine and a suspended three-year prison term, with five years of supervised probation.

Phelps and Joseph Lewis both pleaded guilty last Thursday to conspiracy to traffic in more than 28 grams of cocaine. Also, Robinson entered guilty pleas to conspiracy to traffic and two trafficking counts.

All three were sentenced to \$250 (See DEFENDANTS, Page 2-A)

Sunset Beach Falls Short With Dredging Assessments

With property owners unwilling to fund the project upfront, a proposed canal dredging project at Sunset Beach appears to be headed nowhere.

The proposed dredging includes four east-end canals and the entrance channel to Jinks Creek. Although the project was initiated through citizen petition, property owners have indicated that they are not desperate enough for a canal dredging project to pay upfront assessments.

Town council had asked for the payments to be made no later than July 1, but as of Tuesday, the town had received only \$72,237, or 26 per-

cent, of the \$301,795 in estimated canal dredging assessments, according to Town Administrator Linda Fluegel. The town had hoped to collect 90 percent of the cost in advance of contracting the dredging.

Since the town budgeted no funds for dredging this year and plans to assess property owners the full cost anyway, council had asked all property owners benefiting from the project to pay upfront the estimated cost of \$1,760 for each 50-foot lot.

"I thought for sure that we'd get the money in with the way the people were screaming and yelling for the dredging," said Mrs. Fluegel. "But when it comes time to ask for money,

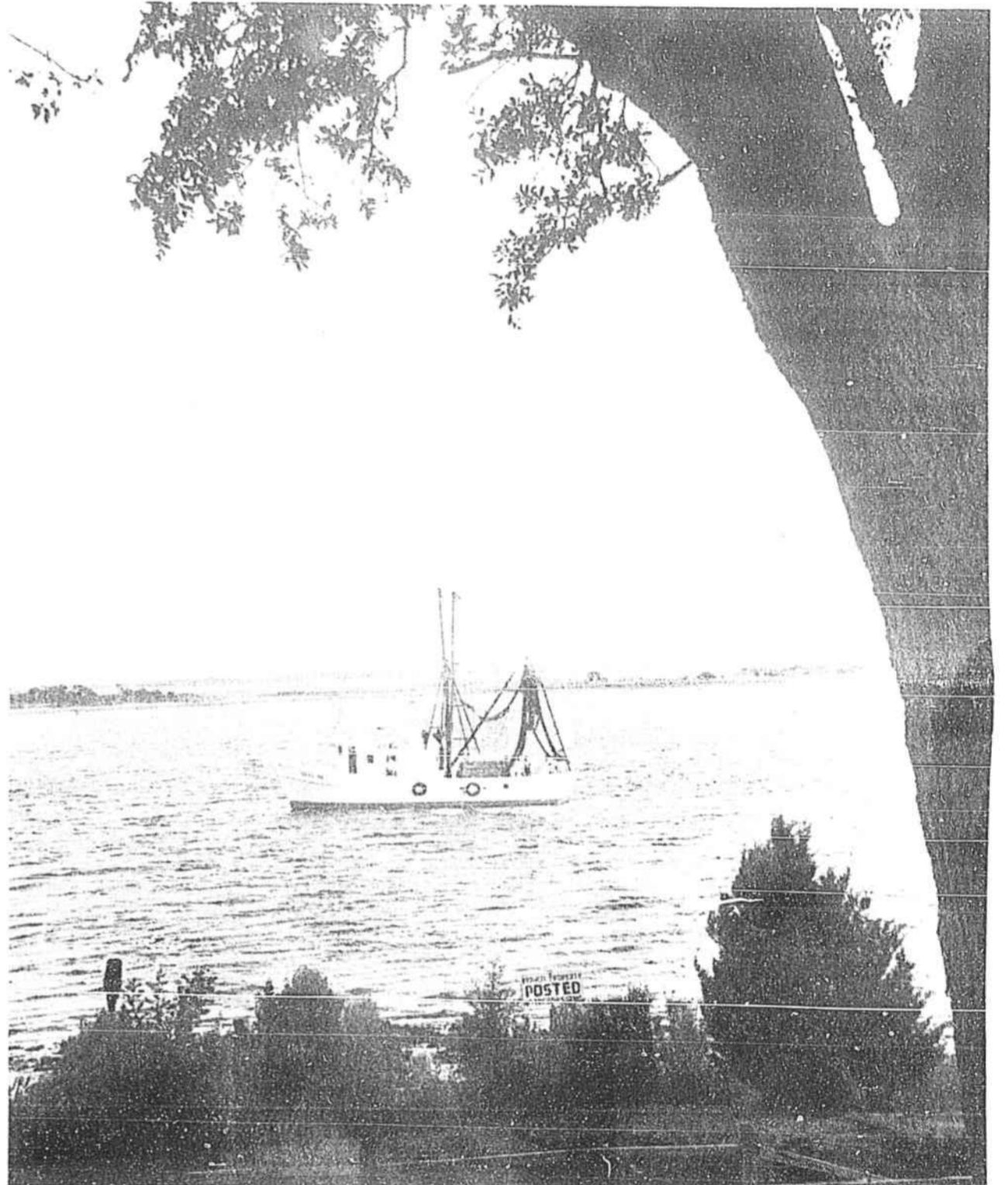
that's a different story."

"Before we let bids we have to have the money," said Mrs. Fluegel, adding that she will continue to collect assessments if any more come in.

If town council decides against the dredging, the money will be returned.

If the project is postponed, Mrs. Fluegel said she would apply for a one-year extension on the dredging permit.

The funds which had been collected as of this week came from 31 payments and 12 letters of credit. There are about 75 property owners included on the assessment role.



STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

Let The Fireworks Begin!

The DRAG NET, out of Supply, was one of the numerous commercial and pleasure boats anchored off the Southport waterfront Monday night for a spectacular view of the fireworks that marked the end of the N.C. Fourth of July Festival. More coverage of the Independence Day holiday is inside this issue.

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Commissioners Adopt 'Conservative' Budget With 4-Cent Tax Rate Hike

BY RAHN ADAMS

Even with a four-cent property tax rate increase, Brunswick County Commissioners last week decided to tighten the county's belt by adopting what board members described as a "conservative" \$27.3 million county budget.

This year's budget, which is \$3 million less than the 1987-88 budget, was unanimously approved by the board last Wednesday night in Bolivia, after at least 33 hours of discussion during 11 meetings held since May 23.

The adopted budget is similar to one proposed June 21 by County Manager John T. Smith. At the board's instruction, Smith made five percent cuts to the county's 30 departments to come up with a model budget that reflected no change in the 50½-cent tax rate, after he initially proposed a \$31.8 million budget and 67-cent tax rate.

Last Wednesday, Smith told commissioners that the departments will probably require additional funding later in the fiscal year. "I don't believe the departments can operate with any type of efficiency with any less than that amount of money," he said.

The board took less than an hour last Wednesday to make six additional allocations to Smith's 50½-cent model and undo several previous budget decisions by adopting the \$27.3 million budget with its four-cent tax rate hike.

The budget ordinance was signed by commissioners at their regular session Tuesday night, following a public meeting which Commission Chairman Grace Besley said was held to answer citizens' questions about the adopted budget.

The "hearing"—which was actually a continuation of the board's June 20, 21, 22, 24, 27 and 28 sessions—was scheduled at the request of speakers at the commis-

sioners' June 7 budget hearing, even though the taxpayers had asked the board to hold a second public hearing before the budget was officially adopted. Deadline for adoption was June 30.

As a result of the 4-cent rate increase to 54½ cents per \$100 of property value, an individual who owns a \$50,000 home in Brunswick County will pay \$272.50 in property taxes, compared to \$252.50 last year.

Commissioners Respond

After last Wednesday's meeting, commissioners commented on their action, which reversed several

budget decisions that had been made earlier in the month-long budget preparation process.

For example, the adopted budget does not include \$450,000 for construction of a proposed minor league baseball stadium at Northwest Township District Park, even though commissioners had voted June 27 to build the stadium.

"It's been the most difficult budget," said Ms. Besley. "That (the stadium) is something we can come back to later . . . the main item tonight was to adopt a budget."



STAFF PHOTO BY RAHN ADAMS

BRUNSWICK COUNTY COMMISSIONERS prepare to vote on the county's 1988-89 budget last Wednesday night in Bolivia. Pictured (clockwise, from left) are Commissioners Frankie Rabon, Grace Besley, Chris

Chappell, Jim Poole, and Benny Ludlum; also, Clerk to the Board Regina Alexander and Long Beach resident Eileen Kellagher.

Budget Outlined

With relatively little discussion last Wednesday, commissioners made the six additions and two cuts which combined to add four cents to the 50½-cent tax rate in Smith's model budget.

The additions included \$250,000 for implementation of a 911 emergency telephone system; \$36,972 for a new anti-litter department; \$35,812 for the addition of two new sanitarians in the county health department a \$366,520 (See CONSERVATIVE, Page 2-A)