

Brunswick's Debt: The Amount Of Tax Burden Citizens Bear

BY RAHN ADAMS

in the words of County Manager John T. Smith, Brunswick County's annual debt payment makes up a "pretty good chunk" of the county budget.

The term "chunk" more than adequately describes Brunswick's debt service contribution, which is expected to amount to more than \$6 million in the coming fiscal year—almost one-fifth of the \$31.1 million budget that was formally adopted Monday by commissioners.

Converted to pennies in the new 5 1/2-cent property tax rate, the debt can be thanked—or blamed—for up to cents or about one-quarter of the rate, since ad

valorem taxes should account for \$23.6 million or about three-quarters of the county's total revenue in the general fund.

During the county's recent budget preparation process, Smith commented on the problem of working with a high debt: "Most of your revenue comes from ad valorem taxes, so you're not really delivering a service for the monies you collect. You're paying for something that's already been built."

According to Finance Director Letha Hahn, the county enters the 1989-90 fiscal year with a general obligation debt of \$70.7 million dollars, composed of

funds that went for capital projects involving the county water system, public schools, The Brunswick Hospital and Brunswick Community College.

The chief contributor to the county debt was the issuance of \$37 million in bonds for the second phase of the water system, authorized by passage of a bond referendum here in 1981.

Based on statistics for fiscal year 1987-88, comparative data compiled by the N.C. Department of the Treasurer shows that Brunswick County had the highest per capita general obligation debt of any county in the state that year. With a population of 49,631, the

county's per capita debt was \$939 or 1.21 percent of a \$3.8 billion assessed valuation.

However, Robert M. High, director of the Fiscal Management Section of the N.C. State and Local Government Finance Division, indicated to the Beacon that the per capita debt figure may be somewhat misleading, since Brunswick County is a resort area with a relatively low permanent population and a high number of non-resident property owners.

"The population is not so high, but they (county government) are providing services that areas with (See BRUNSWICK, Page 2-A)

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

HOAG & SONS BOOK BINDERY
12/31/99
PO BOX 162
SPRINGPORT MI 49284

Twenty-seventh Year, Number 35

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Shallotte, North Carolina, Thursday, July 6, 1989

25¢ Per Copy

34 Pages, 3 Sections



STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER
THE SUNSET BEACH STRAND was packed Saturday afternoon as far as the eye could see. Other local beach towns were equally crowded.

Beaches Enjoy Bang-Up Holiday

BY DOUG RUTTER

Balmy weather and sandy beaches lured thousands of visitors to the South Brunswick Islands over a long July 4th holiday weekend, which area businessmen are calling one of the best.

Real estate agents at all three resort towns in the South Brunswick Islands reported Tuesday that beach cottages are full for the first week in July.

That Independence Day fell on a Tuesday this year seemed to have no effect on rental activity, they said. "We had so many calls this year," said Betty Hobbs of Hobbs Realty at Holden Beach. "I think everybody was booked up."

She said there seems to be more people visiting the area this year than ever before and that most made their reservations well in advance.

Tom Tucker of Sunset Properties at Sunset Beach also said his rental units are full for the week.

"Everybody's having a good time and the weather's holding out," he said. "I think everybody's having a great Fourth of July. That includes the businesses and the tourists."

Visitors seemed to be in a good mood for buying, according to Ann Hines, manager of Ocean Isle Grocery.

"It's been good since last Thursday," she said Tuesday evening. "There's still right much traffic over here."

Jeff White, manager of Beach Cafe' on the

causeway at Holden Beach, was busy setting up a buffet when contacted Tuesday, but said business was "pretty good" during the long holiday weekend.

With the holiday crowds, however, came holiday traffic to local highways not built to deal with thousands of motorists at a time. Roads leading to and from local beach towns were heavily congested Saturday through Tuesday, as was U.S. 17 in Shallotte and beyond the town limits.

Thomas Brown of Supply was traveling northbound through Shallotte Monday around noon and said it took him at least 20 minutes to get from the N.C.N.B. office to The Brunswick Beacon office.

"Everywhere I've been it's been bumper to bumper, either way you go on 17 or coming from Ash or Holden Beach," he said.

Despite the large crowds, local police departments reported no major problems, with officers handling mostly routine calls involving drunks, loud noise and, of course, fireworks.

"We've had a lot of people but a quiet weekend," said Holden Beach Police Chief Raymond Simpson. "We haven't had too much excitement except the parking."

He said officers issued "quite a few" tickets for parking violations on Ocean Boulevard. A new restriction which outlaws parking on almost all of the island's main street went into effect at the start of the tourist season.

Filing Period Opens Friday For November Municipal Elections

BY DOUG RUTTER

Filing opens Friday at noon for 63 seats on 15 municipal boards up for grabs this fall, along with three seats on the Doshier Hospital Board of Trustees.

Interested persons can pay the \$5 fee and file as candidates at the Brunswick County Board of Elections office at the Brunswick County Government Center in Bolivia weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. They can also file for office at their local town hall, if forms are available. Forms filled out at a town hall must be notarized.

The filing period will end at noon on Friday, Aug. 4.

Recent town charter amendments will affect elections this fall in two communities in the South Brunswick Islands.

Holden Beach

A revision in the charter at Holden Beach will have the mayor's post and all five seats on the board of commissioners up for election this fall. Starting with this year's election, all commissioners will be elected for two years instead of four years.

Calabash

In Calabash, an earlier charter amendment which will establish staggered terms of four years each for council members also takes effect this fall. All five council seats and the mayor's post are up for election in 1989.

The mayor and the two town council candidates receiving the largest number of votes in November will serve four years.

The other three council members will serve two years, and their seats will be up for election again in 1991. At that time, the three councilmen elected will serve four years.

In 1987, Mayor Doug Simmons was the only person to file for office, and five council members were elected as write-ins. Three of those elected later resigned, and after two appointments, the current board is still short one council member.

A proposed consolidation of

Calabash and the neighboring community of Carolina Shores could affect the fall election.

Ocean Isle Beach

At Ocean Isle Beach, the mayor's post currently occupied by Betty Williamson and town board seats held by Terry Barbee and Bill Benton will be open in November. The mayor is elected to a two-year term while commissioners are elected to four-year terms.

Sunset Beach

The mayor's position and three of five council seats are up for election in November at Sunset Beach. Those seats are now occupied by Mayor Mason Barber and council members Ed Gore, Kathy Hill Peed and Minnie Hunt. Voters elect the mayor every two years, while councilmen are elected to four-year terms.

Shallotte

Seats held by Shallotte Mayor Jerry Jones and town board members Sarah Tripp and Paul Wayne Reeves are up for election this year. All persons elected in Shallotte serve four years.

The newly-incorporated towns of Varnamtown and Sandy Creek will hold their first municipal elections in November with all seats on both boards available.

Varnamtown

Varnamtown residents will elect five members to the board of aldermen and a mayor. The two candidates for alderman receiving the highest number of votes will serve for four years and the other three elected candidates will serve for two years.

Those three alderman seats will come up for election in 1991, at which time winners will serve terms of four years. The mayor will be elected every two years.

Incumbent Mayor Tracie Varnum has announced he will not seek election.

Sandy Creek

In Sandy Creek, voters will elect five members to the town board this fall. The three highest vote-getters

will serve four years and the other two will serve two years. This opens the way for staggered four-year terms starting with elections in 1991. The mayor of Sandy Creek will be appointed by the board from its membership.

Bolivia

The mayor and all four town council seats in Bolivia will be up for election this fall, as they are every two years.

Bolton Spring Lakes

Boiling Spring Lakes voters will fill the town board seats now occupied by Herbert Bunten and Eleanor Ensminger and Mayor Robert Williams. Town commissioners are elected to terms of four years, while the mayor is elected every two years.

Long Beach

On Oak Island, three commissioners' seats and the mayor's post will be up for grabs in November at Long Beach. Mayor John Vereen and board members Robert Miller, William Hobie Millard and James Sloop will face re-election. Commissioners are elected to four-year terms, and the mayor, a two-year term.

Yaupon Beach

Three of the six seats on the Yaupon Beach Board of Commissioners will be up for election in November. They are currently occupied by E.W. Rees, Robert Brown and Homer Brewer Jr. Town commissioners are elected for four-year terms, and the mayor is appointed by the full board.

Caswell Beach

Caswell Beach Board of Commissioners' seats presently occupied by Duncan Stuart and Bill Boyd and the mayor's position now held by Jack Cook are up for election in November. Town board members are elected for terms of four years, and the mayor is elected every two years.

Southport

Southport voters will fill more (See FILING, Page 2-A)

Shallotte May Have To Pay Back Portion Of State Street Funds

BY DOUG RUTTER

The Town of Shallotte may have to pay back more than \$25,000 in state Powell Bill funds it has received over the past five years for streets that were not being maintained by the town.

Since 1985, the town has received money for about five miles of roadway in the Brierwood Estates subdivision that it did not start taking care of until last fall. Shallotte began

collecting Powell Bill money on some of the subdivision's streets in 1984, when a portion of the area was annexed.

Powell Bill funds are allocated each year to municipalities based on a formula calculated on the basis population and the miles of street maintained by the town. The funds can only be used for street improvements, storm drainage, grading, equipment purchases and

related purposes.

Although the town took over maintenance of all streets in the annexed portion of Brierwood Estates last November, it wasn't until March 1 that the roads were formally dedicated to the town.

Prior to the town taking over maintenance of the streets, they were the responsibility of the developer. As part of the agreement to annex the area, the roads were to

be accepted by the town only after the developer completed improvements requested by the town board.

However, the town has been receiving Powell Bill monies for all of the streets in the annexed section of Brierwood since 1985, according to Marie Chappell, a highway analyst in the planning and research branch of the state Department of Transportation.

During that time, the town received more than \$25,000 for the roads in the subdivision, even though they were not maintained by town employees.

The estimate is based on a figure of \$1,150 for each mile of roadway—the average dollar amount offered per mile between 1985 and 1988—and the 5.13 miles of streets in the annexed section of the golf course subdivision. Also, the town should have received

about \$2,000 for claiming parts of Brierwood Drive and Country Club Road in 1984.

"Ordinarily, we would require them to pay it back if they claimed the street and it was not really their street," said Ms. Chappell. "They need to get this resolved."

Shallotte Mayor Jerry Jones said Tuesday that he and all of the town board members are aware that the (See STATE, Page 2-A)

Bill To Allocate More Funds For Lockwood Folly Inlet Dredging

BY DOUG RUTTER

Lockwood Folly Inlet would be dredged at the same level as it has in the past under a federal appropriations bill which cleared one house of Congress last week.

The Energy and Water Appropriations Bill, which passed the U.S. House of Representatives last Wednesday, would provide \$35,000 for maintenance dredging of the local inlet next fiscal year, which begins in October.

The bill is the latest in a long line of federal funding proposals for dredging the local inlet, which earlier this

year was dropped entirely from next year's proposed budget.

In January, former President Ronald Reagan proposed a budget for fiscal year 1990 that eliminated all funds for maintenance dredging of Lockwood Folly Inlet and nine other coastal waterways in North Carolina.

Deletion of these projects was part of a proposed \$8.3 million cutback in U.S. Army Corps of Engineers waterway maintenance dredging in the state.

President Bush later recommended a revised plan that would earmark

\$329,000 for dredging of the local inlet. But that would provide fewer dollars than have been required in recent years to keep the inlet open.

Over the past five years, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has spent an average of \$440,000 per year to maintain Lockwood Folly Inlet.

Situated between Holden Beach and Long Beach, the inlet is considered vital to both commercial and recreational fishermen seeking access to the Atlantic Ocean. It is also thought to be important to shellfishermen who work in Lockwood Folly River since a clear inlet allows for better flushing of

pollutants.

U.S. Rep. Charles Rose, who has been pushing for restoration of the maintenance dredging funds since budget cuts were proposed in January, said last week that he expects the appropriations bill to pass the Senate without any major problems.

"I think Lockwood Folly Inlet and river are extremely important to commercial fishermen, shrimpers and for the recreational residents of Brunswick County," he said. "If Lockwood Folly is not properly maintained, Brunswick County will suffer economically."

Although he is confident federal dollars will be allocated for inlet dredging next fiscal year, Rose said all money for operation and maintenance must be allocated on a year-to-year basis and that another funding battle may be necessary next year.

"I'm glad that we convinced the Congress that money was needed for maintenance," he said. "I think our senators can see that it stays in the bill."

Keith Pitts, a legislative aide to Rose, said he expects the Senate to act on the bill sometime next month. "We've had success in the past, and

we've been working with people on the Senate side."

Rose also said last week that once the Senate approves the spending plan, he does not expect opposition from the president.

Also included in the appropriations bill is \$300,000 to continue a flood control engineering design study and beach renourishment program at Long Beach.

Long Beach Town Manager Gary Britt said the funds will apparently be used to continue a study started several years ago by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.