

New Purchasing Officer Will 'Take Stock' Of County Goods

BY RAHN ADAMS

As Brunswick County's first purchasing officer, Billy Ingram can count on one thing in his new job: He'll be counting a lot of county-owned things over the next few months.



INGRAM LEWIS

Ingram, who has served as county Building Inspections director for the past 1 1/2 years, moved into the new purchasing office in the Administration Building in Bolivia last week. According to County Manager John T. Smith, Chief Building Inspector Julius "Buddy" Lewis, 34, of Leland, is serving as interim Building Inspections director until Ingram's permanent replacement is found.

"I just wanted to make the change and get the people moved around," Smith said of his reason for moving Ingram before a new inspections director is selected.

Ingram, 43, of Ash, was named to the \$26,486 per year purchasing officer job in September. Fourteen county employees had applied for the post, which was advertised in-house.

Although county commissioners discussed establishing a county purchasing department in 1988 and earlier, the position wasn't created until earlier this year when the 1989-90 budget was adopted.

County officials have favored centralized purchasing in hopes that the county can save money through bulk orders of supplies. However, storage space to handle bulk purchasing is not available. The county-owned Red & White building in Bolivia has been mentioned as a possible warehouse, although it would have to be renovated first.

Smith said last week that since the county does not have sufficient warehouse space yet, Ingram's initial duty is to review orders that are placed by individual department heads. "Right now, we're doing the same as we did," Smith said. "He's just reviewing the requisitions."

Either in January or at the start of the next fiscal year in July, Ingram will begin actually ordering for the departments, Smith said. He added that the most difficult aspect of switching to the new method will be the "changing of attitudes," since department heads have always dealt personally with vendors of their choices.

In the meantime, Ingram also will develop new requisition forms for departments to use, and will take inventory of county stock in the garage, housekeeping and water departments, Smith said.

The county manager said last

week that no decision had been made on how Ingram's former inspections director post will be filled, although he noted that the vacancy probably will be advertised in-house, "to give everyone (in the department) an opportunity to apply."

Except for a period two years ago, Lewis—who recently was elected as a director of the Leland Sanitary District—has been employed in Building Inspections since 1985.

Smith confirmed that Lewis resigned as a building inspector following a Jan. 12, 1987, incident in which he was charged with speeding and driving while impaired in a county truck, and misdemeanor possession of less than one ounce of marijuana.

District Court records on file at the Brunswick County Clerk of Court's office show that Lewis pleaded guilty in July 1987 to reckless driving and the marijuana possession count. The DWI charge was dismissed. He was sentenced to a \$25 fine and a 10-day suspended jail term.

Lewis later was rehired as a building inspector and was promoted to chief inspector last year, when the department was reorganized and Ingram was named director.

Smith said last week that the 1987 incident would not preclude Lewis from being considered for the permanent inspections director position.

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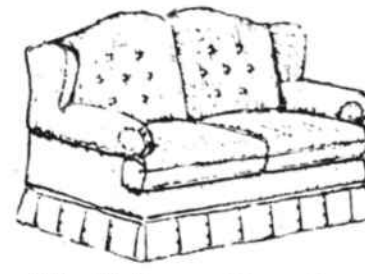
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