

## In The Basket

Wastepaper baskets at the county complex should be emptier this week, as employees start changing disposal habits. A new "desktop" recycling program is expected to help reduce the amount of paper bound for the county landfill. The story's on Page 12-A.

## Take County Crown

West Brunswick High School's Lady Trojans powered past the South Brunswick Cougars Friday 48-29 to claim the county girls' basketball championship before heading into Waccamaw Conference tournament action. For the full story, turn to Page 8-B.

## Nominations Due

Any business that's a year old and has less than 100 employees could be eligible for a 1989 Small Business Award this May. But nominations must be submitted to the BCC Small Business Center no later than April 1. Business news is on Page 9-C.

# THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

Twenty-eighth Year, Number 16

©1990 THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

Shalotte, North Carolina, Thursday, March 1, 1990

25¢ Per Copy

34 Pages, 3 Sections, Plus Insert

## NEW ESTIMATES DOUBLE THE ORIGINAL

# BCC Board Sends Auditorium Plans Back To Drawing Board

BY SUSAN USHER

Construction of an auditorium on the Brunswick Community College campus received yet another setback last week, with news that initial cost estimates for the project were apparently way out of line. As a result, the project is headed back to the design table.

After getting new estimates by two parties, college trustees last Wednesday night voted to hire Boney & Associates of Wilmington as architects for the project should they agree to certain conditions, said Ben DeBlois, vice president for administrative services.

These include redesign of the auditorium to fall within a \$3.2 million maximum budget, while delivering a 1,500-seat facility that complements existing buildings on campus, and is of similar quality to another facility designed by the firm, Kenan Auditorium on the campus of the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. It is also expected to meet the basic design standards agreed on by a community advisory

committee involved in planning of the facility.

The offer to hire came at the recommendation of the board's building and grounds committee, which had met several times in preparation for the board meeting. The motion was approved by the board with only a brief explanation and no discussion. Four of 12 trustees were absent: Eugene Hewett, Shirley Babson, Tommy Bradsher and Commissioner Benny Ludlum.

The board also agreed to lease the old school cafeteria building at its Southport campus to a Southport group that offers recreation to local youths on Saturday morning, discussed progress of a planned dual enrollment program with the Brunswick County Schools and decided to host Department of Community College officials to discuss the local need for a turf management curriculum program at the college.

BCC had turned to Boney & Associates for assistance with the auditorium following the death last September of project architect

*"No one knows why there is such a vast difference in figures."*

—Ben DeBlois, BCC Vice President  
On new auditorium cost estimate

James Pittman. The college had chosen Pittman as architect after he left J.G. Architects to form his own business. Before working with Johnson, Pittman had worked with Boney & Associates for many years, DeBlois said, which is why the college sought out that firm to complete his project.

DeBlois described the current negotiations as an attempt by the college to control three major variables—size, cost and quality—to come up with the best facility possible.

"We don't know if we can achieve all the variables," he said. Should Boney & Associates decide they cannot meet the conditions of the contract, DeBlois said trustees

would then take another look at those three factors.

Pittman had first estimated the project cost at an estimated \$2.8 million. Before agreeing to take on the project, Boney & Associates last month asked to obtain an up-to-date cost figure for the two-year-old project. At that time it was estimating that the project could be let for bid in fall 1990, and occupied in the winter of 1991-92.

Funds to build the auditorium come from proceeds of an \$8 million bond sale approved by county voters. Trustees broke ground for the project last fall as part of BCC's 10th anniversary celebration. The project had already experienced a slight delay after trustees decided

on a change of locations on campus. During that same time period, two other events relating to the auditorium occurred: the death of the project architect, and the naming of the auditorium for benefactor Odell Williamson. He had endowed a trust fund to pay the salary of an auditorium manager.

Harris & Associates of Columbia, S.C., put the cost in the range of \$6 million, including \$500,000 to cover any design changes the college might approve during the pre-construction phase, DeBlois said. "That figure surprised us quite a bit," the vice president indicated.

In fact, it prompted the college to have the plans reviewed by a third party, the state Office of Construction. That estimate came in at \$5 million to \$5.4 million, said DeBlois.

"No one knows why there is such a vast difference in figures," he continued, though there are several theories being advanced. "It can't be explained by inflation alone . . . No one really knows."

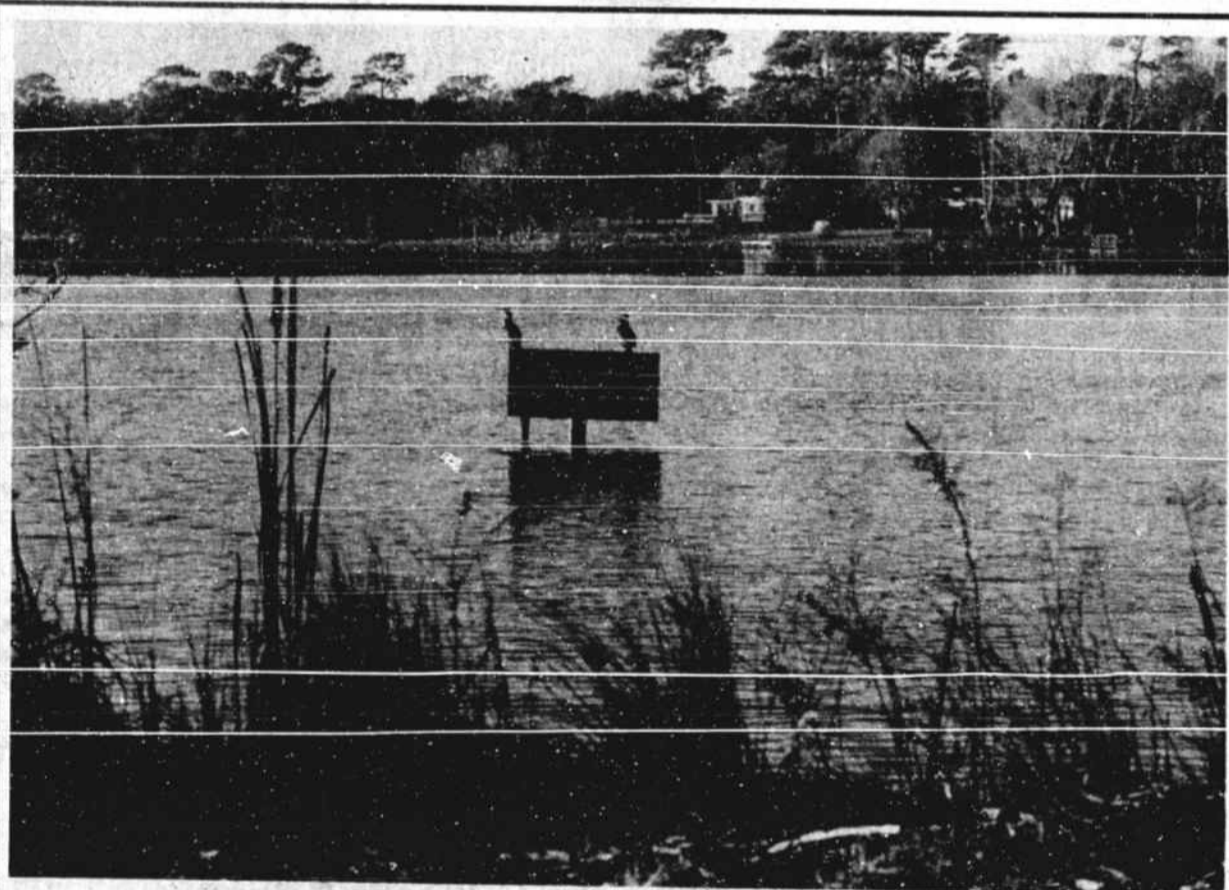
It appears the first estimate was based on a building with 29,000 square footage. But the final plans were for a structure with approximately 45,000 square feet.

In any case, DeBlois said BCC's trustees are committed to building a facility in keeping with the major recommendations of the auditorium advisory committee, which included representatives of all the major arts organizations in the county and others.

It will be, he pledged, "a quality auditorium we can be proud of and that the citizens of this county can have available in a timely manner. The trustees take that charge very seriously."

The project acoustical consultant had described the planned facility as the "best on the East Coast. . . ." DeBlois recalled, noting that while the new facility may not merit that distinction, it could be the best auditorium in the state.

Smiling mischievously, he added, "I know it will be the best in Brunswick County."



STAFF PHOTO BY RAHN ADAMS

THIS IS THE VIEW from one of 42 sites that are inventoried in Brunswick County's first shoreline access plan. A right-of-way pull-off and trash receptacle are located at this site on N.C. 179 within the Sunset Beach town limits.

## Commissioners To Consider Pursuing State Shoreline Access Grant Funds

BY RAHN ADAMS

How Brunswick County will implement its new shoreline access plan will be for county commissioners alone to decide, as the county planning board last week made no recommendations concerning specific access projects for which the county should seek state grant funds.

Proposed pre-applications for Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA) access grants are expected to be considered by commissioners at their March 5 meeting in Bolivia. The county has until March 30 to apply for the access grants.

The planning board briefly discussed the CAMA grant program at its regular monthly meeting last Wednesday. The hour-long meeting was attended by planning board members Ed Gore, Thomas Dixie and Alan Holden.

The three members voted unanimously to recommend that the county file pre-applications for grants subject to the commissioners' selection of individual projects to pursue. According to Planning Director John Harvey, the N.C. Division of Coastal Management must approve any pre-applications before actual grant applications would be allowed.

Harvey told planning board members that a copy of the county's first shoreline access plan—a \$7,800 state- and locally-funded document prepared by Wilmington landscape architect Howard Capps—has been submitted to Coastal Management for review.

Although the state's review of the plan will not be completed for at least two months, Coastal Management officials indicated that the study as it now stands is sufficient to be used in the current grant application process, Harvey said.

### Recommended Sites

While 14 sites throughout Brunswick County are listed as recommended access areas, the study includes schematic plans and cost estimates for only

four sites—the county's four existing N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission boat ramps—because county officials have not indicated yet if they would favor construction of any access areas that require land acquisition.

The wildlife ramps are located at Pireway on the Waccamaw River; at Sunset Harbor on the Lockwood Folly River; and in the Southport area on the Carolina Power & Light Company canal and on Rice's Creek.

The access plan recommends the addition of gazebos at all four sites; picnic tables at all sites but Rice's Creek; and fishing piers at all sites but Sunset Harbor. Estimated improvement costs range from \$11,700 at Sunset Harbor to \$20,450 at Pireway.

Boat access facilities are suggested for nine of the remaining 10 recommended sites, which include:

—Bonaparte Landing off N.C. 179 between Sunset Beach and Calabash, boating access.

—Cape Fear River east of N.C. 133 (N.C. Department of Transportation property), visual (sight-seeing) access.

—Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) in the old N.C. 179 right-of-way (mainland) after construction of the new Sunset Beach Bridge, visual, fishing and possible boating access.

—ICW at Summer Place Drive in the Holden Beach area, boating access.

—ICW at Bricklanding Road, gazebo, picnic tables, benches and boating access.

—ICW at Old Bridge Road under the Oak Island Bridge, picnic area and gazebo, with boating and possibly fishing access.

—Shalotte River at Middle Dam Road, boating, pedestrian and visual access.

—Lockwood Folly River at N.C. 211 bridge, gazebo, picnic shelter, nature trails and boating access.

(See COMMISSIONERS, Page 2-A)

## Clegg Wearing Two More Hats In Department Head Mystery

BY RAHN ADAMS

David Clegg — county attorney and interim county manager—got to try on the hats of two more department heads last week, as the acting building inspections director was away on a three-week medical leave of absence and the county purchasing agent was away on a three-day job suspension.

Clegg, who has headed county administration since the Dec. 4 firing of County Manager John T. Smith, would not comment specifically this week on the absences of acting Inspections Director Julius D. "Buddy" Lewis and Purchasing Agent Billy Ingram.

Instead, the interim manager referred questions to Personnel Officer Deborah Bowling, who would say only that Lewis requested and was granted a medical leave of absence Feb. 15 through March 9, and that Ingram was suspended by Clegg Feb. 19 through 21 for reasons involving "personal conduct."

Neither Clegg nor Ms. Bowling would disclose Lewis' apparent medical problem. Lewis could not be reached at home. A receptionist in the building inspections department said Tuesday that the acting director was "out of town."

Ingram, who returned to work last Thursday, also refused to explain the reasons behind his suspension. "This time I just can't comment on it," he said Tuesday.

According to the county personnel policy, an employee may be suspended without pay for causes relat-



INGRAM

LEWIS

ed to personal conduct "in order to avoid undue disruption of work, to protect the safety of persons or property, or for other serious reasons."

Ingram, however, said his suspension was "not at all" related to a Dec. 21 county commissioners meeting in which his purchasing agent position was discussed. Commissioner Benny Ludlum said he called the emergency meeting after he heard that Chairman Gene Pinkerton intended to fire one department head and hire a director in another department.

Officials indicated that Ingram was the department head whose position was in jeopardy and that Lewis was the prospective new director. Lewis was named acting head of the inspections department in November after Ingram moved from his former inspections director post to the new purchasing agent position.

When those changes were made in November, the building inspections department already was the subject of a Brunswick County Sheriff's Department investigation that involves \$225 discovered miss-

ing from the department's cash drawer. Commissioners requested the investigation in late September.

According to Sheriff John C. Davis and Det. Gary Shay, six employees who had access to the cash drawer—including Ingram—have taken polygraph tests administered by the SBI over the past couple of months. The lawmen would not comment on results of the tests.

Shay said Lewis is the only employee who remains to be tested. Lewis' polygraph test initially was scheduled Feb. 27. However, Davis said Monday that the test was postponed because Lewis was "undergoing treatment."

Clegg told the *Beacon* Monday that the permanent building inspections director position will not be advertised and filled until the theft investigation concludes. He added that he is "overseeing the day-to-day operation" of the building inspections department in Lewis' absence.

Both Clegg and Davis noted that a confession is the only admissible "evidence" that can be drawn from a polygraph test and used in a criminal prosecution. The sheriff said none of the six individuals tested so far had confessed to taking the money.

However, Clegg stated that results of the polygraph tests "could certainly be taken into consideration" by him in handling the matter administratively. When asked if Ingram's suspension last week was related to the investigation, Clegg said, "I'd rather not comment."

## Southport Businesswoman Accused Of Embezzlement

BY RAHN ADAMS

When Olivia Costango went to court last Wednesday, the Southport businesswoman apparently thought she was in Bolivia only to serve as an alternate juror in a murder case. While at the courthouse, however, she was charged with embezzling more than \$4,400 from the Southport revitalization group she served as treasurer.

Costango, 41, owner of the Southport advertising firm Costanzo Ventures, was arrested last Wednesday by Southport Police Chief Robert Gray on nine counts of embezzlement, according to arrest warrants on file in the Brunswick County Clerk of Court's office.

Gray told the *Beacon* that he discussed the arrest with Superior Court Judge Giles R. Clark before having Ms. Costango go to the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department, where the warrants were served. Empaneled Tuesday as an

alternate juror, she did not continue hearing testimony in the murder trial after her arrest last Wednesday.

Ms. Costango was released from custody last Wednesday after posting a \$10,000 secured bond. In a first court appearance Monday, her trial date was set for March 8, according to the clerk of court's office.

While the police chief would not comment on details of the case, Gray said the "improprieties" with which Ms. Costango is charged were reported to him Feb. 2 by representatives of Southport's ANCHOR revitalization group. He indicated that the matter earlier had been discussed by the full ANCHOR board.

The charges allege that Ms. Costango embezzled \$4,462.94 in ANCHOR funds between July 1988 and September 1989. The largest single amount allegedly taken was \$1,000 on June 6, 1989. Four of the

alleged offenses occurred on Sept. 19, 1989, and involved \$1,496.31.

In addition to ANCHOR officials, the arrest warrants listed "witnesses" including Susan Rose of Wilmington Printing Company, Dick Rothfuss of Wilmington's Custom Specialties, Diane McKeithan of the Southport *State Port Pilot* newspaper and Cathy New of Wilmington.

Gray would not explain the business' connections to the case. However, court documents on file at the clerk of court's office indicate that at least one witness, Ms. New, filed a small claims action against Ms. Costango last June to recover \$210 for unpaid typesetting services—the same amount listed in the embezzlement charge which names Ms. New as a witness. The small claims action was dismissed last year at the plaintiff's request.

Other records at the county court—(See BUSINESSWOMAN, Page 2-A)