

# Officials Starting To Work Early On Brunswick County Budget

BY RAHN ADAMS

If department heads and commissioners stick to Interim County Manager David Clegg's schedule, Brunswick County's new budget will be in the bag by June 4—but Clegg says he would settle for June 18, which would still be two weeks under the wire.

With a 3 1/2-week head start on budget work this year, departmental budget requests are due on Clegg's desk Monday. "I was really concerned that we get start-

ed early," the interim manager said Friday. "I think it should be a very methodical process, and we have some highly significant issues that must be resolved in this budget."

Commissioners themselves got on the budget bandwagon Monday as they began talks regarding capital projects facing the county (see related story). Clegg noted that four of the county's most pressing capital needs are water system expansion, construction of a 911

communications center, and the addition of more office space and maintenance facilities at the county government complex.

While the commissioners decide which capital projects to pursue, Clegg continues to work on proposals involving county operational costs. "I am sure people will just have the breath knocked out of them when they see my budget," he predicted, "because it will be a realistic view of Brunswick County operations . . . I'm not

going to play patty-cake with the budget."

Although he won't have an idea of next year's proposed tax rate until later in the budget process, Clegg added that he hopes to provide commissioners with the information they need to adopt a viable budget without them having to meet with the county's more than 30 department heads individually, as was done last year.

Last May and June, the county board bogged down in (See BUDGET, Page 2-A)

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BRUNSWICK COUNTY OFFICIALS tour the county complex grounds Monday afternoon to look at possible building sites. Pictured (from left) are Clerk to the Board Regina Alexander, Commissioner Gene Pinkerton, Commissioner Grace Beasley, Interim County Manager David Clegg, County Engineer Robert Tucker, Commissioner Kelly Holden and Commissioner Frankie Rabon.

## Developers Scale Down River Marina Plans

BY DOUG RUTTER

The future of a controversial proposal to construct a marina in the resource-rich waters of Lockwood Folly River is once again in the hands of the state Division of Coastal Management.

Developers of the Lockwood Folly golf community near Holden Beach have submitted a new permit application and scaled-down set of plans for a marina that has been on the drawing board for nearly two years.

"They made it a whole lot smaller than it was," said Jim Herstine, chief of the Division of Coastal Management's Wilmington office. "It's a very, very scaled down project."

Channel Side Corp. submitted its original permit application in April 1988 with plans to build a private 50-slip marina and dry storage area near some of the richest shellfish beds in the lower Lockwood Folly River.

Herstine said the location of the proposed Genoa Point Boat Basin hasn't changed, but the developers have reduced plans to include 26 slips, one boat ramp and no dry storage area.

The original plans were strongly opposed by local shellfishermen who have depended on oysters and clams in Lockwood Folly River for their livelihood. They argued that construction of the marina would result in more pollution in the river, which is frequently closed to shellfishing because of unsafe levels of fecal coliform bacteria.

"I'm still against it," Annie Smigiel, president of the local preservation group Save Our Shellfish, said Tuesday when told about the new plans. "We've got enough pollution in the Lockwood Folly River now without adding any more to it."

Three Channel Side officials could not be reached for comment Tuesday afternoon, but they have said all along they are just as concerned about the environment as the fishermen.

Herstine, who received the major CAMA permit application and new plans last month, said a decision on whether to grant the permit will probably be made before the end of April. Under state permit guidelines, he said the latest a decision could be made is July.

Before a final decision is made, however, 14 state and federal agencies will have the opportunity to review and comment on the new permit application.

When the original application was reviewed, the state Division of Marine Fisheries was the only agency to oppose the marina, although other groups had concerns about potential environmental impacts.

The old CAMA permit application had been on "administrative hold" since September 1988 pending submission of sewage treatment plans.

According to a form submitted with the new permit application describing the proposed marina, there are no plans for wastewater treatment facilities. There would be no toilets, showers or "pump-out" facilities for docked boats.

The form also states that the depth of the marina channel will increase from the boat ramp to the channel entrance and there will be no constrictions at the channel's mouth. These two factors are expected to promote flushing of the boat basin and reduce negative effects on water quality.

To create the upland boat basin, approximately 2,500 cubic yards of material would have to be excavated. None of the work would require excavation of wetlands, the form states.

Natural vegetative buffers, seeding, mulching and silt fencing would be used to control erosion. Water runoff would be directed through vegetative filters prior to entering any surface waters. Also, no boats longer than 21 feet would be allowed and there would be no fuel facilities.

## State Plans Oyster Relay

The first oyster relay in Brunswick County waters since 1988 will begin later this month in the Shallotte River.

"We're back in the relay business," Rich Carpenter, regional director of the state Division of Marine Fisheries, said Tuesday.

The oyster relay has tentatively been scheduled for March 20 through 23 and April 3 through 6 in the lower section of Shallotte River, said Carpenter.

Under the program, the state pays

fishermen \$1 per bushel to move oysters from polluted areas closed to shellfishing to clean waters where the oysters cleanse themselves and become safe for harvesting.

Carpenter said oysters will be moved from an area in Shallotte River where oyster growth has been "stunted" downstream to an area known as "The Swash," which he described as "a real good growing area."

(See OYSTER RELAY, Page 2-A)

## County Commissioners 'Brainstorm' Proposed Capital Improvement Plan

BY RAHN ADAMS

Brunswick County Commissioners went shopping for building sites at the county complex Monday afternoon, but they were only browsing—or "brainstorming," as Chairman Gene Pinkerton put it.

During the 2 1/2-hour work session, which included an impromptu tour of the complex grounds, the five commissioners discussed, in general, more than 10 proposed capital improvement projects that "are mandated either by the people or by the state," Pinkerton said.

Friday, the board will meet in recessed session with Edward Regan, executive director of the N.C. Association of County Commissioners, and Raleigh attorney A.P. Carlton to talk about financing options available to the county. The meeting begins Friday at 1 p.m. in the Administration Building.

The project that drew the most board discussion Monday was the proposed construction of a facility to house the county's 911 emergency telephone system, which is expected to be in operation by January 1992, and eventually a county emergency medical service as well.

Other projects included water system expansion, landfill improvements and construction of a new courthouse, new office space for several county departments and a sewer system for the county complex. Pinkerton also said buildings at the complex will need up to \$1.5 million in roofing work within the

next two to three years.

"Out of 12 or 14 projects, which ones are you serious about?" the chairman asked at the outset of the work session. He added that he has trouble prioritizing the projects because he feels all of them are "immediate needs" that must be addressed.

A telephone company official said in late January that the county would have to pick a location for the 911 communications center within "several months." Interim County Manager David Clegg commented Monday, "I just know we've got a deadline, and it's got to be housed."

In budget talks last spring, commissioners initially decided to locate the 911 center in the old Agricultural Extension Service/ Brunswick Community College building in Supply. The facility now houses the Volunteer and Information Center, Aging/Older Adults and Clean County.

However, Pinkerton said Monday he is embarrassed about the Supply building's appearance and that the departments must keep their offices there due to lack of sufficient space at the complex. He also noted that the county eventually will need a paid EMS and a facility that would be large enough to house the ambulance service, 911 and emergency management.

The board learned Monday that the county-owned Red and White Building in Bolivia Plaza Shopping

Center apparently is not a viable option to house 911, as has been previously suggested. Pinkerton said the building is in such bad shape that "all you have are two or three masonry walls...It's looking like we don't have a lot of value in that building."

The county purchased the Bolivia Plaza property for \$75,000 in early 1988. Pinkerton said Monday that repairs to the structure's roof alone would cost an estimated \$48,000. The building's electrical system, heating and air conditioning system, and plumbing also are in disrepair, he added.

Though they made no decision, commissioners discussed the possibilities of constructing a metal 911/EMS building—similar to Dare County's EMS facility—either on the Red and White Building site or off U.S. 17 just south of the main complex grounds. According to Pinkerton, simply clearing the Red and White Building site would cost \$28,000.

Concerning a proposed new courthouse, Clegg reminded the commissioners that the 13th Judicial District will be assigned a second resident superior court judge next year, probably increasing the number of court sessions that will be held in Bolivia. Clegg said court officials already have discussed moving some civil court sessions back to the old county courthouse in Southport and holding court in the Public Assembly Building.

"They haven't put any pressure

on us," Pinkerton said of the N.C. Administrative Office of the Courts, "but I can see it coming."

However, the N.C. Department of Environment, Health and Natural Resources has put pressure on the county to correct problems with operation of the complex's sewer system—the same problems that the county spent \$160,000 to try to correct two years ago.

Fined \$2,355 in January for improper maintenance and operation of the system, the county settled with the state earlier this month for less than the amount of the fine. The county also agreed to build a new sewer system, Clegg told the *Beacon* Tuesday.

The sewer project is being headed up by County Engineer Robert Tucker. Clegg said topographic surveys and some land clearing have been done on property toward the rear of the complex to help officials determine what type of system to install. He indicated that no cost estimate has been made for the project, and no funds have been allocated yet.

Commissioners Monday also discussed constructing new office and maintenance space for the recreation and water departments in a building similar to one built in-house last year for the operations services and landfill departments. Cost of the building was about \$48,000 for materials alone or an estimated \$64,000 including county labor.

## Shallotte Woman Killed In Weekend Auto Mishap

A local woman was killed in a single-car accident late Friday near Shallotte.

Paula Melzer Reeves, 26, of Shallotte, was pronounced dead at the scene of the 10:45 p.m. wreck four miles south of Shallotte on N.C. 179, according to Highway Patrol spokesperson Ruby Oakley and Brunswick County Coroner Greg White.

Ms. Reeves' death was the second fatality this year on Brunswick County roadways. Ms. Oakley said five traffic deaths had occurred in the county by this same time last year.

The fatal wreck occurred when Ms. Reeves' 1989 Ford ran off the right side of N.C. 179 and overturned, throwing the driver from the

vehicle. A passenger—Jessie Thomas Reeves, 35, also of Shallotte—was not injured.

Jessie Reeves told Trooper B.L. Wilkes that an unidentified vehicle had forced the Reeves car off the road, Ms. Oakley said. She added that the accident was not alcohol related and that the Reeves auto apparently was traveling 55 mph when the wreck happened.

Wilkes estimated damage to the car at \$6,000. No charges were filed in connection with the accident.

In another local wreck, four South Brunswick Middle School students were slightly injured in a school bus accident Monday on N.C. 87 about 2.5 miles northeast of Bolivia. Thirty-three children were (See SHALLOTTE, Page 2-A)

## Commissioners Pick New Brunswick ABC Chairman

BY RAHN ADAMS

Long Beach resident Joyce Vereen went to Monday night's county commissioners meeting simply hoping to be appointed to the Brunswick County Alcoholic Beverage Control board and left as the three-member panel's new chairman.

Mrs. Vereen, wife of Long Beach Mayor Johnny Vereen, was appointed to complete the three-year term of former ABC Chairman Wilber Rabon, who resigned his three-week-old post Feb. 23.

Nominated by Commission Chairman Gene Pinkerton, Mrs. Vereen was elected on a 3-2 vote along party lines. Republican Commissioners Pinkerton, Frankie Rabon and Kelly Holden supported Mrs. Vereen's nomination. Democrats Grace Beasley and Benny Ludlum supported Navassa Mayor Louis "Bobby" Brown, who was nominated by Ms. Beasley.

Mrs. Vereen, who is employed as office manager for a Long Beach cable television of-

fice, was then elected ABC chairman by acclamation. Ludlum nominated her for the chairmanship.

"It's a little frightening," Mrs. Vereen said afterwards of her new role as head of the county ABC board, "but with the people on there, I think we can do a good job for Brunswick County." Other board members are John Ramsey, also of Long Beach, and Raymond Babson of Ash.

The board is charged with administering Brunswick County's ABC system and opening a county ABC store. A successful countywide alcohol referendum last November cleared the way for the county system. The board members are expected to attend training classes soon in Raleigh.

Commissioners named Rabon, Ramsey and Babson to the ABC board Feb. 5, appointing them to three-, two- and one-year terms, respectively. Rabon, a Winnabow resident who is an older brother of Commissioner Frankie Rabon,

resigned in a Feb. 23 letter that county officials received Feb. 26.

"It is with deep regret that I must decline this appointment," Rabon wrote. "My present commitments to my family and the responsibilities of my job are the primary factors in my decision." Rabon, a former county commissioner and school board member, is employed as chief purchasing agent for Federal Paper Board Company in Riegelwood.

Commissioners almost adjourned Monday's meeting without filling the vacancy. Ludlum, who said he had earlier asked for the appointment to be added to the meeting agenda, stopped board members as they voted on Commissioner Rabon's motion to adjourn.

Ms. Beasley immediately nominated Brown after Ludlum chided the board for attempting to delay the appointment. Ludlum commented, "I feel like we're dragging our feet, and we need to get on with it."