

# Holden Commission Gives \$10,000 To Outfit New Fire Truck

BY DOUG RUTTER

Tri-Beach Volunteer Fire Department will receive \$10,000 from the town of Holden Beach to purchase equipment for a new fire truck.

Town commissioners approved the special contribution at their meeting Monday night, responding to an earlier request from the department.

Holden Beach budgeted \$20,000 this fiscal year for its annual contract with the fire department. The additional donation probably will come from the town's unappropriated fund balance.

"We did \$350,000 this way to put sand on the beach. Certainly we can give \$10,000 for a fire truck," said Commissioner Bob Buck, who made the motion to approve the donation.

Buck said there are no firefighting experts on the town board who would know if the equipment is needed or not. He said the town has to trust the fire department's leaders to ask for what is really needed.

"This town is very, very dependent on that fire department," Buck said, adding that the town has the firemen to thank for its low fire insurance rating.

Mayor Pro tem Gloria Barrett ran the meeting Monday in the absence of Mayor John Tandy, who was in Chapel Hill being honored for a scholarship that has been established in his name through the University of North Carolina.

Mrs. Barrett said the scholarship is funded by five of Tandy's former students in Winston-Salem.

Commissioner Kenner Amos also

was absent Monday for health reasons.

## No More Tank?

Holden Beach officials are thinking about digging up and getting rid of the town's underground gasoline storage tank and contracting with a local filling station.

The town uses the gas tank to fill up its police cars and other vehicles, but changes in state regulations regarding underground gas storage tanks might make it cheaper for the town to buy fuel at a gas station.

Building Inspector Dwight Carroll said the town will have to dig up its underground tank by October or purchase \$1 million in insurance to cover the town in case the tank leaks.

As part of the planned renovation and addition to the town hall complex, commissioners have been considering buying a new above-ground gas tank.

Carroll said the new tank would cost about \$15,000, and that the state will eventually require owners of above-ground tanks to purchase insurance.

Commissioners discussed their options Monday night but made no decision. They pointed out that contracting with a filling station may be cheaper than buying a new tank, but local gas stations aren't open 24 hours a day.

## Hugo Leftovers

Town commissioners took care of two "housekeeping" matters left over from Hurricane Hugo Monday night. The board refused one landowner's request to drop a debris cleanup charge, but agreed to drop the charge in another case.



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—Bob Buck  
Holden Beach Commissioner

Town officials turned down C.H. Skinner's request to forgive a bill for \$100 that he owes the town for cleanup of debris on his property at 226 Hillside Drive.

Building Inspector Carroll said the lot was cleaned up following the 1989 hurricane, and the town paid a contractor for cleaning Skinner's lot. If the bill isn't paid, it can become a lien on the property.

In the second case, commissioners voted to write a letter to Holden Beach Enterprises apologizing for a notice which said the company owed the town \$100 for cleaning up debris on company land following Hugo.

Interim Town Manager Diane Clark said the firm allowed the town and state to pile debris on its land following the storm, and the town shouldn't have billed Holden Beach Enterprises for the cleanup.

## Other Business

In other business Monday, commissioners:

■ Met in executive session for just over one hour, but took no action. Town Attorney Kenneth Campbell said the board discussed personnel

policies as they relate to specific personnel.

■ Adopted an ordinance requiring owners of oceanfront homes to put house numbers on their beach walkways. The numbers must be at least three inches high and be clearly visible from the strand.

■ Voted to send a letter to Brunswick County voicing concerns about a hog slaughtering plant proposed on the Cape Fear River in Bladen County. Resident Crawford Hart suggested the town get involved because the plant's proposed discharge into the Cape Fear River may affect the local drinking water supply. "You've already got enough pollution around here without somebody adding to it," he said.

■ Approved the purchase of \$5,735 worth of police department uniforms and equipment. The board did not decide whether police officers should be required to receive training in ambulance attendant, radar certification, drug awareness and use of excessive force. Commissioners also discussed whether the town should pay officers while they are taking the courses.

■ Agreed to give property owners Ronie and Diane Robinson one year to pay the town \$179 for clearing dead myrtle bushes from their land at 1038 Ocean Blvd. West. The interim town manager said Mrs. Robinson had asked for extra time to pay because her husband was sent with the military to the Middle East.

■ Tabled a proposal to limit the number of consecutive terms someone can serve on the planning board or board of adjustment. Mrs. Barrett suggested the matter be tabled due to the two absences and the controversial nature of the issue.

■ Voted to give one free copy of the town water bill listing to each real estate company that collects occupancy tax revenue for the town and requests the listing. Commissioner Gay Atkins said the lists would allow real estate firms to assist visitors who don't know street addresses of their friends. It costs the town about \$5 to generate each listing.

■ Postponed the next regular meeting because of the Easter holiday. The meeting was rescheduled for Monday, April 8, at 7 p.m. in the town hall.

■ Heard about an experimental street lighting project on Brunswick Avenue West. Mrs. Clark said Brunswick Electric Membership Corp. installed six lights for a 30-day period to give residents a chance to see the lights in action.

■ Heard that the Holden Beach Planning and Zoning Board will discuss a proposed septic tank monitoring and inspection program at its meeting Tuesday, March 19, at 7 p.m. in the town hall.

■ Heard from resident Margaret Vasco that the Holden Beach VFW plans to present the town with a flag for a new flag pole that has been erected near the foot of the bridge. The presentation is scheduled Saturday, March 16, at 10 a.m. She said American troops will be honored during the ceremony.

## Town Board Denies Setback Variance

The Holden Beach Board of Adjustment last week turned down a homeowner's request to build a deck that would have violated the town's setback rules.

L.H. and June Froehlich of Danville, Ill., asked for a variance from the 20-foot setback so they could build a deck as part of an egress on the back of their home at 141 Starfish Dr.

The homeowners requested a variance for the deck because it

would have been located within the setback area. Interim Town Manager Diane Clark said a stairway can still be built without the variance.

Mrs. Clark said the town board voted unanimously last Thursday to deny the request because the deck is not needed for egress from the house.

The board of adjustment has scheduled a meeting for Friday, March 15, at 5 p.m. in town hall to discuss rules of procedure.

## AUDITOR TALKS 'HIDDEN' TAXES

# Library Warns It Might Need More Funds Come Budget Time

BY TERRY POPE

Brunswick County Commissioners heard some good news and some bad news regarding money Monday night. The county's public library system came asking for more money while an auditor told the board how it could find extra tax revenues by auditing local businesses and industries.

Brunswick County's public library system, running short of funds, may have to cut its hours, a member of the library board of trustees told commissioners.

Matilda Suggs said the state cut the library's budget by 5 percent this fiscal year and that 1991-92 doesn't look any better.

"We have learned from the state library that we are also assured of additional cuts in the next budget," Ms. Suggs said.

An increase in county funding may be the only way to keep from cutting employees and their hours during the next fiscal year. With a staff of eight employees, the public library operates three facilities, a main building in Southport and branches in Shallotte and Leland. It also operates a bookmobile.

A new Leland Library building is expected to begin construction this year on Village Road, Ms. Suggs said. Residents have also requested a branch on Oak Island and one in Calabash.

"So far, we haven't been able to do anything with those requests," she said. "Unfortunately, the Brunswick County library is falling behind. Demands have increased."

Funding for the library comes from both the county and state. The towns of Southport and Shallotte also contribute funds. Long Beach has also made donations in the past, Ms. Suggs said.

County commissioners contributed \$20,000 this fiscal year to build the new Leland library. Plans were approved for the building last week, said Edith Tillman, who has headed the drive to build the facility beside the Leland Town Hall.

Ms. Suggs told the board that a 1980 census estimated there were 6,500 functionally illiterate adults in Brunswick County who do not have the skills to fill out job applications. That number has since grown with the population, she said.

"These are problems that call for

*"Unfortunately, the Brunswick County library is falling behind. Demands have increased."*

—Matilda Suggs  
Library Trustee

vigorous efforts," Ms. Suggs said. "The library is the only institution that serves all of the populations, from the cradle to the grave."

The county library hasn't had an increase in local funding in the last four budgets and its staff hasn't increased since 1980, she said.

## Auditor Talks Taxes

County commissioners, also fearing a cut in state funds for the 1991-92 fiscal year, heard from a tax au-

diting firm Monday on ways counties can find hidden money by auditing business property tax listings.

Richard Cooke of Tax Management Associates, which has offices in Charlotte and Raleigh, was invited to address the board by Brunswick County Tax Administrator Boyd Williamson.

The county can hire, on a contingency basis, an independent firm to audit businesses to determine if they

are in compliance with state and county tax laws.

"Maybe it's not a bad idea," Williamson told commissioners. "There are a few negatives, but mostly it's positive."

The firm first approached the county two years ago, Williamson said. Since then, 24 North Carolina counties have signed on to become customers of TMA, including Duplin, Bladen, Robeson and Onslow counties, he said.

"Ours is a fact-finding mission," explained Cooke. "We go to the headquarters of the company we are auditing. Our issue is equity, to see if all machinery and equity is reported properly."

The company would keep 35 percent of all tax revenues discovered by the audit while the county would keep the remaining 65 percent.

"What we are finding is that 65 percent of all taxpayers are in compliance with the law," Cooke said.

Another 25 percent record errors because they either don't understand the law or make unintentional mistakes that the auditors would pick up on, Cooke said.

"There are 5 percent that totally abuse the system," he added. "They might eliminate every other line item or don't list when equipment comes into the plant."

The company has uncovered more than \$15 million for counties that would have gone uncollected without an audit, he said. The company has 98 employees and has been in business for 11 years.

"It's a hot topic," Cooke said. Commissioners took no action on the presentation.

## Demo Precincts Meeting Tonight

Brunswick County Democrats will hold their annual precinct meetings today (Thursday) at 8 p.m. at their regular polling places.

In an announcement this week County Democratic Chairman Glen Peterson encouraged all registered Democrats to attend, "whether they're party regulars or just want to get involved with the party again."

Precinct meetings are the most basic ingredient for Democratic success, Peterson suggested. "The precinct level is where all policy-making begins. The more that people get involved in precinct meetings, the better the party can represent the views of all Democrats."

At the March 7 meetings, Democrats will elect precinct officers and

delegates to the April 6 county convention. The convention will be held at Brunswick County Democratic Headquarters near Supply.

Precincts will also have an opportunity to pass resolutions on the party's public policy issues.

Also, Peterson said the party building committee will meet Saturday, March 9 at 10 a.m. at the headquarters building.

More information on these upcoming events is available from Peterson between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. at (919) 371-9490.

## Late Registration Continues At BCC

Late registration for spring quarter classes continues through Wednesday, March 13, at Brunswick Community College at Supply.

Ann Marie Bellamy, public information officer, said students are encouraged to register before classes begin March 11.

Late registration hours are 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Wednesday.

Courses are available in a wide range of curriculum areas and the college has an open door admission policy.

Students who will be registering at BCC for the first time must arrange to take the school's assessment for success seminar. The evaluation assists in determining appropriate courses and credit loads for students.

More information is available by contacting the Student Services Office at 451-6329, 754-6950 or 343-0203.

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