Leland Wants To Improve Town Tax Collections

BY TERRY POPE

Leland officials have taken steps to begin collecting delinquent taxes owed by its residents.

For the 1989-90 fiscal year, the town collected only 86.3 percent of its taxes levied, a figure that improved to 95 percent for 1990-91.

The state would like the figure to fall closer to 98 percent, said Town Clerk Joyce Bragg, who was appointed by the town council last Thursday to also serve as tax collector.

The Brunswick County Tax Department bills and collects the town's taxes for a 1.5 percent fee. Leland paid the county $567 last year to collect its taxes because the town did not have the manpower to do the job.

According to Ms. Bragg, 54 accounts are still delinquent from 1989-90 for $690 past due. Another 154 accounts are delinquent from 1990-91 for $1,580 past due.

Mayor Russell Baldwin said the town has already mailed letters to those who owe taxes, but Councilman George Yates said that may have violated the town's contract with the county.

"There's nothing here that really says the town cannot do that," said Town Attorney Glenn Peterson. "I don't think it would necessarily prevent you from doing your own collections."

Ms. Bragg said the letters have worked, for the town has already started collecting.

In January, the town received a notice from the N.C. Department of State Treasurer's office that its 86.3 percent tax collection rate was well below the statewide average of 97 percent.

The state recommended ways that the town could become more effective in collecting taxes, including garnishing of wages and assessing bank accounts.

Minutes Dispute

Council members argued for 30 minutes over how to write and approve minutes of town board meetings.

Councilwoman Lynette Carlisle said several drafts of the minutes are written for each meeting because board members and the mayor are adding paragraphs and revising what Ms. Bragg has submitted.

Following an unanimous vote of confidence in Ms. Bragg, the board voted 3-2 to keep discussion on action taken at a minimum in the minutes and to make first corrections at the board meetings.

Ms. Carlisle, Baldwin and William Benton voted for Ms. Carlisle's motion. Yates and Councilwoman Jane Gilbert voted no.

In the past, council members have received minutes prior to the meetings and have been revising them before the next board meeting for Ms. Bragg to retype. The dispute last Thursday concerned minutes from two March meetings.

"Council members are trying to be clerks and not council members," said Ms. Carlisle.

Yates said he agreed that Ms. Bragg was doing a good job, but said he deserved the right to have his comments from a meeting recorded in the minutes.

"This is yet another attempt by you three to control the people in this town," said Yates. "This is the kind of thing that people are fed up with. I can't wait for November to get here."

Seats held by Ms. Carlisle, Ms. Gilbert and Baldwin are up for election in November.

Yates argued that three members of the council are controlling town policy.

"The unreasonable three?" asked Benton.

"You're exactly right," replied Yates.

Other Business

In other business, the board:

■Approved a $1,650 contract with Clement Goodson and Co., certified public accountants, to conduct the town's 1990-91 audit.

■Agreed to develop an employee fringe benefit package to be presented to the board by Ms. Carlisle at a later date.

■Voted 4-1, with Ms. Gilbert voting no, to purchase a map cabinet for the town hall at $516.

■Heard from Yates that Carolina Power and Light Co. will begin installing street lights next week.

■Heard from Baldwin that the N.C. Department of Transportation is surveying Fish Market Road, off of Old Fayetteville Road, to determine if a sufficient right of way exists for the state to upgrade and maintain it.

Interviews Set For First Police Chief

BY TERRY POPE

The Town of Leland moved closer this week to hiring the town's first police chief, as the town council narrowed its lists of candidates to two.

The board plans to interview the two men in open session at tonight's (Thursday) meeting at 7 p.m. at the Leland Town Hall.

The two candidates, both 53, are Johnny McCarthy of Wilmington, and Franklin Strickland of Durham.

McCarthy retired four years ago as a lieutenant with the New York City Police Department. He was head of his department's internal affairs division and headed a staff of 190 officers, said Councilwoman Lynette Carlisle.

McCarthy is presently a consultant for the Wilmington Police Department and is working to renew his police certification.

Strickland is a lieutenant with the Durham Police Department and is director of the Durham Police Academy. He is a 20-year veteran of the U.S. Army, where he supervised police operations for 40 men, said Ms. Carlisle.

Strickland has been a Durham police officer for the last 11 years and holds an advanced law enforcement certificate and a bachelor's degree in science.

The applicants were selected July 6 by a screening committee that included Brunswick County Sheriff John Carr Davis, Wilmington Police Chief Darryl Breustle, Ms. Carlisle and Councilman George Yates. A third interviewee was eliminated by the committee.

At a council meeting last Thursday, Yates made a motion, seconded by Jane Gilbert, that the board only interview Strickland for the job. His motion failed 2-3, with board members William Benton, Ms. Carlisle and Mayor Russell Baldwin voting no.

Baldwin said the council should interview both candidates.

"Both are excellent candidates and would make an excellent chief for this town," said Baldwin.

Yates presented the board with a report that indicated how the screening committee had rated each of the candidates.

The board never discussed, as a group, what it was looking for in a chief, said Ms. Gilbert. Council members must decide if it wants someone who'll "put a lid on the town" or a chief who is more low key, she said.

"I know what my feelings are," she added.

It boils down to whether the town wants "an Andy Taylor or Buford Pusser," said Ms. Carlisle.

The board will set such standards once a chief is hired, said Ms. Carlisle.

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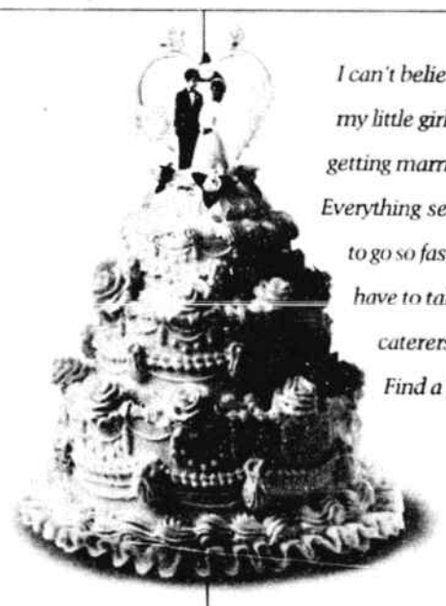
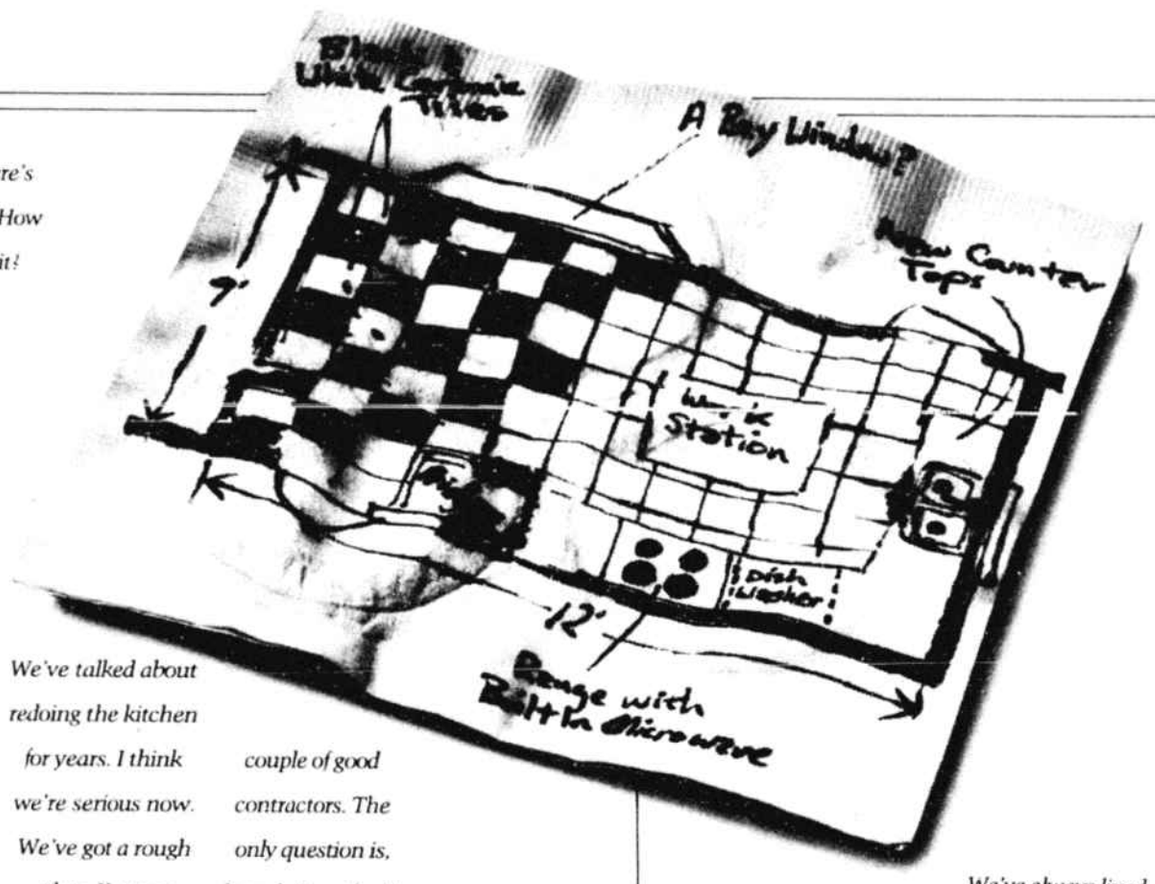
So How Do I Pay For It?

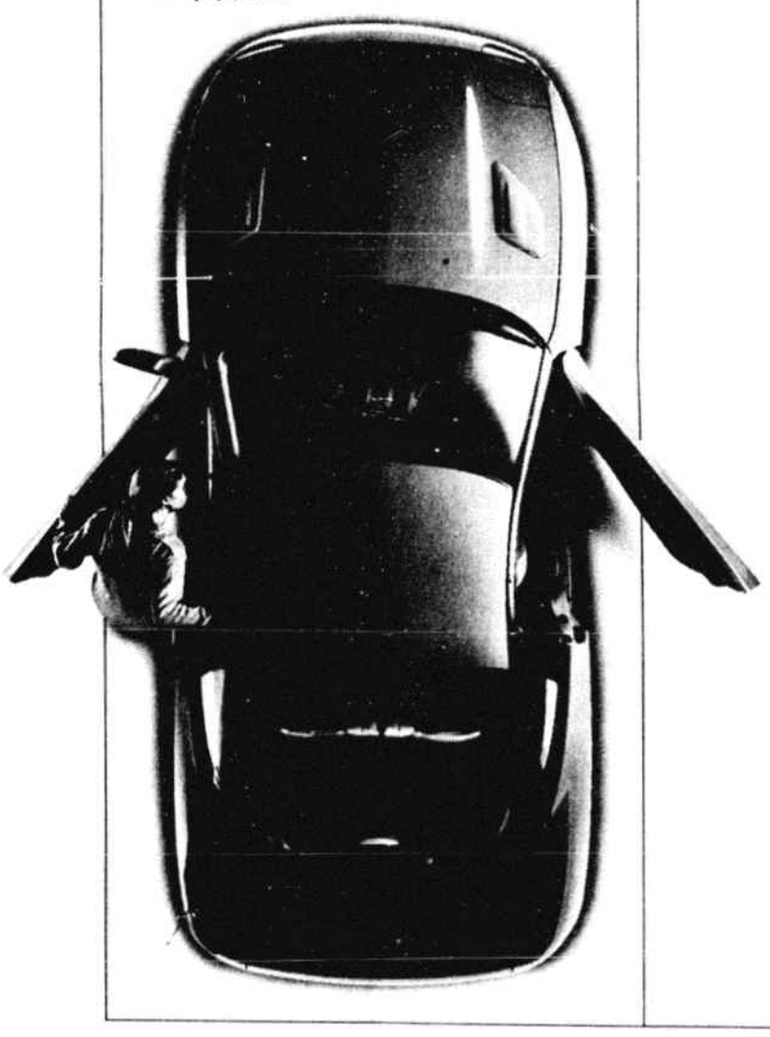


I can't believe my little girl is getting married. Everything seems to go so fast. I'll have to talk to caterers. Florists. Find a band.

And then there's the question: How do I pay for it?



I know exactly the car I want. I know the model. I know the options. Even the color and choice of fabric for the seats. What I don't know is: How do I pay for it?

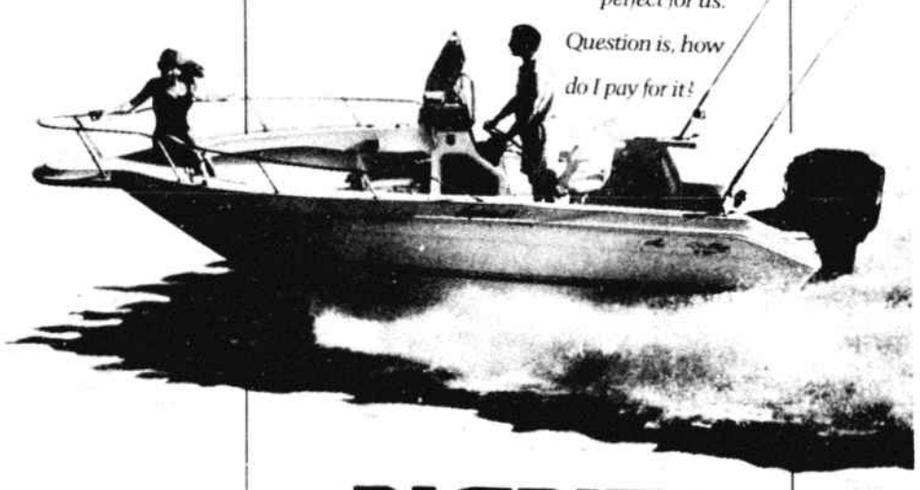


We've talked about redoing the kitchen for years. I think we're serious now. We've got a rough plan. Know a couple of good contractors. The only question is, how do I pay for it?

We've been out with our realtor every weekend for months it seems. We've looked at dozens of neighborhoods. Hundreds of homes. And then last week we finally found it — the perfect house. Now, how do I pay for it?

Just Ask.

We've always lived for the weekends. Done things together. Gone camping. Now, I've got my eye on a boat. It would be perfect for us. Question is, how do I pay for it?



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