

County Tabs Charlotte-Based Firm To Do 1994 Revaluation

BY TERRY POPE

A Charlotte-based accounting firm will conduct the 1994 Brunswick County property tax revaluation.

Tax Management Associates, hired last year to do audits of large companies with outlets in the county, submitted the highest proposal of five firms but received the endorsement of Brunswick County Tax Administrator Boyd Williamson.



WILLIAMSON

"The big reason is personnel," said Williamson. "The project director lives in Columbus County."

With Commissioners Donald Shaw and Gene Pinkerton absent, the board voted 3-0 to accept Williamson's recommendation. The firm has proposed a \$834,900 deal to revalue the county's estimated 90,000 parcels of land to determine their fair market values for tax purposes.

Clegg will negotiate a contract with TMA to include a \$60,000 computer software upgrade. He said the county tax office may use some existing employees to bring the price down to around \$774,000.

The board opted not to perform an in-house revaluation. Using existing employees and hiring additional

workers would cost a "large six-digit figure before it ended," said Clegg.

"It's not cheaper to do them in-house than it is under contract," added Williamson. "There's a misconception that we have staff sitting around waiting on a revaluation to occur."

Other proposals were from Pearson's Appraisal Service of West Virginia, \$712,500; Cott Systems of Raleigh, \$713,000; Specialized Appraisal Services of Delaware, \$735,000; and Cole-Layer-Trumble Company of Ohio, \$826,700.

Pearson had proposed using a project director who had never headed a county revaluation process while Specialized Appraisal is only two years old with its largest job at around 20,000 parcels, said Williamson.

Cole-Layer-Trumble had requested an arbitration clause in its contract against Clegg's wishes and would be viewed as an outside firm by county property owners, Williamson noted. His department visited counties as far away as Asheville to check on work performed by the companies.

W.P. Ferris, which performed the 1978 and 1986 revaluations, sold out to Cott Corp. several years ago. Six other firms declined to submit proposals. Ferris was also hired in 1982 to do a four-year horizontal

revaluation, but protests prompted commissioners to throw those figures out after the firm had been paid \$150,000.

"The less expensive people wouldn't come here because the county is so big," said Clegg, who talked openly with the board about the revaluation process.

"I've always had a horror of it being done in-house and then commissioners not accepting it," he added. "In that case, we would have to do it again."

The county has socked away money each fiscal year to prepare and currently has around \$700,000 saved. The N.C. Property Tax Association estimates it costs a county around \$10 to \$12 per parcel to do a normal revaluation.

"We're in good shape right now," said Clegg. "This is not by any means your normal revaluation. Economic forces at play are going to make it a volatile revaluation. We're dealing with residential property that is selling at way below market costs."

TMA is paid a set fee to uncover "hidden" property taxes that are due the county from large firms with local outlets. The board accepted another \$119,820 in business property tax receipts Monday, said Finance Director Luthia Hahn, as a result of those audits.

Other Business

In other business Monday, commissioners:

■ Heard a request from Brunswick Airport Commissioner Bob Miller to investigate claims that a former member of that board, Grover Gore of Southport, misused funds and was reimbursed for personal telephone bills. The airport board voted 4-2 not to investigate, and county commissioners took no action.

"I just can't see that we're going to sweep it under the rug," said Miller.

The airport authority has scrambled in recent weeks to pay for fuel, utility, maintenance and insurance bills after its fixed-base operator, Resort Aviation, pulled out unexpectedly.

"We find it impossible to continue to operate in an atmosphere of continuous disruption, uncertainty and a feeling that our efforts are being undermined by commission members," wrote Douglas Carmody, president of Resort Aviation.

■ Heard from Clegg that the 1992-93 county budget message will be presented to the board at the May 18 meeting.

■ Approved two budget amendments, adding \$8,000 in federal drug seizure funds to the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department and \$7,000 in state funds for three programs at the Brunswick County Health Department.



PHOTO BY BILL FAVER

WE DON'T MISS the song till the bird has flown!

Don't You Think It Strange We Never Prize The Music?

BY BILL FAVER

A poem in an old book reminded me of how we take so much of the beauty of our world for granted. We become so accustomed to what is around us we often fail to notice what is there.



FAVER

Someone has said that if spring came once a century or once every decade rather than every year, we would put forth the grandest of celebrations. They probably are correct, because the familiarity with our surroundings helps make them commonplace to most of us.

We see cardinals and mockingbirds and bluebirds fairly regularly, and they don't excite us like some exotic species we might see in the process of migration. We are so familiar with goldenrod and roadside asters that they seldom give us reason to rejoice.

Yet these are some of our most spectacular birds and plants. The same is true with our butterflies and with squirrels, rabbits and even deer.

Days do come, though, when we are likely to prize these natural parts of our environmental.

May Smith, in a poem titled *If We Knew*, wrote:

Strange we never prize the music
Till the sweet-voiced bird has flown;
Strange that we should slight the violets
Till the lovely flowers are gone;
Strange that summer skies and sunshine
Never seem one half so fair
As when winter's snowy pinions
Shake their white down in the air!

This is the time of year when we can notice the "year's at the spring" and get out and enjoy our natural environment.

Take time to hear the birds and see the flowers and watch the clouds and the marvelous sunshine in this special place along our coast.

MORE LETTERS

Proud To Live In Brunswick

To the editor:

I am proud to be a resident of Brunswick County. On Easter weekend a local restaurant burned, leaving the owner with a burned-out shell and no insurance.

Immediately local business people rallied around to help. Offers came in to clear the lot off, furnish material and wiring and plumbing for the cost of the material, with the labor furnished free.

A local restaurant, which stood to

profit by the loss of their competition, put out a jar for their patrons to fill with cash to help in the rebuilding.

You say things aren't the same here as they were up North where you came from? Well, I'm from "up North" and I know how little help a burned out restaurant would get up there.

I am proud to be a Brunswick County resident.

Marcia Warring
Sunset Beach

Prevention's A Better Choice

To the editor:

Every year in America, up to 15 million dogs and cats are killed simply because there are not enough good homes for them.

They are sentenced to death for the "crime" of being born. Thank heaven most shelters at least try to administer that sentence in the most merciful manner possible.

But there is an alternative. Doesn't it make infinitely more sense to prevent pet overpopulation through reproductive control than to try and "cure" it by killing these poor animals?

Of course it does!

Especially when you realize that two uncontrolled breeding cats, plus

their kittens and all their kittens' kittens if none are spayed and neutered, have the potential to multiply to more than 80 million cats during a 10-year breeding life.

In addition to making sense from a humane perspective, it also makes sense from an economic perspective. Every dollar spent by a community today on spaying and neutering dogs and cats can save \$18 in the next 10 years.

Let's urge Brunswick County officials to act immediately to promote more aggressive spaying and neutering programs to stop this killing of innocent animals.

Sincerely,
Danny McLean

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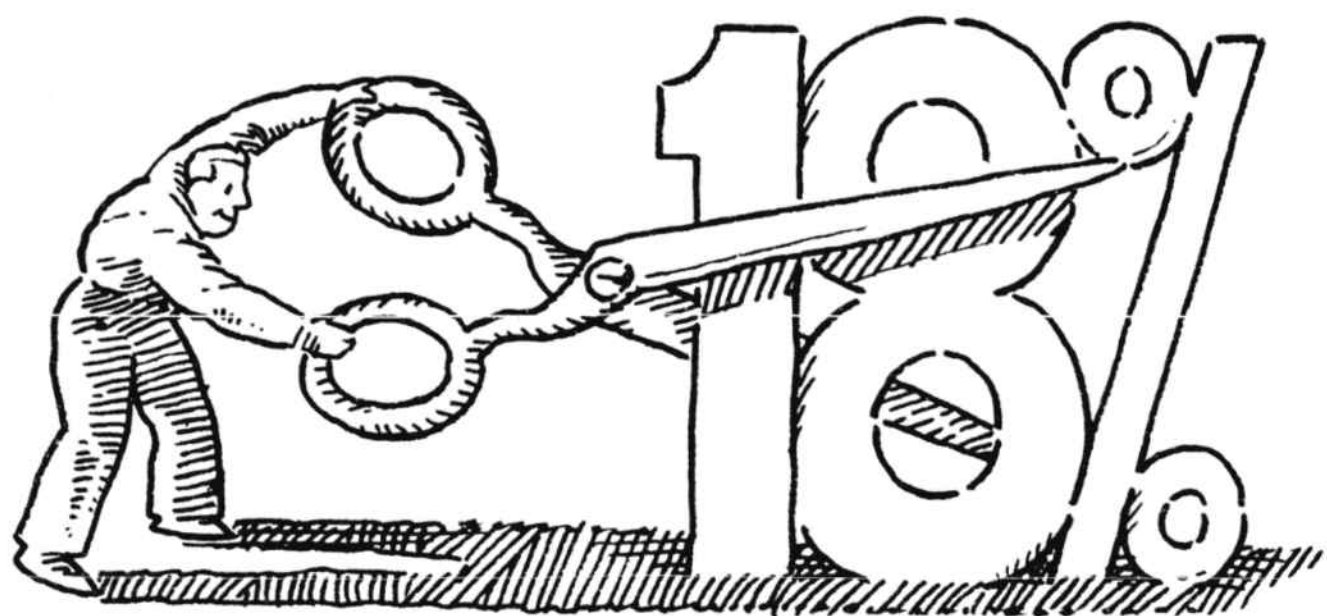


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Total Interest	2,050	Total Interest	916
Total Amount Paid	\$7,050	Total Amount Paid	\$5,916
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