

## Holden Beach Busy With New Budget

BY DOUG RUTTER

Holden Beach officials dove into the town's 1992-93 budget last week, wading through figures during two four-hour workshops held last Friday and Tuesday morning.

Commissioners spent most of the first two sessions reviewing the proposed expenses in each department. The board will continue its recessed meeting on Monday, May 18, at 8:30 a.m.

Town Manager Gary Parker has drafted a \$1.2 million budget featuring a general fund of \$832,969 and a water fund of \$362,400. Under his proposal, the tax rate would stay at 18 cents per \$100 of valuation.

Commissioners haven't decided whether they will change the tax rate one way or the other. It was increased from 14 cents to 18 cents by a previous town board in 1990.

At that time, town officials said three cents of the tax increase was needed to replenish the fund balance that was depleted by dune repairs after Hurricane Hugo in 1989.

Commissioners promised to take the 3 cents off the tax rate after two

years, which means the tax rate should be cut in the upcoming budget.

Based on his study of previous budgets, Parker said the additional tax money was never used to rebuild the fund balance.

It was used for general operating expenses, and about \$125,000 was taken from the occupancy tax fund over the two years to replenish the reserve fund.

Town officials said the money was still put into the fund balance, but it was taken from occupancy tax rather than property taxes.

"It all went into the same pot and it all came out of the same pot," Commissioner Sid Swarts said.

Parker said both he and Town Attorney Ken Campbell are confident the budgeting was legal, although it was confusing to figure out.

"They shouldn't have used the language that they used there because it is misleading," Parker said. "It wasn't set up as clearly as it could have been."

Based on the 18-cent tax rate, an

estimated property valuation of \$236 million and a 98-percent tax collection rate, the town expects to collect \$413,000 in taxes next year.

Other major revenue sources in the proposed budget include \$150,000 in occupancy tax, \$66,000 in local option sales tax, \$44,000 in franchise tax and \$30,000 in Powell bill money.

Proposed general fund expenses include \$212,000 for police, \$164,610 for administration, \$121,950 for streets and about \$75,000 each for streets and public buildings.

In the only action taken at Friday's meeting, town commissioners voted unanimously to accept

### Motor Vehicle Office Moved

The state Division of Motor Vehicles office moved Friday from the Brunswick County Government Center to a former pharmacy building located on U.S. 17 across from The Brunswick Hospital at Supply.

Driver's license examinations, including the written, road and vision tests, are given by the office's staff.

The agency is the latest in a series of state offices asked to find office space outside the county complex because of a shortage of space for growing county offices.

"The county needed this space," said Myers Hickman, an examiner. "And the move gives us a lot more room. We're not nearly as crowded."

The office will also serve division enforcement personnel assigned to the county.

Office hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. The new telephone number for the office is 754-5114.



STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

### House Yields To Erosion

"Handful of Sand," the Ocean Isle Beach home of South Carolina resident Robert Johnson, is on its way to a new location as a result of continued erosion on the east end of the beach. Town Building Inspector Druied Roberson said it has not yet been determined where the house will be relocated; last week it stood at the end of Third Street. He said two east-end houses have met this fate every year for the last several years. The many jetties that have been built along this part of the coast have apparently played no role in the current erosion, Roberson said, because the most recently built are as much as 100 yards out at high tide. Town Commissioner Debbie Fox said the town has tried several remedies over the years and now has applied for a permit to dredge Shallotte Inlet, with the spoil to be used to build up the eroding east end. The U.S. Corps of Engineers has offered to do this dredging as part of its annual maintenance project, pending federal funding.

### Holden Beach Cops Arrest Four Teens

Holden Beach Police arrested four teen-agers Saturday night after finding them partying at a vacant oceanfront house.

The two 16-year-olds and two 17-year-olds were vacationing at the beach with a church group from Davidson, said Police Chief Robert Cook.

All four were charged with breaking and entering, underage drinking,

simple possession of marijuana and possession of drug paraphernalia.

The four youths allegedly picked a lock on a door at 423 Ocean Blvd. West. A man who knew the house was vacant called police after seeing the teens enter the home.

"They were in there having a party," Cook said. "They didn't get to the point where they were destroying stuff, but they were getting close."

### Search For Swimmer Called False Alarm

A report of a man believed to have disappeared in the ocean off Holden Beach Sunday was apparently a false alarm, according to police.

Police Chief Robert Cook said officials think witnesses who reported they saw a white man with black hair disappear about 100 yards offshore actually saw a canvas tarp or porpoise.

Town police, the U.S. Coast Guard and local emergency volunteers came up with nothing after searching the ocean in the vicinity of Holden Beach Bridge for several hours Sunday afternoon.

### Burn Blue Light To Honor Officers

Five North Carolina law enforcement officers who died in the line of duty last year will be honored in a memorial service Friday, May 15, in Washington, D.C.

In memory of the officers and of National Police Week, May 10-17, Brunswick County Lodge 53 of the Fraternal Order of Police asks that residents burn a single blue light at their homes this week, said Tom Vernon, lodge secretary.

Those officers to be honored will include Columbus County Sheriff's Deputy Robert Hinson, who was shot and killed while answering a fake break-in call in the town of Brunswick last June.

Two men charged in the slaying were sentenced to life in prison in Brunswick County Superior Court. The trials were moved to Brunswick County pending pretrial publicity.

Other North Carolina officers killed last year were Ray Kennedy, Locust Police Department; Edward Harris, Southern Pines Police Department; Donald Tucker, Clinton Police Department; and Gene Griffin, Charlotte Police Department.

They and 130 other officers from across the nation will be honored at the ceremony.

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