

## Expanded Service

Two new county convenience stations opened last week, now giving a total of eight. See the story on Page 5-A.



*Island Living*  
Supplement included in this issue.

## Chapel Hill Bound

Irene Johnson's one of 17 county high school students headed to the state track and field championship Friday & Saturday. See Page 10-B.



# THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

12/31/99  
HOAG & SONS BOOK BINDERY  
P.O. BOX 162  
SPRINGPORT, NJ 09284

Thirtieth Year, Number 29

©1992 THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

Shallotte, North Carolina, Thursday, May 21, 1992

50¢ Per Copy

98 Pages, 4 Sections, Including Supplement, 2 inserts

## \$45 Million County Budget Would Maintain Current Rate

BY ERIC CARLSON

There will be no increase in property taxes next year if the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners adopts a proposed \$45.3 million budget unveiled by County Manager David Clegg Monday night.

The board set a public hearing on the proposal for Thursday, May 28, at 7 p.m. in the Pub Assembly Building at the Brunswick County Government Center.

The 1992-93 budget would fund four new departments, create 30 new county positions and provide a 2.5 percent raise for current employees while maintaining the current tax rate of 68.5 cents per \$100 of property valuation.

Brunswick County sheriff's deputies and Register of Deeds employees would get a 5 percent pay hike.

In all the budget envisions a 3 percent increase in county spending based on a total property valuation of about \$4.2 billion.

More than \$5.5 million was trimmed from departmental funding requests, which proposed 51.5 new positions, Clegg said in his budget message to the board. The initial draft of the budget would have required a tax rate of 82.7 cents.

While the new departments and positions might seem to mark a significant expansion of county government, they are more of an "administrative reorganization" of job titles and departmental functions, said Clegg.

Much of the work performed by the new departments has been funded under previous budgets, and only 11 of

the 30 new positions would require hiring new personnel.

"These things are new only in terms of full-year funding," said Clegg. "What you're seeing is that last year Brunswick County mounted all sorts of initiatives—the 911 program, G.I.S. (Geographic Information Systems), the library, the sign shop."

While all of these were partially funded in 1991, "this is the first year's budget that accurately reflects what we've gone off and bought," said Clegg.

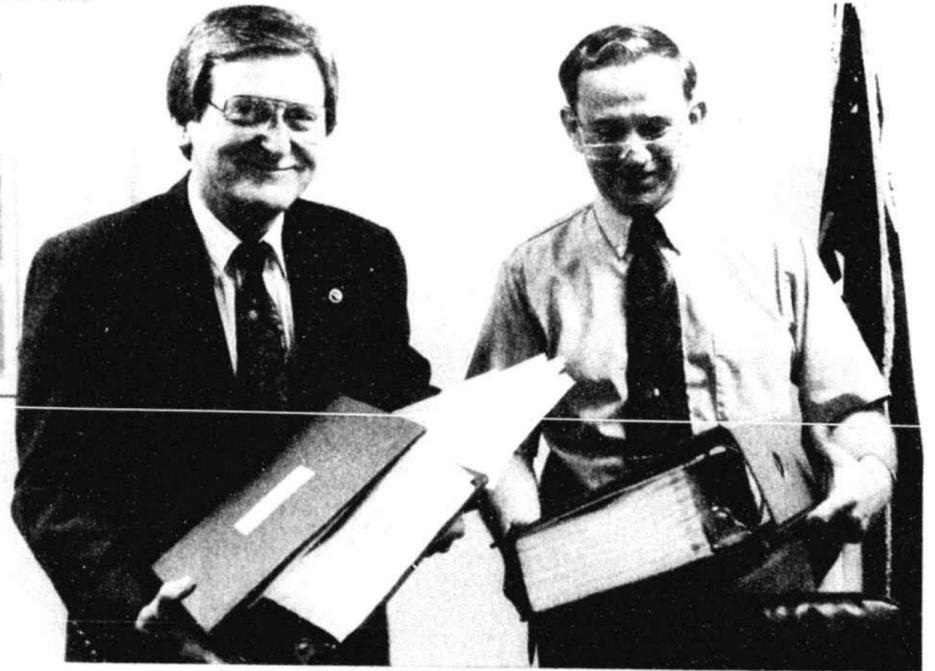
The Central Communications Department, which will operate 911 and assume sheriff's dispatching, is slated to receive \$474,092 for its first full year of operation.

The new Brunswick County Library Department will oversee operations that had been partially funded by the county through a library board of trustees. Under the proposed budget, the new department would receive \$248,512, or more than twice what it received from the county under the old arrangement.

The Brunswick County Sign Shop is a former arm of the planning department created to install and maintain street signs needed by the new 911 program. The budget earmarks \$68,035 in county funds for the new department, to be augmented by a \$60,000 incentive grant from the state.

The G.I.S. department, formerly an arm of the county manager's office, would receive \$285,084, for its first

See \$45 MILLION, page 2-A



BRUNSWICK COUNTY Commissioners Donald Shaw (left) and Jerry Jones leave the commissioners' chambers Monday with copies of the proposed 1992-93 county budget.

STAFF PHOTO BY TERRY POPE

## Holden Beach Board At Odds Over Chamber Donation

BY DOUG RUTTER

A proposed hefty donation to the South Brunswick Islands Chamber of Commerce drew the support of some and the ire of others at Holden Beach's budget meeting Monday morning.

Town commissioners favoring contributions ranging from \$2,000 to \$14,000 eventually struck a compromise and stuck \$7,000 in the proposed budget for the 1992-93 fiscal year.

But that figure could change before the new budget is adopted next month. If the lively discussion at Monday's meeting is any indication, there will be more debate about the donation in the weeks to come.

Consideration of the chamber contribution highlighted a 3 1/2-hour budget session on Monday, as commissioners continued a meeting that had been recessed last Tuesday.

Counting Monday's session, town officials have met for 11 1/2 hours so far on the new budget. The board planned to reconvene Wednesday morning.

Town Manager Gary Parker said he expects three or four more work sessions before the \$1.25 million budget goes to public hearing in

*"I don't get anything from the tourists except aggravation."*

—Commissioner Jim Fournier

June. No change has been proposed in the tax rate of 18 cents per \$100 of valuation.

The chamber has asked for \$14,000 each from Holden, Ocean Isle and Sunset beaches. The request includes \$10,000 for advertising and \$4,000 for administrative costs.

Commissioner David Sandifer suggested Monday that the town go along with the request and give the chamber the money from its occupancy tax fund. Tourists pay occupancy tax on accommodation rentals.

Holden Beach expects to collect more than \$200,000 in occupancy tax next fiscal year, which Sandifer equated to about 9 cents on the tax rate. Using some of the occupancy tax to advertise will help bring in more dollars down the road, he said, and keep the town tax rate low.

Commissioner Gay Atkins said advertising also helps non-resident

homeowners rent their cottages. She said everyone benefits from tourism, because occupancy tax money can be used for projects such as sidewalks and accessways.

Mayor Pro Tem Gil Bass suggested cutting the donation to \$10,000 so the town won't be paying for administrative costs at the chamber.

Bass said the chamber of commerce has done a lot to promote the South Brunswick beaches and has helped the community in other ways. It has supported transportation improvement projects and commercial fishing in the past.

Commissioners Jim Fournier and Sid Swarts said \$2,000 is enough for the chamber. They said the town doesn't need to advertise to attract visitors.

Fournier said chambers of commerce are usually funded by businesses, not government, and the accommodations tax the town receives

is payment for the cost and aggravation of having tourists on Holden Beach.

"I don't get anything from the tourists except aggravation," he said. "I know they're here when I see trash in the canal behind my house."

Swarts said the island is already overloaded with tourists during the summer, and most people visit the beach because it's a nice place, not because of advertising.

If the town spends money on advertising, Swarts said it could be better spent elsewhere.

"I don't think with the chamber of commerce we get our bang for the buck," he said.

### Fees Too High

Although they were at odds over the chamber donation, commissioners did agree Monday that the town has been paying too much in legal fees.

Parker included \$12,000 in the budget for the services of Town Attorney Ken Campbell, who was the subject of criticism at this week's meeting.

Commissioners said the town is paying too much for Campbell, who doesn't have much experience in municipal government. Parker said

he would negotiate with Campbell's law firm.

Holden Beach pays \$6,000 per year as a retainer and \$75 per hour for other work. Due to his lack of experience, officials said Campbell requires more time to do research than other attorneys.

"We're paying to train," Commissioner Fournier said. "His inexperience is costing us money."

Said Swarts, "A lot of the stuff

he's come up with isn't that good."

**Elsewhere In The Budget...**  
Also on Monday, town commissioners reviewed the streets, inspections and sanitation department budgets.

The board tentatively agreed to keep a part-time secretary position in the inspections department, but may end up cutting \$2,200 proposed for a new computer terminal.

See HOLDEN, page 2-A

## FRINK WITHDRAWS

### Democrats Meet To Pick Candidate For District 1

BY TERRY POPE

Brunswick County Democrats were to meet tonight (Thursday) to pick a replacement for the District 1 nominee in the Brunswick County Board of Education race.

Sam Fletcher Frink, 28, of Route 1, Calabash, has withdrawn from the race. He was the only Democrat to file for the seat now held by Democrat Doug Baxley, who chose not to run for re-election. He faced no primary May 5.

A special meeting of the Democratic Party Executive Committee was called for 7 p.m., May 21, by Party Chairman Crawford M. Hart of Boiling Spring Lakes. The meeting is open to all registered Democrats.

Frink said Monday that he had to withdraw from the race so he could devote more time to rebuilding his business.

"We had a fire a couple of months ago," said Frink, who operates the NAPA Auto Parts store in Calabash, which was nearly destroyed in an accidental fire March 21.

"That's taken up my time," he added. "That's pretty much the main reason."

All precinct chairmen and vice-chairmen were called to Thursday's meeting at the Democratic Headquarters in Supply. Replacing Frink on the ballot was the "number one

topic of discussion," said Hart.

"Other important party affairs will also be discussed," he added.

When a candidate resigns or withdraws from a race, it is up to the party's executive committee to name a replacement. Frink said he had no recommendation to take to the committee.

"That won't be left up to me to decide," he said.

It was Frink's first attempt at seeking an elected office. He would have faced Republican nominee Janet Pope, 48, of Shamrock Drive, Shallotte, in the November general race.

In a close contest, Mrs. Pope defeated Joseph Brust, 64, of Ocean Isle Beach in the May 5 Republican primary by a count of 1488 to 1109.

Frink said he regretted having to withdraw from the contest.

"We got a lot of comments from people who really wanted me to run," said Frink. "But that's (store) my livelihood. I have to devote my time to that first."

District 1 encompasses an area south of Shallotte to Calabash.

Two other school board seats are also up for election. In District 3, Democrat William D. "Billy" Carter will face Republican Bill Fairley. In District 4, incumbent Democrat Donna Baxter will run against Republican Pete Barnette.

## Columbus County Board Told To Make Ruling

BY TERRY POPE

Columbus County's Board of Elections must rule if District 14 State House candidate Dewey Hill of Lake Waccamaw should remain on the November ballot.

The State Board of Elections on Friday certified the candidacy of Democratic incumbent E. David Redwine of Ocean Isle Beach, but refused to give clearance to Hill's primary results.

Instead, the matter was remanded back to the Columbus County board for a hearing to review evidence regarding Hill's legal residency, which has been challenged, said Alex Brock, executive director of the State Board.

"Any proceedings held under this hearing cannot be appealed to the State Board of Elections again," said Brock. Any further appeal would go to Superior Court.

Hill, a Democrat, received the second-highest number of votes in the May 5 primary for the two-member 14th District, which includes parts of Brunswick, New Hanover, Columbus and Robeson counties. Residents will vote for two of three names on the ballot.

See COLUMBUS, page 2-A

## NRC Blames CP&L Management For Problems At Brunswick Plant

BY ERIC CARLSON

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission this week said that "despite good intentions," management was to blame for not properly addressing safety problems at the Carolina Power & Light Co.'s Brunswick nuclear plant near Southport.

The NRC will release a report this week with the findings of a two-month investigation into alleged construction deficiencies and inadequate maintenance procedures at the plant. Recent statements by the agency suggest the report will be highly critical of CP&L managers.

"Management has not set high standards for the material condition of the plant," said Sue Gagner, NRC public affairs officer at the agency's offices in Rockville, Md., Tuesday. "They have not provided the leadership and support needed for improvements."

Gagner said there has not been enough "critical self-assessment" of management procedures, which resulted in a "failure to recognize problems and implement corrective actions."

In response to the investigation, CP&L last Thursday announced an accelerated effort to improve operations and performance at the 16-year-old plant. The company plans to spend more than \$200 million in the next five years to modify and upgrade facilities and training at the plant.

"Our objective is to raise the Brunswick plant's overall performance to a level of excellence," said CP&L Chairman and President Sherwood H. Smith Jr. in a company news release. He acknowledged "a growing backlog of maintenance and modification work" at the plant.

Gagner said the NRC is encouraged by the company's announcement, but noted that the problems at the Brunswick plant "can't be solved in a week or two."

She said CP&L management needs to develop a long-term plan for improving conditions at the plant.

"Many of these problems were caused by initiatives with good intentions that were not done well," Gagner said. "Both the NRC and CP&L should have found these problems sooner, but ultimately the responsibility lies with CP&L management and Brunswick staff."

"We have no reason to believe that the Brunswick staff is not as good as any other in the country," she said.

The current NRC investigation marks the latest in a series of problems at the Brunswick plant that have resulted in CP&L being fined nine times since 1988 for safety violations.

This latest round of problems arose when it was discovered that anchor bolts designed to secure the walls of a diesel generator building had been improperly installed. The auxiliary generators are intended to provide back-up power to pump cooling water to the reactors in an emergency. The substandard anchors make the plant more vulnerable to an earthquake.

As a result of the findings, CP&L took the two Brunswick generating units out of service on April 21 to effect repairs and modifications. The company hopes to have one of the units back in operation in late May and the other unit in June.

The company claims it was not aware that the generator building did not meet earthquake resistance standards. A CP&L investigation will try to determine whether the quality of work on the generator building might have been misrepresented. The NRC is also looking into construction practices at the plant.

The overall contractor for the Brunswick nuclear plant was Brown & Root Construction Co. of Houston, Texas.

## Charge Cited Incorrectly

A report in the May 14 edition of *The Brunswick Beacon* incorrectly listed the charges filed against two teen-agers charged with racing following a May 9 accident near Brick Landing.

Both Mark Douglas McKeithan, 17, of Shallotte, and Adam Abbott, 16, of Ocean Isle Beach, were charged with unlawful speed competition and speeding.

However, McKeithan, not Abbott, was charged by the N.C. Highway Patrol with the additional alleged offense of driving while impaired.

The Bronco operated by McKeithan ran off N.C. 179 and then back on to the roadway again, striking the Nissan operated by Abbott. McKeithan's vehicle then overturned on the right shoulder, while Abbott's vehicle ran onto the left shoulder, struck a tree and burst into flames.

The *Beacon* apologizes for the errors.