

# Calabash Commissioners Nix Security Patrol, Cut Tax Rate

BY ERIC CARLSON

In a last-minute round of late night budget cutting Tuesday, the Calabash Board of Commissioners scrapped a proposal to hire a security service, approved a per-meeting payment to themselves and reduced the property tax rate by one cent.

The board approved a 1992-93 general fund budget of \$309,708 at a tax rate of 9.5 cents per \$100 property valuation.

At that rate, the owner of a \$50,000 piece of property will pay annual town taxes of \$47.50.

"I hope it's going to be enough," said Commissioner Ray Card as the final budget figures were tabulated.

Other board members expressed surprise that their evening of budget negotiations had cut 4 cents from the tax rate set in the original spending proposal.

About 40 residents attended the meeting. Some waited in the hall and others stood behind the commissioners as they took separate votes on each line of the budget. Public comment was allowed and frequently heard throughout the meeting.

As expected, the major topic of debate was the proposed expenditure of \$17,888 to contract for an unarmed security guard to patrol the town. The money would include a car and radio equipment. The guard would have no arrest powers and would have to call the sheriff's department in an emergency.

Commissioner Jon Sanborn said he had suggested the measure in response to numerous residents who had expressed concerns over break-ins in Calabash last winter. Recognizing that few people in the town wanted a police department, Sanborn said he had "made a stab at trying to do something" for those who had contacted him.

Card and several residents praised the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department for its frequent patrols of the area in marked and unmarked cars.

"I've never seen so many police in Calabash," said long-time Carolina Shores resident John Carpenter. "If we hire a rent-a-cop it's going to send a message to the sheriff's department that if they're needed they'll be called."

Bob Cramer of Carolina Shores said the department "takes good care of us." He noted that extra patrols were added when a funeral for someone in his neighborhood resulted in many residents being away from their homes.

Al Smith, a former FBI agent, cautioned that the town could find itself in legal trouble if an unarmed, uncertified law enforcement representative of the town was involved in a confrontation with a criminal.

In the end the board voted unanimously to kill the measure.

The first item to spark controversy was a budget proposal allocating \$4,500 to pay board members \$25 for each meeting they attended.

Frank Whitman objected to the idea, telling the commissioners he had served on numerous boards without receiving any pay. He hinted that a positive vote might result in members being defeated in their next election.

"I don't know why you would approve this," Whitman said. "If you do, it will only go to the people who follow you (on the board)."

Commissioners Card, Stuart Thorn and Robert Noe voted in favor of the measure. Voting no were Sanborn and Ed Rice.

The approval of a \$24,640 expenditure for twice-weekly residential garbage pickup and nothing for commercial sanitation brought an angry reaction from several restaurant owners.

The board voted last month to discontinue commercial service when contracts with haulers run out in November. The latest round of bidding on the service brought a cost estimate of \$55,000, which Sanborn said "was four times what we get in taxes."

Jonnie Thomas said she had not heard about the proposal, had not attended the public hearing and had "just begun to fight" the measure. She criticized the board for favoring newly arrived retirees over Calabash natives.

"I pay taxes too, but what do you give me? More regulations?" Thomas said. "Maybe we should all get together and throw our shrimp heads and fish scraps on the streets."

Other changes adopted in the final budget included: ■ A reduction of \$8,000 in the inspection department budget achieved by declining to hire a part-time code enforcement officer. The board instead voted to raise the salary of the building inspector by 5 percent from \$15,600 to \$16,380.

■ An increase from \$1,000 to \$3,000 in the town beautification budget for maintenance of medians and to provide decorations for special celebrations such as Christmas and the upcoming Calabash Festival. The board voted down a proposal to increase the allocation to \$6,000.

■ A cut from \$4,000 to \$2,000 in the planning and zoning budget for printing costs. The money was proposed for a quarterly town newsletter.

In other business the board voted to rezone an area of Calabash Acres between Thomasboro Road and N.C. 179 to allow mobile homes.

Sanborn noted that mosquito spraying would begin in the town July 6 and said that anyone suffering ill effects from the program should call the county mosquito control office at 253-4366.



U.S. MARINE Cpl. Jesse P. Pierce Jr. (right) inspects the damage to his car after he ran into a ditch on U.S. 17 about a half mile south of Brunswick Community College Monday morning as an unidentified bystander looks on. Pierce, who was unhurt, said he was heading north toward Camp Lejeune at about 10 o'clock when his steering failed, forcing him off the left side of the road. Investigating N.C. State Trooper B.D. Barnhardt filed no charges.

STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC CARLSON

## Two Injured, Two Charged In Two Wrecks

Two area men were charged in unrelated accidents that sent two people to local hospitals last week.

Todd Christopher Hart, 22, of Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., was taken to Doshier Memorial Hospital in Southport with Class A injuries Thursday evening after his motorcycle crashed into a car that was making an improper left turn, Trooper D.B. Harvell of the N.C. Highway Patrol reported.

Hart was riding his Kawasaki south on N.C. 133 at about 9 o'clock when the driver of a northbound 1988 Suzuki automobile attempted to turn left onto N.C. 87 about 3.5 miles north of Southport. Hart crashed into the right side of the Suzuki, Harvell reported.

The driver of the Suzuki, Patrick Edward Jones, 17, of Yaupon Beach, was charged with an unsafe movement violation. He was uninjured.

There was an estimated \$2,000 damage to the motorcycle and \$700 to the car.

On Wednesday, Ricardo Jerome Bennett, 21, of Wilmington was taken to The Brunswick Hospital with Class A injuries after a single car accident on U.S. 17 about 1.7 miles south of Shallotte.

Bennett was driving a 1992 Ford south when he lost control in a curve, crossed the centerline and drove onto the shoulder of the northbound lane, according to Trooper B.D. Barnhardt's report.

The car struck a concrete drain pipe, jumped a creek and came to stop on the northbound shoulder of the road, causing an estimated \$5,000 damage to the vehicle.

Bennett was charged with driving left of center.

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