

# Holden Beach Commissioners Hash Out New Budget

BY DOUG RUTTER

Twelve hours and counting. That's how long Holden Beach Commissioners have spent in the town hall meeting room since May 28 reviewing Town Manager Gary Parker's proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

Officials have held four workshops in the past two weeks and had another one planned Wednesday morning. Will it be the last?

"I think it's a possibility," Parker said Tuesday. "You never know. It depends on how far we get and how long they want to go."

Following the latest workshop Monday morning, commissioners still had general fund revenues, water fund revenues and expenses and certain items in the police department budget to discuss.

As part of their review of the water fund, commissioners must decide if they want to increase rates. Holden Beach buys its water from the county, which is looking at a 10-cent rate hike next fiscal year.

Parker's proposed budget calls for a 1-cent increase in the tax rate, from 15 cents to 16 cents per \$100 of property. That would add \$15 to the tax bill for a \$150,000 home.

So far, town officials haven't discussed cutting the tax rate. "They haven't gotten to the revenue yet or even finished the general fund yet," Parker said. "It's kind of

early."

The \$1.3 million budget includes about \$230,000 for police and \$180,000 for streets. The town expects to collect \$231,000 in occupancy tax and use \$46,000 for police salaries and \$40,000 for sidewalks.

Commissioner Jim Fournier has been out of town for the past two weeks and missed the budget workshops. A public hearing on the proposed budget will be held June 23 at 7 p.m. in town hall.

## Fire And Water Rescue

Tri-Beach Volunteer Fire Department won't get as much as it requested or as much as the town manager proposed for fire and water rescue service.

Commissioners last week cut the fire contract proposal from \$25,000 to \$20,000. Tri-Beach is expected to get an additional \$5,000 for water rescue.

Board members cut the fire contract by \$5,000 after reviewing figures from other area towns including Ocean Isle Beach and Yaupon Beach. All of them give less to their fire department than Holden Beach.

Mayor Pro Tem Gil Bass said the town gives more to Tri-Beach than the county, and a small percentage of the calls are on the island.

"A lot of this doesn't seem right to me," Bass said. "I just feel we should stay in line with the rest of the towns and their donations."

Tri-Beach requested \$46,000 from the town, and

Parker proposed \$31,700. The figure now stands at \$26,700.

## Streets

Noteworthy in the proposed streets budget is \$70,800 for paving and \$40,000 for sidewalks.

Paving is planned at Sandpiper, Sandspur, Sand Dune, Lumberton and Marlin streets. Parker said Fayetteville Street has been targeted for resurfacing since it's in the worst shape of the roads already paved.

The \$40,000 would pay for approximately one mile of sidewalk. Officials haven't decided where the new walkway will go. They're hoping for suggestions at the budget hearing.

Sid Swarts and Gay Atkins suggested last week the additional walkway start at the west-end guard shack and run east toward the Heritage Harbor neighborhood.

David Sandifer said he'd like to see the sidewalk extended from Rothschild Street east to Blockade Runner. "We've pretty much ignored the east end long enough," he said.

## Public Buildings

After recent renovations of the town hall and police headquarters and construction of a new public works garage, Holden Beach has no building projects planned next year.

However, commissioners are considering expanding the town hall meeting room in the upcoming year. The town has \$10,000 in a reserve fund for town hall improvements and plans to add another \$5,000 next year.

Mayor Wally Ausley said there are many times when the town could use another 30 seats in the meeting room.

"It's not unusual during one of our lively meetings to have people sitting on the floor," Sandifer added.

## Library Friends' Book Sale Set June 28-July 2

The 13th annual used book sale benefiting the Southport Library will be June 28 through July 2 from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m.

The Friends of the Library are holding the sale at the Southport campus of Brunswick Community College at Lord and Owens streets.

Hardback books will cost 25 cents and paperbacks, 10 cents. Sets will be priced appropriately.

Books to be sold include fiction, nonfiction, educational, children's and others.

## INSPECTIONS DEPARTMENT

### Holden Board Nixes Staff Addition

BY DOUG RUTTER

Holden Beach officials last week rejected a plan to expand the staff in the building inspections department—the only personnel change included in the proposed budget for 1993-94.

At a budget meeting last Friday, commissioners voted 3-1 against a recommendation to change the part-time secretary's position in inspections to a full-time post effective July 1.

Town Manager Gary Parker and Building Inspector Jim McSwain recommended the staff change, but most town board members said last week they don't think it's needed at this time.

Commissioners David Sandifer, Gil Bass and Gay Atkins opposed the idea. Sid Swarts voted for the change. Jim Fournier was on vacation and missed the meeting.

Parker proposed hiring a secretary for 40 hours per week to assist the building inspector. McSwain currently has a secretary working 2 1/2 hours per day, and he said that's not enough to run the department.

Parker said making the position full-time would cost the town an extra \$10,000 per year. He said expanding the staff would allow the department to better serve the public.

"I think we can justify it. We have 15 people working for the town of Holden Beach and I don't think 16 is an inordinate amount..." Parker said. "I think we need to provide the services better than they are."

Besides inspecting new buildings, McSwain is responsible for making sure the town complies with federal flood regulations and state coastal development rules. He also is charged with enforcing certain town ordinances.

"There's a lot of work going on in the inspections department," Parker said. "There seems to be more and more things taking up the time of the person in that position and his assistant."

Sandifer opposed the staff change, citing a drop in new construction over the last five years, McSwain's lack of time on the job and the circumstances he faced when he first arrived.

McSwain started working as inspector April 26 while the town was still recovering from a March 13 storm that damaged 90 percent of the homes on the island. The state also enacted a new building code in April.

Sandifer said he doesn't think the town needs two full-time people in the department with only 60 homes

being built per year. A part-time inspector used to handle 100 homes per year.

"Until Jim has his feet more wet I'm not going to support it," he said.

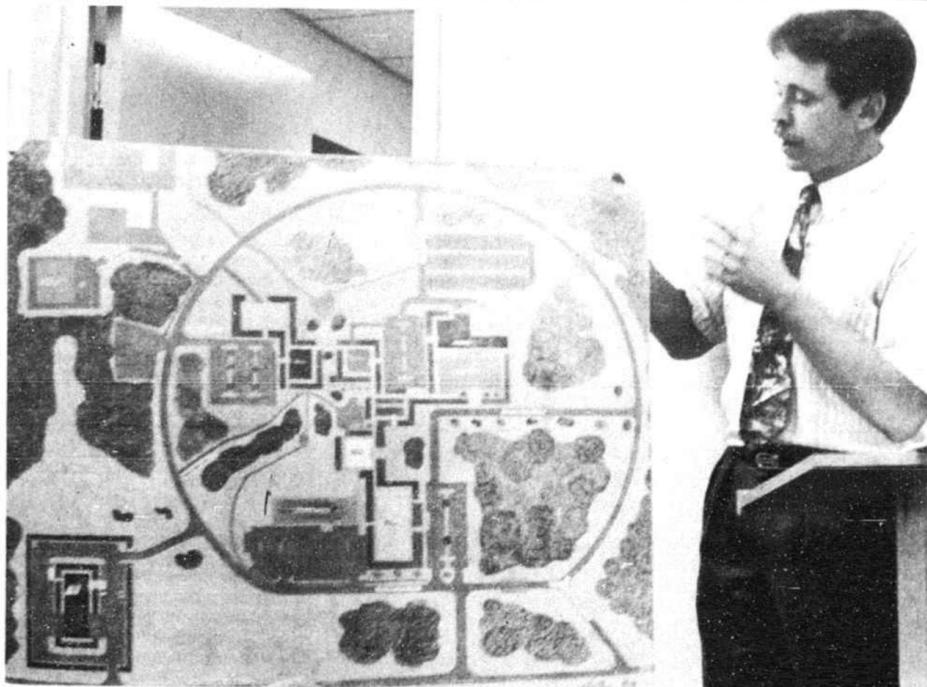
Atkins, a real estate agent, said the March storm created a lot of work for the inspections department. "I understand your stress and your workload. My workload has probably doubled in the last two months."

Despite his limited experience as inspector, McSwain said he doesn't want to wait until next year to expand the department. "I don't know if I want to wait a whole year. I think I got better eyesight than that." Commissioner Swarts said expanding the staff would give the inspector more time to enforce town ordinances that currently aren't being enforced such as ones dealing with house numbers and garbage racks.

"The little items are being completely neglected," he said. "We've got all sorts of things that need to be done that are slipping."

Parker agreed the town could do a better job with code enforcement with the extra staff.

"Things slip through the cracks. Some things are not getting done," he said. "Those things could be done better, a lot better, if we had this time freed up."



STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC CARLSON

### New Sign Proposed

Steve Randone, Brunswick County's geographic information systems manager, shows commissioners a new sign he has designed for the county complex in Bolivia. If authorized for installation, the colorful display would help guide visitors through the often confusing array of government buildings, he said.

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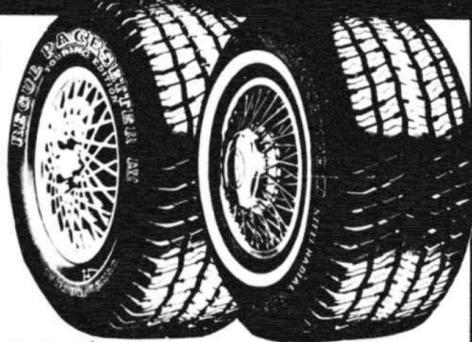
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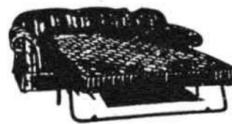
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