

Former Regional Planner Yelton Hired As Brunswick Manager

BY ERIC CARLSON

William Wyman Yelton, a former manager of Wayne and Sampson counties, was selected to become Brunswick's new county manager in a split vote by the board of commissioners Monday night.

The former regional administrator for the N.C. Council of Governments will begin work "Monday morning at 9 o'clock," said Commissioners Chairman Don Warren, who voted with fellow Democrats Tom Rabon and Wayland Vereen in favor of Yelton's hiring.

Republican Commissioner Jerry Jones voted against the motion to hire Yelton, saying he would have preferred Yadkin County Manager Jimmy Varner or former Lincoln County manager Al Sharp who interviewed for the job along with Wilmington city finance officer Michael Hargett.

Commissioner Donald Shaw did not attend the Monday meeting.

Yelton, 56, will replace former county manager David Clegg, who resigned March 15 amidst charges that he was forced out by the newly seated Democrat majority

on the board of commissioners.

Yelton will be paid a starting salary of \$50,000 with a \$3,000 moving allowance. Clegg's salary at the time of his departure was \$68,078, for which he also served as county attorney.

The 1993-94 budget adopted Monday appropriates \$175,000 to operate the county attorney's office. County Attorney Michael Ramos will be paid to do the county's legal work out of his Shallotte law office, including clerical and administrative support.

Last year's budget earmarked \$185,000 for the county attorney's office, which included half of Clegg's salary and the salaries of administrative assistant Kelly Barefoot and secretary Andrea Merklinger.

Yelton accepted the position by phone during a 40-minute closed session during Monday's regular commissioners meeting. Warren said he asked for the executive

session so the board could discuss new information they had received about the manager candidates before returning to the public meeting for a vote.

"I felt we had two outstanding candidates in Mr. Sharp and Mr. Yelton," Warren said. "The board received more negative comments and references regarding Mr. Sharp than we did for Mr. Yelton. He had a pretty clean record wherever he'd been and he was well recommended by both commissioners and private citizens."

In his May 17 interview, Yelton told the board he began working in county government in 1973 as a finance officer for Burke County. After two years there he took a similar position with Catawba County, where he worked until he was hired as Sampson County manager in 1979. He served in that position until 1985, when he was hired as county manager for Wayne County.

Yelton said he had worked for 10 years as a production manager and plant manager in the textile industry. He said his private sector experience made him "appreciate government more by having learned to make a payroll."

As administrator for the Region L office of the N.C. Council of Government in Rocky Mount, Yelton headed the agency's planning activities in Wilson, Nash, Northampton, Edgecombe and Halifax counties. He resigned from the position last February.

In explaining his no vote, Jones said he supported Varner "because of his good management skills." He called Varner "a more down to earth person who could talk to everyone on the same level." Jones said Sharp was his second choice.

Yelton and Varner were among the four county manager applicants interviewed in January, 1991, when the board of commissioners agreed to hire Clegg. Jones said Varner was his second choice during the previous selection process.

This time around, the county received 37 applications for the manager post, of whom seven were determined to meet the advertised job qualifications. The commissioners agreed to invite five finalists for public interviews. One applicant withdrew before the scheduled interview.

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STAFF PHOTO BY LYNN CARLSON

Last-Minute Rehearsal

Larniece Laneer McKoy of Winnabow, Miss Brunswick County 1993, fits in a last-minute rehearsal before leaving for the Miss North Carolina pageant. The pageant finale will be televised Saturday night at 9 a.m. on WECT Channel 6. More about McKoy, Page 3-A.

Filing Begins Next Friday For 66 Seats On 19 Boards

BY SUSAN USHER

Filing opens at noon next Friday, July 2, for 66 seats on 16 municipal and three special governing boards across Brunswick County.

All five commissioners' seats are up for election on the Leland Sanitary District Board for four-year terms, while seats will open up on the South Brunswick Sanitary District, also for four-year terms. Two trustees will be elected to the Doshier Hospital Board to serve six-year terms.

Candidates have until noon Friday, Aug. 6, to pay the \$5 filing fee and get their name on the appropriate ballot.

Most candidates can file with the Brunswick County Board of Elections at the Brunswick County Government Center Monday through Friday from 8:30

a.m. to 5 p.m., or with their local town hall if forms are available. Forms filled out at a town hall must be notarized.

The county board conducts all local elections named except those in Holden Beach and Ocean Isle Beach, which have their own election boards.

Here's a rundown of the municipal seats voters will get to fill in November:

Calabash

With a proposed referendum on division of the town on hold, Calabash voters there will be electing a mayor and four commissioners. Those seats are now occupied by Mayor Doug Simmons, District 1 Commissioner Ed Rice and District II Commissioners George Anderson, Ray Card and Stuart Thorn. The mayor and commis-

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WATER FEES TO RISE 10 PERCENT

New County Budget Has No Tax Increase

BY ERIC CARLSON

The Brunswick County Commissioners Monday adopted a 1993-94 budget that will maintain property tax rates at their current level while increasing water bills by nearly 10 percent.

Under the approved budget, property owners will continue to pay 68 cents in taxes for every \$100 in valuation. But beginning July 1, a typical water customer who currently pays about \$10.47 per month will see his bill increase to about \$11.90.

Copies of the approved budget have not been made available for public inspection. Commissioner's Chairman Don Warren said Monday he does not know the amount of expenditures contained in the approved package. He directed all budget inquiries to county Finance Officer Lithia Hahn, who did not return the Beacon's calls on Tuesday.

While details of the approved spending package were not provided, the commissioners have indicated a complete rejection of the controversial spending plan proposed by Interim County Manager John Harvey. His budget called for a 7-cent tax hike, the elimination of five county departments, the firing of seven employees and the demotion of several others.

Harvey's budget was called "unacceptable" by Warren and loudly opposed at a public hearing. In a series of workshops, the commissioners informally agreed on new spending levels based on last years actual expenditures.

Only two positions are believed to have been eliminated in the final budget package. One cafeteria worker and one employee of the sign shop reportedly will lose their jobs.

According to Clerk to the Board

Kelly Barefoot, her dual county position of administrative/public information officer was returned to the budget with no change in salary. No other salary increases were proposed.

Acknowledging that the new board of commissioners "came in with certain commitments," Warren said the adopted budget includes a 17.5-percent increase in the education budget, which he said was more than any board had increased education spending "in the history of the county."

Citing what he called the board's "conservative fiscal management," Warren said it was "the first (Brunswick County) board in history to base a budget on actual expenditures."

Warren also said the new budget "continues the promised expansion of the water system" by allocating \$2.5 million to extend water mains to Shell Point, around the Brick Landing Loop, to Sunset Harbor and to the east and west ends of Mt.

(See BUDGET, Page 2-A)

Schools' Capital Budget Includes New Classrooms At West, North Brunswick

BY LYNN CARLSON

West and North Brunswick high schools will get \$1.19 million in new classrooms, the first additions since they opened in 1972, under a capital budget approved Monday by the Brunswick County Board of Education.

Plans presented by Bill Turner, assistant superintendent for auxiliary services, would add eight classrooms at West and six at North, plus restrooms and storage rooms in both buildings.

While the new space won't eliminate "roving teachers" who have no classrooms, it may allow the schools to stop using trailers as classrooms. "We're trying to work it out that way," Turner told the school board. "It's the first thing (the principals) would like to get rid of."

Turner said West's enrollment is expected to increase from 914 to 1,019 next year. The school uses six trailers for classrooms and has five teachers with no classroom. The board budgeted \$650,000 for a 10,000-square-foot addition.

North is expected to take on 59 additional students this fall. The school uses four trailers for classrooms and has three teachers without classrooms. The board budgeted \$447,675 for a 6,887-square-foot addition.

Turner said invitations to bid on the two projects should include alternate plans for 10 and eight classrooms, respectively, "since they could be cheaper than we anticipate."

The total capital budget for the new fiscal year, which begins July 1, (See INTERIM, Page 2-A)

DIRE PREDICTIONS

Real Estate Reps Warn Health Board Over Occupancy Rules

BY ERIC CARLSON

Some of the area's most prominent real estate brokers could lose their licenses and be run out of business.

Families who have rented the same Brunswick Islands beach cottages for 20 years could be forced to vacation elsewhere, taking millions of tourist dollars with them.

The local real estate industry could collapse as rental homes no longer bring in enough income to

offset mortgage payments, scaring off buyers and causing banks to readjust their loan requirements.

Homeowners throughout Brunswick County could see their taxes skyrocket as the value of beach property plummets.

Those were just some of the doomsday predictions posed by realtors who say the Brunswick County Health Department is moving too quickly in its crackdown on home occupancy levels that allegedly overload septic systems.

The health board seems to be caught between a rock and a hard place, with state environmental regulators questioning the health department's enforcement of septic system regulations while Brunswick County's most powerful industry complains that local health officials are being unreasonably restrictive.

Representatives of the South Brunswick Islands Board of Realtors agreed Thursday to schedule a series of joint meetings with health board members to discuss the possible phased enforcement of the regulations and to push for construction of central sewage systems.

The controversy arose after the health board recently voted to send a letter to all rental cottage owners informing them that they must either stop advertising occupancy levels



STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC CARLSON

REALTOR Alan Holden explains to members of the Brunswick County Board of Health the implications of the effort to crack down on alleged septic tank overloading in rental cottages.

that exceed the treatment capacity of their unit's septic system, or upgrade the system to handle the advertised

number of occupants. When rental agents complained that their brochures already had

been distributed and most cottages had been booked for this vacation season, the health board agreed not to send out the letters. A health board committee met with realtors Thursday night to discuss the matter.

"We need to do something now because this is the biggest thing to hit this area in years," said Holden Beach Realtor Alan Holden. "This is not just a Brunswick County problem. Counties all over the state are watching what's happening here. The state Senate, the House of Representatives and the state Board of Realtors are all very much aware. My phone rings every day from homeowners concerned about what's going to happen."

Holden said he had been singled out as "a test person" for strict enforcement of septic regulations that are routinely violated throughout the vacation rental industry. He accused Holden Beach Commissioner Sid Schwartz of sending "unauthorized letters" to state regulators informing them that Holden had advertised an occupancy level for a rental cottage that exceeded the capacity of its septic system.

Schwartz was one of two Holden Beach Commissioners who supported a proposed town ordinance that would have prohibited rental agencies from advertising occupancy lev-

els that exceed septic capacities. The measure was defeated in a 3-2 vote.

A recent survey of local rental brochures indicated that "at least 75 percent" of all Brunswick County summer rental homes are advertised to accommodate more occupants than their septic systems were designed to handle, according to Brunswick Environmental Health Supervisor Andrew Robinson.

Last month, Robinson asked the health board to authorize the letter to property owners after the N.C. Real Estate Commission notified Health Director Michael Rhodes that it was investigating "whether advertisements and other representations by licensees of this agency...violate the Real Estate License Law."

The commission's letter to Rhodes concludes by asking what the county intends to do about the alleged violations.

"The licensing commission knows you have a problem. And they're going to cover their butt," Holden said. "So the bottom line is, I'm going to lose my license. But I'm not going to take this lying down. I'm going to take down anybody I've got to take down."

Holden Beach Commissioner David Sandifer questioned the assumption that a septic system is over-

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