

Hertford council expected to raise electric rates

An increase in electric rates appears inevitable for Hertford residents as the town makes every effort to generate more income and recover from a lack of cash flow and a deficit in the General Fund of the 1980 budget.

Accountants Otis Hurd and Edward Lang appeared before the town council at their regular monthly meeting Monday, and recommended to council members to either increase electric rates or to slash the 1980 budget in order to fund the deficit carried over from the 1979-80 fiscal year.

Whatever course the council chooses, action needs to be taken immediately,

according to Hurd. "If you're going to increase electric rates to fund the deficit you really should have done it in July," he said.

"If you increase (electric rates) now, it won't be that great (of an increase) but if you wait until January, then you're going to have to make the increase a drastic one," Hurd said. "Something has got to be done now."

The council was expected to meet in a work session Tuesday night to study possible utility rate hikes.

Figures that emerged from a department-by-department breakdown of the 1980-81 budget showed that the town is

not in as great of a slump as originally anticipated.

The deficit in the General Fund (which foots the bill for most services offered by the town) was slightly less than the estimated \$56,000.

Excess expenditures over revenue accrued in the General Fund totaled \$98,375. Subtracted from this figure are monies carried over from the 1979 budget (\$42,782) which then leaves a deficit sum of \$55,593.

But the actual deficit in the General Fund will be \$43,206 once the council resolves to eliminate a \$12,716 obligation,

outstanding since 1963, to the Debt Service Fund.

"It's a paper transaction," explained Hurd, "and although it doesn't actually mean you're getting the money, you're not losing it either and it will just make you look better on paper."

In a management letter to the town, the accountants wrote of the General Fund: "A review of the June 30, 1980 actual revenues and expenditures as compared to budget indicate that the current deficit was caused by the fact that only \$79,363 was received from the utility funds when \$198,000 was budgeted to be received.

"Without the use of restricted funds the town of Hertford would not have been able to continue its operations for any of its services.

"We suggest that the Town review all of its services that it now provides (Police, Fire, Sanitation, Street, Ice, Cemetery, Historical, Inspection, Recreational and Administrative) and adopt a realistic budget plan that is financially feasible for the size and tax base of the Town."

The accountants also pointed out what councilmembers already knew: that the deficit in the General Fund was due to spending more money than was at hand

and that much of the problem was the result of the fact that the town had not passed on all of Virginia Electric and Power Company's rate increases to Hertford customers.

"The fact is, you paid Veeco more than you budgeted," said Hurd, "and that's your problem in a nutshell because then your General Fund fell short."

"You have got to raise your rates to keep up with Veeco," he said.

Although the accountants found the Electric Fund to be operating at a profit, they warned the commissioners against

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Open house

Student guides stand by ready to answer questions in the newly-renovated Perquimans County High School library

while residents tour the facility. Open house was held there Sunday, with a

record crowd turning out to see the renovations and the addition.

At PCHS

Hundreds tour addition

Hundreds of town and county residents accepted the school board's invitation to tour the \$1.25 million Perquimans County High School addition at the open house held Sunday.

A host of student guides met visitors in the newly-renovated library to take them on what school superintendent Pat Harrell jokingly referred to as the "50 cent tour."

Designed by architects of Ashford and Associates of Raleigh, the addition consists of 12 new classrooms, 2 dressing rooms adjacent to the gymnasium, an activity area, an administrative area, teachers' lounge, a renovated library, and public restroom facilities designed to accommodate school activities held in the gymnasium.

Also included on the tour Sunday was the newly constructed mechanic shop, complete with hydraulic lift.

Light beige vinyl wall coverings have taken the place of the traditional cinderblock walls that have been associated with public school facility design for decades. The walls are installed in panels, conducive to easy cleaning and replacement.

The design of the building gives an open, airy appearance with floor-to-ceiling windows that edge hallways and classrooms. Windows not only border outside walls, but also serve as partitions between classrooms and corridors.

The glass is tinted slightly to eliminate glare and also to aid in heat retention.

The building is zoned for heating and air conditioning, and is equipped with a system easily adaptable to solar heat, according to an earlier conversation with Harrell.

The renovated library is about one-third larger than its former size, with several added features including a darkroom for film and photographic processing, a soundproof preview room for audio-visuals, a professional library for faculty, and a periodical storage and study area.

A reading area is set with brightly upholstered couches and chairs in the main section of the library.

School librarian Lois Stokes said this year's budget allowed for the purchase of some new books to fill the expanse of new library shelves, and that many books had also been donated to the school.

The addition accommodates classes in

English, math, foreign language, and one section of social studies. Athletic offices are also located in the complex.

An "activity area" near the gymnasium can be used to accommodate an overflowing crowd attending an athletic event. A push of a button activates the mechanical door, and the area is converted into a classroom.

Teachers, staff, and students seem well pleased with the addition. "We have room to do a lot of activities we couldn't do before," said Paul Ward, Perquimans County testing coordinator.

"I pinch myself everyday," said English instructor Carroll Harrell of her new classroom in the addition.

Work on the addition began in January of 1979 and was completed in time for school's opening in August of this year.

Inclement weather often halted work on the project, which was originally slated for completion last February.

The facility is newly furnished throughout, with the exception of some student desks.

Overcrowded conditions at the high school are expected to be relieved somewhat by the new high school addition.

Board stands firm, supplement pay is denied

Four vocational teachers from Perquimans High School met with the board of education Monday night to express their concerns about being excluded from a federal pay supplement program.

The supplement would have given vocational teachers \$35 per month for duties performed beyond the school day.

But board members had voted in a prior meeting not to approve the supplement plan in the interest of fairness to other classroom teachers who perform extra duties but receive no extra pay.

The vocational teachers argued, however, that they are virtually required by the state to perform extra duties,

particularly preparing students for contests, whereas many of the duties of other teachers are not required.

"Our main concern is not the extra supplement but the general idea of our unworthiness in not being granted the privilege of participating. Now, more than ever, we as teachers need encouragement, motivation and praise," said vocational teacher Eltona Joyner in a prepared statement.

The vocational teachers also argued that they had received the supplement in the past, and are no less worthy to receive the supplement in the present.

The North Carolina General Assembly has for the first time this year, given

local school boards the option as to whether or not to allow the supplement.

Board member Emmett Long pointed out that classroom teachers had only recently begun to learn about the extra pay awarded to vocational teachers, and were beginning to complain about it.

The teachers, however, presented a list of extra duties they must perform, including: keeping special records on vocational students; attending vocational education teachers meetings; attending conferences each summer; heading up vocational education youth organizations, which compete in local, district, and state contests; and several other duties.

Schools superintendent Pat Harrell, however, noted that Perquimans was not alone in turning down the supplement. Some 35 per cent of the school boards across North Carolina that had acted on the matter as of Monday had elected not to participate.

Harrell also pointed out that other teachers also prepare students for contests, and perform duties beyond the normal school day.

Board members took no action on the matter but agreed to stand by their earlier decision.

Several board members said that it was not out of any lack of support for vocational education but in the interest of

fairness to other teachers.

In another matter, board chairman Clifford Winslow said that it might be time to begin thinking about another local bond referendum, to begin Phase II at the county high school.

But Winslow said that he expects to see a statewide school bond referendum on the ballot in 1981, and that would contribute \$1.5 million to Perquimans County.

Board members expressed reluctance to commit major maintenance funds to the two story portion of the county high school in hopes that its future is a short one.

"If that's our priority, maybe we ought to think in that direction and do some planning," said Winslow.

Board member 'Flutch' Dail said that more funds need to be committed to maintaining structures already in existence in Perquimans County.

"Otherwise, they'll say, 'Why are you going to build something if you won't take care of what you've got,'" said Dail.

In another fiscal matter, Harrell said that teacher salaries are climbing in North Carolina, and are beginning to compare favorably with other states. Hence, teachers are changing jobs less frequently.

Part two of a two part series

Younger students respond well to authority in the classroom

Older Perquimans County youth are subject to a series of school rules that resemble public laws in that punishment for each offense is clearly spelled out.

The demerit system, which is the backbone of discipline at Perquimans County

High School, is also used at the county's junior high school. Both principals consider the policy to be a satisfactory means of controlling student behavior.

Perquimans Union School principal Gary Stubbins described the demerit

policy as "quite effective for this particular school."

Although the policy is basically the same as that which is enforced at the high school, there are some discrepancies.

A student at Perquimans Union School, which houses grades 5 through 8, can receive one demerit for such offenses as tardiness, unauthorized use of the halls, failure to observe the dress code, excessive talking in class, gum chewing,

attending class unprepared, eating outside of the lunchroom, and any other conduct determined undesirable by the principal.

Two demerits can be accumulated for "ungentlemanly or unlady-like" behavior, skipping class, or leaving the campus without permission.

A student can receive three demerits for use of profanity, or for showing disrespect for teachers or other staff members.

Suspension (up to 10 days) can result for those found guilty of: fighting, defacing school property, smoking, cheating, (parents are notified of the first cheating incident) truancy, or carrying a concealed weapon.

The school sends a letter to parents seeking assistance in counseling those who have accumulated five demerits.

Following an accumulation of seven demerits, a second letter is sent to parents advising them of their right to select the type of punishment for their child. Choices of punishment included five licks from a paddle administered by the principal in the presence of a witness, or three days suspension.

Automatic suspension of three days follows the accumulation of ten demerits. Parents are notified by mail of such action.

Because Union school houses some younger-aged students, Stubbins said emphasis is placed on making sure

pupils understand the demerit system.

"We go over the demerit policy very carefully at the beginning of school in the homerooms to make sure that everybody understands it," he said.

Individualized attention

Although the demerit system helps deal with disruptive behavior on a "fair and equal basis," Stubbins said that individualized attention was necessary in some instances.

"We do have a few students who could be considered 'discipline problems,' but for whom the demerit policy seems to have no effect," said Stubbins. "And we can see that suspending them time after time is not doing them any good, and so we then refer them to the school counselor."

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Power companies, election key EMC meeting

Robert Fischbach will be the keynote speaker at the annual meeting of the members of the Albemarle Electric Membership Corporation, scheduled Oct. 11 at 2 p.m. at Perquimans County High School.

Fischbach is currently executive director of the public staff of the N.C. Utilities Commission. He served as a

commission member prior to his present position.

"Mr. Fischbach is well qualified to inform members of the rate differences between Veeco, CP&L, and Duke Power, why the rate differences exist, what projections show rates to be in the future, and the problems in replacing a power supplier with another power supplier," according to the 1980 meeting notice

supplied to Albemarle Electric members.

Three new directors will be elected during the business session, and candidates have already been selected by a nominating committee.

District one (Camden County) candidates are Earl Meiggs of Camden and

G.H. Canfield of South Mills, district two candidates (Chowan County) include Joseph Byrum of Rt. 1, Tyner and Ronnie L. Sawyer of Rt. 2, Edenton, and district three (Perquimans County) candidates are Floyd Matthews, Sr., of Rt. 4, Hertford, and Albert Eure, of Rt. 3, Hertford.

Again this year, electrical appliances will be awarded as prizes during the meeting.

Flood of complaints prompts change

The Perquimans County Board of Commissioners elected Monday to have water meters read every other month, rather than quarterly, after a wave of protests over inaccurate billing flooded the water department-tax office.

The board had opted to read meters quarterly, rather than monthly, in hopes of saving money.

Customers would pay two estimated

bills, then a catch-up bill in the third month. But estimates of consumption were way short for many customers during the summer months, leaving some customers with a bill in the third month that was as large as the previous two months combined.

The board agreed to change the readings on the recommendation of department head Keith Haskett. Com-

missioner Marshall Caddy registered the sole negative vote, arguing that given time, the estimates would become more accurate.

In other action, the board:

*considered moving a part-time, temporary tax office worker to full-time status;

*accepted a fuel oil bid of 6.4 cents below prevailing retail price from Winslow Oil Company (currently 95.9

cents per gallon);

*appointed Ada Turner to the local library board and Dorothy Barbee and Elizabeth Harris to the regional board;

*elected to present former extension secretary Marjorie Fields with a plaque in appreciation of her services to the county;

*and, received copies of the audit report for the 1979-80 fiscal year.

