

THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

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Social Services board approves revised budget

The Perquimans County Board of Social Services approved last week a budget calling for \$142,339 in local expenditures for the department in the coming year.

That budget must now be accepted by the county board of commissioners.

The budget reflects a 3.7 percent rise in county cost for Social Services, up \$8,361 over the present year.

In a budget work session last Tuesday night, Social Services director Paul Gregory told the county commissioners

that he is pleased with the reworked budget. "I feel real good about it," he said.

Gregory had initially sought an increase of some \$20,000 in the county's share of spending, but was able to find areas in which spending could be trimmed. "We were able to cut about \$12,000 out of it, may \$13,000," said Gregory.

Lester Simpson, the county commissioners' representative on the social services board, warned that the budget would be tighter than in past years.

"There's not as much in this budget left over as there's been being left over," Simpson said.

In his initial budget, Gregory figured the cost of county participation in Aid to Families with Dependent Children at \$58,365. The new budget calls for \$56,112, backed by \$5,120 in state equalizing funds.

The state equalizing funds do not actually come from county taxes.

Gregory also trimmed approximately \$3,000 from originally proposed Medicaid spending by using a figure that

represents a 5 percent increase over this year's projected spending, \$57,023.

Proposed special assistance spending was also cut by nearly \$4,000 by using a state estimate rather than Gregory's own estimate of what the program would cost.

Gregory's figure was \$20,844, whereas the state had assumed that \$17,029 would be required.

Aside from the commissioners, the state Department of Human Resources must approve the budget.

New rules and regulations governing

some social services programs are expected from the Reagan administration, but Gregory said it could be as long as two years before they take effect.

In other matters, Simpson suggested that the commissioners ask the county board of education to trim their \$699,600 budget request by \$20,000. Commissioner Charles Ward argued that the figure should be \$50,000.

Ward felt that due to economic conditions, the schools should not be increasing spending.

The county has budgeted \$642,600 for the present year.

In another matter, county finance officer D.F. Reed, Jr. advised board members that the water rates would probably have to be increased so that the system would continue to pay for itself in the coming year.

Board members said they would discuss the need for a new rate schedule with Rivers and Associates, the firm that engineered the water system.

County wrestles with tax levy

By MIKE McLAUGHLIN

The Perquimans County Board of Commissioners spent much of their Monday night meeting wrestling with budget figures in an effort to keep the 1981-1982 tax rate in line with that of the present year.

County finance officer D.F. Reed, Jr., presented estimated budget figures showing a \$1.215 tax rate, and an alternate budget proposal that would require a \$1.19 tax levy. The tax levy for the current year was \$1.15 per \$100 in property valuation.

The proposals were based on budget requests from the various departments and agencies the county provides funding for.

The commissioners, however, will look for areas in which spending can be reduced this week, and will return to the board room at the county courthouse for a special budget meeting Monday night.

Discussion this past Monday night centered around where cuts might be made.

Commissioner Charles Ward advocated deleting some \$4,400 used to help pay for a Farmers Home Administration employee. "I don't see why we should be subsidizing FHA," Ward said.

Commissioner Lester Simpson said he had discussed the matter with the Chowan County manager, and was told that the Chowan commissioners had also discussed cutting their share of the multi-county position.

Ward also argued that the Albemarle Regional Commission should pay more than the \$6,000 rent it has budgeted for 3,600 feet of office space.

He maintained that the figure should be around \$15,000, and said that even at that the county would be losing money on the cost of operating the building.

Simpson, however, was skeptical about any chances of raising ARPDCs rent. "That's all we're going to get," he said.

Ward responded that the commission, "ought to move, then."

"I don't see why we should have to subsidize them \$10,000 a year," he said, noting that the commission is a regional concern.

Another money saving suggestion came from commissioner Marshall Caddy. Caddy asked whether the commissioners shouldn't just go to the department heads and ask them to trim 5 percent from each of their budget requests.

His suggestion, though, was greeted with skepticism. "I think most of them gave us a pretty tight budget," said Simpson.

Holding salary increases for county employees to 5 percent instead of the projected 10 percent would save an estimated \$10,000, Reed said, a figure that proved tempting to some of the board members.

Simpson, though, was not one of them. "I hate to cut my employees back," he said.

But his assertion that recreation should be held to \$20,000, was greeted by silence from other board members.

County recreation director Mac Sligh had earlier offered a no-growth budget request that called for \$30,000 from the county and \$10,000 from the Town of Hertford.

In the current year, though, the two units of government are sharing the program's cost equally.

Though board members were probably already aware of it, Reed asserted that there was no real fat in the budget to cut. He said that the \$1.19 tax levy was a safe one, "without cutting anybody back or hurting anybody too bad."

Services are the only thing you've got to cut that I know of, said Reed.

Ward conceded that the tax rate would probably have to be raised two to three cents just to account for rising fixed costs.

School officials, however, attended the meeting to offer a compromise on their budget request of the previous week.

Board of education chairman Clifford Winslow said that the schools would be willing to forego two cents of a requested three cents increase in tax levy if the money could be made up through revenue sharing.

"You've had a history of allocating a certain amount of revenue sharing money to the schools," Winslow said. "We would be willing to drop two of our three cents request if you could come up with \$20,000 (from revenue sharing)... The bottom line would be the same."

Later in the meeting, Winslow said he thought the board of education would agree to an additional one cent cut (approximately \$10,000).

The schools had sought \$699,600 in funding generated through county tax dollars, up 8.7 percent from the present year's \$642,600.

The request did not, however, include a small item in the present year's budget that the schools hope the county will pay.

Winslow told the commissioners that a \$2,187 expenditure for Alliance for Progress dues had been left out of the schools budget in hopes that it could be added to the county's budget.

He called it a flow-through situation in which the county gives the money to the schools to give to AFP, and said that both units of government benefit from membership in the six-county organization.

The commissioners are considering leaving the figure out of the budget entirely.

In another matter, R.L. Stevenson told the board that the Perquimans County Restoration Association hopes to have the Newbold-White House open for public showing on July 3.

"The house is beautiful. Mr. (W.M.) Kemp has done a masterful job," said Stevenson of efforts to restore what is believed to be the oldest existing house in North Carolina. "It's something the state and county can be proud of," Stevenson said.

He said that festivities are being planned for that date, including visits from state dignitaries, and a dutch luncheon.

Restoration Association member Herbert Nixon asked for funds to have the house placed back on the Historic Albemarle Tour.

Originally included on the tour, the house had been removed because of

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War paint and potter's clay

Teresa Schallock painted Bill Jennings into an Indian (top) during the Spring Extravaganza held in the park on Grubb Street Saturday. Although originally intended as a vehicle for senior citizens to display their talents, the event was opened to anyone with a craft to sell. Hertford potter Nancy Fletcher and son Clay displayed their hand at the wheel, and other displays included an exhibit from Museum of the Albemarle, paintings, basket weaving, and needle work. The day was highlighted by performances from the Harbor Lites, a square dancing team from Snug Harbor, in addition to a performance by the Gospel Countrymen. (Photos by NOEL TODD McLAUGHLIN)

Rate hike to squeeze EMCs

Virginia Electric and Power Company's latest proposal for raising its wholesale rates could put six North Carolina Electric Membership Corporations into a severe "price squeeze" situation this fall, according to N.C. EMC officials.

"We've had price squeeze situations before, but the EMCs served by Vepco appear to be headed for the most critical case of this kind that the state's co-ops have faced in the past decade," said Jim Hubbard, executive vice president of North Carolina EMC, the power supply arm of the statewide EMC organization.

The EMCs that would be affected by the rate case are Albemarle EMC; Cape Hatteras EMC; Buxton; Edgecomb; Martin County EMC; Tarboro; Halifax EMC; Enfield; Roanoke EMC; Rich Square and Tidewater EMC; and Pamlico.

Ed Brown, Jr., general manager of Albemarle EMC, explained that the term "price squeeze" refers to any situation where a co-op's cost of wholesale power is so high that its charges to consumers

are disproportionately out of line with the retail rates of the power supplier.

"N.C. EMC has raised this issue in its petition to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in Washington with regard to the new Vepco rate proposal," he said.

In that petition, the statewide generating and transmission co-op argues that the rates place the EMCs in an "anti-competitive price squeeze situation" that could threaten to put them out of business.

Vepco officials, however, maintain that the effect will not be so dramatic. "I think it will have considerably less impact than the EMCs think it will have," said Randy McKeever, Vepco Southern Division vice president.

The Vepco rate hike request was filed with FERC to become effective on Sept. 1, subject to refund if the agency later finds the request excessive.

Vepco officials say the new rates would increase the cost of power for the Virginia and North Carolina co-ops in the

company's service area by about 21.5 percent or \$21.1 million a year.

N.C. EMC calculations, however, indicate that the figures will be about 45 percent or \$37.8 million a year.

"Vepco's figures were calculated from higher base rates, with a deduction for lower fuel costs as a result of the company's more extensive use of nuclear generating facilities," Brown said. "We think our figures are far more realistic."

He said Vepco may hope to avoid a serious price squeeze challenge by scheduling the new rates to become effective on Sept. 1.

"The company apparently hopes that by then they'll have a ruling from the state utilities commission on a pending rate hike for retail customers in North Carolina," he said.

Since the case wasn't filed until late December of last year, the commission isn't required to issue a ruling until late September, according to Dennis Nightingale of the commission's public staff.

This week

A curious and adventurous life led Albert Poirier to Hertford — see page 3.

The ladies at the nutrition site do more than serve up a good meal — see page 8.

Aid may be available for this year's sowing wheat and barley crops — see page 10.

Weather word

Cloudy and pleasantly mild weather is in store Thursday through Saturday. Highs will average in the low 70s and lows in the 40s to mid-50s.

