

ARTICLE 5 OF STATE CONSTITUTION

Changes To Be Made In Courthouse Duties

COUNTY COMMISSION CONSIDERS REAPPRAISAL OF PROPERTY TAXES

THE WALTON COUNTY COMMISSION voted Tuesday morning to meet with professional property appraisers to discuss the question of a complete re-appraisal of Walton County property.

Tax Assessor Hubert Adkinson met with the Board with the suggestion to have maps made showing ownership of every parcel of land in the county, at a cost of about \$25,000. He said this would pay for itself eventually by selling copies of the maps to real estate firms, abstractors, developers and others.

In the following discussion the Board agreed that the best solution might be the professional appraiser route and Adkinson agreed that this would probably be the best way to meet state requirements. He said he would accept the figures provided by a professional firm.

The Board will ask bids from a number of appraisal firms and plans to meet with them at the November 28 meeting to discuss the problem.

Chairman Conley Martin pointed out that the county is losing more than \$200,000 a year because property here is not assessed at full value, and that this would be an important factor to consider.

THE BOARD ADOPTED the following ordinance:

"WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners of Walton County, Florida, has been advised that the continued use of certain irrigation systems in Walton County, Florida, has lowered the water level to the extent that the fresh water supply has become critically endangered, and

"WHEREAS, the threat of

Adoption of Article 5 of the Florida Constitution by the voters of the state will cause some sweeping changes in the distribution of duties in the Walton county courthouse, as well as over the state.

Under the two-tier system of judges to go in effect January 1, 1973, the office of Judge of the Small Claims Court, now held by Odell O. Thompson, will be abolished and the duties will be taken over by The Judge of the County Court, Judge Joe Dan Trotman. Thompson will continue as supervisor of Registration, his term having two more years to run.

Cases involving juveniles, incompetency, guardianship and probation, now handled in the County Court, will come before the Circuit Court.

Traffic cases, misdemeanors (cases in which the penalty set up by law is no more than one year in county jail, or the amount of money involved is not more than \$500) will still be handled in the County Court. Marriage licenses and birth certificates will also be handled through the County Court.

Fishing and hunting licenses that are now being handled in County Court will after January 1 be handled by the Tax Collector, who already issues boat and motor vehicle licenses.

Art League To Paint Murals

The Christmas season is upon us again and for the plea-

THURSDAY, JANUARY 25, 1973

Prosecution Calls Ballman Trial Story Of "Illicit Love"

Duties Changed In Courthouse

PASSAGE OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT relating to the judicial system in Florida has caused procedural changes of considerable magnitude in the Walton County Courthouse.

Important matters are now handled by other officers than in the past and changes have been made in the offices themselves.

County Judge Joe Dan Trotman's office has probably undergone the most sweeping changes. Matters pertaining to probate, guardianship, juveniles and incompetency are no longer handled through his office.

All these matters, which made up a good bit of his work in the past, are now handled by the Clerk of the County Court, who under the new set-up, is Philip Anderson, who is also Clerk of the Circuit Court. His official title is now Clerk of the Courts.

Marriage licenses are now issued by Clerk Anderson, but after the prescribed waiting period, are executed by Judge Trotman. Anderson also issues delayed birth certificates.

Fishing and hunting licenses, which have in the past been issued through Judge Trotman's office, are now issued in the office of Tax Collector Jack Little. He also issues tax redemption certificates, which had been handled by the Circuit Clerk.

Civil small claims will now be handled in the office of County Judge Trotman. These had been handled in the office of the Small Claims Court Judge, which has been abolished. The amount formerly handled was below \$600. This has been increased as

follows: If the amount is up to \$1500 a hearing is held with or without attorneys, but if the amount is from \$1500 to \$2500, the parties must be represented by attorneys.

Judgments will be issued in cases handled in this court, but it was pointed out that in no cases will any money be collected in this office. The Circuit Court will continue to have jurisdiction over all felonies and civil cases involving more than \$2500. Both County and Circuit Courts will now function as trial courts only.

Another change has been made in regard to the handling of the payment of fines. All fines are now paid in the office of the Clerk of the Courts, instead of in the Sheriff's office, as in the past.

Sheriff Sam Campbell, however, will continue to accept bonds, but will make no collections.

Some of the officers' duties have not been changed. Tax assessor Hubert Adkinson and County Superintendent John Baldwin have no procedural changes made in their offices, but Odell Thompson, now that the Small Claims Court has been abolished, will continue to serve, as in the past, in the capacity of Supervisor of Elections.

All warrants will now be issued from the State Attorney's office and capias from the Clerk's office.

County Prosecuting Attorney, Paul Thompson, no longer works under that title. He is now assistant State Attorney handling misdemeanors. Bill Jennings is assistant State Attorney handling felonies. Both of these appointments were made by State Attorney Curtis Golden.

George Ralph Miller continues as assistant Public Defender.

Offices of all Constables and Justices of the Peace were abolished under the Constitutional changes to Article Five.

Considerable renovation work is being done in the courthouse at this time. Judge Trotman's new offices are on the second floor, behind the circuit court room to the left (as one faces the court) with Judge Wells' offices to the right as before. Carpets are being put down and both judge's chambers are being painted. The petty jury room has been replastered and Clerk Anderson says work will be done on other offices as time permits.

Clerk Anderson's offices now occupy the entire left wing of the courthouse as one enters. The old office used by Judge Trotman is now used by the Clerk, and matters concerning probate, incompetents, juveniles and guardianship are still handled in this same location, although under a new office.

Clerk Anderson says he feels that when the public becomes

accustomed to the new duties of the officials and the different locations where some of the services are rendered, courthouse personnel will be able to serve the public in a more efficient manner than ever.