Jury sets budget

By STEVE BANDY

After two weeks of haggling over the General Fund, the Acadia Parish Police Jury Tuesday morning adopted a $7.2 million budget for 1987.

Controversy over the General Fund arose when members of the Finance Committee recommend-
ed that a large portion of the jurors' salaries be used to reinstate five of 11 non-mandated depart-
ments for which no funding was available.

Jurors were under the assumption that a unanimous vote was needed to reduce salaries and a number of individual jurors were opposed to the plan.

However, during Tuesday morning's special meeting, Ron Bertrand, legal counsel, told the jury that, after reading the state ordinance concerning salaries for elected officials, he was of the opinion that "majority rules."

He told the jury that the ordinance stated that the state legislature could not lower the jurors' salaries during a term of office. However, his interpretation of the law was that a majority vote of that body was sufficient to do so.

The vote to accept the budget proposal (in-
cluding the salary reduction) for the General Fund was 11-4, with Emerson Abshire, Nelson Arceneaux, Claude Courville and Curtis Pellerin casting "no" votes.

Jurors Paul Marx and Clarence Richard were absent.

The proposal calls for an "across the board" cut of 9.15 percent in nearly all offices, with money from the police juror's salaries used to fund the Parish Farm Agent ($11,500), Civil Defense ($24,998), Juvenile Detention ($9,538), Paupers Funerals ($272) and Parish Service Officer ($5,104).

Jurors' salaries were reduced from $508 to $202 per month.

The 9.15 percent cut affected all but the Parish Farm Agent, who's budget remained at $11,500, and the Clerk of Court's Office, who had volunteered an even 10 percent cutback.

Five other line items budgeted in previous years were eliminated all together, including the Planning and Zoning Department, Engineering Depart-
ment, funding for the Council on Aging, allocations for Parish Fairs and Festivals and the Airport Commission.

It was during another special meeting held Mon-
day that a second proposal had been submitted which included reinstating the jurors' salaries at the 1985 level. Under this proposal, all mandated offices would have been forced to incur a cut of 13.98 percent from their requested budgets.