

# THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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## It's Your Health Care They're Talking About

State health planners say Brunswick County needs an additional 100 beds for skilled and intermediate care. As several companies compete for the right to provide those beds, it is the residents of Brunswick County whose voice should hold the greatest sway.

That opportunity will come Jan. 16 during a public hearing held at Bolivia Elementary School by the project review committee of Cardinal Health Systems Agency Inc., a non-profit agency that plans health care for 15 southeastern North Carolina counties. On the CHSA agenda are proposals from several companies wishing to fulfill Brunswick County's allotment of 100 nursing home beds that was recently established by the state. The committee will make its recommendation to Cardinal's full board; the board can accept it or present a recommendation of its own to the state's division of facility services, which makes the final decision. In at least two recent instances, comparable planning boards have reversed committee recommendations, citing community support as their reason.

Recommendations are based on three general criteria: community need, cost containment features and availability of resources needed to carry out the project. Factors to be considered include how accessible the project is to the public (especially groups such as the poor and minorities) in terms of both cost and location; the degree of community support for the project; and the degree to which the project either complements or unnecessarily duplicates existing services.

From the list of companies appear two key front-runners, both with proven track records in the health-care field—Britthaven Inc., a North Carolina firm that plans to build a 100-bed facility just outside Charlotte, and Beverly Enterprises Corp. of Maryland, which plans to build a 100-bed facility adjacent to the Brunswick Hospital.

Comparisons and contrasts between the two companies could be endless, but residents should weigh each proposal in their minds and decide which company can best meet their family's needs. A recent survey of the two companies conducted by the Brunswick County Health Department has provided some needed information.

One of the most obvious questions raised is where the facility should be located. Population growth studies indicate the nursing home should be built between Lockwood Folly and Shallotte, a loop extending roughly from Shallotte to Holden Beach.

Other points residents should keep in mind are the companies' admission policies, waiting lists, long range plans, and building designs. A site next to a hospital or populated area may both be ideal if the companies keep admission priorities suited to the Brunswick County residents.

According to the companies' response to the health department questionnaire, Beverly will assign accommodations "on the basis of medical need and financial arrangements" and provide data on the number of persons on its waiting list.

Britthaven plans to assign accommodations to county hospital patients first, followed by county residents living at home, former residents wishing to return, and relatives of county residents. They also plan to display their waiting list of all applicants for admission to appropriate health-care related agencies.

Beverly's nursing home would be part of a "life care center" that also includes senior apartments or villas for retirement living in a more secure environment. Britthaven will offer respite care and has discussed adding retirement apartments and an adult day activity program in its long-range plan. Britthaven would be located off N.C. 130 (Holden Beach Road), close enough to be within easy reach for the Shallotte Volunteer Rescue Squad.

Beverly plans to share the hospital's sewer system, and says proximity to the hospital will increase physicians' visits and will make it more cost-effective to provide certain ancillary services.

Although it is an important decision, there may be no bad choice in selecting a company to build within the county. However, CHSA should give the residents what they want.

Citizen input is important. After all, it's your health care they're talking about.

## It's Time To Flip Through 365 More Pages

It's time to reflect on 1984, a year of learning and experience on a new job in the real world. Being named staff writer at The Brunswick Beacon provided me with my first newspaper job. A desk calendar will help us look back on the year that passed quicker than expected, and was filled with exciting things as pointed out in last week's year-end edition.



Terry Pope

However, the intent of this column is to point out the non-exciting things, the things a reporter notes to himself on a small three-by-four inch desk calendar that must be thrown away now after plowing through its 365 pages. I realize some folks are already starting to wonder, laugh, or fall asleep.

In looking back, I thought I'd find more writing on the pages than I discovered. It's like sorting through a diary, or receipts in tracing one's past, like Sherlock Holmes trying to trace down the mysterious murderer through documented receipts.

I once knew someone who kept all

of their checkbook balance stubs because it provided a handy reference as to where they were on a certain day, or what month they last visited the dentist. By plowing through the dresser drawer full of checkbook stubs, they were able to keep stories in line about how they visited Las Vegas for their vacation in 1977, where they spent the night, where they ate lunch on the second day of their vacation, or where they purchased additional film. In case anyone was interested.

My calendar is probably as exciting. It all began Tuesday Jan. 3, when I reminded myself to get

"fatalities, alcohol related comparisons for 1983" along with the State Highway Patrol's weekly accident report. Moving right along, I found a reminder to get "9 a.m. pix at NBHS Quiz Bowl," on Friday the 13th. There were no references as to what to expect from the day itself, even though I am a bit superstitious.

Also in January, there are several references to the school board's meetings need to discuss "Servicemaster," the Illinois company that bided for a maintenance contract with the schools. A reminder of a Tuesday morning meeting of the "Erosion Control Committee" at Holden Beach also brought back memories of a promising jetty project that was sunk by a Corps of Engineers' study.

In March, thoughts turn to "school solicitation policy" with Jump Rope for Heart, check with Brooks." On the 14th, a note was made on "Holden Beach, 7 p.m., Special Duplex Meet." There is a reminder of "Medical

Lab Week" in April, along with the school board candidates' forum, sponsored by the League of Women Voters. That event seemed to kick off the election year.

Wednesday, May 9, was "Teacher Appreciation Day," but it kind of got lost amid the primary elections held May 8.

Saturday, June 30 was the date of the Ku Klux Klan rally in Grissetown. Remember that? And my first interview with Gene Yarbrough, who just one week before had been promoted to fill Superintendent Ben Brooks' job, was listed on July 26, at the central office.

In August, there was a shark tournament while Oct. 22 was supposed to be "Rickenbacker lawsuit vs. schools" in court. It got cancelled.

In November there is an "open house, 6-9" listed for The Beacon, while "Christmas parade" is listed for Dec. 1.

But I don't think I'll hold on to my calendar like a checkbook stub.

## Holiday Weather This Year Is Delightful Contrast

BY EDDIE SWEATT

The temptation to comment on the warm weather so far this winter in the South Brunswick Islands has been resisted for fear it might freeze before the newspaper is printed and delivered.

There is only one word to describe

the weather during the Christmas holidays this year: fabulous! This year's 75-plus temperatures were quite a contrast to last year's nine degrees and fierce winds.

Last year I spent Christmas day shivering while boarding up the front of the Beacon office where one of the

plate glass windows was blown out. This year I joined other residents and visitors in shorts and shirtsleeves for a long walk on the strand.

One of the highlights of the season was watching our neighbor on Holden Beach, Ben Tonking, decorate the outside of his house and boat dock

with Christmas lights. It was his first Christmas here as a permanent resident and he was so excited about being able to decorate outside shirtless and in bermuda shorts. He was even more excited about being able to tell his former neighbors who were shivering in Wooster, Ohio, about the weather here at Christmas.

Who said it had to be cold or snowy for the Christmas spirit to flourish? There was ample evidence everywhere of the festive holiday mood. For example, Dave (the plumber) Deaver and his sidekick, Jody Simmons, stopped by the office a day or so before Christmas to report on a water leak they have been trying for some time to stop at my house.

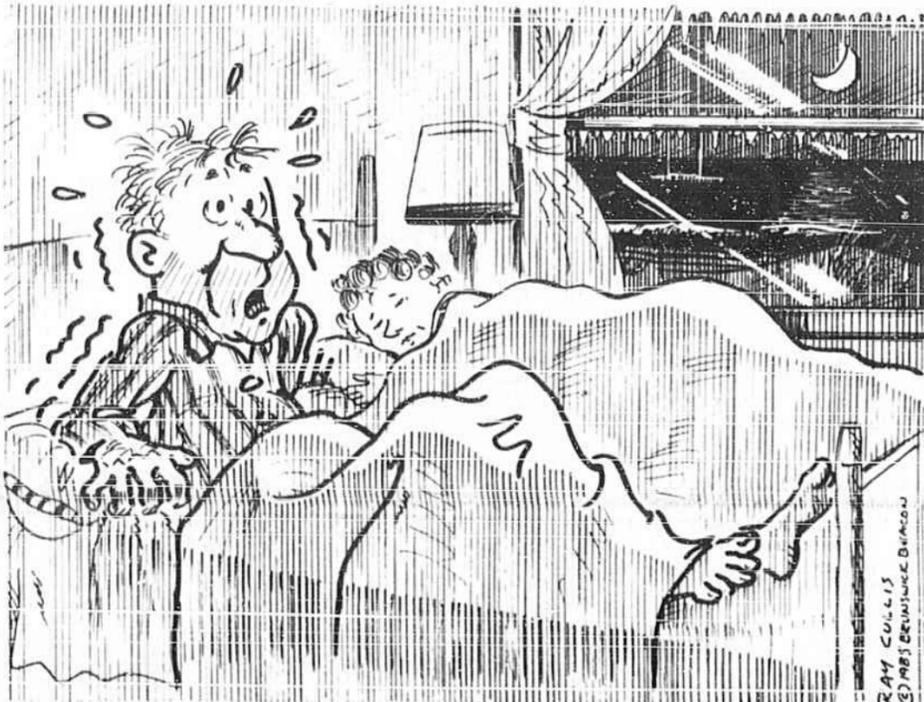
Ordinarily they would have been so busy fixing frozen water pipes this time of year it would have been difficult for them to get around to my piddling little problem.

The two disagreed, with typical holiday good will toward each other, about the cause of my leak. Dave is convinced that the leak is a communist plot and suggested I call the John Birch society for advice.

Jody's explanation was a bit more believable. He said he is sure my property is zoned for a car wash since the top floor keeps leaking on the car below. I'm going to check this out because a car wash would surely be more profitable and less work than the newspaper business.

My holiday mood was so warm and carefree that I accepted their explanations of the problem as well as their failure to put a stop to the leak.

I haven't had as much fun since seven or eight years ago when it was so warm I was bitten by mosquitoes at a New Year's Eve party.



"I DREAMED I WAS TRYING TO MAKE A LEFT TURN ONTO U.S. 17."

## County Appointments Go Begging

What do you do when you have unpteen seats to fill that nobody seems to want?

In some books these jobs are called community service or civic responsibilities. In other books they're called patronage—"rewards" for political support or party loyalty, though in some instances it's hard to see how the seats qualify as rewards.

The jobs? Service on committees and boards by appointment of the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners. The time required may be anywhere from one to eight years; service could end in mid-term if new commissioners ask for wholesale resignations so as to allow appointment of "their own people."

County commissioners talked appointments at a recent workshop. The four men and one woman sat around a conference table with County Manager Billy Carter, Assistant County Manager John Harvey, Clerk Regina White and Attorney David Clegg and plowed their way through the two-inch thick three-ring binder appointment book. The experience was confusing, to say the least.

Commissioners create some boards and can change their make-up, size and terms of office. But, as Carter advised them, "on a lot of them you won't have much leeway." They may have appointing privileges only; how restricted the privilege depends upon the board. Some specify the appointee's profession or background (developer or health care provider, senior citizen or poverty level, for instance). Some boards have even numbers, some odd. In some instances, every commissioner will get a chance to appoint someone to a specific board during his or her term, in some instances he or she might never get the chance unless they kick an existing

Susan Usher



appointee off and plug in their own.

The previous rotation system was set up to portion out the appointments among six commissioners/six townships; they want to adapt it to five electoral districts. That may take some doing.

Frustration was evident at the meeting, with one commissioner voicing support for one-year appointments, another for "at most, two years". Yet another suggested all appointments expire immediately following each election. That would eliminate the touchiest appointments of all—those where Commissioner A asks someone appointed by a past commissioner to step down in mid-term so that A can appoint someone of his own liking.

That's right: you can even lose a volunteer job that someone earlier had begged you to accept.

At best membership on some boards pays well; on others nothing at all, not even good professional contacts or an opportunity to shape public policy that affects a family business.

Some bring little if any public recognition (or lack); others bring a great deal. Some boards function smoothly, others with a great deal of tension and internal disruption. Some of the jobs are challenging, some frustrating or boring; a few are all three at one time or another. Some boards are defunct and need reviv-

ing, such as the Columbus/Brunswick Regional Housing Authority and the Brunswick County Human Relations Council.

Ask any former commissioner—the biggest problem is finding people to serve, especially people who are both interested and qualified. Most people wait to be asked and even then say, "thanks, but no thanks. I don't want any part of it." Because of this, apparently, the same names show up time and again on the list of appointees.

Facing the new crop of commissioners then, is a challenge: To find out people willing to serve the county in a voluntary capacity.

Finding someone is even more complicated than it sounds. Commissioners are looking for more than someone who's qualified and willing to serve. Ideally the appointee will also come from the commissioner's home electoral district—and will be of the same political party registration.

Occasionally will you see "swapping off" of one requirement or another between commissioners so as to spread the seats around fairly and still get qualified people.

I mean, look at the health board: its membership must include a broad representation of health professionals such as doctor, nurse, pharmacist, dentist and veterinarian, as well as public and government representatives. It gets complicated when you start looking for a Democrat from District 1 who happens to be a nurse and is available to attend meetings on the second Monday night of each month; or better yet, a Republican from District 4 who happens to be a veterinarian and is available that same night.

In the past it's been suggested that the county let the public know when vacancies occur so that folks could

apply if interested. Some counties go so far as to advertise the seats, complete with job descriptions, and then screen resumes that are submitted. While appointments remain somewhat political in nature, appointees are at least selected from a more qualified batch of candidates.

The idea of a "talent bank" of people interested in serving county government hasn't met with too much favor here, though several members of the new board of commissioners say they think it might at least provide a pool of people from which to pick and choose.

They hesitate, perhaps, because of the awkwardness that might result if the person most qualified for or most interested in an appointment didn't happen to be from the appropriate electoral district or the "correct" political party.

My personal feeling is "Who cares?" I think the appointments would balance out in the long run. In the meantime the county might get a better quality of board member—individuals who will attend meetings regularly, do their homework and make public policy decisions that benefit the entire county, not just specific individuals, special interest groups or sections of the county.

It's an idea whose time may have arrived. Over the next four years commissioners will be appointing members to policy-making boards such as those serving Brunswick Technical College, the health, social services, resources development and planning departments and the public library, as well as to advisory panels for services such as parks and recreation, nursing home and transportation.

Like the Marines, Brunswick County is looking for a few good men—and women.

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