

Sunset Bridge Traffic Could Resume Early As Friday

BY SUSAN USHER

Passage by car across the intracoastal Waterway to Sunset Beach was expected to resume as early as Friday, less than a week after a barge rammed and destroyed a 50-foot section of the community's pontoon swing bridge, state transportation officials announced Tuesday afternoon.

"If the weather holds and we don't run into any unforeseen difficulties we will finish up significantly ahead of schedule," said Jim Sughrue, chief spokesman for the N.C. Department of Transportation. "Traffic could be restored by the end of the week."

Jack Edgerton, area bridge manager for the N.C. Department of Transportation, said Tuesday it appeared vehicle traffic would resume Friday.

Until transportation is restored, Sughrue said, officials are asking that only residents and those with legitimate business on the island use the temporary ferry service operating while repairs are completed. Information on island access can be obtained by calling 579-4020 or 579-4021 between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. The phones are staffed at a joint command post established at the Sunset Beach Volunteer Fire Department.

Calls in reference to emergency situations should be routed through the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department at 253-4321.

The Marine Safety section of the U.S. Coast Guard's Wilmington District office is investigating the incident. It was uncertain Tuesday what charges, if any, would be filed in connection with the incident, but Sughrue said the state plans to recover all that is possible within the limits of maritime law.

Meanwhile, a combination of

private motorboats, state-provided Boston whalers and an LCU, or military-type landing craft boat, shuttled both non-resident property owners, construction workers and residents to and from the island. Officials said the island was experiencing a "mini construction boom" with 31 houses in various stages of completion and numerous service vehicles going to and from the island.

Emergency and other official vehicles had top priority on the ferry service, with others served on a first-arrival basis.

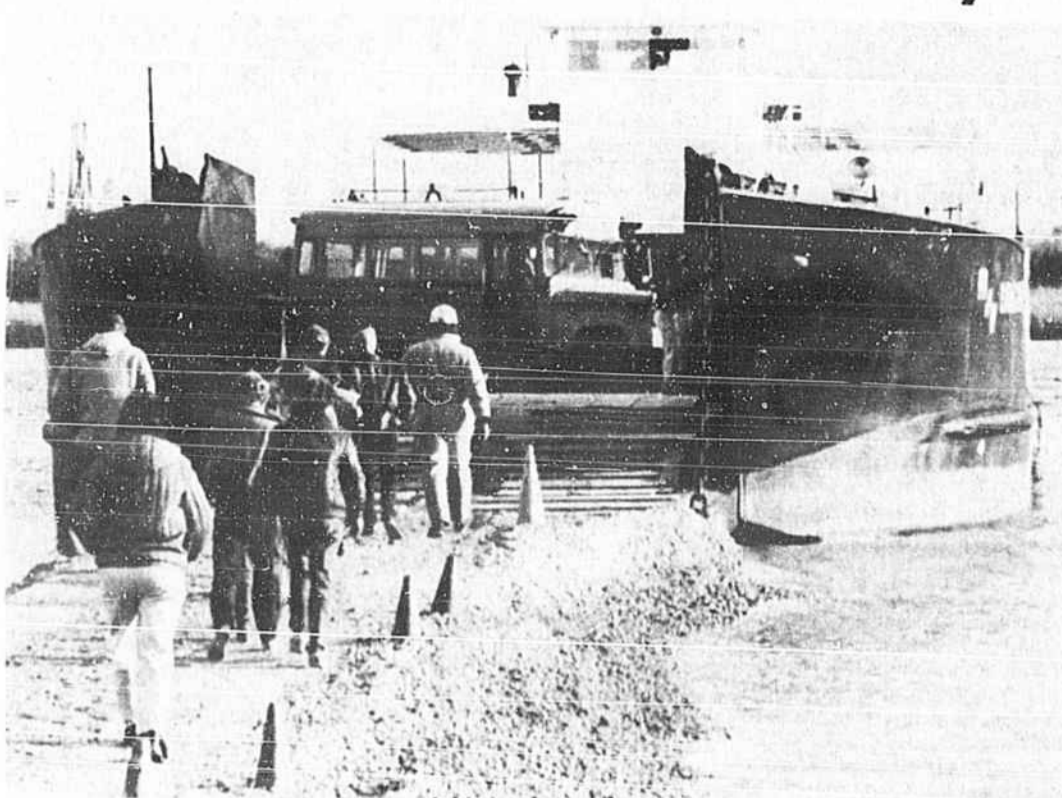
"We don't really have a disaster," commented one transportation official during a planning session Sunday evening. "We just have a transportation interruption problem."

Among the non-residents trapped on the beach were a group from Winston-Salem that included Annette Daniels, who had flown to the coast and rented a car. She arrived on the island about one-half hour before the bridge got knocked out.

South-Bound Tug

The 65-foot tugboat *Angela M.* out of Virginia Beach, Va., was pushing a barge laden with bridge pipe to Jacksonville, Fla., when it veered off course and rammed the bridge about 11:40 a.m. Saturday, ripping out three 17-foot sections of the bridge approach on the island side as well as the fender, and causing slight damage to a fourth section. The swinging barge section of the bridge was not damaged and water traffic was allowed to resume passage Sunday.

Not knowing the extent of submerged debris or other hazards, Brunswick County Emergency Management Coordinator Cecil Logan had closed the bridge to all



STUDENTS BOARDED the ferry at Bonaparte's Landing Monday afternoon that also transported a school bus to the island. Of 27 students on the island, 21 were transported by boat to a waiting bus on the mainland Monday morning, said School Supervisor Bill Turner,

who is in charge of pupil transportation. Students wore lifejackets for the 30 minute ride to the island, assisted by Turner and Emergency Management Coordinator Cecil Logan. Turner said the student transport program was "working out quite well."

waterway traffic Saturday night until an underwater survey and any necessary clearing work could be completed. When he could not contact Chris Chappell, chairman of the county board of commissioners, he made the decision to close based on his own judgement of the situation,

he said.

The operator of the tug was identified as Jim Kelley of Virginia Beach, Va., by Bridgetender J.D. "Danny" Hewett, who said he had radio contact with Kelley shortly after the incident. The tug is owned by Seatow Inc., which is owned and

operated by Jim Williams, also of Virginia Beach, Va. The tug and barge were boarded by the U.S. Coast Guard below Little River, S.C., south of Sunset Beach, but then allowed to continue its trip.

Shagrue said the replacement work, including all costs but salaries

and expenses for the emergency management personnel on the scene, is expected to cost about \$270,000. That cost estimate was based on DOT working its crews 14 days during all available daylight.

Strike Was Seen

Several persons were eye witnesses to the event, including Sunset Beach Police Chief William Hill, Bridgetender J.D. "Danny" Hewett of Shalotte and drivers who had been waiting on both sides of the waterway to cross the bridge.

Police Chief William Hill was in his patrol car with Atlantic Telephone Membership Corp. employee Ronnell Marlowe when the incident occurred. The car was parked at Twin Lakes Restaurant, on a hill near the bridge overlooking the waterway.

"I told Ronnell, 'Look at that joker. He can't handle it; he's going to hit the bridge,'" recalled Hill.

The bridge opened when the barge was still about one-half mile away, partly because of its erratic passage. As the barge passed through a man was situated on the bow of the boat, apparently to help direct the pilot, bystanders noted.

"He was all over the waterway," said Bridgetender Danny Hewett. He talked with the tugboat operator by radio shortly after the incident and was told that wind had buffeted the barge's high load of pipes, reportedly causing Kelley to lose control of the barge.

Beach resident Ruby Mew, bundled in a Sunset Beach Volunteer Fire Department jacket, said she was waiting third in line to leave the beach when the incident occurred. She and her husband Dennis are re-

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Cardinal Staff Recommends Autumn Corp. To Build Nursing Home

BY SUSAN USHER

A staff analysis by Cardinal Health Agency Inc. of Lumberton recommends that agency's board of directors approve an application from Autumn Corporation's to build a nursing home in Brunswick County.

Members of the board's evaluation committee were to consider that recommendation along with pro-

posals from applicants and public comment at a hearing Wednesday, Jan. 16, at 1 p.m. at Southport City Hall. Their recommendation will go to the board of directors, which meets Jan. 23 in Lumberton to consider the Brunswick County nursing home project applications.

Autumn Corp. is one of six firms seeking approval to build all or part

of 100 long term care beds identified by the state as needed in Brunswick County.

The staff recommendation can be upheld or rejected; in either case, a minority report is allowed.

The Rocky Mount-based firm proposes to build a 110-bed facility, with the project name Autumn Care-Brunswick, at the intersection of

White and Mulberry Streets in Shalotte at an estimated cost of \$1,793,000. The project has the support of the Shalotte Board of Aldermen. Autumn Corp. owns and operates 10 nursing homes in North Carolina and Virginia totaling 717 beds.

Spokesman Sally Brown of Autumn's home office in Rocky Mount said the company was delighted with the news of their first-place ranking.

That ranking was derived from consideration by the Cardinal staff of factors related to community need, cost containment and availability of resources such as financing and personnel. These included development cost, per diem charge, bed to staffing ratio, percent administrative cost to revenue, comparison of their past financial performance with that projected, a financial comparison, geographic accessibility, alternative service offerings and site factors.

Geographic access for instance was compared to the agency's long term care plan policy recommendation, which states, "the location

within the county should reflect proximity...to the source of prospective patients."

Since there was "no one best site" for geographic accessibility, four of six applicants—all of those from Supply to Shalotte—received a "2," the best possible score.

Autumn Care compiled a total score of 18 followed by Ocean Trail and then Beverly Care. Autumn received ratings of either 1 or 2 on seven of nine factors. Beverly Care, with 28 points, earned 1 or 2 on three factors.

Cardinal's findings say Autumn will build its 32,816 square foot facility on a paved municipal road with water and sewer available, on a site one-half mile from the fire department with a hydrant less than 500 feet away. Ambulance service is available about one mile away. Based on these site factors, Cardinal ranked Autumn second best, just ahead of Beverly Enterprises, which proposes to build on a site adjoining the Brunswick Hospital in Supply.

Autumn proposes to also offer adult day care. It has more staff per

bed than other applicants propose and the lowest projected daily charges, according to the Cardinal analysis. No preadmission deposit is required and a 3 percent bad debt charity allowance is indicated.

Estimated cost per square foot of \$53.59 "appears reasonable," Cardinal indicated, and compares favorably with other applicants. Autumn has the second lowest total and construction cost per square foot, as well as the third lowest total cost per bed of \$15,989.

The firms seeking to build in the county are as follows: Britthaven Inc., Triad Medical Services/Ocean Trail Convalescent Center, Autumn Corp., Health Care and Retirement Corp. of America, Beverly Enterprises and Unifour Medical Management/Cypress Springs. Britthaven, HCR and Autumn Corp. plan to build in our around Shalotte, Beverly plans to build in Supply and Unifour/Cypress Springs in Bolivia. Triad would expand Ocean Trail Convalescent Center in Southport, presently the only nursing home in the county.

Calabash Council Wants Lewis To Update Town's Water Study

BY TERRY POPE

Calabash town council members voted unanimously Monday afternoon to seek the engineering services of Jerry Lewis and Associates of Shalotte to prepare an updated feasibility study on the costs of installing a town water system.

However, before Lewis can be officially hired as the town's engineer, a long-standing contract between Calabash and Peirson and Whitman Inc. of Raleigh must be legally broken. According to Mayor Sonia Stevens, a feasibility study prepared by the Raleigh engineering firm in November 1975 is still binding against the town until November 1985.

On a motion by Marie Brown, the board voted to have town attorney Mike Isenberg negotiate with the company over breaking the contract, provided it does not cost the town more than \$500 to do so.

"We may not have to pay," Stevens said. "But we need to know how

much in case we do."

The \$500 would be for the plans that Peirson and Whitman Inc. prepared in 1975, but that were never accepted by the town. Town Clerk Janet Thomas said. Several council members labeled the 1975 plans as "outdated" and questioned how valuable the study would be to the town now.

"It wouldn't be useful because the town's changed a lot since then," Councilman Michael Frink said.

In seeking the services of Lewis and Associates, the board also downplayed an offer recently proposed by Ocean Isle Beach developer Odell Williamson. At a meeting organized in November by town residents to discuss obtaining water and sewer services, Williamson offered to build a system for the town as a private venture.

Although council members did not discuss Williamson's offer Monday, Clark Callahan, one of the organizers of a committee formed to study the

town's water and sewer needs, spoke in favor of the town owning its own system. Callahan spoke to the council in positive tones, asking that they move ahead in their plans for building a water system.

"We've been waiting for the council here to approve hiring a feasibility study engineer," Callahan said. "Then we're going to put the lines in. We suggest that the town own it."

Ms. Brown told other members of the council Monday that several town and county officials she has talked with recommended hiring Lewis to conduct the town's feasibility study. She spoke against keeping Peirson and Whitman on as the town's engineers.

"It's a known fact that we don't want them," Ms. Brown added. "So I don't see why we can't take a vote to get rid of them."

Both she and Councilman Virgil "Tink" Coleman were appointed by Mayor Stevens to the town's committee to study water and sewer needs. Callahan said the committee is open to anyone who would like to join the group to discuss obtaining water and sewer services.

Annexation Axed

By unanimous vote Monday, the council denied a request for satellite annexation of a lot north of the town limits on N.C. 179, the site of an Oasis Food Mart.

Following a public hearing that lasted for about 15 minutes, the board ended a six-month-long wait for owners of the convenience store. They had requested annexation to obtain a license to sell beer and wine as well as to receive specified town services. Mayor Stevens said a main

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Frink To Leave Council

Calabash Councilman Michael Frink told fellow board members Monday afternoon he must resign from the council within the next two to three weeks.

"I'll have to be leaving the council," Frink said. Frink, 25, will be moving into a new home he has recently purchased that lies outside the town limits. Council members must be residents of the town.

Board members agreed Monday to begin considering an appointment for the position that will be up for re-

election in the fall. Frink said he may be moved into his home before the council's next meeting on Jan. 28.

"Keep us informed. Send us a letter or something so we'll know," said Mayor Sonia Stevens.

Frink was elected to the board in November 1983, along with four other candidates who ran unopposed for five seats on the board. It was his first attempt at public office.

Frink, a native of Calabash, is assistant manager of the family restaurant, Captain John's.

County To Review Flood Insurance Study

BY SUSAN USHER

Residents of flood-prone areas of Brunswick County could soon qualify for much higher levels of federal flood insurance protection for their homes and businesses.

County commissioners and officials of the six municipalities that participate in the program must first act on the results of a detailed flood study completed in 1982 for use Federal Emergency Management Agency, which administers the federal insurance program.

A public meeting to review the results of the study and the preliminary flood insurance rate maps based on it will be held by FEMA Tuesday, Jan. 22, at 7 p.m. at the public assembly building at the Brunswick County Government Center in Bolivia. Carol S. Campbell, a specialist in the Atlanta regional office of FEMA, will conduct the session. Representatives of the county and the municipalities of Caswell, Holden, Ocean Isle, Sunset, Ysupon and Long beaches, Southport and Shalotte will attend. Also invited are

members of the general public, developers, realtors, surveyors, the media and the Brunswick County League of Women Voters.

While the results will effect how buildings are built in certain areas of

the county, Planning Director John Harvey said he didn't think the study results would come as "too much of a surprise" to local builders and developers. He has sent copies of the study to various county officials in areas as various as agriculture, mosquito control and industrial development for comment on how the changes will affect those areas.

Preliminary maps presented in 1977 were contested, particularly by farming interests in the Waccamaw-Ash area, he added. The more detailed study appears to contain few major changes, he said.

At Ocean Isle Beach, Building Inspector T.D. Roberson expected more of a reaction from developers. The greatest changes on that town's maps occur in base flood elevations along the first and second row, which have increased at least one foot and in some cases three feet, he said.

While much of the oceanfront is already developed, any future redevelopment would be affected.

Developers of Ocean Cove con-

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Galloway Flats
Area To Open

A section of the Lockwood-Polby River known as "Galloway Flats" was to open to shellfish harvesting 9 a.m. Wednesday, Robert Mahood, director of the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries, announced Tuesday.

Oysters were replanted in the 14-acre section of the river last spring by hand, using local volunteers who were paid a minimum per-bushel figure.

The area will remain closed to clamming and will be posted with signs by the Division of Marine Fisheries.