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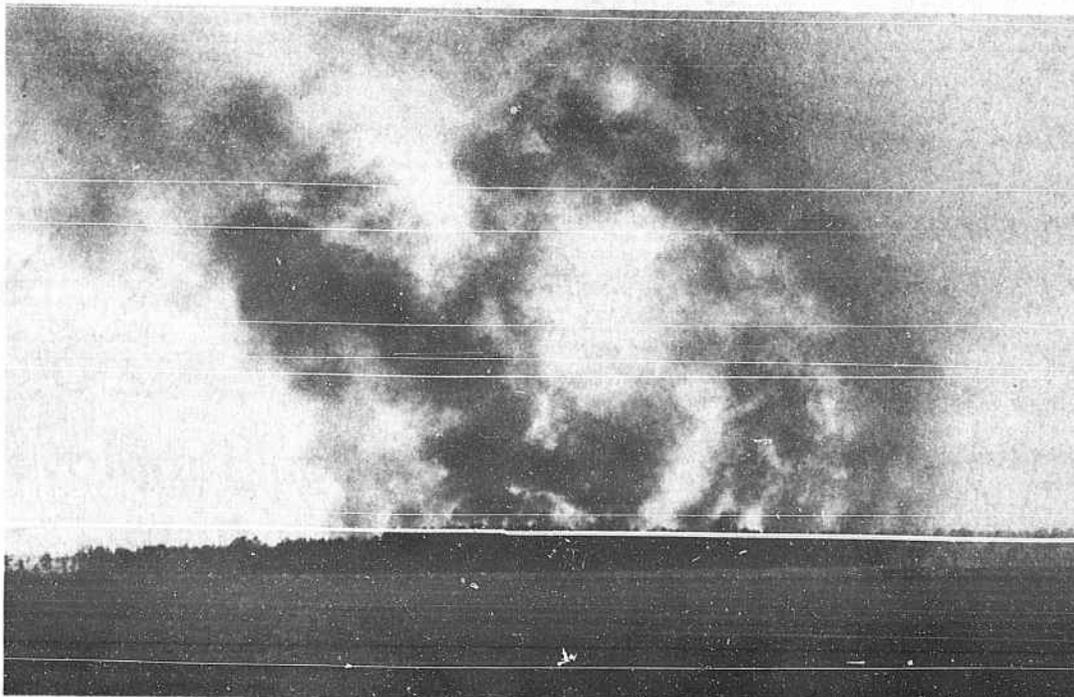
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SEEN HERE from a distance, a debris fire started near Grissetown Thursday afternoon burned 558 acres before firefighters brought it under control

that evening. It was the largest fire reported in the five-county forestry district last week and possibly the largest in the state.

STAFF PHOTO BY TERRY POPE

Wildfires Force Ban On Open Burning Here

BY SUSAN USHER

Wildfires scorched hundreds of acres of Brunswick County woodlands last week, with one Thursday afternoon blaze destroying 558 acres, four cars and two tobacco barns in the Grissetown area before it was brought under control.

As the spring fire season began in earnest, a general ban on burning was still in effect statewide Tuesday and was expected to remain in effect as long as conditions remained unchanged.

That means open burning of any kind is prohibited, whether or not a permit would normally be required. The ban was imposed Friday in response to fires that swept the region and state on Thursday.

Numerous brush and forest fires reported across the region last week have forest resources officials comparing this fire season with the "hottest" in recent history—1981.

At one point Thursday, three major fires were burning across the district at one time, two in Columbus County and one in Brunswick County.

"The way this one's shaping up, unless we get some rain, it looks like it could be like that," said Willard Lane of Whiteville, District Ranger. "It could get exciting."

In 1981, said Ranger Miller Caison, Forest Service personnel in Brunswick County responded to 199 fires. Records weren't readily available of the acreage involved. In 1982, they handled 192 calls. Since January 1 Caison's crews have already handled 68 fires, compared to 111 total fires throughout 1984. Five calls were reported both Thursday and Friday, compared to two or three a day earlier in the week. Caison said the wildfires were caused by primarily out-of-control debris fires and woods arson, or incendiary fires.

"It's a whole lot hotter and busier than last year," he said.

Lane said 1984 and 1983 were relatively mild seasons, with higher than average rainfall and fewer than normal fires in the district.

A combination of rising temperatures, low humidity and rainfall, and gusting winds contributed to the fires, Lane said, along with a heavier than usual layer of fuel on the forest floor.

"The cold has killed a lot," said Caison, "and Hurricane Diana put a lot of debris on the ground."

Forest rangers and personnel from five volunteer fire departments battled the Grissetown fire, one of three blazes in the county last Thursday

that had the potential of becoming "project" fires, Caison said. The other two occurred at Maco.

A fourth fire that broke out about mid-morning Thursday at Longwood was small, but threatened three residences and a field of L.P. gas tanks owned by Collier-Gwynn. Waccamaw and Shalotte firefighters contained the runaway trash fire with the aid of a forest resources plow crew.

Three of the four fires were debris or trash fires that "got away," while the fourth, one of the Maco fires, was apparently started by a smoker.

A "project" fire, explained Lane, "is one that would be beyond our capability to control if it escaped. It would require help from outside the district."

Location, the type of fuel, the potential loss in terms of houses, timber plantations and other property and how many acres the fire could consume all figure into the designation.

The district's largest fire of the year to date started Thursday about one mile south of Grissetown on the north side of U.S. 17 when someone let a trash fire get out of their control. State personnel were on the scene nearly nine hours, pulling out about 10 p.m.

It burned parallel to the highway, Caison said, then jumped across, running south and then north again as the winds finally shifted about 8 p.m. with the arrival of a cold front.

The blaze was fueled by dense underbrush and scrub pines in a thicket called Dog's Head Bay.

Flames "treestopped" as high as 100 feet into the air when the blaze reached a stand of mature longleaf pines, Brunswick County Emergency Management Coordinator Cecil Logan said.

An air tanker leased for the spring fire season arrived at the Bear Pen airfield operated by the N.C. Division of Forest Resources in the Green Swamp late Thursday, in time for two runs to the Grissetown fire. On each trip it dropped 2,000 gallons of fire retardant.

"We used the tanker to protect the houses," said Caison. Two or three were threatened, others would have been if the fire had crossed back to the north side of U.S. 17.

Five tractors or plows were brought in, two owned by the state, the others coming from International, Georgia Pacific and Federal paper companies.

(See VOLUNTEERS, Page 3-A)

Commissioners Ask For Bill To Guarantee Third-Party 'Rebate'

BY SUSAN USHER

Brunswick County Commissioners will ask Rep. David Redwine for legislation that would allow the county to guarantee a party that installs water lines in existing developments to collect 100 percent of his costs.

When a number of questions arose, the board tabled consideration of a related proposal which would provide for a \$100 rebate per tap-on to developers of new subdivisions who install water lines later dedicated to the county.

Chappell, chairman of the water extension policy committee and the only board member on the committee at this time, made the motion, saying the board could call an informational hearing to discuss the proposal.

He defended both proposed policies.

"If we don't find a mechanism to provide water to these areas," he warned, future commissioners "will have to float general obligation bonds" to pay off the county's indebtedness on its water system. "We need all the users we can get."

Commissioners said they thought the cost of installing water lines was an expense developers typically passed along to buyers of property in a development, as with other improvements.

"It sounds like developers may get paid for it twice," suggested Commissioner Jim Poole.

Commissioner Herman Love added, "Why should we be the collecting agent for a developer?"

And all agreed with Commissioner Grace Beasley's "I think I need somebody to sit down and explain this to me in detail."

In conjunction with the "new subdivision" policy, Commissioner Chris Chappell explained, the county would increase its water service tap-on fee from \$260 to \$400. The difference in the county's cost and the \$100 could be applied to extending county water lines, Chappell said.

According to the proposed policy, the county would hold the \$100 portions of the connection fees for three years after payment. The first reimbursements to a developer would come three years after installation

and continue for no more than eight years and for no sum greater than the actual cost of installation.

While commissioners had their doubts about that policy, they clearly supported helping residents of "sold out" subdivisions—where the developer no longer has a responsibility—obtain water service.

Chappell said he didn't think it was fair for lines to be run into such subdivisions "and the county be the only one to benefit." In order for a subdivision to obtain county water, the distribution lines must be dedicated to the county water system or else the community must operate its own distribution system.

The policy, with the help of local legislation, would allow whoever installs such lines to obtain full rebates from collections made by the county. It would apply not only to existing subdivisions, but to existing shopping centers, multi-family developments and mobile home parks that want to connect to the county water line.

Current laws would allow the county to advance the residents money to install the lines, and then assess

them to collect its money.

But, said County Attorney David Clegg, it doesn't allow the county to enter a contractual agreement to guarantee 100 percent reimbursement to a third party.

How It Works

Under the addition to the water extension policy, the party that has installed the line and 75 percent of the property owners in the area could petition the county for total cost reclamation payments or "rebates." The line must have been built to county standards and dedicated to the county water system.

The county would assess all property owners in the development their pro-rated share of the installation costs plus a 10 percent administrative fee. Payment would be due in 60 days, monthly interest levied on the balance. Assessment liens can be placed against the property and can be foreclosed.

Rebates from the collections would be disbursed at six-month intervals until the installer is repaid his costs.

(See HURRICANE, Page 2-A)

Town That Never Really Was May Soon Be No More

BY SUSAN USHER

The Town of Shady Forest may soon be no more.

A local bill filed by Rep. David Redwine last Friday in the N.C. House of Representatives would revoke the long inactive town's charter and dissolve its incorporation.

A development located near Bonaparte's Landing between Sunset Beach and Calabash, Shady Forest came into being as a town in March 1974 after Sunset Beach included the development in an extraterritorial zoning plan enacted that Feb. 4 over the written protests of 35 Shady Forest residents. Spokesmen for the residents said they thought the zoning plan would restrict their ability to use their property as they saw fit. The zone essentially surrounds the inactive town.

"The reason we got this in here," recalled charter councilman Perry McLamb, "was to keep Sunset Beach out. We didn't have any trouble getting it."

Sen. Arthur Williamson of Columbus County willingly introduced S.B. 1258, which was ratified on March 29,

1974.

It set the town's boundaries as: "Located in Colkins Neck, Shalotte Township, Brunswick County, beginning at a point in the western property line of the International Paper Company, approximately 2,000 feet from the Calabash River, and running thence with said property line south 70 degrees, 30 minutes east 350 feet to a point; thence south 75 degrees, 43 minutes west 4,885 feet to the property line of the W.M. Stanaland Estate; thence north 23 degrees, 45 minutes west 550 feet; thence north 78 degrees east 4,938 feet to the point of beginning."

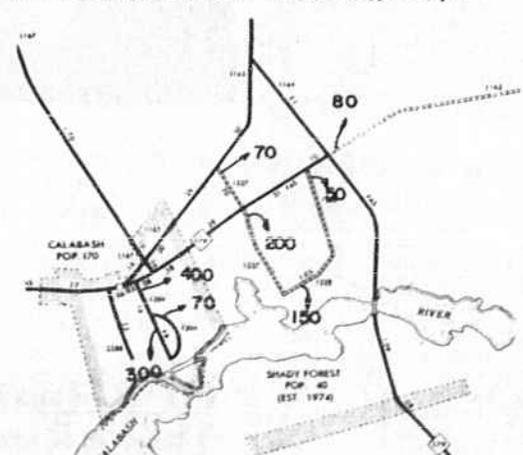
And it appointed Mrs. John L. Foster as mayor and Perry McLamb, Hamp Leonard and Arthur W. Hundley as members of the town council until the 1975 elections could be held.

Residents had no trouble getting their town, but keeping it going was another story. It never was much of a town except on paper, one former councilman recalled.

"We started it off," said McLamb. "We wanted everybody to work together to hold taxes as low as possible."

But "everybody started changing," he recalled. "Soon we had more laws than the City of Wil-

ington." He and several other municipal supporters dropped out, quit.



A SHADED vertical segment and notation on this county-produced map are among the few reminders of Shady Forest, inactive as a town almost since its establishment in 1974.

And in 1975, in Shady Forest's first and only municipal election, Councilman Hundley and Mayor Foster were the only members of the original governing board to file for election. William Adams Jr. and Gerald Barney sought the other two council seats. All were unopposed.

When the count was in, 29 votes had been cast—seven for each council member and eight for the mayor.

"The town never did nothing," said McLamb. "I think I'm the only one who ever paid any taxes. I know of one more man who sent in his check, but they sent it back."

Any money remaining in the town's name would revert to the University of North Carolina system under the bill introduced by Redwine.

As far as street maintenance, a man worked with a wheelbarrow filling in holes in the road, he said.

And one road was paved in the development, but not by the town's doing. The owner of several hundred acres at the end of road on McLamb's side of the development paved their road to provide access to his property. The state later took over its maintenance.

As for the development road on the other side of N.C. 179, near Oyster Bay Golf Links, McLamb said he doesn't think it will ever be paved.

The town's only mayor, Mrs. Foster, had contacted Redwine less than a year ago about incorporating the town, but it was too late to do anything about it, he said. The legislature cleaned municipal house last summer, revoking the charters of approximately 40 inactive towns.

When he tried to contact her again this spring to reaffirm her request, Mrs. Foster had returned to her former home in the mountains.

He then called McLamb, who said he advised Redwine "to use his own judgment."

In 1974 the town had 14 or 15 registered voters and approximately 40 residents. Today the number of residents has doubled or better, McLamb estimates. Most know nothing about the town's history.

While one man has suggested reincorporation might not be a good idea, McLamb doesn't know what sentiment will prevail.

"I don't know what they'll think about it here," he said.