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# BRUNSWICK BEACON

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## Bypass Tops County's List Of Road Priorities

BY SUSAN USHER

A bypass around Shallotte ranks at the top of the county's list of road priorities delegates will present at a division-wide public hearing on transportation needs today (Thursday) in Jacksonville.

The Division 3 meeting begins with registration at 1 p.m. at the Municipal Building. The full Shallotte Board of Aldermen, representatives of the county's two chambers of commerce, Rep. David Redwine, County Planner John Harvey, County Planning Board Chairman Ed Gore, County Commissioner Vice-Chairman Jim Poole and political party officials are among those planning to attend from Brunswick County. The group is attempting to present a unified set of priorities to the state, with the hope of influencing the state board's expenditures in Brunswick County. It will work out details on the list.

Second on the county's list is completion of the four-laning of U.S. 17 from Bell Swamp (N.C. 87) to Supply (N.C. 211), followed by the segment from Supply to the South Carolina state line. At this point the county's list will deviate a second time from the recommendations of the planning board.

The county planning board, meeting last Wednesday night, proposed as the county's top priority the four-laning from Supply to the state line, including the bypass rather than breaking it out as a separate project.

When Commissioner Frankie Rabon questioned that arrangement

Monday night, County Planner John Harvey said it was written that way as a reflection of action taken by the previous board of commissioners.

The idea, added Chairman Chris Chappell, is to draw northbound traffic from Myrtle Beach, S.C., into Brunswick County rather than losing it to Interstate 95, and to accommodate traffic entering the area from S.C. 9.

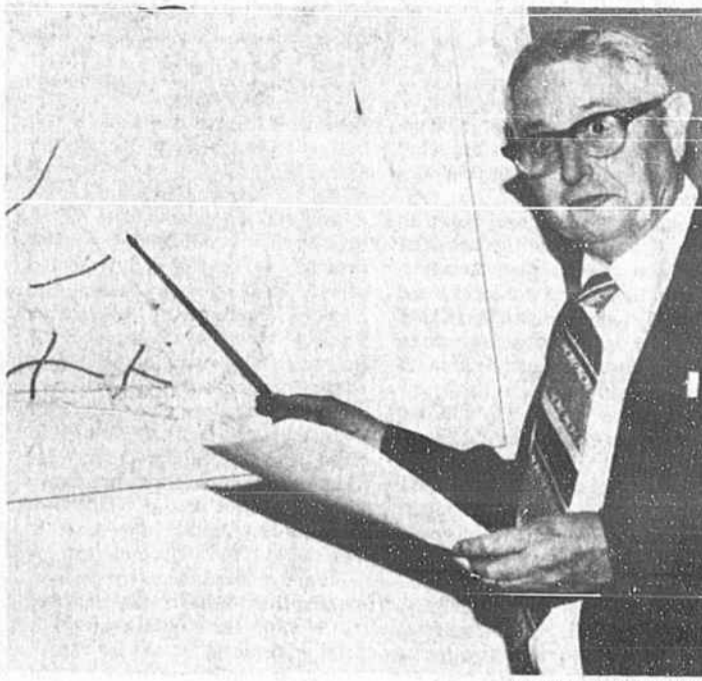
But, he said, agreeing to changes proposed by Rabon, "It doesn't matter. That group's (the State Board of Transportation) is going to do what they see fit. They're going to set their priorities and we're going to have to accept it."

The top ranking as adopted reflects the state's intent as outlined by Transportation Commissioner Tommy Pollard last week. It also reflects resolutions adopted last summer by the towns of Shallotte, Ocean Isle Beach, Sunset Beach, Calabash and Holden Beach, the South Brunswick Islands Chamber of Commerce and the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners. The resolutions asked that the bypass be broken out as a separate project and completed "immediately and expeditiously."

No Delays

An informal U.S. 17-bypass coalition had first planned to ask the state to move the entire Supply-S.C. segment up, but was told that would delay the entire four-laning project.

Engineering work and acquisition of right-of-way has begun on the Bell Swamp-Supply segment, and 25 percent of the right-of-way has been ob-



STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

COUNTY PLANNING DIRECTOR JOHN HARVEY reviewed road needs with commissioners Monday night. The board rated a bypass around Shallotte, then continuation of the four-laning of U.S. 17, as its top two priorities.

tained for the bypass, but preliminary work has not begun on the southernmost segment.

Former Transportation Commissioner Louis Sewell had said moving the bypass ahead would not delay the Bell Swamp segment, which includes a bypass around Bolivia.

Under the schedule proposed by Pollard, the Shallotte bypass may be completed several months in advance of the scheduled completion of the Bolivia bypass.

Connie Ledgett of the Southport-Oak Island Chamber of Commerce, said four-laning of U.S. 17 across

North Carolina is the top priority for Coast Hosts, a coastal tourism promotion group in which she represents the local chamber.

Commissioners agreed to Rabon's placement of the fourth and fifth action items: 4) widening of old U.S. 74-76 from near Belville to Old Village Road to include turn lanes in front of the Wilson Plaza Shopping Center, plus traffic signals; and 5) widening N.C. 133 from the Oak Island Bridge to N.C. 211 to five lanes, with installation of traffic lights. Beach Road is the Southport-Oak Island Chamber of Commerce's top priority, Ms. Ledgett said. But she was concerned that sufficient right-of-way might not be available for five urban (no median) lanes.

The planning board had ranked a countywide thoroughfare plan third

on its list, just behind the U.S. 17 projects, as a means of providing long-range planning for other county road projects.

Poole, Harvey, Planning Board Chairman Ed Gore and representatives of the chambers of commerce will work out placement of several items commissioners were uncertain how to treat.

For instance, Poole questioned placement of a second Oak Island (8th) below a Sunset Beach Bridge (5th) in priority by the planning board, saying that not everyone at Sunset Beach wants that bridge.

The state "sees the need" and has allocated funds for right-of-way acquisition for a high-rise bridge at Sunset, but not construction funds as

(See BYPASS, Page 2-A)

## Two Suspended For Drugs

Two Shallotte Middle School eighth-graders were suspended from school last Friday after one student was rushed to the Brunswick Hospital in Supply for an apparent drug overdose.

According to Assistant Principal William Detrie, one student was taken to the hospital after taking about three tranquilizers supplied by another student. The boy who brought the prescription drugs from home was turned over to Shallotte police officers for prosecution.

"He only took a minimum number

of pills and was more or less taken to the hospital for observation," Detrie said. "I understand the boy has gone back to Raleigh to stay with his father."

Detrie said he had heard rumors that the boy was in the intensive care unit all weekend, which was not the case, he added. With Principal Mark Owens at a meeting Friday, Detrie investigated the incident and called in the Shallotte Police Department.

"I looked into the situation as well as I could," Detrie said, "and there were no other students involved."

## Face Lifts In Offing For Park, Sunnyside

Boy Scout William (Willie) Norton of Shallotte Troop 287 plans to spend a large chunk of his summer in Shallotte Municipal Park, giving one corner a new look as he works toward his Eagle rank.

In the opposite corner of the park, several local organizations hope to bring new life to the Sunnyside school building as well.

Norton received permission from an enthusiastic board of aldermen last Wednesday night to undertake the beautification project, but must still obtain approval from a Cape Fear Council Eagle project review board in June.

To qualify toward the Eagle rank, Norton must organize and carry out the entire project, including supervising the Scout that plans to assist him.

At his own expense Norton, 15, proposes to enclose a 45-foot by 50-foot area with low wooden fencing, seed grass and water it until established, plant 10 azaleas and seven redtips, build a picnic table and clean up the general area, including weeding the ditch. He expects the project to take at least 50 to 60 hours to complete.

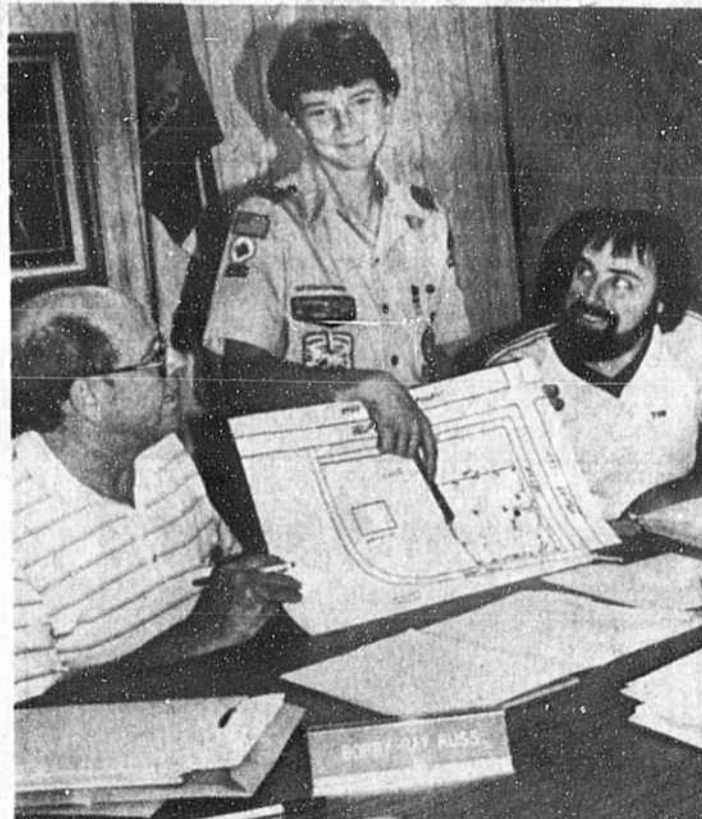
He will pay the estimated \$100 expense from money he earned last summer and fall, mowing lawns.

Norton stands to become the first Eagle Scout in Troop 287, sponsored by the Shallotte American Legion Post. Before it went inactive Troop 506, sponsored a number of years ago by the Legion post, had at least seven Scouts to attain Eagle rank in 1963. They included Jimmy and Chris Marshall, David Redwine, Steve Holden, Samuel G. Moffitt, Charles G. Holden and Ronald Holden.

The Brunswick County Arts Council is spearheading the latest effort to make Sunnyside usable. The school building dates from the early 1900s and was in continuous use through the 1971-72 school year, when the old Shallotte High School closed. It was moved to the park for preservation and restoration.

President Ouida Hewett said the council would like to see the building used for art exhibitions and as a focal point in this end of the county for arts activities, possibly an arts festival or "art in the park" program.

"It will probably cost about \$10,000 (See PARK, Page 2-A)



STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

BOY SCOUT WILLIE NORTON discusses plans for his a community service project he hopes to undertake at Shallotte Municipal Park with Mayor Beamon Hewett and Mayor Pro-Tem Paul Wayne Reeves. The project will help Norton attain Eagle rank, the highest rank in Scouting.

## School Bus Bill Could Create Local Problems

BY TERRY POPE

A bill that would prohibit schools from hiring people younger than 18 to drive school buses could create problems for the Brunswick County school system, one school official said last week.

State Rep. Alex Hall, D-New Hanover County, recently introduced a bill before the State House that would set the age limit on school bus drivers. The bill was scheduled for debate before the House Highway Safety Committee this week before going to the House floor for a vote.

"I have a feeling we will have a problem in finding all adult drivers," said Bill Turner, Brunswick County schools transportation supervisor, "at least in the first year."

Such a bill would not affect student drivers who may already have their bus license from driving for the schools next year; however, it would prohibit students under 18 from seeking a bus license.

The bill was introduced last month, amid a flurry of school bus accidents in southeastern North Carolina. A recent school bus accident in Shallotte on May 6 sent 17 Union Primary School students to the Brunswick Hospital for treatment.

In that accident, a 16-year-old driver was charged with running a red light and driving a bus without a school bus license. The 19-year-old regular bus driver was charged with allowing an unlicensed person to drive his bus.

In Brunswick County, there are approximately 150 to 170 licensed school bus drivers for the schools' 126 yellow school buses, Turner said. About half of those drivers are adults.

When members of the Union Primary School Parent Teachers Organization met recently to honor the school's bus drivers, of the 13 present, only four were student drivers. But in the high schools, the numbers are reversed where there are fewer adult drivers available.

Thomas Ward, who was recently promoted to the schools' maintenance supervisor, believes the new bill will hurt the county unless pay for bus drivers is "made more attractive."

Adults are not going to work on a school bus for a few hours each day because, for many of them, it will be "more trouble than it is worth," he added.

"I think we've got outstanding bus (See BUS, Page 3-A)

## Murder Trial To Remain In Brunswick Courtroom

BY TERRY POPE

A Superior Court judge ruled Monday that the first-degree murder trial of James R. Stamper, 23, charged in the stabbing death of a Long Beach resident, will be heard in Brunswick County.

Stamper's attorneys, Bill Fairley and Stephen Yount of Southport, filed four motions Monday relating to the case prior to an arraignment. Yount asked Judge B. Craig Ellis to either transfer the trial to another judicial district or adjoining county because newspaper accounts of the murder "has made it difficult to obtain a fair and impartial trial" locally.

Yount presented copies of local press coverage of the Feb. 27 murder to Judge Ellis, most notably coverage provided to the public by

the State Port Pilot of Southport, the local weekly for the Oak Island area. The article that appeared in the March 6 issue contained photos of Stamper handcuffed on the front page and "very detrimental type quotes," Yount argued.

Coverage was also provided by the other two newspapers in the county, The Brunswick Beacon and The Brunswick Free Press, but those reports were more general, Yount said.

Stamper, of Welch, W.Va., is charged with the first-degree murder of Samuel Allen Mabe, 23, a rehabilitation aide at Ocean Trail Convalescent Center in Southport and resident of N.E. 38th Street in Long Beach. The suspect was arrested the same day of the murder by

the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department while he was walking along U.S. 17 in Bolivia.

In refusing to transfer the trial Monday, Judge Ellis of Laurinburg said the media coverage of the murder did not exceed normal publicity for the entire county.

"I am aware that Brunswick County is a big county," Ellis said. "Every jury that has been selected while I've been here has included people from all parts of the county, and they are selected fairly at random."

District Attorney Michael Easley argued against moving the trial to another courtroom, saying he didn't think "it could be demonstrated that there was any more publicity in this

case than in any general case. I don't think the burden has been met."

Easley also argued against another motion filed by Stamper's attorneys Monday that would have requested \$1,000 from the state for a second psychiatric examination for the suspect. Stamper was examined at Dorothea Dix Hospital in Raleigh last month and was determined to be mentally competent to stand trial for murder.

"I'd like to point out that he's had the psychiatric examination and it's here today," Easley said.

Fairley argued in court Monday that Stamper's evaluation was a 30-minute session before a psychologist who did not make a determination as to what happened

to the suspect on the night of the murder. The victim was stabbed 13 times, indicating that "something very unusual must have happened to him (Stamper) that night to make him lose control of himself," Fairley said.

Since first-degree murder carries a possible death sentence, the defendant should be entitled to all evidence possible under law, Fairley said. It is up to the defendants to prove a second psychiatric examination would be profitable to the case.

"If the state's allegations are true," Fairley said, "then something extremely unusual happened. Your honor, I think \$1,000 to find out what happened is rather inexpensive."

Easley said a second evaluation

should be granted only if the results are likely to prove or disprove a factor in the case. Asking the court to grant another examination on a statement like, "What if it is significant? just is not enough," he added. "It's a question of what comes first, the chicken or the egg?" Fairley said. "I think it will show a mitigating circumstance."

Judge Ellis also refused a motion Monday that would have allowed for the defense to receive a list of mitigating factors in the case that is likely to be introduced in the trial by the state.

Stamper will face arraignment and trial during the July 22 session of Superior Court or during a special session in June if one is called, Easley said.