

Views On Public Access Misrepresented, Says Holden

BY ETTA SMITH and SUSAN USHER

In a 3 1/2-page statement read last Wednesday night to the Brunswick County Planning Board, member Alan Holden criticized the release of unapproved minutes by the board that he said resulted in misrepresentation of his views on public access in the local news media.

"The half sentences, summaries, etc. represented in this set of unapproved minutes has done more to cause hard feelings in this county than anything I know of recently," he said, referring to minutes of the board's Oct. 15 meeting. He said such incomplete minutes can do "irreparable damage to individuals and the organizations they represent."

During the 30-minute meeting, he asked that the minutes be corrected to either exclude the paragraphs in question or to include the entire conversation verbatim.

There was no discussion after Holden completed his statement. A motion by member John Harbey to include the entire conversation failed for lack of a second. Then the board voted unanimously in favor of a motion by member Thomas Dixie to delete the paragraphs. Voting were members Harbey, Dixie, Ed Gore, Holden and Shelton Stanley.

Also, at Holden's request, the Brunswick County Planning Department has adopted a policy of no longer issuing unapproved minutes of planning board meetings to the general public or media on request. As public documents, however, they will be available for inspection at the planning department during regular business hours.

The comments covered in the minutes in question were part of a conversation regarding a Sept. 11 memo from the N.C. Division of Coastal Management. County Planning Director John Harbey had advised the board that the county has a policy that financial responsibility for providing public beach access and beach parks should rest with state and federal government, not the county.

Holden said his comments were in response to that policy statement and indicated that he saw both sides of the issue. "I explained that it is difficult to ask the people who have paid the price of beach property and built their homes on that property to pay all of the expenses for a park which they will not use. However, I never said that the people and property owners of Holden Beach would not pay for it and I never said people on the mainland were not welcome," his statement read.

Holden cited his track record as a public and private citizen as speaking for itself. He cited his efforts as chairman of the Holden Beach Planning Board in support of a regional beach and waterway access near the Holden Beach Bridge. The town obtained a state grant to help pay for construction of the planned public area and recently appeared before the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners seeking \$10,000 in financial assistance in maintaining the site.

With no answer from the county and deadlines imposed by the state for an answer and the donors of an oceanfront accessway for acceptance of their offer (Les and Russ Cole), the town board voted to go ahead with the park project, he said, while still hoping for county assistance on the maintenance. "I offered compromise ideas supporting a favorable vote for the project at that meeting," he indicated.

Holden also cited his record as a private citizen in allowing free public use of facilities owned by him for parking, boating access, beach access and bathhouse and shower facilities.

No reporter attended the Oct. 15 meeting, he noted.

While not reflected clearly in the minutes, he said that those present knew he and member Ed Gore had not made statements that the public should not be allowed on the beaches and that both had records of promoting public access.

A news article, based on the unapproved minutes of the Oct. 15 meeting, appeared in the Oct. 20 issue of *The Brunswick Beacon*. It was followed by a number of letters to the editor in local newspapers critical of Holden for statements attributed to him in the draft of the minutes.

"It is indeed an injustice to members of this board and the organizations which we represent to have this kind of poor communications between this board, the press, and the citizens," Holden noted in his statement.

If he had died, said Holden, a notice would have run once in the ordinary section. Instead, he said, "my public image has died four consecutive weeks since these unapproved minutes were rough drafted. I guess this may prove that the pen is mightier than the sword."

The complete text of Holden's statement is on page 4-A of this issue.

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

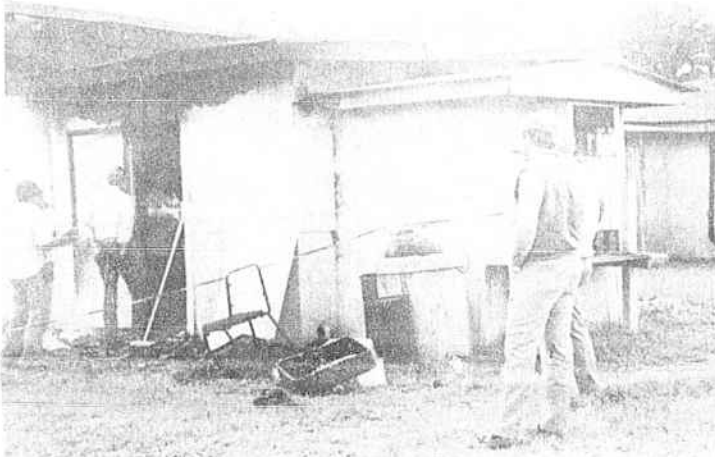
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AS INVESTIGATORS try to determine the cause of Sunday's fire, Gary Jordan and "Red" Tew discuss the Jordan family's hopes of repairing the building. Tew

was to have begun leasing the restaurant Monday, he said.

STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

Second Shallotte Officer Resigns; Board Asks For New Fire Chief

BY SUSAN USHER

For the second time in two weeks, a Shallotte police officer has resigned under apparent pressure, reducing the size of the five-officer department to three.

Patrol Officer Nellie Evans Hising, employed with the department since April 21, 1983, submitted her resignation to the town's board of aldermen Thursday afternoon, citing "personal reasons." It was effective immediately.

Aldermen accepted the letter unanimously, with member Bobby Ray Russ absent.

Also Thursday, the board rejected the Shallotte Volunteer Fire Department's choice of chief, Michael Arnold, and asked firefighters to submit a new name for consideration.

Arnold has asked for a meeting with the board to hear the reasons for its rejection, he told *The Brunswick Beacon*. He would like it to be held before the fire department meets again Dec. 2, the day before the town board's next regular meeting, and he has asked that it be an open meeting.

"There has to be reason they turned it down," he said. "I want to know personally. If it's something I've done I want to know it and I want the public to know it. Maybe it was a misunderstanding that could be worked out."

Resignation

To maintain full police coverage in the wake of the two resignations, the three remaining Shallotte police officers—Chief Don Stovall, Sgt. Rodney Gause and Officer Eddie Reynolds—are working 12-hour shifts. Stovall said he expects to recommend officers to fill both vacancies at the board's Dec. 3 meeting.

Aldermen had met behind closed doors for 1 1/2 hours to discuss police personnel matters during their regular meeting Wednesday night, with Mayor Jerry Jones noting, "Matters have come up in the last day or two that we need to discuss." Following the pattern followed

earlier this month when Officer William C. Lewis II resigned, the board continued the meeting to the following day in order to consider Hising's letter of resignation.

Also citing "personal reasons," Lewis' resignation, submitted on Nov. 6, was effective Nov. 11. It followed a similar closed door session by the board on Nov. 5.

Contacted by the *Beacon* later regarding the resignations, Jones said the two were unrelated and that he didn't see a problem within the department.

"I hope they don't have a problem; I don't think they do."

Chief Rejected

Arnold was first elected chief a year ago. At that time his consideration by the town board was delayed by one meeting, so as to allow all board members to vote.

Bylaws for the department call for its chief to be elected subject to the town board's approval. Other officers need not be approved.

Firefighters elected officers on Nov. 18, re-electing Arnold chief on a 15-6 vote. The other candidate for the office was David Moore, who served for several months last year as interim chief between the resignation of Curman Arnold and the election of Michael Arnold as chief.

Town aldermen were prepared to consider the department's selection Wednesday night, but the name was

not submitted until the next morning, in time for the continued meeting.

Two firemen who attended Wednesday's meeting, David Moore and Tony Hewitt, said they were there "just to listen" and had been instructed not to speak.

Other officers elected by the fire department Tuesday were Waddell Berry, assistant chief; J.L. Holmes, captain; Brock Holmes and Tom Carter, lieutenants; and Sarah Williamson, secretary-treasurer. They are to assume office at the department's Dec. 2 meeting. As it now stands, said Arnold, Berry will preside at that meeting.

Asked why the town board rejected Arnold's nomination by the fire department, Mayor Jones told the *Beacon*, "Apparently they were not satisfied with the way it's been operating."

Arnold said no explanation was given in the letter he received from the town; only a request for the department to submit a new name at the town board's Dec. 3 meeting.

If aldermen choose not to discuss the matter in open session, he added, "I will walk out."

"I hate gossip, especially about me. I want it open. Everybody has a right to hear what I have to say and what they have to say."

Office Approved

Aldermen agreed Wednesday to (See SHALLOTTE, Page 2-A)

Sunday Fire Damages Calabash Restaurant

BY SUSAN USHER

Investigation of the second restaurant fire in two weeks in the seafood capital of Calabash continued Monday.

Jordan's Calabash Breakfast Corner, located at the corner of N.C. 179 and Thomashorn Road adjacent to the Calabash Volunteer Fire Department, was partially destroyed by a fire that broke out shortly before 9:30 p.m. Sunday.

The blaze apparently began at the rear of the building in the kitchen, according to Cecil Logan, Brunswick County's emergency management coordinator and fire marshal.

He and SBI Arson Investigator Jerry Webster and the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department are investigating the cause of the fire.

Investigators indicated the fire was apparently unrelated to a Nov. 14 blaze that destroyed Dockside Restaurant on the Calabash river-

front.

A passerby spotted the fire at Jordan's and told an employee at Moore's Grocery, who then called the fire department, said Logan.

Sunset Beach VFD was called to provide mutual aid to Calabash firefighters and Calabash Volunteer Rescue Squad also responded.

"The fire itself was contained pretty much to the kitchen area," said Logan. "But there was extensive fire and smoke damage."

While the restaurant is not a total loss, he estimated it would take an investment of at least \$38,000 to remodel the restaurant so that it could reopen.

Chuckie Jordan, whose family owns the restaurant, said that the front door of the dining area and windows on one side of the building broke and that the dining area had suffered some damage from smoke and fire. "Everything that could be

destroyed by heat is destroyed," he said.

The fire at least temporarily delayed plans for a change of management at the restaurant.

"Red" Tew told *The Brunswick Beacon* he was supposed to take over operation of the restaurant from Floyd L. "Sam" and Talitha Jordan at 8 a.m. Monday. The papers were to be drawn up that day.

"It was a shock to me this morning—or last night," he said. "I'm hoping they can remodel and we can go back in in two or three weeks."

Tew, Floyd Jordan and members of Jordan's family watched outside the restaurant Monday morning as investigators combed the scene for evidence.

"I don't know what they're looking for in there," said Jordan. He said he was in Charlotte Sunday night when he learned of the fire at about 11 p.m. "It's just a plain old fire. Nothing was broken into."

Judge's Appointment Could Take Months

BY ETTA SMITH

It could take several months for a successor to be named for District Court Judge Lee J. "Bubba" Greer Jr., who died Nov. 21 in N.C. Memorial Hospital in Chapel Hill.

Greer, 36, of Long Beach, died of complications resulting from injuries he received in an Oct. 6 auto accident. He had never regained consciousness. Two weeks ago his condition was upgraded from critical to serious and family members were optimistic about his recovery. Last week, his condition was downgraded to critical again after he contracted meningitis, an inflammation of the lining of the brain.

He was appointed in 1983 to fill the unexpired term of 19th Judicial District Judge J. Wilton Hunt Sr.,

and was to begin his second term Dec. 1, after being elected without opposition on Nov. 4.

Judge William C. Gore Jr., chief district court judge, said a law passed in the last legislative session limits the time for 60 days in appointing someone. Before there was no limit as to how long the governor could take to decide on an appointment.

"I'll be surprised if we get a judge in the next 30 to 45 days," said Gore.

"The county bar associations from Brunswick, Columbus and Bladen counties will have to submit at least two and not more than three names to the district bar association." He said the Brunswick County Bar Association probably won't meet until sometime next week to discuss its

nominations.

The district association will then decide on three of nine possible nominees to recommend to the governor.

"We need the position filled bad," said Gore. "We do have relief judges helping out now but it's not like having a residential judge."

"I'd hope he'd (the governor) make the appointment as soon as possible," he said. Gore added that the court has already functioned seven weeks short-handed.

Gore said he doesn't know of anyone who is interested in the position.

"All the lawyers thought Greer would be recovering, so we never (See APPOINTMENT, Page 2-A)



LEE J. GREER JR.