



STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER  
COMMISSIONER JIM POOLE, who motioned to adopt the optional half-cent sales tax Monday night, said he plans to use the revenue to cut property taxes at budget time.

## County Adopts Added Half-Cent Sales Tax

BY SUSAN USHER

Brunswick County followed the example of 97 other counties Monday night, adopting a local option half-cent sales tax increase on a 4-0 vote, with Commissioner Benny Ludlum absent.

Local shoppers could begin paying the tax as early as April.

In other business, commissioners met behind closed doors for 45 minutes at the request of County Attorney/Acting County Manager David Clegg, to discuss personnel matters and property acquisition. They took no action on either.

Last October following a public hearing, commissioners tabled consideration of the tax until their first meeting in February. Approximately eight persons spoke at that hearing, their opinions divided.

"I don't think you could call it either way," Commissioner Jim Poole recalled before motioning to adopt the tax. "It was a dead heat."

According to Linda Randall, administrative officer for the Sales and Use Tax Division of the Department of Revenue, the earliest the county can begin collecting revenues from the tax is April.

"They have to give us 30 days' notice," she said. "The March list is already together."

As of the March list, Brunswick, Wilson and Clay

counties are the only ones that have not adopted the tax.

Adding the half-cent sales tax will generate an estimated \$900,000 yearly in new revenues. The tax revenue is distributed on the basis of population.

"I plan to use this to cut taxes at budget time," Poole pledged.

Commissioners adopted the tax with no discussion, but with comments from Chairman Grace Beasley and Commissioners Chris Chappell and Poole.

While the decision adds another tax to the public, Poole said it also provides a way for the county to collect a tax people already pay. "You don't pay \$1.04%, you pay \$1.05," he said.

Plus, he added, visitors who come here from all over the state and elsewhere are accustomed to paying the higher rate.

Beasley noted the tax is a way to help build a new school in the Supply area proposed by the Brunswick County Board of Education without increasing the property tax.

A portion of the tax revenues will go annually to the schools for capital outlay projects or to retire debt for capital outlay projects, though that portion decreases on a regular schedule.

During the first two years, the schools receive 60 percent of the revenues and the county receives 40 per-

cent. During the second two years, the money is divided 50-50. Then, over the ensuing four years, the county gets 60 percent and the schools get 40 percent. The figure for the schools then drops to 30 percent and two years later, to 20 percent, indicated Randall.

At least one person at Monday's meeting was unhappy with the commissioners' vote. Audience member Peggy Jaynes advised commissioners before the vote to "be brave," and not adopt the tax. Referring to a large electric bill error that was overlooked, she continued, "If you're not going to worry about how the money is spent and where it goes, then you should think twice about adding another tax."

To Meet Jointly

Commissioners agreed to meet jointly on Feb. 4 at 7 p.m. with county planning board members on the land use plan update and other issues of common interest such as the subdivision ordinance.

Delayed until that meeting was a request to hire a part-time consultant, at a fee of up to \$10,000, to help planning department staff members complete the update.

Planning Board member Alan Holden, one of three members interviewing consultants, said the board wasn't looking for someone to dictate land use and

(See HALF-CENT, Page 2-A)

## Sunset Accepts Gore's 35 Acres For Public Parking Project

BY TERRY POPE

The town of Sunset Beach Monday became owner of a 35-acre oceanfront tract that promises to eliminate parking shortages on the island.

Town council members voted unanimously to accept a deed from fellow councilman and developer Ed Gore, whose family has donated the west-end tract provided it is used as a public parking facility and beach access area.

Gore made his offer last year, but it was tabled after board members could not agree on the wording of the deed. The wording was changed again Monday night before it was accepted on a motion by Donald Safrit. Minnie Hunt seconded the motion.

"Well, we've been kicking this thing around for a long time now,"

Safrit said. "I think the wording is what we've been seeking."

At its Jan. 5 meeting, the board asked Town Attorney Mike Isenberg to reword the deed to state that if the town begins construction on the parking lot within a certain number of years, then its ownership would permanently go to the town. At previous board meetings, Ms. Hunt had expressed concerns that a clause would allow the property to revert back to the Gore family under certain conditions.

Under the deed accepted Monday, the town must construct the parking lot within three years for the town to retain ownership. A minimum of 100 parking spaces must also be built.

If the town fails to construct the parking lot within three years, the Gore family would have the right to

recover the property, the deed states.

Gore asked the board to replace the words "shall begin construction" on the deed with "shall construct" to eliminate "vagueness."

"My counsel says for it to be absolute, it must be very clear and definite," Gore said.

The town must purchase an oceanfront lot to gain access to the west-end tract. At the Jan. 5 meeting, Julia Shambaugh, of the N.C. Department of Natural Resources and Community Development public access program, told the board that the west-end project would be eligible for state grants.

The town plans to construct a parking lot, elevated walkways across the dunes and public restroom facilities on the tract.

Drainage Concerns

The town continues to suffer from poor drainage of its streets while awaiting an engineer's report on exactly what work needs to be done, Town Administrator Linda Fluegel said.

Several residents living on 29th Street attended Monday's meeting, asking for help in draining rain water from the street. At the Jan. 5 meeting, the board voted to seek an engineer's report on how to eliminate standing water on the island. That report has not been completed.

The board had set aside \$35,000 for sidewalk construction along Main Street, but those funds may now have to be converted to pay for street drainage, said Ms. Hunt, the town's finance officer.

(See DRAINAGE, Page 2-A)



STAFF PHOTO BY ETTA SMITH

STATE SEN. R.C. SOLES JR. (center) asks for a halt in both annexation and incorporation attempts involving the Holden Beach causeway Saturday as he speaks to an audience of about 80 people in the Seafood Barn Restaurant. Among those listening are restaurant owner and former county commissioner Cletis Clemmons, right, and Rep. E. David "Butch" Redwine, left.

## Hearing Officer Recommends DSS Rehire Fired Secretary

BY SUSAN USHER

Alinda Meares moved one step closer last week to regaining her former job as an administrative secretary with the county.

Hearing Officer William Lawton proposed Friday that the State Personnel Commission recommend Meares be reinstated in her old job with the Brunswick County Department of Social Services or placed in an equivalent position with the county, with similar responsibilities and salary commensurate with what she would have been earning with across-the-board raises.

The commission is scheduled to consider the case on Feb. 26 in Raleigh, at which time defense lawyers for the county and for DSS Director Jamie Orrock plan to appeal findings of the hearing officer.

Lawton also recommends the commission find that Meares was fired without just cause on Sept. 8, 1981, and that Social Services Director Jamie Orrock did not comply with proper procedures in his handling of her dismissal.

According to Margaret Errington, an associate of Meares' civil rights attorney, Leslie Winners of Charlotte, Lawton also asks the commission to recommend full back pay to the day Meares obtained other employment, repayment for medical expenses incurred while uninsured, and accumulated annual, sick and petty leave.

She said the commission rarely overrides the recommendation of a hearing officer. "It's very rare," she said. "I haven't heard tell of it happening."

In any case, both parties have a right to appeal to the state's Superior Court.

Meares' local attorney, Dennis Worley of Tabor City, and Meares could not be reached for comment Friday. However, Errington said Meares has advised she would accept a job with the county.

This is the third time Ms. Meares' case has come before the commission.

Lawton's proposed findings are the result of an Oct. 27-28 hearing held in Brunswick County after all parties consented to have the case heard by the commission and to generally abide by its recommendation. Both sides, however, retained the right to appeal findings of fact and other points of law.

Monday night, County Attorney David Clegg said he would join Bill Fairley, attorney for DSS Director Jamie Orrock, in an appeal of Lawton's recommendation.

"I was employed in 1984 by the commissioners and told to prosecute this case," he said. "They have not told me to do otherwise."

He and Fairley met for several hours Friday after the recommendation was made public. They plan to file exceptions to the proposed recommendation and to request the

right to make oral arguments when the commission considers the recommendations on Feb. 26.

Specific findings by Lawton indicate, among other things, that Orrock did not give a required oral warning and did not have written warnings in Meares' personnel file as of a certain date.

Ongoing Case

Meares was dismissed by Director Jamie Orrock for alleged "failure to maintain a harmonious working relationship, participation in actions that seriously disrupt or disturb the normal working operations of the agency . . . and attempting to undermine my authority."

The former secretary contends she was wrongfully fired and has spent the past 5 1/2 years trying to win back her job. Those efforts have taken Meares, now working in real estate in South Carolina, to both the courts and the commission several times.

She withdrew her first appeal to the State Personnel Commission voluntarily in 1982 after learning its recommendation would not be binding on the county.

She then sought a court order to force the county to rehire her, only to be told in Brunswick County Superior Court to exhaust all administrative remedies before seeking judicial redress.

Then, in 1984, the State Personnel Commission approved a settlement reached between Meares and the Brunswick County Board of Social

Services that would have returned her to her old job, with full back pay and benefits. The job, however, no longer existed and would have had to be created by the county commissioners, who never accepted the settlement.

Later, both Wake County Superior Court and the N.C. Court of Appeals held that the social services board did not have the authority to negotiate such a settlement. The case was sent back to the commission for a new entry of judgement in keeping with the court's findings.

Meares also had filed wrongful firing suits in both state and federal court against the county, county commissioners, Orrock and the social services department.

The suit in Brunswick County Superior Court seeking her reinstatement on the basis of the 1984 settlement was dismissed voluntarily.

The consent agreement stayed the federal civil rights suit pending the outcome of the State Personnel Commission appeal. Until then, said Errington, "it will just stay in limbo."

Jamie Orrock, the social services director who fired Meares, was himself fired in November 1983 following allegations by a former employee of sexual misconduct. Following a ruling by the State Personnel Commission, he was reinstated in August 1985 by the Brunswick County Board of Social Services.

## Charges Dismissed Against One; Two Others Sentenced

Breaking, entering and larceny charges were dismissed against one man while two others were given three years' probation last Friday in connection with a series of break-ins at Holden Beach.

Judge D. Jack Hooks Jr. dismissed four charges of breaking, entering and larceny against Arthur E. Carter Jr., 42, of Kannapolis, in Brunswick County District Criminal Court.

He also ordered Melvin C. Roark

Jr., 33, of Kannapolis, and Randy E. Sloop of Concord to serve three years probation and pay restitution to the victims of their alleged crimes. They are to jointly pay approximately \$2,185 in restitution within a year.

One charge of larceny of a firearm was dismissed against all three men. The men were arrested by Holden Beach Police officers on Dec. 6 in connection with a series of break-ins that had occurred that same week.

## Legislators Want Causeway Status Put On Hold

BY ETTA SMITH

Two state legislators said Saturday they would stall further attempts to either annex or incorporate the Holden Beach causeway area.

Sen. R.C. Soles told about 80 people at a public meeting that if Holden Beach doesn't discontinue the process of annexation of the area—and if opponents don't end their effort to incorporate it first—he and Redwine will stop them when the state legislature convenes Feb. 9.

"There are good people on both sides of this issue, but things are moving too fast. You need to sit down together and work this out," said Soles.

"Each side is wanting to outpace the other," he continued. "But there's some solution that will satisfy the majority of the people."

Soles listened to audience comments for and against annexation before he made the announcement.

The meeting was one of several held recently at the Seafood Barn Restaurant on the causeway to discuss incorporating the area to avoid its being annexed by the town.

Restaurant owner Cletis Clemmons presented Redwine and Soles petitions Saturday, asking them to introduce a bill to incorporate North Holden Beach.

The move to incorporate the town began for a second time after Holden

Beach commissioners voted Jan. 5 to prepare a letter of intent to annex the area.

The first effort to incorporate the new town failed last June.

Holden Beach Commissioner William Williamson said the town had looked at the area and voted to consider annexing it. However, he said no decision had been made.

"I played with J.W.'s (Robinson) children on Holden Beach when it was just a bunch of sand dunes. I feel like this is a community. I'm sure when anybody asks J.W. where he's from, he says Holden Beach," said Williamson.

Williamson added that Holden Beach can provide things like garbage pick-up and police protection if the area is annexed, something North Holden Beach couldn't do on an 11-cent per \$100 tax valuation.

Causeway resident Walter Willetts said that in 1968 when causeway residents were raising money for a rescue squad (now Coastline VRS) they were called by the Holden Beach police chief and restricted from raising funds on the island.

"Things like that are the biggest reason this side is against Holden Beach annexing us," he said. He also asked if the causeway residents would have any say-so on the fire

(See LEGISLATORS, Page 2-A)