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## Take Meares Back, Says State Commission

BY SUSAN USHER

Former administrative secretary Alinda Meares should be rehired by the Brunswick County Board of Social Services with full back pay and benefits, the State Personnel Commission has ruled.

The commission said Ms. Meares' dismissal 5½ ago was without just cause and did not comply with procedural requirements.

The order upholds a series of recommendations submitted to the commission in January by William Lawton, the officer who heard the Meares case last October.

Parties in the case, including DSS, the county commissioners and Meares, negotiated a consent agreement in August 1986 in which they agreed to let the State Personnel Commission make the final determination in the wrongful firing case. Unless the parties agree otherwise,

commission rulings are advisory only except in discrimination cases.

In the consent agreement, however, the attorneys reserved the right to appeal finding of facts and points of law to the N.C. Court of Appeals. Defendants in the case appealed several of the officer's findings before the commission itself on Feb. 26.

County Attorney David Clegg had no comment on the panel's recommendation Monday. "We're working on it now," he said.

Neither DSS attorney Mary P. Easley or Meares' attorney, Leslie J. Winner of Charlotte, could be reached for comment. Meares has an unlisted telephone number.

The decision will also affect other legal action by Meares. A wrongful-firing lawsuit she filed in U.S. District Court in September 1984 had been stayed pending the commission's ruling. In that suit, she seeks \$100,000

jointly from the county, the county commissioners, the social services department and DSS Director Jamie Orrock, plus an additional \$100,000 from Orrock in punitive damages.

According to the commission, Meares' firing on Sept. 6, 1981, by DSS Director Jamie Orrock from her position as administrative secretary V failed to comply with procedural requirements and was not based upon just cause. It recommends she be reinstated to a position of the same pay grade as before, "with similar duties, responsibilities and status," and that she be paid \$23,161 in back pay, reimbursed \$602.50 in medical expenses incurred while she was uninsured as well as \$3,596.06 to replace the cost of privately-paid health insurance premiums.

The commission also recommends that her new salary reflect all salary increases or across the board raises to which she would have been entitled and that all

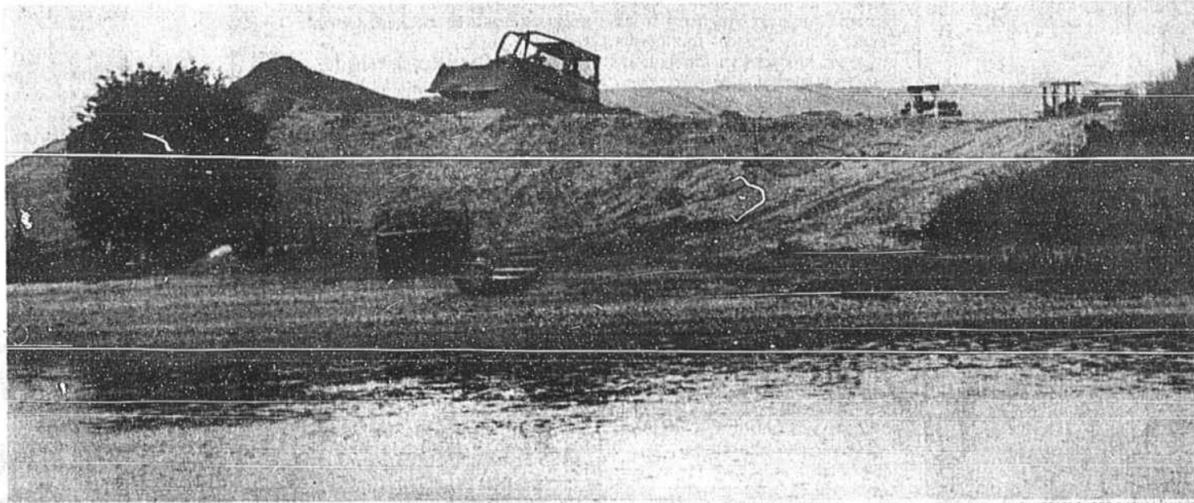
benefits such as accumulated sick leave and petty leave be restored.

Attorneys' fees are to be paid according to terms of the consent agreement. Drake Maynard of the State Personnel Commission said he understood those fees were to be determined by the Duke Arbitration Center.

The case has followed convoluted course between the courts and the State Personnel Commission over the past 5½ years as Meares has sought to regain her county job.

A spokesman for her attorney said last month that Meares would accept a job with the county if one is offered.

Orrock, the director who fired Meares, in 1981, was later fired himself for alleged misconduct. Fired November 30, 1983, he was reinstated in 1985 following the recommendation of the State Personnel Commission.



Monk's Island Heading Up

As a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers contractor deepens the capacity for dredge spoil at Monk's Island off Shalotte Point, nearby residents are get-

ting a drastic change of view. The island will hold spoil from the Corps' maintenance dredging along the Intracoastal Waterway.

STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

## UOB Recommends Going Ahead With Assessment District

BY SUSAN USHER

Despite opposition to the move, the Brunswick County Utility Operations Board will recommend that the county proceed with plans to install lateral water lines in several subdivisions near Holden Beach at the property owners' expense.

The board agreed unanimously last Thursday afternoon to support member Ed Gore's motion to that effect. The decision will be presented March 23 to the county commissioners for ratification.

"We've gone too far to turn back now," Gore said after the meeting.

Special Assessment District 1 primarily consists of Holiday Ranches, Holiday Acres and Holiday Pines subdivisions. It was ranked first in priority for the water lines on the basis of the number of principle structures to be served, the number of parcels in the area and the cost effectiveness of serving each parcel.

Once the lines are installed, the approximately 500 property owners there will be assessed the full cost, plus a small impact fee.

"I'm against making people do something like that," said Ernest McGee of Leland. "But if it will keep a majority from getting it..."

Most of the speakers at a March 19 hearing were against the project, as were an estimated 100 residents who signed a petition presented to UOB Chairman Robert Nubel just before last week's hearing. No mention of the petition was made during the hearing. At Thursday's UOB meeting, it was noted that staff had been unable to verify that all signers were property owners in the affected subdivisions.

Much of the opposition voiced came from Holiday Ranches residents, but UOB members Thursday dismissed the possibility of striking the area from the district.

A portion of the subdivision would have to be included to enter the district from N.C. 130, said County Planning Director John Harvey, and to accommodate tie-ins in the future from subdivisions behind S.A.D. 1 that have asked for water, such as Barefoot Bay.

These areas can't be added to the district without having to start over the legal process. However, areas can be deleted from a particular district, though that might change its priority ratings, he noted.

In deciding to move ahead with the project, members noted that the area with the most opposition is heavily developed with small lots.

In other business, the board discussed the possibility of slating separate hearings for each district and to slate them as quickly as possible.

They said they want to get this legal requirement out of the way as quickly as possible, while allowing residents of each community an opportunity to be heard. Gore and Chairman Robert Nubel said after the meeting, that while opposition expressed at the first hearing did not in-

fluence board members to drop the project, that the hearings are not being held simply because they are required by law.

It's conceivable, said Nubel, that information could be presented that would change the board's view of a project.

With the recent decision by the town of Sunset Beach to extend water service to the Seaside Station area, which had ranked second in priority, a new subdivision moved into the ranks of funded project: Water Wonderland/Somerset Landing. With a projected cost of \$91,600 compared to \$110,400 for Seaside Station, the project increases the board's fund balance by about \$20,000. Expenditures for all funded projects are expected to total about \$925,000.

At the recommendation of the board's consulting engineer, Jerry Lewis of Lewis & Associates, this last area would be combined with the nearby sixth-ranked Whispering Heights area to form one large assessment district.

However, members learned that extra surveying will be required in the Somerset Landing area because it has not been platted and exact front footage is required for assessment purposes.

Top-ranked behind the North Holden area on the district list is the area between Brick Landing Plantation and Bent Tree Plantation that includes Brunswick Shores, Long Acres, Shangria and Stanley's Campground. The project is expected to cost about \$198,100.

Regarding the third-ranked project, Brooks Acres and B & B Subdivision, the board also agreed to consider extending the boundary line to include at least a portion of the Odell Williamson or Hideaway Estates subdivision so that the water line would loop back to N.C. 179 rather than dead-ending. That would improve water quality, said Water Plant Director Kenneth Hewett.

Nubel warned that minor changes for engineering purposes, such as this, are acceptable. But he warned that the board shouldn't make major changes because that would affect the priority list.

The next project area is Sea Pines off Long Beach Road, both adjoining subdivisions have county water.

In the fifth-ranked project area, Ocean Pine Acres off N.C. 179/N.C. 904, UOB members agreed Monday, on a motion by Bill English, to accept a proposal submitted by Robert Williamson, manager of Brunswick Building Supplies. The acceptance is subject to approval of the county attorney, with a letter of understanding to be prepared.

The company has offered to bear the cost of running the water line from N.C. 179 along Brooks Avenue to the company's property line near its concrete plant, if the county will bore the tap from its existing line under N.C. 179 to the property line

(See UOB, Page 2-A)

## Education Plan Calls For More Teachers, Space

BY SUSAN USHER

The state's Basic Education Program will have an impact on Brunswick County schools both in terms of instructional programs and facilities, Bill Church of the N.C. Department of Public Instruction told school board members Monday night in Southport.

"When you see the teachers and staff you will require in Brunswick County," he said, "facilities will become a major concern of yours."

Brunswick County Board of Education members divided much of their

time at Monday's special meeting between an hour-long closed door session and Church's presentation.

The plan sets out a program of instruction that all school systems are to make available to students in grades kindergarten through 12 and the essentials—other than facilities—required to meet that goal. Facilities are covered in companion legislation calling for a statewide bond referendum for school construction. The county school board has its own building plan proposed for funding over the

next several years from several sources, including the system's share of both state half-cent sales taxes. As the program is proposed, Church said, Brunswick County can expect to add 73 teachers over the next five school terms to meet requirements for smaller class sizes and more program offerings.

Over the same six-year period, if funding continues as proposed, the county would receive funds for an additional 94 slots for instructional personnel, aides, clerical support and supervisors. Also, during the 1987-89

biennium only, the system is tentatively slated to receive \$21,427 for instructional materials and \$37,995 for staff development.

However, Church cautioned, if counties use the state positions and funds to replace current county funding, it would defeat the aim of the Basic Education Program to improve the schools.

"A lot of county commissioners are significantly aware of this program," he said. "We need to be careful. We need that continuing sub-

(See STATE, Page 2-A)

## U.S. Attorney's Office To Investigate Death

BY ETTA SMITH

The U.S. Attorney's Office will investigate the apparent suicide of a Southport man who had earlier claimed he was threatened for testifying in a fraud trial.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Kieran Shanahan said he plans to immediately begin an investigation into the death of Corbett Anderson, 78, who died Sunday at Doshier Memorial Hospital in Southport.

According to Brunswick County Coroner Greg White, Anderson died as a result of a self-inflicted gunshot

wound to the head.

Anderson recently testified against two Southport funeral home operators who were being tried by a federal grand jury for fraud.

Shanahan said that during post-trial detention hearings Special Agent Charles Mercer testified that Anderson told him he had been threatened by two unidentified men who rode by his house on the day he was scheduled to testify in the trial.

Shanahan, who prosecuted the Gilberts, said the two men in the car told Anderson they would get him for

testifying. He also said that Anderson claimed he was threatened by unidentified phone callers.

Southport Police Chief Bill Coring, in whose jurisdiction the death occurred, has not returned several phone calls from The Brunswick Beacon.

White said Southport Police officers told him that Anderson's wife was home when the incident occurred, but that she didn't witness the shooting.

Thomas E. Gilbert III and his son Thomas E. Gilbert IV were indicted by a federal grand jury last October

on charges they defrauded customers who entered into pre-need funeral and burial contracts.

In February Thomas E. Gilbert III, 63, was found guilty of 12 counts of defrauding customers and giving false statements on bank loan applications. Thomas E. Gilbert III was found guilty on 11 similar charges. They are to be sentenced on April 13.

The Gilberts were cleared of charges that they had burned their funeral home to collect the insurance.

## State Cabinet Member To Address County GOP

Secretary of the N.C. Department of Cultural Resources Patric Dorsey will be the keynote speaker when Brunswick County Republicans hold their biennial convention Saturday, March 21, at the Brunswick County Government Center in Bolivia.

In addition to cultural and artistic pursuits, Dorsey has been active in the Republican Party for more than 10 years, serving as Craven County Chairman for Reagan and as a state delegate to the National Republican Convention in 1976 and on the national platform committee in 1980. She ran for the state House of

Representatives in 1980 and for Secretary of State in 1984. In 1985, at the request of the governor-elect, she chaired Gov. Jim Martin's inaugural committee.

Delegates from each of the county's precincts are expected to participate in the 2 p.m. event at the public assembly building. The meeting is open to all county Republicans, said Chairman John Dozier.

Business will include election of new officers of the county organization to two-year terms, election of 44 delegates to the district and state

conventions and consideration of several resolutions.

One of those resolutions, said Dozier, is expected to ask the county convention to bind its 7th Congressional District Convention delegates to the governor's choice to head the state GOP, Jack Hawke.

"I know a majority will back the governor's choice," he said, adding, "I think we have enough votes to do it, to send our delegates fully committed."

The Congressional Club is challenging Gov. Jim Martin's nominee, supporting a candidate of its own.



PATRIC DORSEY