

New County Manager Resigns After SBI Probe Uncovered

BY TERRY POPE AND SUSAN USHER
Scheduled to start work next Wednesday, newly-hired Brunswick County Manager M. Thomas Barnes resigned under pressure Monday.

The Board of Commissioners asked for Barnes' resignation following a brief executive session. He had been hired last Monday to fill the county manager's position vacated April 1 by William Carter, who retired on medical disability.

According to Commissioner Chris Chappell's motion, the board asked Barnes to resign "for not being honest and upfront with us in the interview." If Barnes had refused to resign over the telephone Monday, the board was prepared to fire him immediately.

Commissioners expressed surprise last Friday after they learned that Barnes had been the subject of a State Bureau of Investigation probe while serving as Halifax County's administrator.

Barnes resigned his position in December 1986, the same day Halifax County Commissioners voted unanimously not to reappoint him for another year.

Chappell said he learned of the SBI investigation last Thursday when a reporter showed him copies of news articles from a Roanoke Rapids newspaper. He said that Barnes did not tell the board about the investigation during the interview.

An emergency meeting of the commissioners was called Friday afternoon so commissioners could confront Barnes and hear his side of the story in a 50-minute executive session.

The board voted then to defer the matter until Monday, after conferring with County Attorney David Clegg, who was in Raleigh over the weekend managing Miss Brunswick County in the Miss North Carolina pageant.

The SBI investigation looked into allegations that Barnes had produced altered copies of a Halifax County Commissioners' meeting and that he had used his office for personal gain. No charges were filed against Barnes after the four-month investigation.

"I don't think the board had any other choice," said Commission Chairperson Grace Beasley, after calling Barnes and asking for his resignation Monday. "The fact that he withheld certain information from

the board just put a cloud over the whole situation."

Barnes gave Ms. Beasley his resignation over the telephone from his business in Greenville and told her he would also send a letter of resignation to the board.

Barnes, 45, resigned as administrator of Halifax County in December 1986, after serving 8½ years. He was hired by Brunswick County at an annual salary of \$42,500 (See NEW COUNTY, Page 2-A)

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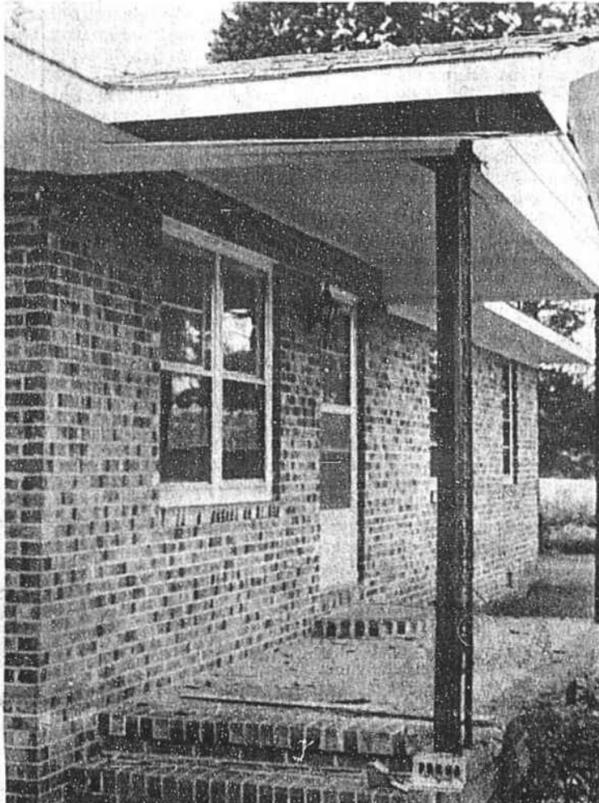
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STAFF PHOTO BY MARJORIE MEGIVERN
ROOF AND PORCH DAMAGE resulted when lightning jumped from a tree to this metal pillar Friday at Dorothy Long's home in Ash.

Lightning Played Tricks In County

BY MARJORIE MEGIVERN
At least three Brunswick County residents were acutely aware of the Friday afternoon thunderstorm that swept through the county with heavy rain, thunder and lightning.

The storm's electricity played havoc in three locations, in one case causing severe damage.

Dorothy Long was washing dishes at her home in Ash, when she heard an explosion at the front of the house. "It was like a bomb went off," she said.

Frightened, she ran to investigate and saw a part of her porch roof had been blown apart and bricks shattered around the base of a metal post.

"There was a terrible, terrible odor," she said.

Then Mrs. Long noticed the huge pine tree about 20 feet from the house, with a strip of bark seared from the trunk all the way to the top.

Members of the Ash Volunteer Fire Department, who answered her frantic call, said lightning had struck the tree, then arced to the metal post and

up to the roof.

She later discovered the charge had gone through her telephone wire, and the wiring and jack were replaced.

About the same time, along Hwy. 130 near Ash, Mike Potts and two friends were working on a boat motor in the open bay door of his shop.

Suddenly one of the men jumped up and ran to the other side of the building, just as a bolt of lightning struck the motor.

"I saw fire jump out of that motor about two feet," Potts said. "The other guy said he saw it coming, a big flash of white."

No one was hurt, nor was the motor damaged, and Potts continued his work.

A little farther away, in Civietown, Van Hewett saw the most spectacular lightning strike of his life, he said.

"It hit a pine tree in my yard and blew the top off of it and out 50 or 60 feet. I've seen lightning hit before, but nothing like this."

Ga. Company Wants To Handle Coal Ash Waste From Mill Creek

BY SUSAN USHER
A Marietta, Ga., company has applied for permission to operate a transfer site in the Mill Creek area for brokering coal ash waste from the Cogentrix plant at Southport.

Vice President Jerry Chumley said KBK Enterprises applied for a permit from the N.C. Division of Health Services on June 12, following up with a letter to the county. It seeks permission to operate the facility on an 85-acre farm tract it has an option to buy from the Worth Mercer family. In addition to low-elevation temporary cells or "stockpiles" of compacted ash, the operation would include a small office/maintenance building and approximately four employees. Hauling would be contracted out locally, said Chumley. The county line on N.C. 87 could be the facility's water supply.

"Our plans are to use 100 percent of the ash," he said, selling it for use in almost every phase of construction, from fill material to concrete additive. "Reuse of this material is much better than having to dispose of it."

According to Michael deSherbinin, executive director for the Resources Development Commission, "it is such valuable material for specific uses KBK won't have any trouble finding users. The only problem is having enough (to meet demand)."

The facility would start up, said Chumley, "as soon as we can."

The coal ash KBK would handle is not considered a hazardous waste under the federal Resources Conservation and Recovery Act, but it must be handled within certain limitations that apply to solid waste storage and disposal, such as on-site containment of water that comes into contact with the fly ash to prevent leaching into groundwater supplies.

State landfill regulations require the project have the approval of the Brunswick County Commissioners before an operating permit will be awarded.

Operation of the fly ash transfer site is an alternative to the county handling the ash at its Supply landfill or at another site, a commitment made to Cogentrix more than a year ago when the Southport project began.

"The county is obligated to assist Cogentrix," confirmed deSherbinin.

However, operation of the transfer site could free up 100 acres of landfill space that would have been required for fly ash disposal over a 10-year period.

Chumley said the N.C. Division of Health's Solid and Hazardous Waste Branch has sent a letter of support for the project proposal to the county.

Monday afternoon, Commissioner Frankie Rabon, in whose district the

proposed site is located, said residents are raising concerns about the siting of the facility and are asking for a public hearing by the county.

KBK is to make a presentation to the board on July 6; a decision on whether public hearing is needed will not be made before then.

The Mill Creek location north of Boiling Spring Lakes off N.C. 87 is the "preferred" site, said Chumley. He added, "If we encounter too much resistance there we would look somewhere else."

KBK liked the Mercer tract, he said, because of its central location in the county for purposes of brokering fly ash for use in construction projects as well as its proximity to the Cogentrix plant.

Low carbon fly ash can be used in most any phase of construction—as an additive in concrete, as a soil enhancer, for berms, road beds, parking lots and air strips, and to produce lightweight aggregate.

KBK has included in its permit application a proposal to demonstrate some use of coal ash on site, for land farming/soil conditioning.

"Our company actively promotes the beneficial use of coal ash," said Chumley. And while its initial contract is with Cogentrix, the firm would be interested in working with other local industry.

Volume 'Small'
It would receive 10 to 12 truckloads per day of mixed fly ash and heavier bottom ash, the result of coal byproducts and pollution controls at Cogentrix's coal-fired steam cogeneration plant. The total volume handled in a year's time would be about 50,000 cubic yards, relatively small by KBK's standards.

On site, the ash would be temporarily stored in above-ground stockpiles or cells eight to ten feet in height and not visible from N.C. 87.

The tract would be cleared and topsoil pushed aside for later use as berms and topcover. Then the ash would be mixed with 15 percent water and spread in 12-inch thick layers or "lifts," which when compacted are about six inches deep.

Water that comes in contact with ash would be contained on-site, where Chumley said it could be used to help maintain all-weather roads and to keep down dust in the cells.

KBK has active contracts in 18 to 20 states, according to Chumley. It is one of five subsidiaries of JTM Industries, all of which are involved in some form of byproduct reuse, including lime and cement kiln waste and gypsum waste recycling. It is currently working with CP&L on use of products from its coal-fired energy production facilities, such as the Sutton plant near Wilmington.

Taxes Rate Jumps In Calabash

day. Several asked questions as to why the tax increase was necessary, but none criticized the increase once the board explained why additional funds were needed. The residents left before the board voted on the budget.

Funds generated by the increased tax rate will be used to pay for a survey of the town, which is needed before the town can plan for extending water lines and for joining the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) federal flood insurance program. The town has not been platted since 1972, Ms. Thomas said.

The town must also generate enough funds to pay for engineering fees for designing water lines in a piecemeal approach. Shallotte's Jerry Lewis and Associates will be asked to design the water lines in smaller projects rather than in one or two large phases if funds are not available.

The board agreed on a 22-cent tax

rate at a budget workshop last week, but added another one cent so water lines can be drawn in sections. The town plans to extend water lines in small projects if a November referendum that would allow the town to assess property owners should fail.

The water budget does reflect a possible \$110,000 in water assessments, which would be used to run water lines along the Calabash River and down Oak Street.

Once a water line has already been installed, the town can assess property owners to recover the cost. Pre-assessments require a special act of legislation from the N.C. General Assembly.

Mayor Robert Simmons said the town cut its budget too tightly last year, when it decreased taxes from 27 cents per \$100 to 17 cents.

"We cut it to the bone last year, which was too much," Simmons said. "We wanted to increase it this year to

bring our planning and zoning up to date. That's where it sounds bad."

Weber said the 35 percent increase sounds bad when you are talking about a higher tax rate like those in northern cities.

"You can play with percentages," Weber told the residents, "but realistically, six cents more on a \$60,000 house is \$36 more per year."

Weber asked the board, "What would 22 cents do for us?"

"Break us even," council member Pati Lewellyn replied.

Mayor Simmons said the residents "brought out some good points" Monday.

"They're questioning where their money is being spent," he added.

Ms. Thomas said the tax rate would have to be increased by two or three cents just to cover the budget. The town has estimated an 81 percent collection rate, she added.

As of June, the town has a tax collection rate of 89.4 percent, she said.

Town Wants To End Street Parking Near Post Office

BY TERRY POPE
Shallotte aldermen are hoping an ordinance they adopted last Wednesday will help eliminate traffic congestion and fender-benders in front of the Shallotte Post Office.

The ordinance eliminates street parking in front of the post office and the adjacent Coastal Insurance building on Main Street. Five spaces will be eliminated in the northbound lane to help drivers leaving the post office and Pine Street get a better view of U.S. 17 traffic.

N.C. Department of Transportation officials must approve the final

plans. A town ordinance is required before no-parking signs and street markings can be placed by DOT.

The town has also asked DOT to change the eliminated spaces into a right turn lane for northbound traffic on U.S. 17. Three spaces in front of Coastal Insurance and two in front of the post office will be eliminated.

Police Chief Don Stovall told the board of aldermen last Wednesday that cars parking on the street has become a problem for drivers leaving both the post office parking lot and Pine Street. He said accidents occur quite frequently there.

Loitering Ordinance
The board also adopted an ordinance last week that eliminates loitering and vagrancy in the Shallotte Township District Park on U.S. 17.

An ordinance against loitering and vagrancy on the town's property was already on the books, Stovall said, but it did not apply to the town's parks. Officers had been limited in what laws they could enforce at the park.

Loitering had become a problem there, Stovall said.

(See TWO SHALLOTTE, Page 2-A)



STAFF PHOTO BY TERRY POPE
SHALLOTTE ALDERMEN adopted a resolution last week asking the N.C. Department of Transportation to eliminate parking spaces in front of the post office on

Main Street. The town hopes the spaces will be changed into a turn lane.