

# Grand Jury Hears Brunswick Tech Case

BY RAHN ADAMS

The Brunswick County Grand Jury has instructed the 13th District Attorney's office to investigate alleged fraud involving continuing education classes at Brunswick Technical College in Supply.

According to District Attorney Mike Easley, the grand jury this week learned that continuing education classes taught by Bertie Faye King of Kingtown were investigated by the SBI during its recent probe.

Easley said the alleged offenses involved "receiving money for teaching students that were not taught, and

reporting as registered some students who were not properly registered for class."

The classes in question were taught between June 30, 1986, and Nov. 30, 1986, Easley said.

Jesse Clemmons, dean of continuing education at Brunswick Tech, said Tuesday he did not know the results of the SBI investigation, and that he did not know which of Ms. King's classes were being investigated.

"I really have no response (to the SBI probe)," Clemmons said, "because I don't know what's been done on it."

Clemmons said Ms. King previously has taught a quilting class for Brunswick Tech. He said her classes were held in a workshop area behind her Kingtown home.

Ms. King was unavailable for comment Tuesday.

According to Easley, the SBI agent assigned to the Brunswick Tech investigation presented a summary of his findings to the grand jury Tuesday morning in Bolivia.

"I had the SBI agent in charge of the investigation of Brunswick Tech subpoenaed to go into the grand jury,"

Easley said. "He went in and gave them an oral presentation, summarizing his investigation.

"I did not submit indictments," he said, "but I requested the grand jury to express an opinion by way of a presentment."

Easley defined a "presentment" as a written statement from the grand jury requesting an indictment and/or investigation from the district attorney's office.

"So pursuant to the grand jury's request, there will be further investigation into the matter," Easley said.

He said the grand jury next meets Nov. 2.

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RESORT PLAZA shopping center on U.S. 17 South in Shallotte was "arrested and seized" by U.S. marshals last Thursday in connection with cocaine trafficking that allegedly occurred there. Businesses in the complex are not involved in the investigation, officials say.

Some 23 businesses in Shallotte's Resort Plaza shopping center got a new landlord last week: the U.S. Government. But besides that, "business as usual" is the shopping center tenants' catchphrase.

## Federal Marshals Seize Shallotte Shopping Center

BY RAHN ADAMS

Some 23 businesses in Shallotte's Resort Plaza shopping center got a new landlord last week: the U.S. Government. But besides that, "business as usual" is the shopping center tenants' catchphrase.

Last Thursday morning, federal marshals from the state's eastern district converged on Resort Plaza, located on U.S. 17 South, to seize the \$1.5 million shopping center in connection with a federal civil suit against the complex's former owner, indicted drug suspect Alvin Bryan "Al" Willis III of Shallotte.

According to Assistant U.S. Attorney Doug McCullough in Raleigh, the two-year-old shopping center was one of the largest commercial properties ever seized by the government in Eastern North Carolina.

McCullough said Resort Plaza was taken into custody by the government because it allegedly was used for illegal drug trafficking by Willis.

"We have filed a civil suit in which seizure of the shopping center is authorized when it's used to facilitate the committing of felonious violations of the Controlled Substances Act," McCullough said, referring to his office's federal civil suit filed Aug. 19.

McCullough said Willis allegedly used the property to store controlled substances, hold drug transactions and make telephone calls related to drug trafficking.

Willis, 32, was indicted June 11 by a special Brunswick County investigative grand jury on 12 counts each of cocaine trafficking and conspiracy to traffic. He was released on a \$25,000 bond and is currently awaiting trial.

Willis was one of 32 persons indicted by the special grand jury. He faces up to 420 years in jail on the trafficking charges.

According to 13th District Attorney Mike Easley, the businesses located in Resort Plaza are not implicated in the case.

"None of the shop-owners or their businesses are under any investigation at all," Easley said.

And even though last Thursday's seizure was a surprise to shop-owners, they handled the situation well, according to agents involved in the operation.

"They have nothing to do with it

(the investigation) whatsoever," said U.S. Marshal Dennis Kudro, "and we got a cooperative reaction. We found the tenants in the complex very nice, very understanding and very pleasant to deal with."

According to Brunswick County Sheriff John Carr Davis, officers from his department accompanied the plain-clothed marshals as they notified shop-owners that the shopping center had been seized by the government.

"We just went with them to show that they were law enforcement officers," Davis said, adding that no problems arose during the seizure.

Beginning around 10:30 a.m. last Thursday, marshals went from store to store, handing out legal documents explaining their action. Marshals were still on the scene that day as late as 4 p.m.

Included among the documents given shop-owners was a copy of a general warranty deed, showing that Willis had turned Resort Plaza over to his mother, Elizabeth L. Willis of Shallotte, in January, almost six months prior to his indictment.

But according to Easley, the property could still be seized since it allegedly was used to facilitate drug trafficking.

Sheriff Davis said officers earlier this year seized a boat belonging to Willis. The boat is being stored in the county's impoundment yard in Bolivia, Davis said.

"What you do is you have to gather information over a long period of time to make a seizure," Easley said.

He explained that the federal civil suit to seize Resort Plaza was drawn from information gathered during the criminal investigation handled by the district attorney's office, Brunswick County Sheriff's Department, State Bureau of Investigation and Drug Enforcement Administration.

Willis' drug trafficking violations are alleged to have occurred between Nov. 1, 1984, and May 15, 1986, according to the indictment.

McCullough said he expects his office's civil suit to follow the state criminal action pending against Willis.

And if the civil case goes against Willis, the government expects to sell the shopping center for at least \$500,000, he said.

"Any liens against the property would be paid off," McCullough said in reference to a possible sale. "Any profits would go in the U.S. Marshals forfeiture fund and eventually to the government's general fund."

In the meantime, the shopping center will be managed by a professional management company, McCullough said.

The U.S. Marshal's Service has contracted with Shallotte realtor Jimmy Parker to manage the shopping center while the federal suit against Willis is in litigation. Parker owns Real Estate Center of Brunswick Inc.

"I'm just looking after it (Resort Plaza) on an interim basis for the marshals office," Parker said last Thursday. "Everything will run as usual. My function will be just to oversee its operation until they get the problem resolved."

## Six More Plead Guilty In Drug Cases

BY RAHN ADAMS

Six more defendants indicted on cocaine trafficking charges earlier this year by a special investigative grand jury entered guilty pleas to trafficking or lesser charges last week in Brunswick County Superior Court in Bolivia.

Only one of the six was sentenced; the others will be scheduled for sentencing during later terms of Superior Court.

According to court records, Cleron Tucker Culley of Shallotte pleaded guilty Aug. 31 to felonious possession of more than one gram of cocaine.

He was represented by Shallotte attorney Mike Ramos.

Culley, one of 32 persons indicted June 11, initially was charged with two counts each of cocaine trafficking and conspiracy to traffic in cocaine.

The offenses involved 28 grams or more of cocaine and occurred between Nov. 15, 1984, and Feb. 25, 1985.

Following his June arrest, Culley was released from custody on a \$10,000 bond.

Superior Court Judge Henry W. Hight Jr. last week handed Culley a two-year suspended sentence, with two years of supervised probation.

Culley was ordered to pay a \$250 fine, court costs and a probation fee, and he will be required to perform 50 hours of community service work within 150 days of sentencing.

Other stipulations in Culley's sentence require him to submit to warrantless searches; to neither use nor possess controlled substances; to not associate with known users of controlled substances; to undergo a drug abuse assessment and treatment program; and to testify truthfully against any co-defendants or co-conspirators.

According to court records, five other defendants entered guilty pleas during the Aug. 31 term of Brunswick County Superior Court.

They included: Ricky Dale Bellamy, Shallotte; James Elmer Hatcher, Rt. 1, Winnabow; Charles Ronald Strickland, Tabor City; Ronald Dale Ward, 32, Rt. 1, Nakina; and William Irvin Peal, 24, Whiteville.

All five were indicted in June and July as a result of work done by the special investigative grand jury.

Bellamy was indicted on charges including possession of cocaine and conspiracy to traffic in cocaine, involving more than 28 grams of the controlled substance. He had previously entered a plea of not guilty.

Bellamy last week also pleaded guilty to firing a weapon into an occupied dwelling and conspiracy to commit arson in connection with a July 15, 1986, incident at a Mulberry Street, Shallotte, residence.

A second-degree arson charge against Bellamy was dismissed last week.

Hatcher's indictments included

five counts each of cocaine trafficking and conspiracy, involving amounts of 28 grams or more. He was released from custody on a \$5,000 bond.

Strickland was indicted on three counts each of trafficking and conspiracy, involving 400 grams or more. He was released on a \$600,000 bond.

Indictments against Ward included two counts each of trafficking and conspiracy, also involving at least 400 grams of cocaine. He also was released from the Brunswick County Jail on a \$600,000 bond.

Peal was indicted on charges of conspiracy to possess more than 400 grams of cocaine and possession of more than 400 grams.

According to the clerk's office, all five last week received prayers for judgment that will be continued from term to term until they are scheduled for sentencing by the district attorney's office.

## KBK To Locate In Leland Industrial Park

BY RAHN ADAMS

Officials with KBK Enterprises said last week the company now plans to locate its coal ash transfer site in Leland Industrial Park, not in the Mill Creek section of Brunswick County.

According to KBK Vice President Jerry Chumley, his company is directing its efforts toward "securing an option" on a tract of land in the industrial park, located off Mt. Misery Road.

Mike deSherbinin, director of the county's Resource Development Commission, identified the proposed site as a 15-acre tract owned by the Brunswick County Economic Development Council.

deSherbinin met with KBK officials last week in Bolivia.

Chumley said KBK plans to begin construction of the facility "as soon as possible," pending approval from the state.

He said KBK has applied for permits from the state's Solid and Hazardous Waste Division and Health Services Section to operate the facility.

The Marietta, Ga., company plans to stockpile coal ash from Southport's Cogentrix plant, which is due to begin operation in October.

Cogentrix, currently in its pre-operation phase, is a co-generation plant that will sell process steam to Pfizer Chemicals Inc., and use surplus steam to make electricity for sale to Carolina Power and Light Co.

According to deSherbinin, Brunswick County is obligated to pro-

vide for disposal of Cogentrix's coal ash residuals, as part of the county's agreement to get the \$83 million plant to locate here.

deSherbinin said Cogentrix will be the county's largest water user at 3.5 million gallons of water per day.

And he explained that the state is promoting the re-use of certain waste materials, like coal ash, instead of disposing of them in a landfill.

deSherbinin said the county initially planned to dispose of the ash at the Brunswick County landfill; however, the landfill proved not large enough to handle the waste.

In July, about 20 Mill Creek residents appeared before the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners to protest KBK's initial plans to locate the transfer facility in their

community.

The residents, worried about possible groundwater contamination and fugitive dust problems from the coal ash, presented commissioners with a 150-name petition opposing location of the facility in Mill Creek.

As a result, commissioners told KBK to consider alternative sites.

Chumley had discounted the residents' worries, saying tests show ash does not contaminate groundwater and that precautions would be taken to keep ash from blowing.

"We contend there's really no impact," Chumley said again last week. "What we're proposing to do here is not new on the national level, even though it is new in the (Brunswick County) area."

(See KBK, Page 2-A)

## Sunset Taxpayers To Fight Dune Parking

BY RAHN ADAMS

"We want the public to come to the beach; we just don't want to disrupt the entire environment to make parking when there are other alternatives."

That was what Sunset Beach Taxpayers' Association President Mason Barber said Saturday after association members unanimously approved a motion to oppose a plan to convert dunes on the beach's far west end into a parking lot.

During the meeting, members were encouraged to participate in a letter-writing campaign to let the state know they oppose the plan.

Most of the discussion during Saturday morning's 1 1/2-hour tax-

payers' association meeting dealt with a proposed regional beach access at Sunset Beach.

Around 120 of the association's 509 members attended the annual session at Sunset Beach Volunteer Fire Department despite heavy rains that morning.

Prior to the group's vote, Barber brought the group up to date on plans by the state and town to build a 100- to 400-car parking lot with restroom and shower facilities on the west end of Sunset Beach.

Barber, who is unopposed in his bid for election as town mayor, said he recently received word from the governor's office in Raleigh that no decision had been made concerning

appropriation of funds for the estimated \$600,000 project.

"As it stands right now on the beach access programs," Barber told members, "they (the state) have not approved anything... except the beach access studies."

According to town councilperson and association member Minnie Hunt, Sunset Beach has received two grants to fund a comprehensive study on beach access. The study has not yet been done, Mrs. Hunt said.

She said that earlier this year the town authorized a drawing by a local landscape architect of a proposed access area for town property on the west end of the beach.

The drawing was used as part of

the town's grant application; however, the town did not endorse the plan suggested by the drawing, that of a 400-car parking area in what are now dunes, she said.

Members were especially concerned Saturday about the size of the proposed parking area and its impact on the environment.

Association member Warren "Bud" Knapp pointed out that the proposed beach access project should be called "dune parking" and not simply beach access, to underscore the fact that dunes would have to be destroyed to construct the lot.

Knapp made the motion that of (See SUNSET, Page 2-A)



PRESIDENT MASON BARBER addresses about 120 members of the Sunset Beach Taxpayers' Association at its annual meeting held Saturday morning at Sunset Beach Volunteer Fire Department.