

Drug Dog Can Search Lockers; Board May Target Other Areas

BY SUSAN USHER

While a drug dog owned by the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department will soon begin unannounced, randomly-scheduled searches for drugs in school locker areas, Brunswick County Board of Education members are already considering ways to expand the dog's usage on campuses.

The board adopted the locker

search policy unanimously Monday on its second reading.

Under the policy, the dog will come on campus only at the invitation of the school's or school system administration, and then its visit will be unannounced. If the dog "alerts" on a specific locker, it will be searched. Any illegal materials seized during the search will be handled as evidence and turned over to law en-

forcement officers. Roles taken by school and law enforcement officials in such searches are expected to be clarified as the policy goes into actual use.

While the policy became effective Tuesday, no searches are expected until after information on the planned use of the dog has been, by motion of board member/attorney Doug Baxley, "disseminated by the widest

possible means" as recommended earlier by board attorney Glen Peterson.

While awaiting adoption of the policy, the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department has been taking its drug dog, Buddy, on the rounds of local schools by invitation. So far he's demonstrated his ability to "sniff out" drugs in demonstrations at five schools, with visits to

North and West Brunswick high schools scheduled.

Board members and teachers at Monday's meeting discussed the possibility of extending Buddy's territory into other public areas of the schools, such as gyms, bathrooms, halls and classrooms—and perhaps the school parking lot.

While the school-owned lockers may be searched without a warrant if

the dog "alerts" to them, Peterson said search of a private vehicle could not be made without a search warrant. He added that Buddy's alerting to the vehicle would typically be sufficient probable cause for a law officer to obtain a warrant.

However, he said, the law is not clear on whether the dog can be taken through a parking lot for that (See DRUG DOG, Page 2-A)

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STAFF PHOTO BY EDDIE SWEATT

On Parade In Charlotte

Despite the chilly forecast, approximately 125 units and plenty of spectators turned out Saturday morning for Charlotte's Christmas Parade. Above, Amanda Reeves, daughter of Paul Wayne and Marilyn Reeves of Charlotte, cuts cartwheels as part of the Dance Showcase entry. You'll find the story and more photo coverage in the B section on pages 6 and 7.

Willis Sentenced To 35 Years In Prison And \$250,000 Fine

BY RAHN ADAMS

Shalotte businessman Alvin Bryan Willis III, who admitted to having been "a major cocaine dealer in Brunswick County," was sentenced to 35 years in prison and was fined \$250,000 following a two-day sentencing hearing that ended Tuesday in Whiteville.

Also, a Greenville man—Petros Tholiotis—pleaded guilty Tuesday to three counts of conspiracy to traffic in cocaine and is expected to be sentenced in February.

Both men were among 32 defendants indicted on cocaine trafficking charges in June by a special investigative grand jury in Brunswick County.

Willis, 32, of Shalotte, was sentenced by Judge Napoleon Barefoot Sr. late Tuesday afternoon in Columbus County Superior Court.

Willis, who pleaded guilty last month to one count of conspiracy to traffic in more than 400 grams of cocaine, received the statutory minimum sentence and must serve at least 14 years without benefit of parole, said Special Assistant District Attorney William Wolak.

William R. Shell, Willis' attorney, immediately gave notice that the sentence would be appealed to the N.C. Court of Appeals.

"I felt the court's decision was obviously erroneous," Shell said after the hearing, in reference to the judge's determination that Willis had not provided the state with "substantial assistance" to justify a lighter sentence.

In his closing remarks, Shell asked that Barefoot "impose a reasonable sentence" and suggested a 12-year sentence on a "Class D" felony conviction.

Shell pointed out that Willis was the first witness to testify before the

special investigative grand jury on Feb. 9, and that Willis had provided information about "quite a number of people" who were later also indicted on drug charges or are currently being investigated.

Shell said Willis gave investigators information on suspects Jack Truesdale and Donna Truesdale, both of Florida; James Cromartie of Maryland; Tucker Culley of Shalotte; Fotios Kamsiklis of Greenville and Tholiotis—all of whom were indicted by the special investigative grand jury in June.

But during the two-day hearing, the prosecution maintained that Willis had not "fully and truthfully cooperated" with the state.

In his closing argument, Wolak said Willis' assistance "must be measured by the terms" of Willis' plea agreement, in which he "agreed to fully and truthfully cooperate with the state."

"We say the defendant has not substantially cooperated," Wolak said.

After the hearing, Wolak said he felt that "the court rendered a very proper judgment."

Willis In Custody

Shortly after sentencing, Willis was taken into custody by Brunswick County Sheriff John C. Davis and was transported to the Brunswick County Jail.

Davis said late Tuesday that Willis

would be moved to Central Prison in Raleigh no sooner than Thursday (Dec. 10), pending the outcome of an appeal bond hearing, which Davis said he expected would also be held this week.

"I wanted to give his family a chance to visit with him tomorrow," Davis said Tuesday.

Willis had entered his guilty plea on the single conspiracy count Nov. 2 in Brunswick County Superior Court, as part of a plea bargaining agreement dated Dec. 18, 1986, according to testimony this week.

The plea agreement was made almost six months before Willis was indicted by the special investigative grand jury on 12 counts each of conspiracy to traffic and trafficking by possession of more than 400 grams of cocaine.

His sentencing hearing was continued from the Nov. 16 term of Brunswick County Superior Court and was scheduled for the 13th District's next session of Superior Court, which began Monday in Whiteville.

Both Shell and Wolak described the sentencing hearing as "unusual."

"This was the longest sentencing hearing I've ever been involved with in a drug case," Wolak said. "From that standpoint—the length—it is very unusual, although it was very detailed."

Much of the testimony in the two-

day hearing came from the SBI agent who handled Willis' case and from Willis himself.

During lengthy testimony Monday, the agent said Willis did not give investigators "a true and accurate account" of his drug dealings with various suspects.

Willis testified on his own behalf much of Tuesday afternoon and outlined his cooperation with the state, saying he provided full and truthful cooperation, although it was "not all done at one time."

Also, he testified concerning the disposal of his assets, including the \$1.5 million dollar Resort Plaza shopping center in Shalotte, which was seized by U.S. Marshals in September.

The government maintains that the shopping center was used to facilitate drug trafficking.

Willis said he deeded his interest in the property to his mother, Elizabeth Willis, after the SBI agent told him how much prison time he faced, if convicted.

The civil suit involving seizure of the shopping center is pending in U.S. Federal Court, and is being handled separately from Willis' criminal case.

On Tuesday afternoon, 15 Shalotte area residents appeared in court as character witnesses for Willis.

(See THOLIOTIS, Page 2-A)

Lewellyn Declines Second Calabash Term

Despite a recent victory in the general election, Pati Lewellyn will not serve a second consecutive term on the Calabash Town Council.

Citing business and personal reasons, she stepped down from her post effective Monday.

In a letter to Mayor Doug Simmons, Lewellyn said it was impossible for her to "devote the time that will be necessary for this council to continue the programs initiated over the past two years."

According to Brunswick County Elections Supervisor Lynda Britt, the choice of a replacement is up to the town council.

Lewellyn was re-elected with 34 write-in votes on Nov. 3 after being elected to her first term in 1985. Of the five council seat winners, she was the lowest vote-getter.

Three former council members, Suzy Moore, Lin-

da Roberts and Robert Weber, received fewer votes and were not re-elected.

Incoming council member Landis High said, "My personal view is that I hate to see Pati go. She has done a lot of good for this town, and she also has a lot of valuable experience as a council member. It's going to be a loss to the town."

Councilwoman Lewellyn also said in the letter that she will remain "very much concerned" about matters facing Calabash and will "look forward to continued progress with the new town council." She had no further comment.

Mayor Doug Simmons was out of town Monday and Tuesday and could not be reached for comment.

During Lewellyn's tenure on the council, it worked to obtain a town water system and made plans to assess residents the cost of the system.

A majority of those elected to the board in November have said they oppose the water system assessments and think the town should study the issue of a water system some more.



Sunset Beach To Challenge Withdrawal Of '12th Street'

BY DOUG RUTTER

Sunset Beach Council has decided to fight one of its own members and four local property owners over rights to an area the town had hoped to use for public beach access.

During Monday's meeting, council decided to legally challenge the recent withdrawal of 12th Street from dedication to the town.

The four properties surrounding the street were developed by council member Ed Gore. He said he requested the withdrawal "in following the wishes of the property owners affected."

At the November meeting, Gore informed council members that the town would be unable to accept at least part of a public beach access matching grant from the N.C. Department of Natural Resources and Community Development because of the land's status.

The grant would have supplied the town with partial funds to establish parking spaces and dune crossovers at 12th and 40th streets.

According to Town Attorney Mike Isenberg, the town has 15 years from the time the property is platted in which to open and use the street. If it is not opened within the time limit, the developer has the option to withdraw it from town dedication.

He said that while the property and street were originally platted in 1958, additional plats were completed in 1970 and 1975.

Isenberg said that although the original 15 years had already passed, the courts may view the replatting as a rededication of the street to the town.

"If the town wants to challenge the withdrawal," he explained, "that would probably be the best basis of challenging it."

He recommended that council meet in executive session in the near future to decide how it wants to proceed

with the challenge.

Council member Minnie Hunt called Gore's actions "horrifying."

"I find it terribly ironic, Mr. Gore, that you were the one who made the original motion to apply for these grants," she said.

Councilman Mary Griffith asked Gore, "Don't you think it would have been proper to have made your intentions known to the town?"

Gore replied that he had never been opposed to the beach access grants, but that he was against creating a public parking facility in an area set aside for residences.

According to John Youngblood, one of the "12th Street" property owners present at the meeting, the town's attempt to use the street as a public parking area was "discriminatory."

He added that the property owners were instructed by their lawyer, Tim Sellers, not to say anything about the withdrawn street before it could be well-documented that the town had never used it.

Youngblood said it was withdrawn on Oct. 14 and that pictures were taken as proof that the strip had never been used as a road.

He also said the fact that the street would have been used for seven parking spaces was "a token gesture at best."

It would not have helped the problem of limited parking at all, he said, and it just would have created problems for the landowners.

Isenberg added that despite beach access signs in the area, the street would have to be opened by the town and used by the public for it to become a permanent town roadway.

Youngblood concluded, "We will follow this thing through to the limit. If we have it our way, it will stay as it is forever."



STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

SUNSET BEACH plans to put up a legal fight for this sandy ditch, which was 12th Street before it was withdrawn from town dedication a few months ago.

The town had planned to use the street as a public parking area to improve its beach access.