



WATER SYSTEM DIRECTOR KENNETH HEWETT (right) accepts a check Friday from Brunswick Shores resident Chester Parrish for the first tap-on in Special

Assessment District 2. Also pictured are SAD 2 residents Guinn Hutchinson, Vernon Edney, Jim Ward, Marvin Stanley, Lawrence Scott and Virginia Scott.

Varnum Would Be First Mayor Of Proposed Varnamtown

BY DOUG RUTTER

Varnamtown residents this week unanimously approved a charter and elected officials who will lead the community if it is incorporated later this year.

About 60 residents of the small fishing community gathered Tuesday evening at Gospel Center Baptist Church to take the next step toward incorporation of their area later this year.

Those present elected a mayor and board of aldermen who will serve the town from the time of its incorporation until the general election in November 1989.

Rev. Tracie Varnum was elected to the mayor's seat while Ennis Swain, Roger Robinson, Marion Davis, John Dawson and Ada McDonald were elected to the board of aldermen by secret ballot. Swain, chairman of the incorporation committee, received the highest number of votes of the aldermen and will serve as mayor pro tem.

Rev. Varnum was one of three persons nominated for the mayor's seat, while a total of 11 persons were nominated for aldermen.

The nomination and election of town officials followed approval of the proposed town charter, which was developed by the incorporation committee after it had examined the charters of other local municipalities.

Key items included in the proposed charter are the name of the town, its boundaries, the structure of the governing board and the system of town elections.

The charter and names of elected officials will be forwarded to State Rep. E. David Redwine, who plans to take the request for incorporation to the General Assembly next month. Before the community can become a town, however, Redwine said he will require a referendum of voters in the area to be incorporated.

Swain stressed Tuesday night that approval of the proposed charter and election of officers is not the last step in incorporation.

Referring to a community meeting held March 21, he said, "(Redwine) assured us that night that it would

come back for your approval."

Alderman-elect Davis, who also serves on the incorporation committee, said he had been informed by the local representative that a referendum on incorporation would probably be held later this year, before the November election.

According to the charter, the boundaries approved at a previous community meeting will serve as boundaries for the Town of Varnamtown.

The southern border of town will run along the northern property line of the newly-developed golf course community Lockwood Folly. On the east, the town will border the Lockwood Folly River.

The western border will primarily run along Stone Chimney Road (S.R. 1119) from the Stanbury Creek bridge south to the intersection with Sabbath Home Road (S.R. 1129). The proposed town limits will also include about 16 lots west of Stone Chimney Road and south of Sabbath Home Road.

On the north, the town boundary will run along northern lot lines of properties located north of Varnamtown Road.

The charter also calls for the five aldermen to be elected to terms of four years each, while the non-voting mayor will be elected to a two-year term.

All seats will be up for election next November. At that time, the two aldermen receiving the highest number of votes will serve four-year terms while the other three aldermen will serve for two years.

In 1991, three aldermen seats will then be up for election and the winners of those seats will serve for four years. Under this system, aldermen seats will be staggered and the entire board will not be up for election every four years.

Like other local towns, elections will be non-partisan and held on a plurality basis with the highest vote-getters earning seats. The mayor and aldermen will also be elected at large.

The charter requires anyone seeking election to file with the town clerk at least 45 days before the next election and pay a \$5 fee which will be put

into the general fund of the town and used to finance elections.

According to the charter, town taxes will not exceed 10 cents per \$100 of property valuation. James Callan, the only member of the incorporation committee not elected to the board of aldermen, said the approximate property valuation of the area to be incorporated is \$8,229,800.

"This is a safety precaution so it can't be blown out without us voting on it," said Callan.

An amendment of the charter proposed by the incorporation committee will allow town board members and the mayor to collect a small salary provided it is approved by at least 60 percent of the town's eligible voters present at a town meeting. The board must give residents 30 days notice before holding a vote concerning the salary of town officials.

Prior to this week's election of town officers, alderman-elect Davis urged residents to nominate and vote for those people who will lead the town responsibly and are willing to work.

"The people that you elect to your council tonight are going to control the destiny of Varnamtown," he said.

Following his election as mayor, Rev. Varnum offered a brief victory speech to his supporters, saying, "This is the first election I ever won. Thank you and God bless you all."

Shallotte Police Chief Resigns

BY DOUG RUTTER

Shallotte Mayor Jerry Jones said the town board of aldermen will take its time to select a qualified replacement following last week's resignation of Police Chief Don Stovall.

In his letter of resignation, accepted by the town board at last Wednesday's meeting, Stovall cited personal reasons for leaving the department effective May 18.

Jones said the police chief informed him of his intentions to resign last Wednesday afternoon, just hours before the meeting. He said Stovall had given him no indication before that time that he was considering leaving the department.

Both Jones and Stovall said the resignation was unrelated to an apparent personnel problem within the department.

However, Stovall's resignation followed three consecutive meetings during which the board met in executive session to discuss a personnel problem within the police department.

On March 16, the board met behind closed doors for more than two hours before authorizing its personnel committee, consisting of David Gause and Sarah Tripp, to work with Stovall to resolve an unspecified problem within the department.

(See SHALLOTTE, Page 2-A)



Stovall

County Ready For 'Deluge' Of Water Customers In SAD

BY RAHN ADAMS

Chester Parrish of Brunswick Shores is on a first-name basis with the Brunswick County Water System's office staff now, ever since he started calling them at least once a week to find out when he could tap on to new water lines in the county's first special assessment district.

But this week he didn't have to call. On Friday morning, Parrish and at least 11 of his neighbors were the first property owners to sign up as water customers in SAD 2. The district, which is located between Brick Landing Plantation and Bent Tree Plantation, also consists of Shangrila, Long Acres and Stanley Campground.

"We're real glad at finally being able to get some decent water to drink and not have to haul our drinking water," Parrish said after paying his tap-on fee at the water system office in Bolivia.

He said residents in his neighborhood have hauled water from the county pumping station on N.C. 179 for the past two years, just to have good, clean water to drink and use for other household purposes. Before that, they drove to Shallotte to pick up water, he said.

"It's the greatest thing that's happened in that area," added Guinn Hutchinson, president of the Shangrila Property Owners' Association. "It's been needed for some time."

Water System Director Kenneth Hewett said Friday that the first water taps in SAD 2 will be done in about two weeks, depending on his two tapping crews' work loads. Ordinarily, the water system adds from 25 to 50 new customers each month.

At least 75 new customers are expected "right quick" due to completion of SAD 2, Hewett said. He noted that the district currently contains 189 potential customers.

John Harvey, who serves as the Brunswick County Utility Operations Board's administrative staff, was

almost as elated as the new water customers in SAD 2 last week.

"I am besieged daily—and so is the water department—by people saying, 'Please, when can I get on (the water system),'" Harvey said. "It is with relief and pride that we're in a position to take customers with some of this work."

Since January 1987, Harvey has helped guide the eight-member utility board through the sometimes complicated special assessment district process. Some 100 SADs were identified by the county in a February 1986 study. Of that number, six are in various stages of completion—whether under actual construction, under contract or on the drawing board. The UOB will soon begin preliminary work on eight more districts.

The process itself involves public hearings to determine if property owners want county water. If so, plans and specifications are developed, contracts are awarded and construction is done. Finally, county commissioners—with more public input—use the total cost of the project to determine property owners' assessments.

Initial estimates were that property owners in SAD 2 could expect assessments of \$4.50 to \$6 per frontage foot. However, final construction costs are expected to exceed the original contract price of more than \$192,000. Harvey said Friday he could not estimate the assessment rate due to anticipated changes in the contract price.

Harvey and Hewett said that refin-

(See WATER, Page 2-A)

FORSTNER FILES FOR RUNOFF

Recount Ends Possibility Of Baxley-Godwin Runoff

BY SUSAN USHER

Correction during the official canvass last Thursday of an 80-vote reporting error during the May 3 primary ruled out a runoff between District 1 school board candidate Cary Godwin of Ash and incumbent Doug Baxley of Tarheel Acres.



Godwin

That leaves just one second primary scheduled on May 31 by the Brunswick County Board of Elections. Last Thursday Brunswick County Board of Education Chairman James Forstner formally filed for a runoff for the District 3 seat with retired educator Jonathan Hankins of Southport.

The winner of that run-off will face Republican Bob Slockett in November.

Unofficial returns of last Tuesday's primary, showed Godwin, a Democrat, with 1,431 votes, to Baxley's 2,781. A third candidate, C.C. Russ, had 1,410. That gave Baxley just under 50 percent of the vote—a plurality, but not a majority, and gave Godwin the right to call for a run-off on May 31.

However, the canvass Thursday morning uncovered a mistake in Ash precinct, where Board of Elections Supervisor Lynda Britt said Godwin was first reported as having 87 votes when in fact he had seven votes.

Britt said the error occurred in reading the print-out from the voting machine at Ash, with a slashed zero misread as an eight. Inexperience may have been the cause, she added, since four of five workers at the

precinct were new.

The 80-vote reduction in Godwin's total changed the odds, giving Baxley a clear majority. In the November general election, Baxley will be running against Republican Diane Grissett for the District 1 seat. She is a 28-year-old housewife from Grissett-town.

Up until learning the results of the official recount this weekend, Godwin had been debating his options and was leaning toward not calling for a run-off, he said, in the interest of maintaining party unity.

"I had been talking with the party chairman and other party supporters and probably what I would have done is not call for a run-off," he said. "They felt it would work in the best interest of the party not to call one."

However, Godwin said he was "upset" at having not been formally notified of the canvass results by the

Brunswick County Board of Elections. In future, he suggested, regardless of whether the results affect the outcome of their particular race, all candidates should be notified of the official counts "for the record's sake."

While Baxley knew of the canvass results last Thursday night, Godwin said a friend told him the results at church Sunday. Neither had been notified by the elections board.

While his campaign in this election has ended, Godwin said he would consider running for office again in the future. "There's a possibility, hopefully," he added.

No other count changes affected candidate's status. However, correction of an adding error showed Democratic Clerk of Court candidate Diana Morgan with 3,611 votes rather than 3,341.

Chappell To Seek Changes In County's Foreclosure Process

BY RAHN ADAMS

After a 90-minute discussion of how Brunswick County is attempting to collect delinquent property taxes, Commissioner Chris Chappell last week said he intends to request changes in the county's handling of tax foreclosures.

Although he did not specify the suggestions he intends to make later this year, Chappell said he feels the county's current foreclosure process is "wrong" and should be handled by the county's legal staff rather than by an outside attorney.

The commissioner said he "will be

making recommendations in November," at the expiration of a contract with the county's current foreclosure attorney, Thomas Heller of Yaupon Beach, who has handled county tax foreclosures since 1984.

County tax officials estimated that the foreclosure attorney has collected about \$500,000 in revenue for the county since 1984 and has received about \$100,000 for his services.

Chappell's announcement came last Thursday night after commissioners met in Bolivia with Tax Administrator Boyd Williamson and Tax Collector Nancy Moore, in a con-

tinuation of the board's regular May 2 meeting. Frankie Rabon was the only commissioner absent from last Thursday's session.

Back Taxes Billed Noting that he has received "numerous calls" about property tax discoveries, some of them dating back 10 years, Chappell asked Williamson and Ms. Moore to outline a recent change in their department's method of collecting delinquent taxes.

Williamson explained that approximately 12,000 delinquent tax notices were mailed to Brunswick County

property owners in March, after the department's computer was reprogrammed to bill for unpaid taxes since 1978.

According to tax department statistics, the notices represented more than \$2.6 million in delinquent taxes. Of that amount, unpaid taxes for years prior to 1987 accounted for more than \$1.4 million.

"These are taxes we never had been able to collect before," Williamson commented. "This is the first time we've had the capability to do it."

He added that the department's

former computer system listed only current taxes, and that property owners had to ask clerks to manually search tax files to find unpaid tax bills from previous years.

This year Brunswick County collected almost \$532,000 in taxes through April, which was a \$222,000 increase from the same period last year. Williamson and Ms. Moore attributed the majority of that increase to the 10-year billing.

The tax officials pointed out that in September county commissioners will be asked to "write off" more than \$88,000 in unpaid taxes from

1978. State law requires that property tax records be maintained for 10 years.

Problems Noted

Williamson and Ms. Moore also emphasized that tax foreclosures are not being done for years prior to 1981, mainly due to record-keeping problems in 1978 and 1979.

The county's eight-year property revaluation in 1978 caused tax bills to be sent out several months late. Some confusion occurred because many property owners actually paid their taxes and were given hand-writ-

(See CHAPPELL, Page 2-A)