

News-Hopping

Resident or visitor, catch the news at Holden Beach, Shallotte, Sunset Beach, Ocean Isle, Calabash, with stories inside this issue.

The Amateur

Led by winner Gary Robinson of Fayetteville, low handicap golfers met the challenge of The Amateur at Brick Landing, Pages 8-B and 9-B.



Hitting The Spot(s)

A mid-season run of spots made for a good weekend of pier fishing. The Fishing Report's on Page 12-C.

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

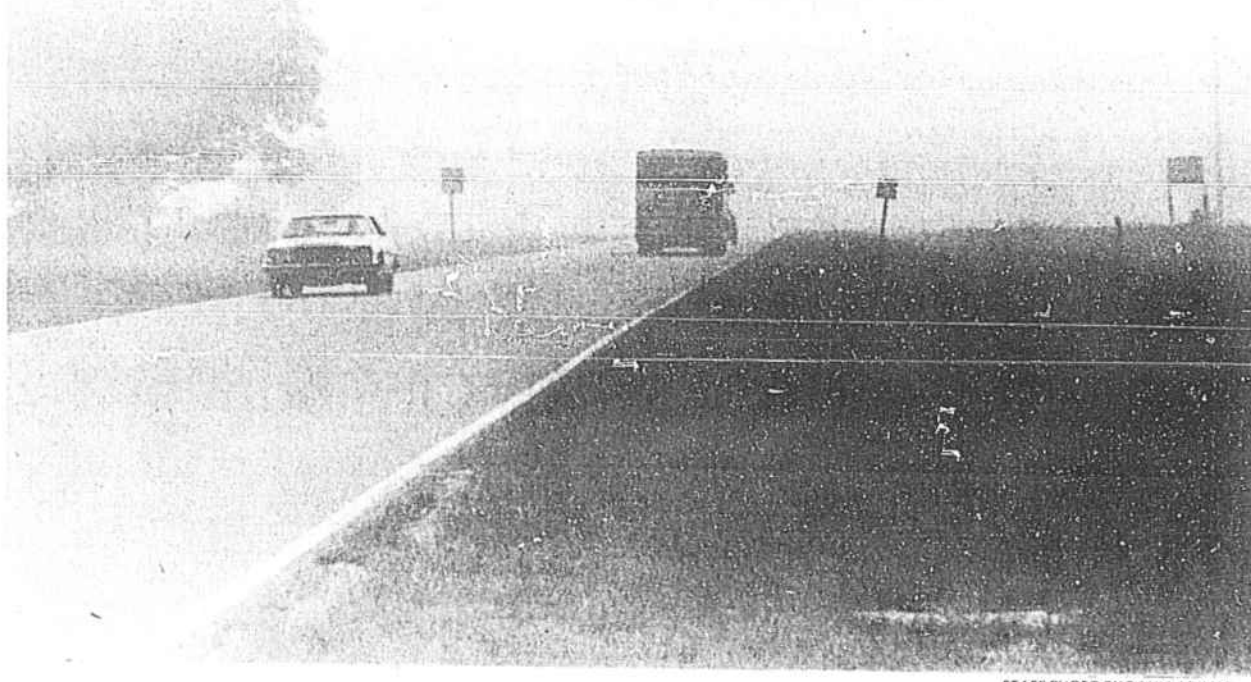
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MOTORISTS TRAVELING U.S. 17 SOUTH last Thursday morning encountered reduced visibility due to smoke on a 1½-mile section of the highway between Shallotte and the Ocean Isle Beach Road intersection.

The smoke, which dissipated before noon last Thursday, resulted from a controlled burn located about four miles northwest of Shallotte.

Northerly Winds Carry Smoke Into Shallotte, Ocean Isle Beach Areas

BY RAHN ADAMS

Lena Ross, co-founder of a local environmental group called Citizens Against Toxic Shenanigans, hopes the smoky haze that covered parts of western Brunswick County last Thursday morning served as a brief reminder of more serious smoke problems experienced here last summer.

"I think the main thing to do is just stay on top of it and be aware," Ms. Ross said Friday. "It (last Thursday's smoke) is aggravating, but it's not as health-threatening as when it lingers every morning."

Ms. Ross was referring to a situation last July, when a 5,000-foot column of smoke was measured over much of western Brunswick County. A large stable air mass, controlled burning by paper companies and wildfires were blamed for last summer's smoke problem.

According to Brunswick County Forest Ranger Miller Caison, last week's smoke came from a controlled burn by Federal Paper Board Company in the Ludlum Pasture area about four miles northwest of Shallotte. The smoke drifted into the Shallotte and Ocean Isle Beach areas Thursday morning due to a change in wind direction, he explained.

Caison said Federal's 100-acre burn, which was underway on and off for about a month, actually ended July 5. However, "residual" smoke was

generated from the fire which continued to smolder in organic soils.

Also, a section of the burned area rekindled and jumped fire lines on Wednesday, involving another 50 acres of Federal property, Caison added.

"Part of it is controlled burning, and part is what escaped the lines yesterday," Caison said last Thursday, referring to the smoke that drifted south into populated areas.

The ranger emphasized that Federal had a permit to burn and that the company followed N.C. Forest Service smoke management guidelines. "As long as they're following guidelines, they're doing legal burning," Caison said.

Meanwhile, vacationers and residents in the Shallotte and Ocean Isle Beach areas were forced to endure smoky conditions last Thursday morning until the winds shifted before noon and cleared the air.

As late as 9:30 a.m., some motorists on U.S. 17 south of Shallotte continued to burn their headlights due to reduced visibility from the smoke, which covered about a 1½-mile stretch on U.S. 17 between Shallotte and the Ocean Isle Beach Road intersection.

Ms. Ross, who lives east of Shallotte on Holden Beach Road, said smoke was so dense at her house last Thursday morning that she awakened early to close her windows. Despite the situation, she received no

similar complaints from her 25-member organization, she said.

That, however, wasn't the case last Thursday morning at Ocean Isle Beach Town Hall. Secretary Peggy Clemmons said she received about 200 calls about the smoke before noon.

"They all wanted to know when it was going to go away," Ms. Clemmons said. "We just told them to pray for a big wind to blow it away."

Ms. Clemmons noted that most of the calls came from individuals living on the island's east end. She added that some oceanfront residents told her that the smoke was so thick that they couldn't see the ocean. Also, several individuals complained of respiratory problems due to the poor air quality, she said.

John Marshall, administrator of The Brunswick Hospital in Supply, said Friday that his facility did not treat anyone for health problems stemming from last Thursday's smoky conditions.

"I'm surprised it didn't (cause problems)," Marshall said, "because people with respiratory problems generally have a tremendous sensitivity to that... We got lucky."

In February, Brunswick County Commissioners told Ms. Ross that they would consider asking the state to restrict outdoor burning here if smoke becomes as serious a problem as it was last summer.

Clarify Septic Tank Regulations, Health Board Asks Committee

BY RAHN ADAMS

The Brunswick County Board of Health went on record Monday supporting changes in the state's sewage disposal regulations to clarify rules involving lots that contain fill material and others that can be found "provisionally suitable" for septic tanks.

The board unanimously approved a two-page letter from Health Board Chairman William Rabon to State Rep. David Redwine of Ocean Isle Beach, who is co-chairman of a legislative study committee on septic tank permitting. Copies of the letter also were sent to regional and state health officials.

According to Health Director Michael Rhodes, the purpose of the letter is to make the legislative study committee aware of specific concerns of the local health board.

"They (the study committee) haven't had—as far as I know—direct correspondence from a board of health," Rhodes said. He added that he feels the board's input will have positive results.

In the letter, Rabon states that "any changes in the North Carolina Sewage Rules will have a significant effect on Brunswick County," since more lot evaluations for septic tanks are done here than anywhere else in the state.

The health board specifically asks that the regulations address "historical fill" in the section which requires that a lot contain at least 12 inches of original soil above the water table to be approved for a septic tank.

"In many cases, the fill material is over six feet in depth and of a suitable nature for septic systems," the letter states. "These 'historical fill' areas must be addressed in the rules."

The board also requested a clarification of the section which allows the health department to determine lots "provisionally suitable" if engineered solutions with substantiating data are provided.

"This section needs to have more explanation so the local sanitarians, health directors and boards of health can utilize it and still maintain good public health practices," the letter says.

Redwine's study committee is expected to make its recommendations to the General Assembly during next year's session.

Permitting Changed

In another matter at Monday's meeting, the health board approved a measure that, in effect, reduces the length of time that a property owner can hold a permit before installing a septic tank.

Rhodes explained that favorable site evaluations, which are necessary to obtain a septic tank permit, are valid for 36 months. In turn, septic tank permits also are good for 36 months, as mandated by state law.

As a result, a property owner could install a septic tank six years after receiving the initial site evaluation, Rhodes said. The problem is that state septic tank laws may change over that six-year period.

In order to help prevent such problems, the board voted to give an individual septic tank permit the same date as its previous site evaluation, an action which effectively gives the property owner the mandated three years in which to install the septic tank.

Shallotte Appoints Gause Police Chief

Shallotte Aldermen couldn't have surprised too many townspeople last Wednesday when they named Rodney Gause chief of police.

With Mayor Pro Tem Paul Wayne Reeves absent, the board voted unanimously to appoint the Brunswick County native and seven-year police department veteran to the chief's position.

The appointment followed a 45-minute executive session called to discuss personnel. In addition to the selection of a chief, the closed session also resulted in the hiring of two town patrol officers.

Despite the earlier selection of three finalists for the chief's position who were to be interviewed last week, Gause was the only applicant to talk with the board behind closed doors.

Mayor Jerry Jones said the other two finalists, who were selected June 15 from a total of seven applicants, dropped out on their own but gave no specific reasons. "The two of them just called me and told me they weren't coming for the interview."

He said the other finalists currently work with police departments at Matthews and Saint Pauls.

"I don't think we could have done any better," said Alderman Wilton Harrelson after making the motion to appoint Gause. "We're looking forward to his tenure as chief."

Following the vote, the mayor added, "Rodney, we've all looked forward to you handling this job for a long time. We hope you'll stay with us for a long time and continue to do the good job you've done in the past."

According to Jones, Gause will earn a salary of \$20,800 as chief of police. He earned \$17,232 last year as the department's only lieutenant detective.

Gause, 28, succeeds former chief Don Stovall, who resigned effective May 18. Before his appointment last week, Gause had served as acting chief since Stovall's resignation.

Prior to the closed session last week, Shallotte businessman John Fazekas spoke on behalf of Gause and urged board members to appoint him chief.

"Rodney is dedicated to be here, and I feel he's gonna be here 20 years from now," he said. "I really feel we'd be building a fine foundation with him as chief."

Fazekas stressed to the board that he was not second-guessing any of their previous decisions and that he did not know any of the other applicants, but said a lot of people in town felt the same way he did—that Gause would be the best choice.

In other business relating to police department personnel, aldermen voted last week to hire patrol officers Ray Altizer and William Kohler, both of Ocean Isle Beach.

Altizer, a 21-year-old native of West Virginia, said he worked with security companies since high school (See GAUSE, Page 2-A)

Holden Beach Effort To Annex Mainland Clears First Hurdle

BY SUSAN USHER

Efforts by the Town of Holden Beach to annex an area along the mainland causeway to the island cleared a major hurdle this week when the area qualified for annexation under state statutes.

Tom Cassell, a planning consultant with the N.C. Division of Community Assistance, told town commissioners Monday night that the tract easily met most of the criteria: It is adjacent and contiguous to the town; 29.2 percent of its 12,898-foot perimeter (well over the required 12.5 percent) coincides with the town's boundary; no part of the area is included within the boundary of another incorporated municipality and that the area is developed for urban purposes.

Only on the fourth or "use" test, did the tract barely qualify.

"I don't think you could cut it any closer," Cassell said, answering a question about the effect of changing

the size of the area proposed for annexation.

The area easily met the subdivision test with 86.4 percent of the residential and undeveloped acreage subdivided into lots and tracts of five acres or less. However, of the 583 lots and tracts in the proposed area, 363 or 62.1 are "developed" lots and tracts used for residential, commercial, industrial, government or institutional purposes. The minimum for annexation is 60 percent, though a 5 percent margin of error is typically allowed, Cassell said.

The town took its first formal step toward possible annexation more than 1½ years ago when, on Jan. 5, 1987, the board adopted a resolution which identified the causeway as being under consideration for annexation. That resolution remains effective for two years.

Rumors of the town's interest in the area prompted an effort to incor-

porate the causeway as North Holden Beach. Last year a compromise study committee of causeway and island restaurants met over a period of three months to study the area proposed for annexation.

The next steps in the study process, Cassell said, including determining the "financial feasibility" of annexing the area or some smaller portion of it.

This involves preparing maps that include both the town and the area proposed for annexation; working up costs for extending services into the area as well as projected revenues; developing a revenue/expense summary for a five- to 10-year period; and preparation of a financing plan should one be required. The town will have to hire a professional engineer to prepare a plan for extending utilities into the area, such as water service.

(See ANNEXATION, Page 2-A)

Redwine's Bill Paves The Way For Private Road Improvements

BY RAHN ADAMS

The N.C. General Assembly last week ratified a local bill which will help residents in Brunswick County upgrade their private roads even if some of their neighbors don't want to share any of the expense.

The bill, which affects only Brunswick and Avery counties, allows private roads to be brought up to state standards through a process similar to the one currently used to extend water service in specific areas of Brunswick County through special assessment districts.

State Rep. David Redwine sponsored the bill at the request of Brunswick County Commissioners. During the June session, Redwine's bill initially involved only Brunswick but was amended to include Avery.

Also, the bill was rewritten to include all private roads instead of only roads built prior to Oct. 1, 1975, as the original draft stated.

Last May, commissioners sent Redwine a similar private roads bill which was not introduced because it was received late in the General Assembly session.

At a public hearing held by commissioners last October, speakers said they favored being assessed by the county for road improvements, because they could not afford to bring their roads up to state standards without full cooperation from other property owners in their subdivisions.

Under the ratified bill, owners who represent at least 65 percent of the road frontage of the proposed

project and at least 65 percent of the property owners along the road must petition the county for improvements. The project also must be approved by the N.C. Department of Transportation.

After DOT completes a cost analysis of the project, commissioners will hold a public hearing and consider certifying that the project is eligible for local share reimbursement. With the board's approval, the developer or petitioning property owners pay the local share to the county, which in turn forwards the funds to DOT.

Property owners who do not pay their proportionate share of the project up front are assessed for that amount, plus 10 percent to cover the county's administrative expenses.

According to District DOT Engineer Jim Cooke, the local share of improvement projects on roads built after Oct. 1, 1975, is 100 percent. Also, those roads must be paved to be included in the state secondary road system.

Roads built prior to Oct. 1, 1975, can be accepted into the state system whether they meet state standards or not, Cooke said. The roads would be maintained but not necessarily improved.

Cooke said roads that have been on the state system for at least two years can be paved out of DOT's priority list through a property owner participation program. The current local share of a POP project is \$8 per foot, while the state's share is \$12 per foot.