

Grissett Elected County GOP Chairman

BY DOUG RUTTER

Malcolm Grissett of Grissettown took control of the Brunswick County Republican Party Saturday during a convention which officers said drew the largest turnout in local party history.

An enthusiastic and sometimes boisterous crowd of precinct delegates packed the public assembly building in Bolivia to elect new leaders for the next two years, appoint township chairmen and adopt resolutions regarding various county issues.

Grissett, who replaces John Dozier of Boiling Spring Lakes as party chairman, defeated Shirley Babson of Bolivia, the only other nominee for the post, in a polling of delegates by a margin of 154 to 46.

Other party officers elected were Nancy Conn of Long Beach, vice chairman; Sadie Shaw of Leland, secretary; and Jamie Milliken of Shallotte, treasurer. They were the only nominees for their positions, and all of the new officers, including

Grissett, were nominated by C.B. "Cash" Caroon of Southport.

The election of party chairman created some controversy as party officials had trouble settling a question of parliamentary procedure. A motion from the floor to close nominations without allowing Babson supporters to nominate their candidate was protested and later withdrawn after a lengthy debate.

Grissett, outside plant manager with Atlantic Telephone Membership Corporation in Shallotte, said his goals as party chairman are to continue building a two-party system in Brunswick County and to establish a permanent home for the GOP.

In addition to a long history as a strong party worker, he currently serves on the board of the Governor Morehead School by appointment of the governor and the Brunswick County Board of Social Services.

In his keynote address, Alan Pugh, special assistant to Gov. James Martin, stressed that the Republican Party is the party of reform, responsibility and the right.

Pugh referred to Dozier as "the finest Republican Party county chairman in the state."

Dozier, who received a standing ovation and was quite emotional Saturday, served six years as county chairman. He urged continued party unity through harmony, agreement, peace and friendship before handing over the gavel to Grissett.

Prior to introducing the guest speaker, Tommy Harrelson of Southport, deputy secretary with the state Department of Transportation, predicted that within a few years there would be no more Democrats elected to office in Brunswick County.

Resolutions Adopted

County Republicans adopted a dozen resolutions Saturday, with only two drawing debate. All but one of the resolutions was drafted by the party resolution committee.

Janet Pope, wife of previous Board of Education nominee Tom Pope, introduced a resolution stating that the

Republican Party supports an "attitude of excellence" in Brunswick County schools and is no longer willing to accept an "attitude of mediocrity."

Despite the objections of Republican school board member Robert Slockett, the resolution passed by a margin of 66 to 12. Prior to the vote Slockett argued, "I don't think there's a general attitude of mediocrity."

The GOP also adopted a resolution stating, "It is of utmost importance that there be an immediate increase in management efficiency and productivity in the supervision of our county workforce in the maintenance and enforcement of rules and regulations within Brunswick County."

As proposed, the resolution called for specific concentration in the areas of health, welfare and recreation. William Rabon of Southport and Jerry Lewis of Shallotte both objected to the proposal because it targeted specific departments, and

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STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

MALCOLM GRISSETT of Grissettown, left, speaks with Bolivia resident R.H. Maultsby following the Brunswick County Republican Party convention Saturday. Grissett was elected to a two-year term as county party chairman.

Two Resign From Calabash Town Council

BY DOUG RUTTER

Calabash Town Council accepted the resignations of two of its members Tuesday night, with one expected and the other coming as a complete surprise.

The board accepted letters of resignation from Ronnie Pittman and Sonia Stevens. Pittman was elected to the board for the first time in November 1987, while Stevens had served several terms on the town council and is a former mayor.

Although council members had been expecting the resignation of Pittman for some time, Stevens' resignation left board members in shock.

In her letter, she said she hopes the town continues to grow and prosper in an orderly manner.

"I have enjoyed the opportunity to serve on the Calabash Board as a council member and as a former mayor, but I feel that it is time for someone else to replace me," she wrote.

The former councilwoman's husband, David Stevens, answered the telephone Tuesday night and said his wife had no comment.

Mayor Doug Simmons said he received Pittman's letter last week but had not opened it until the meeting Tuesday.

In the brief, handwritten letter dated Feb. 27, Pittman said he was resigning "because of my own inability to attend and participate in town meetings." He could not be reached for further comment at his home Tuesday afternoon or evening.

Citing excessive absences, the council informally agreed last month to request his resignation. Since taking the oath of office on Dec. 14, 1987, Pittman had missed 17 town meetings and attended nine.

According to town records, he had not attended a meeting since last September and had missed the last eight consecutive sessions.

The number of absences does not include the half dozen or more times since his election that the council has had to cancel a scheduled meeting due to lack of a quorum. In order to conduct town business, at least three of the five council members must be present.

In earlier statements to the Beacon, Pittman said his job as a commercial fisherman occupied too

much of his time to allow him to perform the duties of a town councilman.

Following a public reading of both letters of resignation, Councilman Keith Hardee joked, "I forgot mine."

Although no action was taken this week to fill the vacancies, councilmen mentioned the names of former board members Virgil Coleman and Sam Bierworth as possible replacements and indicated that both would be willing to serve.

Pittman and Stevens bring to three the number of town council members to resign since their election in November 1987. Immediately following her re-election that month, Pati Lewellyn resigned. She was later replaced by John High.

Settlement Expected In Shopping Center Seizure

BY RAHN ADAMS

Parties involved in a federal civil lawsuit over seizure of a \$1.5 million Shallotte shopping center are discussing an out-of-court settlement, according to a federal official.

The trial involving the September 1987 drug-related seizure of Resort Plaza shopping center was scheduled to begin Monday (March 13) in Wilmington federal district court before Judge James C. Fox. However, Assistant U.S. Attorney Steve West indicated Monday that the trial was continued due to settlement negotiations.

West would not comment further on the settlement talks between his office and Wilmington attorney Jay Corpening, who represents the family of the shopping center's former owner, Alvin Bryan Willis III. Corpening was in court Tuesday afternoon and could not be reached for comment.

West noted that any out-of-court settlement reached by the parties would have to be approved by Judge Fox before being final. A spokesperson in the federal Clerk of Court's office told the Beacon that an official

settlement had not been filed as of Tuesday afternoon.

Resort Plaza, located on U.S. 17 South in Shallotte, was seized by federal marshals on Sept. 3, 1987, about three months after Willis was indicted by a Brunswick County investigative grand jury on cocaine trafficking charges. At the time, officials said the two-year-old shopping center was one of the largest commercial properties ever seized by the government in eastern North Carolina.

Willis pleaded guilty in December 1987 to conspiracy to traffic in cocaine and was sentenced to a \$250,000 fine and a 35-year prison term.

The suit that authorized the seizure maintains that Willis used the property to facilitate drug trafficking by storing cocaine, holding drug transactions, and by making drug-related telephone calls there.

None of Resort Plaza's 23 businesses at the time of the seizure were implicated in the case. Since then, the property has been managed by professional management companies contracted by the U.S. Mar-

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Developers Blast County Zoning In Opening Forum

BY RAHN ADAMS

Saying "economically motivated" development has worked well enough in Brunswick County, local developers last week denounced countywide zoning in the first of nine forums that are underway to gauge public sentiment on whether or not zoning is wanted here.

About 40 citizens—including several of the South Brunswick Islands' leading developers—attended last Thursday night's 1½-hour forum at Sea Trail Clubhouse near Sunset Beach. County officials pre-

sent included Commissioners Kelly Holden and Gene Pinkerton, Planning Board Chairman Ed Gore, Planning Director John Harvey and Planner Thomas Birmingham.

Only five individuals other than officials and reporters attended the second meeting in the series Friday night at Town Creek Community Building. Officials at the hour-long meeting included Holden, Pinkerton, Commissioner Benny Ludlum and Harvey. At that session, residents mainly asked questions about zoning and how it would affect their neighborhoods.

Only one person, David Mintz of Leland, took a strong position either for or against zoning.

The idea to put the zoning issue

before the public originated at a commissioners' meeting in early February, when Holden said work on an ordinance—in conjunction with a public education program—should begin as soon as possible. Other commissioners, however, felt citizens should have input on the subject even before a proposed ordinance is drafted.

Positions Voiced

Although most of the 12 speakers at last Thursday's forum supported zoning, developers Odell Williamson and Mason Anderson and real estate agent Harry Rickenbacker were adamant in their opposition.

"This zoning thing you're proposing to me looks like another

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More Forums On Schedule

Zoning forums scheduled by the Brunswick County Planning board during the coming week will be held as follows:

- Thursday, March 16, at Shallotte Town Hall;
- Friday, March 17 at Leland Community Building; and
- Wednesday, March 22, at Lockwood Folly Community Building.

Other forums are slated for March 27 at CP&L Nuclear Plant Visitors Center, March 29 at Hood's Creek Community Building, March 30 at Waccamaw Community Building and April 5 at the Public Assembly Building in Bolivia.

All of the meetings begin at 7:30 p.m.

Hewett Named '88 'Officer Of Year'

BY DOUG RUTTER

Dale Hewett of Grissettown has been named Marine Fisheries Officer of the Year for 1988 by the N.C. Wildlife Federation.

The Brunswick County native received his award March 4 at the Governor's Awards Banquet in Raleigh.

Hewett, an enforcement officer with the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries for the past five years, said, "It's a real honor to me. Anytime you're named Officer of the Year, especially in a state department job, that's saying a whole lot."

The annual award was icing on the cake, as Hewett also was chosen as the first enforcement officer ever to be named Officer of the Month by the Division of Marine Fisheries and its quarterly publication "Tar Heel Coast." The honor was for the month of March.

Hewett said he found out about both awards on the same day. "I was hit with two honors instead of one," he said. "It hit me all at one time."

One of four Marine Fisheries enforcement officers in Brunswick County, Hewett is one of 13 officers in the southern district and 47 statewide.

He said he was nominated for the Officer of the Year award by Southeast District Law Enforcement Supervisor Bob Everett, and was then chosen from among four finalists by the N.C. Wildlife Federation, an affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation.

As an enforcement officer, Hewett patrols local estuaries, rivers, waterways and state waters of the



HEWETT

Atlantic Ocean looking for possible violations. He monitors activities such as shellfishing, netting and shrimping during the different seasons.

"There's never a dull moment," he said of his job. "There something in season all the time."

Hewett noted that he also deals frequently with officers of area beach towns because municipal and Marine Fisheries jurisdictions often overlap.

"It's good to work for an organization like Marine Fisheries and still be in my home area," he said, noting that the division no longer allows newly-hired officers to work in their home district because of possible conflicts of interest. "The main thing is that I enjoy it."

Hewett, a 1967 graduate of Waccamaw High School, served two years as a deputy with the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department prior to becoming a Marine Fisheries officer in 1984.

Hewett said his experience with the sheriff's department assured him that law enforcement was his niche. "It prepared me for what I'm in now, and I want to give credit where credit is due," he said.

Following high school, Hewett also served two years in the U.S. Navy, worked nine years at Du Pont's Cape Fear Plant in Leland and spent two years farming before entering the field of law enforcement.

Outside of work, Hewett is a member of the N.C. Law Enforcement Officers Association, the First Responders Group for Ocean Isle Beach and the State Employees Association.

A husband and the father of two children, Hewett is active as a little league baseball coach and is president of the Big Neck Community Hunting Club.

County, State Leaders Discuss River Pollution Findings Today

A Brunswick County delegation was to meet with state environmental officials Wednesday, March 15, to discuss the results of a Lockwood Folly River watershed study aimed at identifying pollution sources.

The study was begun following a public meeting at Bolivia last October 26. At that time, state officials pledged to return with data and a plan of action for addressing the river's increasing problem with pollution.

Research undertaken includes a septic tank survey along Lockwood Folly River, research of drainage activity in the Green Swamp area and possibly chemical tests of the river and areas draining into it.

Initial findings of the septic tank survey conducted by the N.C. Division of Health Services did not indicate failing septic tanks were a cause of the pollution that kept portions of the river closed to

shellfishing on and off throughout the 1988-89 season.

Lockwood Folly River has traditionally provided Brunswick County's richest shellfishing beds, accounting for 40 percent of all shellfish harvest here.

From Genoe's Point to its mouth, the Lockwood Folly River has also been nominated for designation as an Outstanding Resource Water by the state. This status would give it special protection.

Among the delegation slated to attend Wednesday's meeting were Annie Smigiel, president of Save Our Shellfish, a local organization aimed at preserving the river and its resources; Marlene Varnum and her husband, Carson, who is on the Marine Fisheries Commission; and retired attorney Wallace Smith of the Holden Beach area.

Mrs. Smigiel said the group will be joined by John F. Holden of Holden Beach. They've asked him to explain

to state officials a proposal he recently shared with SOS members.

Holden outlined a plan that calls for dredging open a channel between Sheep Island and Long Beach to restore flushing action in what was once the primary outlet from the river to the ocean.

Over the past 15 or 20 years the channel west of Sheep Island has been widened and the eastern channel and the area below the island allowed to fill. Holden said he thinks this blocks the natural flow of water from the river and forces water to return up the river before it has had a chance to circulate with ocean water.

Also expected to attend the meeting are Brunswick County Commissioners Gene Pinkerton and Kelly Holden, and possibly other local Republican leaders.

"We hope they're going to let us know what they've come up with. I'm hoping we'll get some results," Mrs. Smigiel said Tuesday.