

## COUNTY ABC BOARD NAMED

## Brunswick Plans To Purchase \$1.1 Million Training Center

BY RAHN ADAMS

For the first time in the board's history, Brunswick County Commissioners Monday considered a "consent agenda"—a list of relatively routine business matters that were approved with a single vote near the outset of the panel's regular agenda.

But the major decisions of the night had to do with an agenda of another sort: a secret—or at least unpublicized—agenda that apparently surprised two commissioners, as well as the public and press on hand for Monday's two-hour meeting in Bolivia. All five commissioners were present.

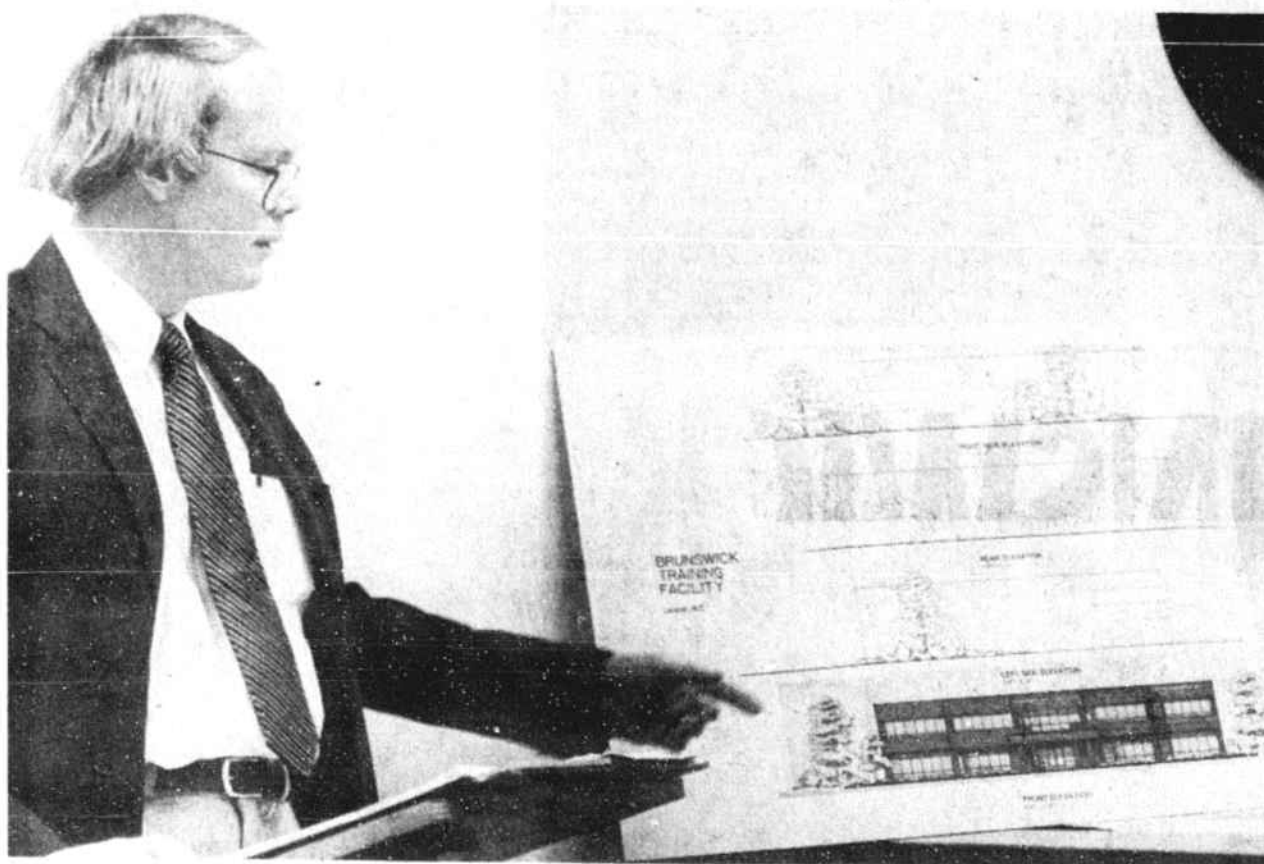
The board decided to negotiate for the purchase of a \$1.1 million training facility that will be built this year in Leland Industrial Park, and to hire a new county manager (see related story). The commissioners were split on both matters, as Commissioners Kelly Holden and Benny Ludlum made unsuccessful attempts to delay the votes.

Following a 25-minute executive session in which the county manager's post was discussed, the board also appointed three members to the newly-created Brunswick County Alcoholic Beverage Control Board and voted to pay the appointees \$100 per month.

The ABC Board members are Chairman Wilbur Rabon of Winnebaw, appointed to a three-year term; John Ramsey of Southport, two-year term; and Raymond Babson of Shallotte Point, one-year term. The three were appointed on a unanimous vote.

Rabon, older brother of Commissioner Frankie Rabon, is a former county commissioner and school board member. Ramsey is a Southport businessman and former Republican candidate for clerk of court. Babson is a former school board member.

None of those major issues—the building purchase, county manager hiring and ABC Board appointments—appeared on either of the commissioners' previously-publicized agendas Monday. All three subjects were brought up unannounced near the close of the meeting, after all agenda items were disposed.



RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR Michael de Sherbinin shows commissioners the design of an industrial training center to be built this year at Leland Industrial Park.

## County Wants Building

Actually, Pinkerton's motion to begin negotiations to buy the training facility was unanimous, but only after Holden's proposed amendment to table the vote for two weeks was defeated 3-2. Holden and Ludlum said they supported the training center project, even though both indicated that they felt the board should take more time to review the matter due to the building's estimated expense.

The votes followed a presentation by Brunswick County Resources Development Director Michael de Sherbinin and additional comments by Brunswick Community College President Mike Reaves and BCC Board of Trustees Chairman David Kelly.

When the facility opens in August, the 20,000-square-foot, two-story training center will be leased by Brunswick Community College to train workers for Exide Electronics and other industries that may lo-

cate in the Leland area. Exide is scheduled to begin operations in October or November, de Sherbinin said. The manufacturing plant will initially employ 100 workers; its work force is expected to rise to 283 within three years and 500 within five years, he added.

Establishment of a training center was part of an incentives package that the county and industrial park developer Landmark Organization Inc. of Wilmington used last year to lure Exide to Leland Industrial Park. The county also appropriated \$300,000 to purchase the plant site and donate it to Exide. The initial plan involving the building, however, was for the facility to be constructed and owned by Landmark, then leased to the college.

After Monday's meeting, de Sherbinin and Reaves explained that county ownership of the training center wasn't part of that initial plan, until county officials recently

realized that the county could eventually recapture the cost of the facility through lease payments and funds from the N.C. Department of Community Colleges' New and Expanding Industries Program. Reaves told commissioners that the Department of Community Colleges already has agreed to provide \$40,000 in annual funding while BCC leases the facility.

According to Pinkerton's motion, the \$1.1 million would come from the county unappropriated fund balance. He added that the \$1.1 million would be returned to the fund balance after "proper financing" is arranged.

Ludlum objected to voting on the matter Monday because he said he did not receive information on the proposal that was prepared by de Sherbinin and mailed to commissioners Jan. 30. "From now on, whenever we're involved in a million-dollar, let's run that through the county manager and get

it in the (regular meeting) packet," Ludlum said. Pinkerton responded, "Undoubtedly everybody got it but you."

## Appointments Made

In addition to the ABC Board appointments, commissioners Monday reappointed members to four other county and regional boards, including the Nursing Home Advisory Board, Southeastern Mental Health Board, Utility Operations Board and Southeastern Economic Development Commission.

Reappointed members included the following: Nursing Home Advisory Board—Virginia Bellamy, Rebecca Chapman, Carrie Haggins, Perita Pricas and Mary Strickland; Southeastern Mental Health Board—J.R. Frink and James O. Gray; UOB—Ernest McGee, Burton Myers and Robert Nubel; Southeastern Economic Development Commission—Roscoe Butler and Orie Gore.

The nursing home board vote was unanimous; votes on the other three boards were 4-1, with Holden dissenting. Holden objected to the manner in which Ms. Beasley made motions to reappoint the members rather than open the floor for nominations.

While he didn't vote against Ms. Beasley's motions, Ludlum also chided the board. "If you'll go back and check it, you'll see that we've done these board appointments every different way." He added that the county board was making "a fool of ourselves" through its conduct.

## Other Business

In other action at Monday's meeting, the commissioners:

—As expected, adopted a 911 emergency telephone system ordinance that will result in a monthly 50-cent subscriber surcharge beginning in August.

—Set a public hearing for March 12, at 7 p.m., in the Public Assembly Building on Special Assessment District 10 (Calabash area), whose proposed water line assessment rate is \$5.22 per front foot.

—Agreed to have the county planning department initially review all secondary road petitions before they are forwarded to the N.C. Department of Transportation.

—Approved tax releases and re-funds for December 1989.

—Amended the county's sewage and septic-hauling ordinance to make violations of it to be misdemeanor offenses.

—Adopted a sewer use ordinance for the county sewer system in Leland Industrial Park, with a rate of \$2.50 per 1,000 gallons of wastewater and a tap-on fee equal to materials, parts and labor plus 10-percent.

—Voted to buy a new \$16,995 burglar-alarm system for the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department.

—Accepted a new solid waste container site donated by property owners in the Sunset Harbor area.

—Agreed to give five surplus sheriff's department cars to the Sandy Creek Police Department, Shallotte Police Department and Brunswick Community College.

—Tabled until budget time later this year a proposal to set \$20 per diem payments for citizen members of the Brunswick Interagency Transportation System Board.

—Approved Planning Director John Harvey's recommendations of policy statements to be used in the county's shoreline access plan.

—Appointed Holden and county engineer Robert Tucker to serve on a regional committee that is studying solid waste disposal alternatives for several counties in southeastern North Carolina and northeastern South Carolina.

—Agreed to give Public Utilities Director Jerry Webb authority to waive water bill penalties in "unusual" cases.

—Appointed Ms. Beasley to the Wilmington Urban Area Transportation Planning Advisory Committee.

—Adopted a capital projects ordinances for construction of a new Social Services Building, with \$328,900 to come from the capital reserve account (depleting that account) and \$135,600 to come from the operational reserve fund.

—OK'd county health board recommendations to bring the health department clinic's fee schedule in line with new Medicare fees, and to authorize a \$100 annual public swimming pool inspection fee.

## Dot Worth Is New School Board Chairman

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seated, in December after the November elections.

Board members showed no surprise Monday night when Baxley, after several routine items of business, announced he would tender his resignation and have the superintendent conduct election of a new chairman.

His decision followed an incident Thursday when differences between Slockett and Superintendent John Kaufhold came to a head in a heated confrontation at the board of education office in Southport. The dispute centered around scheduling of an election on Monday's agenda.

However, under either the existing policy or the amended version before the board Monday night, the soonest an election could be held would be December. To do otherwise, Baxley later explained, would have required another policy amendment, with first and second reading and adoption over a two-month period.

Conducting such an election Monday would have meant, said Baxley, "playing fast and loose with the procedural rules of the board" and would have also set a "harmful example" or precedent for future board actions.

And, Baxley told a group of about 30 audience members and the board Monday, "a board or any public body which either ignores or merely winks at its own rules is one step away from chaos in being able to govern itself."

He chose instead to resign, preserving board procedure while eliminating possible accusations that he might be manipulating procedures in order to retain the office. Not the case at all, Baxley noted, saying the job of chairman "is often burdensome and always thankless." He said his decision was intended to "promote harmony" among board members while preserving the sanctity of the board's rules and procedure.

Board member James Clemmons had objected to Monday's election, saying Baxley was most suited to lead the divided board through its current year, to present its budget request to the county and to present the accreditation study report to the Southern Association visitation team in April.

While agreeing on Baxley's capabilities, Slockett said he strongly disagreed with the outgoing chair-

*"I think that laws and rules are made to be bent and twisted..."*

—Robert Slockett  
Board of Education

man's insistence on strictly adhering to rules and policies.

"I think that laws and rules are made to be bent and twisted," continued Slockett, "especially since we're just a board of education and not legislators..."

Slockett said he had asked for election of a chairman and vice chairman to be scheduled on Monday's meeting agenda, subject to approval of the policy change. Kaufhold said he objected to the request on several grounds mainly relating to board procedures. These include a policy that requires board members to take turns placing items on the agenda. Slockett had already placed two items on the agenda and was requesting a third, he said, without waiting to allow other members the opportunity to add concerns of their own to the agenda.

However, after a lengthy exchange, Kaufhold said he finally agreed to check with the board attorney on the appropriateness of Slockett's request. Kaufhold said he then asked Slockett to leave the office so he could get back to work.

Then, Kaufhold told reporters Monday night, "I did tell Mr. Slockett that if he did not leave immediately he would leave me no choice but to call the law."

Slockett left soon after. Slockett said Monday night he preferred not to comment on the incident until the board completes its evaluation of the superintendent on Feb. 15. However, he said he made the agenda request with no expectation there would be such a confrontation.

Hostilities between Slockett and Kaufhold flared up off and on throughout Monday night's meeting, as they have at earlier meetings, especially during discussion of Brunswick County Educational Foundation, which Slockett and Baxter are working to found.

Chairman Worth at one point ruled both Slockett and Kaufhold out of order, and at another point in the meeting chided, "We should act like adults, not like children."

Citing what he viewed as excessive requests for the Brunswick County Educational Foundation,

Kaufhold Monday proposed a policy that would require board members to relay requests for work by staff or requests for information through the superintendent's office; Kaufhold said this would help better distribute staff workloads and help him run the efficient office expected by taxpayers.

Board members defeated the proposal on first reading, leaving Kaufhold asking for direction in how to handle such "interruptions." Chairman Worth and Clemmons told Kaufhold they thought board members had the right to request and receive information as they desired, but agreed board should disrupt staff as little as possible.

Kaufhold said most requests for service in the past several months had come from Baxter and Slockett, and that many of their requests were for work on behalf of the foundation. Baxter said she made requests mostly after 4 p.m. and without disrupting staff. "We'll be gone as soon as we have the money!" she interjected. "Just give us a break!"

The foundation is in the process of raising funds, with plans to announce the winner of a car today (Thursday). However, though Slockett was optimistic the project would do well, as of Monday supporters had not raised enough funds to cover the cost of the vehicle. In any case, Slockett said the project had raised public awareness of the foundation and its goals for the school system.

The superintendent said Monday he has billed the foundation nearly \$200 for work completed earlier, and expects to bill for additional work.

At Monday's meeting, board attorney Glen Peterson advised the board that use of staff time for purposes other than those of the local or state boards of education could be open to question. As much as possible, he said, the board should avoid doing work for organizations outside the school system.

While the foundation has the support of the board of education and has board of education staff as liaison, it is a separate, not-for-profit organization. Monday night, fol-

lowing reports by Slockett and Baxter, Worth recommended that future foundation reports be made by its director rather than by school board members.

## Checking On Lease

The board also directed staff, on a motion by Baxley, to check with Gene Pinkerton, chairman of the county board of commissioners, to see if the county has a continuing interest in leasing the Alternative Education Center at Piney Grove.

After hearing from the county, the board will continue discussing Slockett's proposal to create a science/math center at the building, as well as other alternatives for the structure. The building was abandoned by the school system and its return offered to the county last year, with staff citing high maintenance costs and other problems.

The board at its next meeting also expects to discuss whether to provide the Brunswick County Educational Foundation an office at the site, as requested once again Monday night by Slockett. In drafting a proposed lease for the county, the board retained one office and one classroom for its own, unspecified use.

## Mild Weather To Continue

Unseasonably mild weather is expected to continue in the Shallotte area over the next several days, according to Shallotte Point meteorologist Jackson Canady.

Temperatures through the weekend should average from the low 40s at night to the low 60s during the day. Rainfall is expected to be near normal at about one-half inch.

For the period of Jan. 30 through Feb. 5, the daily average temperature in the Shallotte area was 56 degrees, which Canady said was 10 degrees above average.

The daily average high temperature was 67 degrees, and the nightly average low temperature was 46 degrees.

The maximum high temperature during the period was 77 degrees on Feb. 3. The minimum low temperature was 35 degrees on Jan. 30.

Canady measured 0.6 of an inch of rain during the seven-day period.

## Annexation Rejected

(Continued From Page 1-A)

of the town.

Commissioner Bryan, who seconded Buck's motion, pointed out that most of the people who spoke at a public hearing on annexation last year opposed the measure. "I really think that we should listen to the people," she said. "It's the people's town."

At a continuation of the town meeting Tuesday morning, Ms. Atkins continued her efforts to keep the annexation issue alive by making a motion to bring the matter before the island's registered voters in a referendum. The proposal died when there was no second to the motion.

Commissioner Bryan was quick to point out that Ms. Atkins had opposed holding a referendum on annexation when a similar motion was made last summer. Buck added that voters made their feelings on annexation public in the town election last fall.

Reading a prepared statement and fighting back tears Tuesday, Ms. Atkins said, "I woke up this morning with the same feeling of devastation as I had the morning I came back on Holden Beach after Hugo." She added later, "The future leaves us stagnated, isolated and land-locked."

Still unanswered is the question of whether the town board can legally repeal the annexation ordinance. State statute does not address the situation, and there is no case law history.

Municipal law experts across the state have offered various opinions on whether the ordinance can be overturned.

However, Charles J. Murray, special deputy attorney general in the N.C. Attorney General's office, said in a letter last November that the

courts would most likely find that the town board has the authority to rescind the ordinance.

Holden Beach Town Attorney Doug Ledgett, who has maintained all along that the ordinance can be overturned as long as it is done before annexation takes effect, reaffirmed his opinion Monday night.

Commissioner Atkins, however, questioned his legal opinion. "I still can't believe that you can legally do this," she said. She added later, "Doug (Ledgett) is not the only attorney in the world, and I've talked to a few who don't think it can be done."

She also said the town could be setting the stage for a lawsuit. Property owners in the area targeted for annexation may sue the town, she said, because they made plans based on the impending annexation.

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