

Interim Head Tomlinson Wants Receptive, Cohesive CRC

BY SUSAN USHER

When the N.C. Coastal Management Commission meets March 25 and 26 in Wilmington, one of the changes instituted by recently-appointed interim chairman Eugene Tomlinson will be apparent almost at once.

After announcements have been made Thursday, the floor will be opened for 30 to 45 minutes to comments from the public on items on the commission's agenda, said the retired engineer from Southport. Speakers may simply show up that morning. If a large number want to address the commission, their time may be limited, but all will have an opportunity to speak.

The CRC has never tried offering a public forum before, Tomlinson said, but during his 20 years as mayor of Southport between 1957 and 1983, "it worked real well" with the city's board of aldermen in showing members of the public its interest in their concerns.

"Everyone on the commission seems very willing to go along with the revised format and to get into the swing of things," the longtime commissioner said in a telephone interview after his first CRC meeting as interim chairman last



TOMLINSON

Thursday and Friday in Atlantic Beach.

Tomlinson also wants to see the Coastal Resources Advisory Council (CRAC) play a much larger role than they have in the past several years. "They are our local contacts and have very valuable experiences. We need their input."

Jonathan Howes, secretary of the Department of Environment, Health and Natural Resources, also wants the CRAC members "put to work," said the chairman. He anticipates the CRC appointing more advisory council members to its working committees and subcommittees as various issues are studied.

In addition to making the commission more open and responsive to the public, Tomlinson, who has a reputation among commission members as a moderate and as a consensus builder, also wants panel members to work harder at building agreement among themselves and setting aside differences.

"The first thing I would like is for us to stop the polarization that's been going on between environmental and development interests."

"We were appointed to this commission because of our expertise in a specific field. We are to use that knowledge as we study issues, not to lobby for or against a particular field," he said.

"Unfortunately, we have had some of that recently,"

added Tomlinson, who has served continuously on the commission since July 1977.

The acting chairman said he is well satisfied with the ethics policy adopted by the commission last week.

"I thought it was a very comprehensive policy," he said. "I think it will tend to keep our members out of trouble if they will all follow it."

Member Dan Besse was the only one of 11 members voting who objected to the new policy, which replaces one that ran into trouble with the state ethics panel. Besse wasn't satisfied because he wanted the conflict-of-interest policy to apply to rule-making votes as well as to votes on appeals. The policy says commissioners with conflicts of interest—who stand to personally gain financially from a panel decision—should abstain from discussing and voting in contested cases. The policy does say a member should abstain from discussion or voting on a rule if it is designed to specifically benefit that commissioner.

"I agree with one of our other commissioners who said that if we were interested in feathering our own nests we have no business being on the commission in the first place," said Tomlinson.

He anticipates the commission meeting in Brunswick County in coming months, the first time in at least 11

years, possibly in the southwestern section of the county.

"With the improved facilities we have now I don't think we'd have any problem meeting here," he said.

Gov. Jim Hunt appointed Tomlinson interim chairman immediately after receiving the Jan. 25 resignation of James E. Harrington as chairman and member-at-large of the CRC.

"The word just came down through Secretary Howes asking if I would be willing to serve as interim chairman. I indicated I would be glad to do anything I could to be of service," explained Tomlinson. "And if he sees fit, I would be glad to continue working to move the commission forward in a positive direction."

Hunt has not indicated when he intends to name a permanent chairman, said Debbie Crane, departmental spokesman. "He wants to have time to look at the entire commission, across the board."

Tomlinson was reappointed last July to the CRC's engineering seat. He retired as an engineer with the U.S. Department of the Army at Sunny Point Military Ocean Terminal, then worked in engineering for Carolina Power & Light Co. for several years. He also served as a trustee during the 1958-1969 period during which former Wilmington College made the transition to a four-year state institution.

Resignations Free Governor To Make CRC Appointments

Bald Head Island property owner James E. Harrington of Raleigh was one of two members to resign in January from the N.C. Coastal Resources Commission.

Aurora Mayor Grace Bonner has resigned from the local government seat she had held since July. Because of poor health she has not been able to attend any commission meetings.

The resignations will allow Gov. Jim Hunt to begin making his own appointments to the board much earlier than anticipated, said Debbie Crane, departmental spokesman.

The terms due to expire first, on June 30, 1994, are those of Daniel A. Besse of New Bern, James Hamilton of Jacksonville, David L. Jennette Sr. of Windsor, Reginald Caroon of Lowland, J. Bowen Ross of Atlantic Beach, Harrington and Ernest A. "Ernie" Carl. Carl was appointed last fall by Gov. Jim Martin to complete the unexpired term of UNCW professor Courtney Hackney, who resigned from the marine ecology seat. Carl served as deputy secretary of environment and natural resources under Martin.

In his Jan. 25 letter to Hunt, Harrington wrote, "It is with real pleasure that I submit this letter of resignation from my positions as chairman and member-at-large of the Coastal Resources Commission..."

"You will want your own chairman," he continued, noting that while his own term extended to 1994, "I feel that I have adequately fulfilled my obligation as a citizen in service to North Carolina in several positions, and others should have the opportunity to serve."

Harrington's resignation was effective Feb. 1. He had served as Gov. Jim Martin's transportation secretary and was a former secretary of the Department of Natural Resources, having played a large role in pushing the Coastal Area Management Act through the legislature in the 1970s.

Ash Shooting Is County's First Homicide Of Year

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witness at the hospital. The gun has been sent to the State Bureau of Investigation laboratories for ballistic tests.

Witnesses said Gilley ran out the back door after the shooting and has not been seen since, Caison said. His two companions reportedly left in Fulwood's red Chevrolet pickup truck. Police believe Faircloth later returned to search the area near the lounge, picked up Gilley and took him home.

Detectives located Fulwood Sunday morning and learned that Gilley and Faircloth had left the county in the truck tractor that Faircloth drives for the Yandle mobile home dealership in Shallotte, Caison said. After a ground and air search, the vehicle was found abandoned at a truck stop in Florence.

"We don't know if they're hitchhiking or if they caught a ride with another trucker," Caison said. "Or they may have arranged for someone to pick them up."

Caison said neither suspect was a regular customer at the Junction Lounge, although one witness said he had seen at least one of the men in the bar before. The lounge serves beer and wine and has several pool

tables. Witnesses told Caison the bar was "packed" with a crowd he estimated at about 35 to 40 people.

Local authorities have entered the names and descriptions of Gilley and Faircloth into the Police Information Network computer system, asking authorities to be on the lookout for the two men, Caison said.

The Brunswick County Clerk of Courts office has no record of either man being arrested for violent offenses.

Gilley pleaded guilty in August, 1990, to a charge of reckless driving to endanger and was given a suspended 1-day jail sentence.

In November 1991, Faircloth pleaded guilty to a charge of damaging a truck tire owned by a Forest L. Gilley of Route 7, Shallotte. As part of his negotiated plea, the state voluntarily dismissed a charge of communicating threats in which Faircloth was alleged to have told Forest Gilley, "I am going to burn your trucks."

Caison asks that anyone with information about the shooting or the whereabouts of the two men call him at the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department, (919) 253-4321.

Alexander Files Federal Suit Against County

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Barefoot, is a Democrat and was not a political supporter at the time of her hiring, as was alleged both the draft suit and the one filed in federal court.

Jones also said Tuesday he would not comment on the lawsuit.

County Attorney David Clegg said Tuesday he could not discuss the substance of Alexander's charges and would not speculate about why the case had been taken to federal court. He said the county has no plans to seek an out-of-court settlement in the case.

"We will answer and deny the allegations. Our position will be made

clear in our answer," Clegg said.

The *Beacon* twice attempted to reach Alexander's attorney, Martha Geer of Raleigh. On both occasions, her secretary said Geer was busy on the phone. The secretary later called back to say Geer would be in meetings for the rest of the day and would be out of the office Wednesday.

In an earlier interview, Geer acknowledged that a board of commissioners has the right not to reappoint a county clerk. She said that if the case went to trial, she would have the burden of proving the termination was racially or politically motivated.

Alexander was first hired by the

county in January 1975, as secretary to the county planner, according to the suit. She was appointed clerk to the board in 1980 and was reappointed by subsequent boards until 1990, when Shaw and Jones joined Holden, Pinkerton and Frankie Rabon to form an all-Republican board.

The suit claims an unnamed political supporter of Holden recommended that Alexander change her party affiliation to Republican. It states that on another occasion, she was advised to distance herself from commissioners Pinkerton and Rabon. She refused both requests, according to the suit.

"Subsequently, defendants Hol-

den, Shaw and Jones refused to communicate or work with (Alexander)," the suit states. "Although (she) never received any complaints about her performance, rumors circulated that her job was in jeopardy. As a result, (Alexander) began experiencing substantial emotional stress that contributed to severe health problems."

The suit claims Alexander was eliminated from her position in a restructuring of county positions that was in fact a "pretext for unlawful discrimination."

No details of the defendants' alleged racial or political discrimination are outlined in the suit.

Advertising Extra Sleeping Capacity Common: Study

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cent accurate, but it gives an idea of the extent of the overcrowding problem. He said the report may even understate the percentage of potentially-overcrowded houses.

There are no septic system permits records for about 30 percent of the homes on the island. Most of those were built many years ago. In those cases, Swarts said the commit-

tee accepted that the advertised capacity was correct.

The study was authorized last month after commissioners rejected a committee proposal to impose a "punitive surcharge" on homeowners who use more water than their septic systems are designed to accommodate.

Last year, town officials balked at a proposed ordinance that would

have prohibited advertising that homes have more bedrooms or sleeping capacity than health department permits allow.

Other firms listed in the report included Hobsbs Realty, which advertised that 103 of its 123 units (84 percent) had more sleeping capacity than their septic systems were built to handle.

The study also looked at rental

homes handled through Brunswickland Realty (72 percent of units exceeded permitted capacity), Alan Holden Realty (62 percent) and Sand Peddler Realty (66 percent).

The report did not include information on rentals handled through Craig Realty. Swarts said the company didn't have its new rental brochures when the study was being conducted.

Register Of Deeds Responds To Members' Criticism

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\$51,424 he was the sixth highest-paid register of deeds in the state last year, according to a county salary survey published by the Institute of Government at UNC-Chapel Hill.

Robinson said he was not asked to participate in the original county-wide salary study and was not notified of the later increase authorized by the commissioners.

"I read about it in the newspaper," Robinson said. "But when our checks came, there weren't any raises in them. I had already prepared a salary study. So when we didn't get the raises, I submitted personnel action forms and had the raises approved."

Robinson said his "current plan" will be to submit a departmental budget request for a lower level of county funding than in the past fiscal year.

In an unrelated matter, Vereen said that "at least once a week" he receives a call from someone complaining about difficulties getting building permits from the county engineering department. He said one man told him he went to the department "four or five times" to get a

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permit.

"Could you encourage the building inspection department to put out a form telling people what they need for a permit?" Vereen asked Clegg.

Clegg said the engineering department has numerous such forms outlining step-by-step procedures for obtaining building permits for mobile homes, commercial structures, single family dwellings, signs, storage buildings, additions, remodeling, etc.

After the meeting, Vereen was asked for the names of some of those who had complained of difficulties obtaining permits. He was unable to remember the names of any of the callers, although he said

one had called him the night before.

County Engineer Robert Tucker said Tuesday he agrees that applicants can encounter frustrating difficulties in obtaining a building permit. But he said the problem arose out of the many approvals required from different county departments.

"Unfortunately, someone might have to go to the health department for a septic tank permit, then the planning department for a flood check, then to GIS (Geographic Information Services) to get a street address and maybe to the tax department if he's not sure exactly where the property is."

"By that time anyone would get pretty tired of running around," Tucker said.

Acknowledging that there is "a

tremendous amount of redundant information" requested at numerous offices, Tucker said the county is working toward implementing a one-stop permitting process. He said that eventually an applicant should be able to fill out one form that will be entered into a computer network linking all departments that need the information.

In other business the board voted unanimously to appoint Virginia Bellamy, Ray Walton, Eva Mae Watts and Margaret Dennis to the Nursing Home/Domiciliary Care Advisory Board. Roscoe Butler and H. Orie Gore were appointed to the Southeastern Economic Development Commission. Dentist Jeffrey Mintz was appointed to the Brunswick County Board of Health.

Average Winter Weather Expected For Coming Week

Both temperatures and precipitation are expected to be "about average" for this time of year over the next few days, Shallotte Point meteorologist Jackson Canady said Tuesday.

He anticipates temperatures will average from about the mid-30s at night into the mid-50s during the daytime, with about a half-inch of rainfall.

In a break from recent weeks, Canady recorded no rainfall for the period Jan. 26 through Feb. 1.

Temperatures reached a high of 68 degrees on Feb. 1 after dipping to a low of 28 degrees on Jan. 28.

A daily average high of 59 degrees combined with a nightly average low of 38 degrees for a daily average temperature of 48 degrees, which Canady said is about 2 degrees above average.

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