

'Deadbeat Dads, Malingering Moms' Target Of Special Court Session

More than 100 "deadbeat dads" and "malingering moms" have been ordered to appear in Brunswick County District Court next week for a first-of-its-kind session scheduled to recover thousands of dollars in overdue child support.

With cooperation from the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department and Clerk of Courts offices, the county's child-support enforcement office has issued a total of 109 show cause orders to men and women who are behind in their court-ordered payments. Those who fail to show up in court Friday, April 2, could be found in contempt of court and thrown in jail.

Delinquent parents who avoid arrest by complying with the order will have to explain to Judge David Wall why they haven't

fulfilled their obligation to support their children. If the judge accepts the explanation he will likely order a new schedule of payments to be worked out with the advice of child support caseworkers.

"Our goal is not to put people in jail," said Brunswick Child Support Supervisor Mary Cornish. "We want to see that these children get the support they are entitled to."

Child support cases are heard regularly in court civil, Cornish said Tuesday. Some hearings seek to establish paternity and to decide who should pay child support after a divorce or separation. Other proceedings seek to determine the amount of support owed and to work out a payment plan.

But this is the first time a special court day has been held to deal with delinquent

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Child Support Supervisor

support cases. Cornish believes the session will focus attention on the problem and improve her agency's collection rate.

She also hopes that such cases can be handled in civil court to avoid future criminal prosecution.

Last February, a Superior Court judge imposed the maximum allowable prison sentence on a father who left the state for eight years, took a second wife in Texas and refused to pay \$42,000 in court-ordered support for his four children.

Tony Lamonta Hewett, 36, of Route 1, Supply, was sentenced to five years in prison after pleading guilty to a charge of felony child abandonment and non-support. He admitted that he had not paid his court-ordered support payments of \$400 per month since 1984.

Hewett was arrested after his name ap-

peared on the top-ten list of delinquent child-support cases compiled by the N.C. Child Support Enforcement agency in Raleigh.

The cases to be considered in next week's session range from \$80 to \$21,414 in delinquent payments, Cornish said. Most are men, but some mothers also are under court-ordered support orders.

Cornish's office currently handles about 3,100 child support cases. Of those, about a third are under some sort of court ordered payment schedule. Every month, about half of them don't pay, although some later catch up on their payments.

Brunswick County's 50-percent delinquency rate is about equal to the state average, she said.

Accident Between Bus, Logging Truck Sends 16 To Area Hospitals

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told us at Duke that Amanda's treatment here—controlling her bleeding and giving her blood—saved her life until she could get there. They never questioned anything we did here."

Duke's Life Flight helicopter reached Supply at about 5:30 and left with Amanda by 6, Creceles said. A second air ambulance was on standby in case other injured students required transport, but none did. "A few students needed sutures, but most injuries were minimal," Creceles said. "It was important to make sure there were no neck or shoulder fractures, so we had to clear a lot of X-rays."

Amanda's parents, Ronnie and Belinda Scoggins of Holden Beach, were driven to Duke and furnished with a hotel room by Schools Superintendent Ralph Johnston, who stayed with the family and returned to Brunswick County Saturday morning.

Johnston and Assistant Superintendent Bill Turner were at the accident scene and later at the hospital to notify parents, answer their questions and arrange transportation for those who needed it. "I've been in this system for 20 years, and it was the worst one I've seen so far for serious injury," Turner said Tuesday.

Turner said the bus driver, Mattie Bryant, had been readmitted to The Brunswick Hospital after suffering chest pains following the accident. "It was real stressful for her, even though there was nothing she could have done to avoid this," Turner said, adding, "People don't realize the responsibility these drivers are under with as many as 60 children in their care at a time."

Teachers will be keeping a close eye on students for signs of physical or emotional symptoms needing attention, Turner said. Parents were "truly appreciative" of the efforts on behalf of their children, he added, a sentiment echoed by Melanie Fields' aunt. "From the family side of it, we're so touched by the concern that was showed and that is still being showed for both Melanie and Amanda," Diane Ward said.

A fund for Amanda has been established at the main branch of United Carolina Bank in Shallotte, and those interested in contributing should contact Judy Flint, Ward added. Although the students' medical bills are being forwarded to the logging company's insurer, the fund will be used for "things Amanda may need down the road," Ward said.



TWO SHALLOTTE MIDDLE School girls bore the brunt of the accident's impact as they were sitting in the right rear seat where the collision occurred. Melanie Fields, 12, is recuperating at home after spending night in Doshier Memorial Hospital with a concussion. Amanda Scoggins, 13, of Holden Beach remains in critical but stable condition at Duke University Medical Center.

Island Owner Seeks 'Flexibility' For Plans Under Zoning Regs

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Island fairly and effectively will be a challenge. "It doesn't lend itself to a typical lot layout. A clustering concept might be a more realistic approach."

Good called it "helpful" to hear Ryder's description of Price's plans. "Our thinking is not crystallized. I think we all realize we're dealing with something unique, and we do want a resolution of this matter for ourselves, for you and for the community at large, which has concerns about it."

Town Attorney Michael Isenberg reminded the boards that they may not legally deprive Price of the "economically beneficial use" of her land. While council has resolved that it would prefer to see Bird Island acquired by a conservation group or state government, its members have acknowledged that they must zone the area in a way that allows land to be sold and homes built.

Ryder said Price proposes a 288 total bedrooms on the Bird Island, while the planning board's proposal would allow 264. "Total bedrooms might be the best way to set total density, but we need to be able to build on 7,500-square-foot lots if that's the only way we can get it."

He added that fruition of Price's plans will be "years away, if ever," adding, "This is not the first barrier island we've dealt with, and lots have not been dealt with very well. But with the kind of money these lots will have to go for to cover the development costs, it will have to be

at the top of the market. If we destroy the character of the island in the course of development, we'll not be able to sell these lots. We'll have a big old bridge to nowhere."

Councilman Bud Scramton objected to the idea of using a total number of bedrooms to control density on Bird Island and balked at Ryder's attempts to convince him that Price would undertake less development than the town will allow. "We've gotten snookered before," Scramton said.

Councilwoman Julia Thomas asked what happened to Price's plans to build a 15-homesite family compound. "She first said it was going to be a private, family affair. Is it going to be public now?" she asked.

"She did say that, but she doesn't want to be locked to that," Ryder replied.

Mayor Mason Barber said the "consensus of the community is to retain (Bird Island) as a conservation area in its natural state," and that council "encourages and supports" efforts to acquire the island as a conservation area.

Bill Ducker, head of the Bird Island Preservation Society, said Ryder's presentation to the boards "makes the real plan clear. In order to finance her bridge, Mrs. Price is going to have to develop the entire island."

Ducker's group has raised about \$20,000 and also hopes to receive public funds to help acquire the island. Mrs. Price has said she would consider an offer on the property but has not received one.

Department Heads Hear Reassurances From Warren

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"I have been impressed by some of the work by some of the department heads," said Warren. "I can assure you that county personnel will be treated professionally and evaluated on their performance."

Warren advised department officials to avoid "listening to the rumor mill" and to carry on with the day-to-day business of county government. He said that in the transition period between county managers, all inquiries about county operations should be directed to interim manager John Harvey and not to the commissioners.

The chairman said the annual budgeting process should proceed as usual with all preliminary funding requests made to Harvey.

Commissioner Jones also urged that county

employees "just continue doing what you've been doing."

Social Services Director Jamie Orrock used the opportunity to renew his request for authorization to fill vacant positions in his department. Hiring in all county departments has been delayed since the board of commissioners ordered that only positions deemed "essential to county operations" be filled.

"I am nine people short, including six out on disability. It creates a real hardship," Orrock said. "If you're lying on an operating table bleeding and you have to wait to determine whether or not it's essential to stop it, you'll die," he said.

In an interview Tuesday, Tucker said the meeting was a constructive step that will help allay the fears of many county workers.

"I've been tuned in to the same rumor mills as

everyone else—both at the county complex and in the community—and it has been alluded to several times that I was on a hit list," Tucker said. "It was certainly good to be reassured."

"I think it was comforting to hear that the commissioners came in with no pre-set agendas," he said. "I feel everyone at the meeting was pleased to hear that and to have a personal reassurance that this is not the start of some massive hiring and firing campaign. I think now, as far as most of us are concerned, it's back to business as usual."

Commissioner Jones also said the meeting served a constructive purpose, but felt it should have been done earlier.

"It would have been nice if this could have happened three months ago, before David Clegg left," Jones said.

Police Nab One, Search For Another In Belville Robbery

A brief multi-agency manhunt and a foot chase through the woods ended with one Leland man in custody and a warrant issued for another in the common-law robbery of a Belville convenience store Tuesday afternoon.

About 15 to 20 vehicles from the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department, the Leland Police Department

and the State Highway Patrol converged the area around Chapel Loop Road, Old U.S. 17 and N.C. 133 after a 3 p.m. robbery was reported at the Holiday Beverage store in Belville.

According to BCSD Detective Steve Mason, the two men had been in the store for several minutes when they broke into coin box of a pool

table and attempted to leave. The manager confronted them and a struggle ensued.

The men broke free and ran from the scene with a bag of coins, Mason said. They apparently panicked and took off on foot, leaving behind the yellow Volkswagen Rabbit in which they arrived, said Det. Kevin Holden.

Patrol Deputy Matthew Jessen spotted one of the men running through the woods and followed him on foot. After a brief chase, Jessen apprehended Michael David Dick, 18, of Lanvale Road behind a home on Blackwell Road, Mason said.

Dick has been charged with common law robbery and was being held in Brunswick County Jail Tuesday night, said Mason.

Dick identified his accomplice as

Shallotte Police Probe Afternoon Robbery Of Convenience Store

Shallotte Police were tracking down several leads Tuesday following an armed robbery Sunday at a convenience store.

A man stole a small amount of cash from the Minuteman located on Holden Beach Road around 12:45 p.m. Sunday, said Police Chief Rodney Gause.

Gause said the man brought a bottle of Sundrop and bag of pork skins to the front of the store and placed them on the counter. He then pulled out a small-caliber handgun from a pocket and threatened to kill the clerk if she didn't give him all of the store's money.

After getting the cash, the man left the store and walked behind the building. The clerk and only customer inside the store at the time of the holdup were not injured.

"We've had a couple of phone calls and we're checking out a couple of leads, a couple of suspects," Gause said Tuesday afternoon. "We don't have anything concrete yet."

The robber was described as a

black male in his early 20s. He stands about 5 feet 10 inches tall and weighs approximately 160 pounds. At the time of the robbery, he was wearing blue jeans, a white sweater and sunglasses.

Gause said police believe the suspect is left-handed because he pulled the gun out of his pants' pocket with his left hand.

The police chief also said it's "very possible" the suspect lives in the area. The customer in the store at the time of the robbery told police she recognized the man.

Police combed the area surrounding the store immediately following the crime and found no signs of the thief. Gause said five police units were at the scene less than three minutes after the robbery was reported.

A person at the car wash behind the Minuteman told police he didn't see anyone. "The only thing we can figure at this time is there was a vehicle parked nearby and he drove off," Gause said.

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Landfill Director Hewett Is Fired After Suspension

Leo Hewett has been terminated from his position as Brunswick County landfill/solid waste director by Interim County Manager John Harvey following a suspension which was one of the final acts of former County Manager/Attorney David Clegg, who resigned last week.

Hewett, 44, of Cedar Grove, contacted Monday, declined comment on his dismissal, as did County Personnel Manager Starrie Grissett.

Harvey followed Clegg's recommendation that Hewett's work be taken over by Operational Services Director David Somerset.

Hewett was employed by the

county in August 1978. He held several positions before being named solid waste director in March 1988 at a salary of \$28,534.

He was in charge of operating the county landfill and was dismissed as the county undertakes a search for a new landfill, since the only existing landfill north of Bolivia is projected to be adequate for only another five years.

Hewett can appeal his termination to the board of commissioners, which can hear the case or refer it to a three-member advisory personnel board for a recommendation. The next step is appeal to the State Personnel Commission.

Wet Weather In Forecast

South Brunswick Islands residents can expect a little wet weather in the days ahead, but temperatures should remain seasonable, Shallotte Point meteorologist Jackson Canady said Tuesday.

He expects temperatures to average from the mid-40s at night to the mid-60s during the daytime, with at least three-fourths inch of rainfall.

For the period March 16-22, he recorded a maximum high of 75 degrees on the 22nd and a minimum low of 25 on the 16th.

An average daily high of 63 degrees and an average nightly low of 38 degrees combined for a daily average temperature of 50 degrees, which Canady said is about 5 degrees below average.

He recorded 1.14 inches of rainfall at his home.

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