

Shallotte Appoints Committee To Battle For Better Post Office

BY DOUG RUTTER

Shallotte Aldermen, still bitter about the post office's move to Seaside a year ago, have formed a committee intent on restoring local mail service to the level residents and merchants desire.

Town officials hope a retired postmaster from Michigan will add punch to the four-member committee formed Tuesday night to fight for better service at the Shallotte Post Office.

Aldermen say the level of service at the downtown branch has steadily declined since most mail-handling operations and employees were moved from Shallotte to the new South Brunswick branch at Seaside last May.

Mayor Sarah Tripp, Alderman Roney Cheers and Planning Board Chairman Carson Durham will serve on the committee. Town officials also have enlisted the support of Ray DeVries, a former postmaster who recently moved to Shallotte.

"I think if you stand up and shout long enough you can get it manned sufficiently and get the service you need," said DeVries, who brings to the group 37 years experience as a postal employee.

DeVries, who spent 18 years as postmaster in Traverse City, Mich., recommended

Tuesday that the town contact two national postmasters associations, which oppose post office closings and loss of service. He also suggested postal patrons upset with the service fill out "consumer service cards."

"We're just befuddled about the whole situation," said Cheers, who has been in contact with Congressman Charlie Rose about the situation. "Leave Shallotte Post office alone, where it is needed by the business community."

Mayor Tripp described the post office's move to Seaside as "a situation that's been hard to swallow." She said Shallotte Postmaster Frank Bringoli has never asked for the town's input on anything affecting the Main Street office.

Aldermen also said Tuesday that the postal service has lied to them repeatedly. One postal official last year said former mayor Jerry Jones asked that the post office be moved out of town.

Town officials say they have documentation proving otherwise, including an April 1987 letter from Jones to the postal service in which Jones requests improvements at the downtown office.

"I can't live with somebody who will stand there, regardless of his background and ability, and tell lies and expect me to be-

"Our fight is not with the employees. It's with the hierarchy."

—Carson Durham

lieve them," Alderman Wilton Harrelson said.

Durham, who runs a business in Shallotte, said the community doesn't have any problems with the people working at the office. "Our fight is not with the employees. It's with the hierarchy."

Variations Granted

Prior to Tuesday night's meeting of the board of aldermen, the Shallotte Board of Adjustment met at town hall and granted three variances from the town zoning code.

In two cases, the board agreed to waive the side yard setback. Officials also granted a variance from the sign ordinance and allow Bed Land Mattress Discounters to erect a 60-square-foot sign beside its Main Street building.

Building Inspector Albert Hughes said the ordinance limits signs in the Central Business district to 32 square feet. Town officials agreed to allow the larger sign if others are removed from the building.

Board members said the business is set back off the street and is hard to locate without a sign. "To me a nice sign wouldn't take away from the property, it would add to the property," Cheers said.

Setback variances were granted to Gene Smith to allow construction of a garage at his Cheers Street residence and to Hubert Bellamy for a commercial tract at East Gate Plaza on Holden Beach Road.

Other Business

In other business Tuesday, aldermen:

■Granted a one-year franchise to Johnnie Moody allowing him to provide taxi cab service to Shallotte. There were no public comments during a public hearing on the franchise request.

■Set a public hearing on a proposal to amend the zoning code and allow farmers markets as conditional uses in the Central Business district. The hearing will be Tuesday, May 18, at 7:30 p.m.

■Voted to provide water service outside the town limits to Sherri H. Hughes of Lightwood Lane. Under town policy,

Hughes will be required to extend the water line and pay \$648 for the water meter. She also will be charged twice as much for water as users inside the town.

■Postponed adoption of a proposed adult entertainment ordinance. It would prohibit topless bars and similar businesses. Town officials want to review the ordinance with Town Attorney Mark Lewis before adopting it.

■Appointed Anthony Maglione of Brierwood Estates to a vacancy on the planning board, as recommended by the planning board.

■Voted to apply for a recycling assistance grant offered through the N.C. Office of Waste Reduction. The money could be used to hire a recycling coordinator, purchase equipment or to cover other related expenses. The grant would require a 30 percent match by the town.

■Declared \$57.58 in unpaid town taxes as uncollectable. Town officials don't know how to contact the person who owes the taxes, according to Town Clerk Mary Etta Hewett.

■Referred to the planning board a request for a conditional use permit from David Jones, who wants to operate a business in a residential district.

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