

Controversy Brewing Over Plan To Close Shallotte Library

BY ERIC CARLSON

The storm may be far away, but rumbles already can be heard over the Brunswick County Library Board's plan to close the Shallotte library branch during seven months of construction scheduled to begin next January.

A major \$218,600 addition and renovation project is planned for the Shallotte library as part of a \$1.5 million plan to create a modern four-branch county library system. Also scheduled are new branch library buildings at Leland and Yaupon Beach and a \$242,400 renovation and addition for the library at Southport.

Plans have been approved for all four branches, and the library board hopes to begin construction of the new libraries sometime in June, with completion expected by late December.

After that, work will begin on the renovations and additions. And so will the problems, say patrons of the West Brunswick Library Branch in Shallotte.

Both older branches are scheduled to be closed during construction. Regular users of the Southport library will

only have to make a short drive to the new one on Oak Island. But for Shallotte users—some who live as far away as Calabash—the nearest county library will be in Leland, an hour's drive away.

In Shallotte, the Friends of the Library have prepared cards protesting the closure that can be mailed to library board members.

In Calabash, the town's board of commissioners last week voted to recommend that the library board "find another location or remain open on a partial basis" during construction.

In Sunset Beach Monday night, the town council voted unanimously to ask their town attorney to draft a resolution asking that some form of access to the Shallotte library be maintained. Members were particularly concerned that children would be unable to use encyclopedias and other reference materials during the proposed closure.

All of which may be a bit premature, said Don Eggert, chairman of the library board's building commit-

tee. He acknowledged that the committee had agreed with Architect John Sawyer's recommendation to close the Shallotte library during construction. But he said no one has ruled out the possibility of opening temporarily somewhere else.

"I'm afraid there may be a perception that this is just a cosmetic renovation and that things could go on as usual while the addition is being built," said Eggert. "This is going to be a major project—reorienting the entire interior and relocating the main desk and the office and changing the location of the front entrance."

"It's going to be such a mess that the public wouldn't want to be in there anyway," he said. "And they'd be in the way of the work."

Eggert said the county would probably incur additional insurance expenses and might encounter a "liability problem" by allowing the public into a building under construction.

But Library Board Vice Chairman Marie Harrison

said she is "very adamant" about what she sees as the necessity of keeping the Shallotte branch open during construction.

"We've got to consider what this means to the citizens whose tax money pays for these libraries and these books. And especially what it means to the children," Harrison said. "Other libraries have enlarged and not closed down. I think folks would rather put up with construction than to have the library closed."

"Or we can look into finding a place to move. I have no preference," she said. "As long as we don't close. We just can't do that."

Eggert and Harrison agreed that it is probably too early to arrange the rental of a temporary site for the library. Both said they would welcome citizen input on how best to keep the Shallotte branch open.

The Brunswick County Library Board meets on the third Monday of every month at 7 p.m. in the Emergency Services (911) Center at the county complex in Bolivia.

Storm Aid Requires Documentation

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recover any storm-related costs.

Qualified debris removal covers debris that had to be removed to eliminate an immediate threat to life, health and safety; an immediate threat to improved public or private property; or to ensure the economic recovery of the community by providing a benefit for the community at large.

For example, the grant won't cover removal of debris from private property, but will cover the costs of removing debris private property owners have placed in the town's right-of-way for pick up.

It will cover the repair of town-owned vehicles damaged by the storm, overtime paid to police officers or others called out to work during the storm to protect lives or property, the cost of extra trash collections to remove debris, and some administrative costs.

At Ocean Isle Beach, where a road washed out that served several

families on the oceanfront at the east end of the beach, restoration of emergency access to the property with a earthen or gravel base street would qualify, Free told Building Inspector Druid Roberson.

Repairs needed to restore electrical, water or sewer service qualify for reimbursement, as would removal of hazardous sections of broken or damaged beach accessways. However, Free said he would have "a hard time justifying" the repair of accessways as an emergency protective measure.

Dune repairs are also marginal when it comes to reimbursement. Local beaches are "natural," not "designed" beaches engineered to certain specifications.

However where improved facilities such as a private home, business or a street have depended on a natural bermed or beach area for protection, said Free, "if damage is threatened to the facility by a 1- to 5-year storm, we can pay for providing a

minimum degree of work."

"The goal is not long-term improvement, just emergency services. The minimum amount of work required to protect improved property," he reiterated. "However, long-term improvements might be the result, as in the case of a building having to be replaced."

Currie Batchelor and Robert "Chip" Leavitt of Brunswick Electric Membership Corp. said last Thursday that damage from the March 13 storm was much more widespread than from Hurricane Hugo, with the cooperative's losses estimated at \$1.5 million across the service area.

After receiving notices of interest or applications, FEMA is sending teams into the field to inspect documentation and write damage survey reports. Free said the turn-around time for receiving assistance should be "much faster" than after Hurricane Hugo, when some settlements were as long as 18 months in coming.

Board Clerk Remains On Job

(Continued From Page 1-A)

what the problem is except that the other three don't want to accept her."

Republican Commissioner Jerry Jones said he had "heard rumors that they want to relieve her of her duties of clerk to the board" but knew of "no official discussion" among board members. He said he "saw no reason" why she should be reprimanded or removed.

"I understand some of the commissioners had some complaints pertaining to things they would prefer that she do, but I've never had a problem with her," Jones said. "I'm always willing to listen, but someone would have to tell me more than I know now before I would ever vote to relieve her of her duties."

As Warren pointed out, state law provides that the clerk to the board serves at the pleasure of the com-

"I would vote against re-hiring (Alexander). Especially with litigation going on"

—Don Warren

missioners and can be removed at any time by a majority vote.

However, Barefoot has also been a county employee for 14 years. So under the county personnel policy, she can not be indiscriminately fired from her current positions of administrative officer and public information officer. However, those positions could be deleted from the coming budget, as Alexander's was when the 1991-92 budget was adopted.

Warren said Tuesday he would

not consider re-hiring Alexander, who has filed a lawsuit in federal court alleging that her firing was politically and racially motivated. Her suit asks that she be re-hired with back pay.

"I would vote against re-hiring her," Warren said. "Especially with litigation going on."

Barefoot was hired in April 1979 as a temporary secretary in the landfill department. Her position was made permanent in September 1980.

Three years later, Barefoot applied and was hired for the position of legal secretary to then County Attorney Avery Bordeaux. She was subsequently promoted in 1989 to the position of administrative assistant to the county attorney. In 1991, she was appointed to a second position of public information officer.

Barefoot's current salary is \$26,418. Alexander's salary at the time of her separation was \$26,440.

Seventh River View Fire Raises Calabash Arson Total To Eight

BY ERIC CARLSON

For the fourth time in three weeks, an arsonist struck in a Calabash neighborhood last Wednesday (April 28), setting fire to a mobile home on River View Drive within a stone's throw of six others he is believed to have started since February.

Like the past three fires—two on April 14 and one on April 21—the latest blaze started on the outside of an unoccupied vacation trailer in the middle of the week between midnight and dawn. And, like all but one of the others, this most recent fire left a lot of charred wreckage, but very little evidence.

"Naturally we feel this fire is connected with the others," said Brunswick County Sheriff's Detective Tom Hunter.

Jerry Prince, chief of the

Calabash Volunteer Fire Department, was the first person to reach the burning home after a neighbor called 911 to report the fire at about 3:40 a.m.

"I went straight to the scene and it was fully engulfed," Prince said. "It started at the center of the home and spread to the ends. It looked to me like it started underneath."

Firefighters could do little more than prevent the blaze from spreading. They managed to save a combination apartment and tool shed located about 20 feet away, Prince said. Otherwise, the trailer was a total loss he estimated to be worth about \$20,000.

The owner, Bill Justice, was at his home in Hudson, near Hickory, at the time of the fire, Prince said. The power had been left on, but no one was staying at the mobile home, he

"I'm afraid we've got a pathological maniac on our hands. Whoever is doing it, enjoys doing it. I'm just worried he's going to start lighting fires in homes with people in them."

—Jerry Prince
Calabash Fire Chief

said. "There's no way this was accidental," he said.

Prince was on the scene of the past four River View fires and also remembers the Feb. 11 blaze that started in one trailer and spread to

destroy two others. He said the fire had appeared suspicious at the time. But he also thought it might have been started by a faulty refrigerator.

"When they burn up like those did, it doesn't leave you much to go on," he said.

Hunter agreed that his investigation has been made more difficult by the extreme damage caused at each of the fires. Still, he has collected some physical evidence at several of the fire scenes.

Investigators continue to speculate that the recent fires may be connected to another trailer fire believed to have been set about a half mile away last September. Hunter has identified a juvenile male as a prime suspect in that case.

Prince said the seven River View fires happened so close together, "a fellow with a good arm could stand at any one and hit the farthest one with a baseball." He no longer has any doubts that they were all set by an arson.

"I'm afraid we've got a pathological maniac on our hands," Prince said. Whoever is doing it, enjoys do-

ing it. I'm just worried he's going to start lighting fires in homes with people in them."

Army Halts Sale Of Scrap Lumber

Effective Monday, May 10, Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point will stop holding its regularly scheduled scrap lumber sales.

On May 10, the terminal will hold a special sale of hardwood from 8:30 a.m. until 1 p.m., said Myrtle D. Meade, information officer. Prices will be posted at the sale site.

Brunswick Unit 2 Slowly Increasing Power Level

BY SUSAN USHER

After a brief delay last week, start-up of Unit 2 at Carolina Power & Light's Brunswick Nuclear Plant was continuing smoothly early this week.

As of Tuesday afternoon, the unit's nuclear reactor was at the 5 percent power level, said CP&L spokesman Wayne Ennis. Testing to make sure all systems were operating properly is continuing as the unit moves toward the next performance benchmark. At the 15 percent power level, which could be reached within the next several days, approval of

the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission will be needed before the advance toward full power continues, Ennis said.

NRC approval to restart Unit 2 came last Tuesday, April 27, at 5:50 p.m. While testing continued Wednesday morning workers found that one of the unit's four radiation detection monitors was broken. That was repaired.

Restart began Thursday morning, with the first control rod withdrawn at 9:40 a.m. and the nuclear fission chain reaction beginning at 1:42

p.m.

The steam generation unit is fueled by uranium dioxide in the form of ceramic pellets. The half-inch long pellets are stacked end-to-end in zirconium alloy tubing called fuel rods. These are arranged in 560 fuel assemblies, or bundles of 64 rods each in the core of the reactor. These are separated by cross-shaped control rods.

The fission chain reaction is regulated by moving the rods into and out of the reactor core. As rods are slowly raised, the fuel bundles make contact with each other and the chain reaction begins. The higher the rods are raised, and the more rods that are raised, the more fission

increases and the more heat is produced.

If all goes well, the restart of Unit 2 will take from 20 to 40 days to full production. Last week Brunswick Plant Vice President Roy Anderson said the continuous testing during the slow return to service is deliberate.

It is intended to help CP&L identify needed repairs, such as leaks in gaskets that have been dry for a year, or adjustments, such as balancing of turbines that have been rebuilt during the year-long shutdown.

With those kinds of needs in mind, the utility has scheduled two 11-day shutdowns during the start-up process.

Warm, Dry Weather On Tap

Continued drier weather is in the forecast for the next several days across the South Brunswick Islands.

Shallotte Point meteorologist Jackson Canady said Tuesday he expects less than a half inch of rainfall, coupled with above average temperatures ranging from the lower 60s at night into the lower 80s during the day.

For the period April 27 through May 3, he recorded a high of 81 degrees that occurred on May 1 and 2,

and a low of 39 degrees that occurred on April 28.

A daily average high of 78 degrees and an average nightly low of 48 degrees combined for a daily average temperature of 63 degrees, which Canady said is about 4 degrees below average for this time of year.

For the past three weeks, Canady said the area has received only a trace of rainfall, after unusually heavy rains the previous month.

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