

County Health Board Puts Some Teeth In Dangerous Dog Rules

BY ERIC CARLSON

In a move aimed at preventing attacks by vicious dogs, the Brunswick County Health Board on Monday gave Health Director Michael Rhodes the authority to have a pet declared "dangerous" if it is deemed a threat to the public.

The board also discussed its policy of selling euthanized cat carcasses for \$3 each to medical laboratories for research. Animal Control Supervisor Greg Thompson asked the members to consider returning the proceeds of the sales to his department, rather than depositing the money into the county's general fund.

Speaking at the health board's regular meeting, Thompson gave an update of his

activities and requested several changes in current department policies. He asked for and received authorization to allow animal control officers to respond to reports of wounded animals while on call at night and on weekends.

Legislation passed by the N.C. General Assembly in 1990 allows county health departments to declare a dog "potentially dangerous" and require the owner to take steps to prevent the animal from attacking people. But the county has been operating under previous laws that allow a dog to be declared "vicious" only after it attacks someone.

"A 90-pound pit bull that is trained to attack is not dangerous as long as the owner

"This allows us to take away the animal's chance for one free bite."

—Health Director Michael Rhodes

keeps it in a fenced pen that has a roof and a concrete pad and a padlock on the door," Thompson said. "But a 200-pound Saint Bernard that runs loose and knocks people down and chases young children into a busy street could be considered dangerous."

Thompson cautioned that the county could be held liable if such a dog injured someone after the health department received complaints and did not declare the animal dangerous.

Rhodes said the change would allow the health department to declare a dog potentially dangerous and give the owner written instructions of what needed to be done to alleviate the threat to the public. That way, if the animal bit someone, the county would be on record as having warned the owner about the potential danger, he said.

"As it is now, a dog almost needs to attack someone before we can intercede and declare it vicious," Rhodes said. "This allows us to take away the animal's chance

for one free bite." Board member Don Warren questioned whether the new rule would prevent a business owner from keeping guard dogs in a fenced equipment yard. Thompson said such animals would not be considered dangerous as long as they were kept in a "secure" place.

Member Benny Ludlum opposed the rule change saying, "Just as soon as you pass this, you'll need to put two more people on staff to declare dogs dangerous."

The health department declares only about "one or two" dogs a year as "vicious," Rhodes said he doubts the change in policy would result in a significant number (See NEW RULES, Page 2-A)

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Breaking Ground At St. Brendan's

As a proud congregation watches, church leaders bless the site of a new worship facility to be built for St. Brendan the Navigator Catholic Parish in Shallotte. The groundbreaking and blessing ceremonies took place Sunday afternoon at the church site south of Shallotte on U.S. 17. Pictured (in foreground, from left) are altar boys Jeremy and Joshua Horn; the Rev. John Richardson, former pastor; the Very Rev. Thomas P. Hadden, dean; the Rev. Francis G. Maloney, current pastor; Ralph Kuhnel, chairman of the parish finance council; and Thomas J. Lewis, planning committee chairman.

STAFF PHOTO BY DOROTHY BRENNAN

School Board Says Proposed Audit Should Be Welcomed

BY SUSAN USHER

A school system performance audit by a state agency independent of the Department of Public Instruction would be welcomed here, Brunswick County Board of Education members decided Monday night.

At a Feb. 21 meeting of the Brunswick County Commissioners, District 3 Commissioner Wayland Vereen called for such an audit by State Auditor Ralph Campbell Jr.'s office, saying an independent analysis was "long overdue."

A study of central office organization conducted by the N.C. Department of Public Instruction several years ago recommended a restructuring of the Brunswick County Schools administrative staff and hiring of additional staff.

School board members voted Monday in support of a performance audit, their only question whether the undetermined cost would come out of the schools' 1994-95 budget or the county commissioners' budget.

"It's the county money either way you look at it," said Superintendent Ralph Johnston.

Vereen said last month he hoped a performance audit would determine if there are overlapping jobs and programs or unnecessary duplication of services.

He could not be reached for comment Tuesday to find out if he intends to pursue the idea. As of midday Tuesday he had not asked for the audit request to be placed on the agenda of the commissioners' March 21 meeting, County Manager Wyman Yelton said.

Superintendent Johnston told school board members Monday he thought a performance audit could

benefit the school system. "It could finally put the county school system on an even keel with other departments," he said.

If a performance audit is forthcoming, results wouldn't be ready before the 1994-95 budget is adopted.

Jimmy Benson, a deputy state auditor, said the office of the auditor is completing a performance audit for Lee County Schools, the 12th such study done for school systems over a number of years. Other systems for which audits have been completed include Pasquotank, Camden, Northampton and more recently, Wake, the largest to date.

How quickly an audit sought by Brunswick County would be completed isn't certain, given the department's existing workload. "Obviously we can't take on every system in the state and we have other performances audits we have to perform," said Benson. "We would have to consider priorities in our work plan and try to work in any request within a reasonable length of time. If we do a hurry-up job it won't be a good job."

Typically a performance audit is restricted to the central office, examining its structure, lines of authority and delivery of services and programs to its users. Responses to a questionnaire sent to all "users" of central office services, "everybody in the school system who interacts with the central office, from bus mechanics to principals," are a key factor in looking at effectiveness of the central office staff's performance. Benson said the surveys typically have a high response rate of 45 per-

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Holden Beach Finishes Manager's Evaluation

BY DOUG RUTTER

Holden Beach Commissioners completed an evaluation of Town Manager Gus Ulrich in executive session last Thursday and took no related action in open session.

Mayor Wally Ausley announced following a 45-minute closed meeting that the town board had finished its evaluation of Ulrich's job performance that it had started on March 7.

Ausley said town policy requires all employees be evaluated after their first six months. The town manager evaluates the employees, and the board of commissioners evaluates the manager.

The executive session was held at the close of a special meeting last Thursday called to discuss

the construction of an oceanfront dune along Hillside Drive.

There was no executive session on the meeting agenda, but commissioners voted 4-1 to add it to the agenda after the meeting was called to order.

Commissioner David Sandifer voted against adding the executive session, and when the time came, he voted against the motion to go behind closed doors to discuss "personnel matters."

Sandifer said he wanted to discuss in open session an article in last week's *Beacon* concerning a March 7 executive session. Ausley said other commissioners wanted to discuss the issue in closed session.

Sandifer said he didn't like that certain board members told a reporter what happened in the

executive session. He said it wasn't fair to the commissioners who declined to comment on the closed session because their opinions were not expressed in the article.

Responding to several requests from audience members who said they wanted to discuss the article with the board, Sandifer made a motion to add "public comments" to the agenda.

However, there was no second to his motion. Commissioners allow public comments at all of their regular meetings.

Ausley said discussion of personnel matters is one of the reasons a town board can go into executive session. "The reason for an executive session is not to hide anything from the public," he said.

EDC Opposes Wilmington Plan To Control Brunswick Development

BY ERIC CARLSON

The Brunswick County Economic Development Commission went on record Monday in opposition to the City of Wilmington's plan to study extending its zoning controls across the Cape Fear River to prevent unattractive development along the Brunswick County shoreline.

According to recent newspaper accounts, the Wilmington City Council has discussed extending its extra-territorial jurisdiction into Brunswick County to protect the waterfront view from the city's historic district and riverfront park.

Margaret Rudd, a Southport real estate broker who attended the meeting, called the move "a classic case of trying to control something that's not yours."

Brunswick EDC Director Tom Monks told commission members that the county needs to send "a clear message to the other side of the river that we intend to

control our own destiny." He suggested that the commission adopt a resolution to be sent to the county board of commissioners and planning board.

The commission voted unanimously in favor of drafting the resolution. The board also:

- Began consideration of Monks' preliminary budget for 1994-95. The draft proposal calls for a 19 percent increase in EDC spending, from the current figure of \$168,520 to \$208,495. The commission plans to discuss the proposed budget at its next meeting.

- Agreed to give Monks the authority, with the chairman's approval, to handle the paperwork for state infrastructure grants for local industries. The appropriations are used to build roads and install water and sewer lines for new and expanding businesses.

- Appropriated \$310 to the Brunswick Community College Small Business Awards Program.

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Team Gearing Up For Aerial Pesticide Assault

BY ERIC CARLSON

As if planning for a military invasion, an army of agriculture experts, entomologists and government officials is preparing to launch a massive air assault next month on a foreign invader that came ashore in Brunswick County last summer.

After holding several meetings in other areas of the state, the Asian Gypsy Moth Management Team will come to Wilmington next week for their first discussions in the area of operations where airplanes and helicopters will spray insecticide over 130,000 acres of Brunswick and New Hanover counties in hopes of stopping the pest before it spreads.

A local public information meeting on the gypsy moth eradication program will be held at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 22, at the county government complex in Bolivia.

Last July, a German ship docked at the Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point (MOTSU) was found to be infested with Asian gypsy moths.

**Gypsy Moth Hotline:
1-800-449-9007**

Although the ship was immediately sent back to sea and fumigated, insect traps set shortly after the discovery indicated that the moths had made their way to shore on both sides of the Cape Fear River.

Experts consider the Asian gypsy moth to be one of the most damaging plant pests ever brought to our shores. Its close relative, the European gypsy moth already affects more than 4.2 million acres of forests each year.

The Asian variety poses an even greater threat. Female European gypsy moths are flightless and lay their eggs near where they emerge from their cocoon. But a female Asian gypsy moth can fly

up to 20 miles before depositing her eggs.

Today the enemy lies dormant in its egg stage on trees throughout the infested area. But sometime around April 10, those eggs are expected to release thousands of larvae that will begin making their way into the young leaves to forage for food.

That's when the planes will strike, when the moths are at their most vulnerable, Brunswick County Cooperative Extension Agent Milton Coleman said Tuesday. The management team plans to blanket all wooded areas within a 30-mile radius of Sunny Point with two applications of two different pesticides.

"Right now our biggest concern is the weather," Coleman said. "For the spray to work properly, it needs to be applied during a time when there is no rain or high winds. We need to make two sprays within 10 days of each other, so a week of rainy weather could create some real problems."

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STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC CARLSON

Very Special Talent

Students and staff of the Brunswick Community College Inter-agency Program enjoy developing their creative talents at last week's "A Very Special Arts Festival," sponsored by the Brunswick County Parks and Recreation Department. Here, Beverly Criswell (sitting) makes a dry flower terrarium with the help of Barbara Randolph. More festival pictures are on Page 7A.