

# School Board Members Say They Won't Be A 'Lame-Duck' Board

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ber has to "have faith" that people elected them to do the right thing, which she defined as trying to see that "everybody in the system is doing what they were hired and trained to do. If we're unable to do that, it's not hard to understand why we're third from the bottom."

In her six years on the board, Baxter said she's been told over and over again "if I have this, then I can do this," but that the changes in academic performance haven't been forthcoming.

As her replacement on the ticket, she'd like to see a person with children in the school system, who enjoys reading "because there is a lot of reading," who listens to what is going on in the community and with students, and who already understands finances. "I also hope this person has a good sense of humor," she said.

A similarly discouraged Fairley announced his intent to withdraw several

months ago, but waited until after the primary so that his party would have a chance to name another nominee for the seat.

His decision came after the board reversed its support of a resolution drafted by Fairley that the board had already approved, then amended to reflect some teachers' concerns. The measure would have linked bonus pay for teachers to the academic performance of their students. With Baxter's abstention counting as a yes, the vote to rescind the resolution was 4-1.

Both Fairley and Baxter plan to complete their current terms on the board, saying there is still work to be done.

"I believe she (Baxter) will continue to be effective and that the board will be effective," said board member Russ. "I don't think we're going to be lame ducks."

"I'm looking at the remainder of my term with a different perspective, that there's a time limit and there is still an awful lot to get done."

As chairman Baxter's job includes having to "take the brunt of a lot of criticism" that rightly should be shared, said Russ. "For example, the relationship with county commissioners is not just Donna, but the board. It wasn't just her." The board voted 4-1 last year, with Gause dissenting, to take legal action in an effort to obtain more funds for the schools.

The confrontation led to a court-mediated settlement. Friction between the two boards has continued, surfacing most recently in disagreement over funding plans for the Leland Elementary School.

Russ said she supported Baxter's decision to withdraw and didn't try to talk her out of it. "Donna needs to give Donna some time," she said. "I don't think people realize how much time she has invested in this job."

While Baxter's tenure on the board was marked by criticism of her public relations ability, it has included successes as well.

The board set long- and short-term goals for improvement of the schools; built Supply Elementary School and laid the groundwork for a new Leland Elementary School; begun putting classified employees on new pay schedules; begun giving teachers and principals more authority through site-based management and more input in development of policies; and hired Superintendent Ralph Johnson and his assistants, Oscar Blanks and Jan Calhoun. The board is also revising and updating policies that hadn't been changed in 10 or 12 years.

A "safe schools" effort hasn't been in place long enough to document its effectiveness, Baxter said, "but we're doing things that have been proven to work elsewhere."

## Barnette Withdrawing Also

The Republican Party will also be seeking a new nominee for the District 4 county commissioner's seat. Pete Barnette, director of the Brunswick County Volunteer and

Information Center, confirmed Friday that he has asked party leaders to replace him as a candidate.

Barnette was seeking the seat held by incumbent Tom B. Rabon, who won his Democratic primary.

"I just have entirely too much, my work with VIC is too demanding. My work schedule doesn't lend itself to the responsibility of good civic service," he said, adding that he would be submitting a formal letter of withdrawal to the elections board soon.

Barnette said he would like to see the party choose "a businessman, like (Commissioners) Don Warren or Donald Shaw" as his replacement.

Brunswick County Republican Party Chairman Shirley Babson said the executive committee has been talking to prospects for both tickets, but hasn't reached a decision.

Roney Cheers, chairman of the Brunswick County Democratic Party, could not be reached for comment.

# Murder Warrant Issued Against S.C. Man In Puckett Shooting Death

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six-shot, .22-caliber derringer at him.

"They were looking for trouble," he said.

Again the altercation moved outside, where the suspect reportedly pointed the weapon at the crowd of bar patrons who followed them out.

"The owner told everybody to get back inside," Caison said. "Then something else happened and the other guy got his gun. There was another altercation. The victim tried to calm things down and got shot."

An autopsy has determined that Puckett died from a single .22-caliber bullet fired from about five feet away, Caison said. The derringer, with one spent shell and five live

rounds in the cylinder, was taken into custody at the scene, along with a 9mm semi-automatic pistol belonging to the suspect's companion.

"Our investigation indicates that the victim had not been drinking," Caison said. "He went out there to make peace and to separate what was going on and got shot in the process."

A friend of Puckett's told the *Beacon* she had just returned home Saturday night from two weeks out of town. She and her husband went to the Gator Lounge at about 11:45 "to unwind."

She said the place was crowded with locals and many people from outside the area. She and her husband were sitting at a table in back, watching Puckett play darts when they noticed a disturbance at the bar.

The witness, an emergency medical technician, said she saw a group of people follow two men outside. They returned to the bar, then went back out the door again. When the two men came back in a second time, she said Puckett walked over to offer his help to his uncle, Johnny Waylon, owner of the Gator Lounge.

"They all went outside again and I heard a shot," she said. "I ran to the door as Jet was coming in. He said, 'He shot me. I can't breathe. I can't breathe.' He had a small hole the left side of his chest and blood was frothing out of his mouth and his nose. It looked like he had been hit in the lung and maybe the heart."

She said she yelled for someone to call 911 as Puckett fell to the floor. She checked his wrist and throat and found no pulse. She began administering cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and continued until rescue workers arrived and took over.

Puckett was pronounced dead on arrival at the Brunswick Hospital. At least two other men were treated for injuries suffered in the scuffle. One was reportedly hit on the head with a gun by one of the two suspects.

While details of what happened that night remain sketchy, those who knew Puckett insist he was not the kind of man to get involved in an "alcohol-induced bar brawl," as other news accounts have suggested. They say he had a steady job with a local construction company and also worked for his uncle at the Gator Lounge on weekends.

"If anything, he would have been a calming force," said Karen Moshoures of Shallotte. "Everybody was his friend and he was a friend to everybody. If he thought you needed \$10, he'd give it to you before you had a chance to ask."

Moshoures's daughter Kristi and Puckett were planning to be married this fall. "He loved my daughter and would have done anything for her," she said. "That's why he was so precious to me. He was part of our family."

"He was just a regular guy with a great big heart."



STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC CARLSON

## Water Plans Examined

Utilities director Jerry Webb shows the Brunswick County Utilities Operations Board preliminary plans for extending county water service to the Shell Point and Boones Neck areas. On Monday the board delayed approval of an assessment roll for water lines in Shallotte Foini and recommended a construction contract for Special Assessment District 19. Shown (seated clockwise from lower left) are board members William Browning, Rudolph Simmons, Tom Rabon, Chairman Al Morrison, Earl Andrews, Dan Yarbrough and Berton Meyers. Standing behind the board is Thomas Horne of Buccaneer Hills.

## No Change In Primary Outcome After Canvass

A May 5 canvass of votes cast in the May 3 primary increased votes for one candidate by 200, but didn't change the outcome of any race.

Lynda Britt, elections supervisor for the Brunswick County Board of Elections, said District 1 school board candidate Olaf "Bud" Thorsen received 294 votes instead of 94 in Shallotte Precinct. The number was misread on a voting machine print-out.

If the error had resulted in a loss of 200 votes instead of a gain, that would have been enough to change the outcome of the election. Instead it widened what had been a 113-vote margin, giving Thorsen 3,972 votes to incumbent Thurman Gause's 3,659 votes.

## Normal Spring Temps Ahead

Expect normal spring temperatures and precipitation over the next few days, advises Jackson Canady, Shallotte Point weather-watcher.

Average daytime highs are expected to be around 80 degrees, with average nightly lows about 60. Canady forecasts about half an inch of rainfall.

For the period May 3-9, he recorded a maximum high temperature of 83 on the 7th, with the minimum low, 47, on the 6th. The daily average temperature of 64 degrees was about 4 degrees below normal.

He measured 1.15 inches of rainfall at his home.

## OIB Commissioners Stand Firm On Plan Board Vote

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Proctor said Tuesday he was disappointed but not surprised that no fellow board members changed their vote. His position is also unchanged.

"I still think we against the wishes of the people," he said. "The lesson to be learned here is that property owners need to get more involved and say what they want. The town will change when the people want it to."

In a related matter the board voted 4-1 to appoint Bob Shupe of East Third Street to the planning and zoning board to fill the vacancy created by the resignation in April of DeCarol Williamson. Shupe's term will end in July 1996. Making the nomination, Benton said Shupe had expressed a strong interest in serving on the board and that the town had expressed a desire to have a representative from the east end of the island.

Kendall Suh voted for his nominee, Ron Speakman, saying he had talked with Speakman about the post before talking with Shupe.

Shupe said later that he was "surprised" he received the appointment.

His appointment represents an almost complete turnover in membership on the planning and zoning board. EIA representative John Frink is the only continuing member. Other recent appointees include town members Joe Johnson and Norfleet Underwood and ETA member Frank Williamson Jr., who is the son of Mayor Betty Williamson.

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