

# Ash ABC Store Proposal Sparks Economic, Religious Arguments

BY DOUG RUTTER

Should the Brunswick County Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) Board follow through on plans to build a liquor store in Ash?

Some residents of the rural community say they're in favor of the idea, while others are vehemently opposed. Groups on both sides of the issue are trying to organize.

Representatives of eight Ash area churches opposed to the liquor store met Sunday at New Britton Baptist. A public meeting is planned Thursday at 8 p.m. at New Britton.

There are others who support the county ABC board's plans for a local store. They say it would be more convenient for area residents who now must drive about 10 miles to Shallotte to purchase liquor.

Since 1990, the county ABC system has opened one store near Holden Beach and another on U.S. 74-76 near the New

Hanover county line.

The three-member county ABC board, whose members are appointed by county commissioners, has decided the third store should be located somewhere in Ash, said ABC system manager Dot Kelly.

Tom Rabon, who represents Ash on the county board of commissioners, said he doesn't know whether more people in the community are for or against an ABC store.

"I've had some feedback pro and con," Rabon said Tuesday. "I really couldn't give you an answer one way or the other on that. I really don't know."

Brunswick County Commissioners passed a resolution earlier this month urging the ABC board to reconsider its plan to open a store in Ash.

"We've already done our thing," Rabon said. "We passed a resolution. I guess that says what we intend to say, I assume. It's up to the ABC board what to do next."

The county ABC board's next meeting

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—Jim Smith

*"Our biggest concern is that it goes against our spiritual beliefs."*

—Tom Mabry

"I guarantee you we'll have a group of people there on the 27th," said Jim Smith, who owns the Roadside Racing store in Ash and supports plans for an ABC store.

Smith said an overwhelming majority of the people in Ash are in favor of a local liquor store.

"The community right here I would say 90 percent are for it. I have personally heard nobody say anything against it," he said. "There's an awful lot of people in Ash that want this store. We would like to see Ash grow also."

Kelly has declined to say where the new store might be, but Smith said county ABC officials have talked to him about building the store next to his business on N.C. 130.

Smith said a liquor store on the east side of the highway would catch traffic headed to the beaches. "I definitely think it would help the area. All the traffic that goes flying through here would stop," Smith said.

Benny King is among the people in Ash

who are opposed to a county liquor store.

"We stand against it because we just don't think it's needed in a rural area like this," he said. "I just don't know what would be the benefit of having it in this area. I can't see it out in the country like this."

Tom Mabry, a deacon at Myrtle Head Baptist Church, said the purpose of Thursday night's meeting "is to mobilize support to fight the proposed ABC store for the Ash community."

Eight churches are spearheading the opposition, but Mabry said all of the local churches are going to be involved.

"Our biggest concern is that it goes against our spiritual beliefs," he said. "You don't have to go very far to see the destruction alcohol causes in lives, especially teenagers' lives."

People on both sides of the issue said they only found out about the county ABC

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STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC CARLSON

## Why Sweat It?

It may be hot on the street, but the water's just fine. At left, Megan Anderson, 4, of Kannapolis makes no effort to conceal her enthusiasm for summer vacation. At right, Jordan Jeffries of Burlington and Christine Kirby of Mebane cool off on a hot afternoon by floating in the surf. The two 7-year-olds became friends while their parents vacationed at in the South Brunswick Islands recently.

## School Board Declines County Offer; Hopes Mediation Will Resolve Issues

BY SUSAN USHER

Brunswick County Board of Education members Monday declined an offer of \$800,000 from county commissioners to settle a budget dispute, and instead instructed their attorney to continue the appeal process.

A letter from Clerk of Court Diana Morgan formally referring the dispute to Superior Civil Court for settlement was filed Monday afternoon by Deputy Clerk Yvette Murray. Also county attorney Michael Ramos filed a request for the case to be heard by jury trial.

School board Chairman Donna Baxter said that board hopes that court-ordered mediation will provide another chance to discuss the budget with commissioners.

"We hope we can go through the figures one more time and resolve any questions they have," she said. "We think we've gained a lot more knowledge of how to defend our budget and how to present it as a result of going through the process a year ago."

County commissioners appropriated \$9.26 million to the schools for the 1994-95 school year, which the schools said isn't enough to continue programs and services at existing levels. The schools returned to the county commissioners to ask for at least another \$1.2 million.

The commissioners' offer last week included \$150,000 toward establishment of alternative learning center for middle and high school students who don't function well or are disruptive in a regular school setting, and \$650,000 toward general operating expenses.

"They also offered in-kind assistance from staff members. They're trying to help. They realize the

*If the judge agrees to a jury trial, he will be breaking with the court's standard method of operation.*

concerns," said Baxter. But, she added, the county has the responsibility of meeting the school system's needs.

During the first four years of her six years on the board, said Baxter, the board's budget process was "go, come back and cut," based on its allocation to the commissioners, rather than to defend the budget or the process by which it was derived.

"We looked at the pros and cons. This was a principal-driven, bottom-up budget," she said. "We're still willing to compromise, but we're concerned." Those concerns include being able to take advantage of and build on a technology plan the schools began implementing last year at a cost of \$3 million, including a \$1 million special appropriation from the county, and matching state pay raises for locally paid employees, among other needs.

The schools' \$1.2 million compromise request came before the state legislature granted higher pay raises for teachers than the school system had anticipated. While the state pays salaries for most

teachers, the school system must match those salaries for additional teachers paid with local funds. The school had budgeted with the expectation of 4 percent across-the-board raises or 3 percent raises and a 1 percent bonus. Instead teachers with three to 30 years' experience will receive an average 7 percent increase plus a 1 percent bonus.

Finance Officer Rudi Connor hasn't received final figures but told the school board Monday she estimates the raises will cost at least another \$120,000 more than first anticipated.

School board members reached their consensus Monday morning after meeting for approximately an hour with board attorney Glen Peterson.

"I got the sense the board feels very strongly about the budget request it has submitted," said Peterson. "The board feels it is needed."

Resident Superior Court William C. Gore was hearing court in Robeson County and could not be reached this week. If he agrees to immediate scheduling of a jury trial, Gore will be breaking with the court's standard method of operation.

Mediation is standard first procedure for all civil Superior Court cases coming into the 13th District. According to trial administrator Steve Foster, mediation is based on the premise of give and take by both parties that results in a reasonable settlement. If the two parties are unable to reach an agreement, the mediator declares an impasse and the budget appeal case gets top priority on the Superior Court's calendar.

The school board's July 20 meeting, first set to continue revisions of several policies, was rescheduled for Wednesday, July 27, at 5:30 p.m., for policy revision, personnel and attorney-client matters.

## JONES QUITS PLANNING BOARD

# Commissioners Ask For New Look At Zoning

BY ERIC CARLSON

Feeling overwhelmed by public hearings on proposed zoning changes, Brunswick Commissioners on Monday called for a comprehensive study of the county zoning map and ordinance to identify "inconsistencies" that might need to be corrected.

But the county planning director and the chairman of the planning board on Tuesday said the process of fine-tuning county zoning has been under way for months and is directly responsible for the large volume of hearings, which are required by state law for any zoning change.

They also questioned the wisdom of cutting two employees from the planning staff as rezoning requests continue to mount and the department is being called upon to help implement the commissioners' new central permitting office proposal.

And in a surprise move that followed a brief discussion of zoning problems, Commissioner Jerry Jones resigned from his seat on the planning board saying, "I've served about three years now. I think it's about time for someone else to try it. I've tried to do a good job. I will attend the next meeting (July 20)."

Now let somebody else get some of the action."

At the commissioners' regular meeting Monday night, Chairman Don Warren noted that there have been many requests for zoning variances at each meeting" and said it is time to address the "obvious inconsistencies" in the law.

"I'd like the county manager to look at getting a time schedule for the planning department and the zoning administrator to go through the county section by section," Warren said. "There are too many inconsistencies between what is on site and what the ordinance says. It's hurting too many people's lives."

Commissioner Donald Shaw agreed saying, "I get more complaints about this every day. It hurts a lot of people and they hold the board of commissioners responsible. I want them to know we care."

Calling the zoning ordinance "too restrictive," Commissioner Wayland

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JONES

## Bird Island Owners Propose Plan For Denser Development

BY SUSAN USHER

Agents representing Bird Island owner Janie Price came before Sunset Beach Town Council Tuesday with a compromise proposal for rezoning the pristine barrier island to allow a denser level of development.

The changes proposed Tuesday would cut the size of building lots by half, increase the number of bedrooms allowed by one-third; reduce oceanfront yard setback by one-third; and double the density cap.

"We still feel that what we're looking at is more restrictive than what is called for," said John Ryder of Century 21/von Oesen consulting engineers in Wilmington. He was joined at the meeting by Price's son, Rees Poag, and attorney, H. Glenn Dunn.

While some individual town regulations have their own impact, such as the oceanfront setback, Dunn said the "interaction of various regulations" increases the loss of usable land even more.

He asked council to consider what is understood by the courts to be the "general rule of thumb" in restricting use of private property: protection of a genuine public interest.

"In our opinion you have gone past that purpose; you have gone too far with this combination of regulations," he said.

Last fall Sunset Beach Town Council zoned the island, its surrounding marshlands and similar areas within its planning limits as a conservation reserve district, de-

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## Man Called A Hero For Protecting Domestic Violence Victim

BY ERIC CARLSON

O.J. Simpson had just emerged as a suspect in his wife's murder and made domestic violence a hot topic of conversation on June 15, when Robert Poulk left a Southport restaurant for his home in Winnabow.

Little did Poulk know that he was about to be thrust into the midst of a violent altercation between an estranged couple that could have resulted in serious injury—or something worse—to himself or others.

Nor did he expect to be cited for heroism in recognition of his actions that evening.

"I don't know how heroic it was," Poulk said in a Tuesday interview. "I just did what I could to help."

Local law enforcement officers, who consider domestic violence calls to be some of the most dangerous situations they encounter, feel Poulk did more than they expect of the average citizen.

Which is why the modest 47-year-old Carolina Power and Light worker will be presented with the Brunswick County Sheriff's Gold Service Award, the department's highest recognition for heroic action by a citizen, Thursday.

"In a time when non-involvement is the norm, we in law enforcement hold in high regard an individual willing to put aside his fears to help another in a time of need," says the award certificate signed by Sheriff

John Carr Davis.

Poulk said he was driving north on Midway Road that evening when something caught his eye as he passed a dirt road near the Brunswick County Shrine Club. It appeared that a pickup truck had been involved in an accident and looked as if a man was trying to help a woman out from beneath the vehicle.

After turning around to see if he could help, Poulk said he reached the scene to find that there had indeed been a woman under the truck. But she had crawled there trying to escape from a man who had just succeeded in dragging her out from beneath the vehicle.

"When I got there she was sitting in the middle of the road saying, 'Help me! Please help me!'" Poulk said. "He had her by the shoulders and was trying to force her back into the truck. So I yelled for him to stop."

The man broke off his attack. Poulk was able to get between them and see to the woman's condition. She told him the man had beaten her and choked her.

"She was having a lot of trouble breathing," Poulk remembered. "About all she could say was 'Help me. Help me.'"

Seeing all the commotion, a nearby resident came over to investigate. Poulk told the neighbor to call 911,

then sat with the victim and "kept her calm" until help arrived.

Fortunately, the man maintained his distance. But he continually implored the woman to get back into his truck, Poulk said. She refused to go with him. The three waited several tense moments together before Deputy Rebekah McDonald pulled up and arrested the assailant on a charge of assaulting a female.

"An ambulance got there a few minutes later and gave her oxygen, which seemed to help a lot, because she was hyperventilating," Poulk said.

The victim was transported to Doshier Hospital in Southport, where

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