

'Tis The Season

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THOMAS WRIGHT, N.C. Representative for the 98th house district, addresses a legislative forum at The Brunswick Hospital sponsored by the county's three chambers of commerce Thursday night. Seated are 14th district representatives Dewey Hill (left) and David Redwine.

CHAMBER FORUM

Local Democrat Lawmakers Adapting To Minority Status

BY ERIC CARLSON

Things are going to be very different in Raleigh next year.

That was the message delivered during a legislative forum at The Brunswick Hospital Thursday night by Democrat representatives when asked about their expectations for working in Republican-controlled state house next year.

Issues like health care and environmental regulations will take a back seat to legislation aimed at cutting taxes, reforming the welfare system and giving veto power to the governor, representatives told the group of about 100 people who attended the forum sponsored by the county's three chambers of commerce.

Rep. Dewey Hill said Republicans "have a mandate" and are likely to succeed in passing many of the proposals listed in their conservative "contract with voters." Rep. David Redwine gave a similar assessment of what the new majority in the state government indicates.

"The message we got from voters was that they want less government intrusion, lower taxes and fewer regulations. They voted for people who supported those issues."

Asked if the legislature is likely to push forward with Gov. Jim Hunt's "Year of the Coast" environmental initiatives, Redwine said he expected "real rough sledding" for the programs.

"They carry a very heavy price tag," Redwine said. "I doubt very seriously if much of that will pass."

Redwine said that before the house majority changed hands, he was in line for a co-chairmanship of the pow-

erful House Appropriations Committee. The job will now go to a Republican legislator. Still, Redwine says he believes there can be cooperation between the two parties on some issues, including his bill to hold a referendum on a lottery in North Carolina.

"The Republican majority has it on their agenda to put it on the ballot, so they'll have 67 votes plus mine," Redwine said. "But a lot of those folks who were elected got support from the Christian coalition. They voted against (a lottery) before. So it will be interesting to see if they can take the heat."

Redwine said a referendum could open up other options for legalized gambling, including horse racing, video poker and riverboat gambling. He called the latter "a great economic development tool" that could boost construction along the Cape Fear River.

None of the representatives voiced support for the idea of having school boards and county commissioners set their own tax rates for individual budgets. The proposal is expected to be discussed in the legislature as a means of making school systems more accountable for spending.

In directing the school funding question to the legislators, Kelly Holden, former chairman of the Brunswick County Commissioners, said the local school board "has handily used the commissioners as a scapegoat" for deficiencies in education. He questioned the wisdom of having a jury of 12 people "who nobody voted for" set the county tax rate.

Both Hill and Redwine said such disputes should be

"The message we got from voters was that they want less government intrusion, lower taxes and fewer regulations. They voted for people who supported those issues."

—Rep. Dewey Hill

(See DELEGATION, Page 2-A)

CRC Votes Against New Measure For Protecting Bird Island

BY SUSAN USHER

A state commission charged with regulating planning and development in 20 coastal counties decided Friday that additional development restrictions aren't needed for Bird Island.

The island had been nominated by members of the Bird Island Preservation Society as a coastal complex area of concern or AEC, on the premise that existing regulations do not afford sufficient protection of the area's natural and aesthetic values. If so designated, the state would have had to establish specific use standards governing the island and could have controlled density of development—something not provided by the six other AEC designations that already apply to the undeveloped barrier island west of Sunset Beach.

"I'm disappointed that the CRC did not have the fortitude to vote positively," Bird Island Preservation Society President Bill Ducker said Monday afternoon. He said the N.C. Coastal Federation had presented a "factual, no-gingerbread" presentation in committee.

"I think the reasons the CRC gave for not following the staff's recommendation were inadequate. For someone to say to me it's already under six AECs and doesn't need another, I don't agree with that."

Among other things, the society had been concerned that local zoning regulations could not be relied upon to ensure low-density development, citing the developer's application pending before the Sunset Beach Town Council for a lessening of the rules. Council will hold a public hearing on the request Monday, Dec. 5, at 7 p.m.

at the Maples Clubhouse, Sea Trail.

The town planning and zoning board has recommended no change in the island's conservation reserve zoning, but the council is not bound by that recommendation.

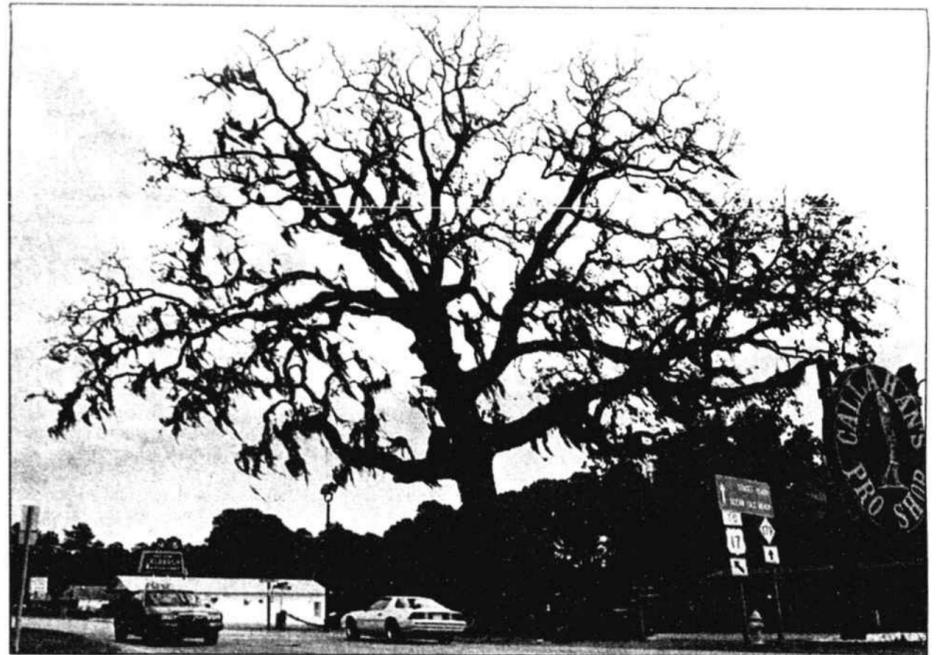
While agreeing the island met the necessary qualifications to become a coastal complex AEC, first a committee and then the full Coastal Resources Commission voted against taking the nomination the next step to public hearing, ending the nomination process.

They concurred with the argument by Rees Poag, whose mother, Jane P. Price, owns the island, that a seventh AEC designation on the island would be "regulatory overkill." Poag, who could not be reached Monday, and his agents have contended that existing regulations are adequate to protect the natural environment and that additional regulation could make it too expensive to develop the island for residential use. They suggested some conditions could be added to the development permit if necessary.

On an 8-4 vote the CRC chose to uphold a recommendation from the Planning & Special Issues Committee and not send the proposal to public hearing. Voting in the minority were David McNaught, Courtney Hackney, Richard Hargitt and David Adams.

Voting in the majority were Eric Haste Jr., Reginald Caroon, Roger Crowe, Bob Emory, Peggy Griffin, Paula Kirby, Timothy Thornton and Baxter Williams.

Chairman Gene Tomlinson does not vote except to (See COASTAL, Page 2-A)



Old Oak Tree

The massive oak tree near the traffic light on N.C. 179 in downtown Calabash was felled on Monday. The white oak had very hard wood, said Rose Clemmons of Massie Tree Service of Supply, which was hired to remove the dead tree. Large branches were removed before the tree was cut at its trunk and allowed to fall onto the highway. "People keep on telling me it was something like 300 years old," Clemmons said of the tree.

VOTE TO MEET ONCE MORE

Outgoing Commissioners Do Some Last-Minute Spending

BY ERIC CARLSON

In a round of last-minute appropriations, the outgoing Democrat dominated Brunswick County Board of Commissioners spent more than \$191,400 during its last regular meeting before a new Republican majority takes office Dec. 5.

But instead of adjourning for the last time, the board agreed to recess until Nov. 30, when commissioners will have a final opportunity to appoint 16 members to area advisory boards and commissions.

Without discussion, the commissioners voted unanimously to use \$162,000 of the county's unspent fund balance to purchase 10 new patrol cars for the sheriff's department.

Due to their heavy usage, the county normally replaces 10 to 12 sheriff's department vehicles during each budget cycle. The new cars were requested in the 1994-95 budget, but were cut out of the spending

plan by temporary County Manager Charles McGinnis.

"They put so many miles on them that we have to replace some every year or we'll be forced to buy twice as many the next year," Commissioner Jerry Jones said after the meeting. "I don't know how they got cut out. But I think they do need them."

The Brunswick County Economic Development Commission also received \$15,300 from the commissioners Monday night for an automobile purchase that was discussed and denied by the board during budget workshops.

Tom Monks, executive director of the EDC, told the commissioners that mileage reimbursement for EDC employee Steve Johnson "averages \$400 to \$600 per month."

The new car will be used by Monks, while Johnson will be given the EDC's old automobile. An ap-

propriation of \$1,500 for maintenance and insurance on the new car also was approved.

Another \$3,700 was given to the EDC for "marketing and advertising efforts," which Monks said had to be reduced by \$5,500 due to the new budget.

The approval came despite the recommendation of County Manager Wyman Yelton to deny the request. Yelton said the need for a new car was "not an emergency situation" and advised that the request "could have been addressed and resolved during the regular budget process."

At the request of county health Director Michael Rhodes, the commissioners earmarked \$7,472 to partially fund a new environmental health specialist position. Rhodes agreed to apply \$10,000 worth of lapsed salary funds in the health department budget to cover the re-

mainder of the \$17,472 needed to fill the position for six months.

The board denied Rhode's request to for an additional \$16,160 to purchase a vehicle and supplies for the new position. He was told to make do with existing vehicles and equipment.

Rhodes asked for the new position after the board of health voted unanimously to request another environmental health specialist. A study committee recommended the new position to allow the county to catch up on a backlog of low-pressure septic system inspections.

In July, 1992, the N.C. Commission for Health Services turned over responsibility for monitoring the pump-type septic systems to county health departments. Failure to keep up with their supervision could lead the state to prohibit their use in Brunswick County, Rhodes said.

Low-pressure septic systems are used on small lots that do not have enough space for a traditional gravity-powered septic system. Brunswick has more such systems than any county in the state, Rhodes said.

The county commissioners will decide whether to refund the position permanently during budget discussions next spring.

At the request of Rose Ann Mack, executive director of the Cape Fear Council of Governments, the commissioners agreed to appropriate \$1,470 in matching funds as Brunswick County's share of a new alternative sentencing program for non-violent criminals.

The "Community Penalties Program" will allow judges to choose a sentencing package that requires full restitution to victims, employment, community service, substance abuse treatment and job training for convicted criminals instead

of an active prison term. Brunswick County will participate in the program along with (See OUTGOING, Page 2-A)

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