

Zoning Stands

Sunset Beach Town Council sticks with its zoning plan for Bird Island. Hunting is banned throughout the town. Page 7-A.

Strike Up The Band

Bolivia's first Christmas parade is set for Saturday. The fun starts at 11 a.m. The lineup is on Page 4-B.

Season Opener

West Brunswick High School's girls and boys are victorious in Friday night hoops against North. Sports, Section D.

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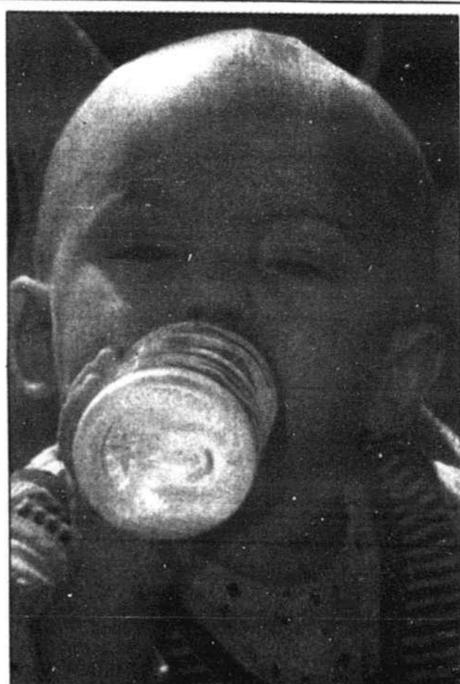
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Santa's Coming!

Santa Claus tosses a handful of candy to eager children awaiting his climactic arrival at the annual Christmas parade through Shallotte last weekend. Meanwhile, 15-month old Heather Taylor of Seaside found a bottle of warm milk more to her liking as she enjoyed the festivities from a prime vantage point on Main Street.



STAFF PHOTOS BY ERIC CARLSON

Some Lose Jobs, Some Promoted In New Sheriff's Reorganization

BY ERIC CARLSON

As promised, Ronald Hewett said the doors to his department have remained open 24 hours a day since he was sworn in as Brunswick County Sheriff Monday.

There were many changes under way at the sheriff's department this week as offices were re-arranged, new furniture was brought in and walls got a new coat of paint. Several veteran officers were assuming new responsibilities while others looked for new jobs.

Unlike other areas of county government, state law gives the sheriff the freedom to reorganize department personnel in any way he chooses. Asked about the numerous changes announced Monday, Hewett said "decisions were made in the best interest of the department" in an effort "to improve its ability to function properly."

Nine full-time deputies were not rehired by the incoming sheriff. Three other officers resigned. Several of those are heading for jobs with other law enforcement agencies.

Among those who lost their jobs with the department were training officer Lt. Carl Pearson, jail supervisor Capt. Douglas "Sonny" Padgett, deputy Sgt. Donald Stovall and deputies Anthony Key, Rebekah McDonald, Cathy Hamilton, Joseph Adams and Jerry Gray.

Others veteran officers, like former

Chief Deputy John Marlow, were transferred to other positions in the department. Marlow is now a captain whose duties include those of chief jailer and supervisor of bailiffs. He will retain his former salary.

Hewett has named retired SBI agent and former state trooper Ken Snead as his chief deputy. Snead began his career as a law enforcement officer in 1965 with the N.C. Highway Patrol, where he served for more than eight years before working another 29 years with the N.C. State Bureau of Investigation.



SNEAD

As chief deputy, Snead will oversee the daily operations of the sheriff's department and act on behalf of the sheriff in his absence. Snead's duties include overall supervision of detectives, narcotics investigators, patrol deputies and the Emergency Response Team.

The former supervisor of civil process, Larry Jones, has been promoted from lieutenant to captain of administration with departmental budgeting responsibilities added to his other duties.

Capt. Phil Perry will retain his (See CHANGES, Page 2-A)

JONES CHAIRMAN, COLLIER VICE-CHAIR

New Commissioners Reverse Old Board's Vote

BY ERIC CARLSON

Republican commissioners took control of county government Monday night, appointing four-year veteran Jerry Jones chairman and newly elected board member Leslie Collier vice chairman in split votes along party lines.

Second-term Commissioner Tom Rabon nominated fellow Democrat Bill Sue to be chairman. Sue returned the favor by suggesting Rabon for the second seat.

Both of the Democrats alternative nominations were defeated when newcomer Douglas Simmons joined Jones and Collier to assure Republican leadership on the board.

The board did not vote to appoint a county clerk, a county manager or

a county attorney. Until further action by the board, Joyce Johnson will remain temporary clerk, while Wyman Yelton serves as county manager and Michael Ramos continues his duties as county attorney.

A swearing-in ceremony for the commissioners and the presentation of a service award to outgoing member Wayland Vereen preceded the new board's first regular meeting.

Former Chairman Don Warren and Commissioner Donald Shaw, who were likewise defeated in the November election, did not attend the traditional change-of-office ceremony or a reception for outgoing board members before the meeting.

Collier, who is the first Republican woman ever to be elected commissioner in Brunswick County, quickly sparked a minor controversy when she asked the new board to overturn an action made last week during the old board's final meeting.

A majority agreed to remove Southport zoning activist Robert Quinn from the newly formed Zoning Overlay Advisory Committee and to return former appointee Rosetta Short to the post.

The overlay group was formed to study the potential need for special



JONES



COLLIER

zoning districts that would protect environmentally sensitive areas of the county. Its recommendations are to be brought to the county planning board for consideration.

Short, who is a member of the N.C. Coastal Resources Advisory Council, was named to the local seven-member committee by former Commissioner Vereen in September. Last week, during his last meeting as a board member, Vereen asked fellow commissioners to replace Short with Quinn.

Republican Shaw and Democrat Warren backed Vereen and agreed to approve the change. Jones voted against the move.

Quinn was among the founders of the Brunswick Mining Awareness Committee, a citizen action group that mounted a successful protest to stop Martin Marietta Aggregates from opening a limestone mine on land it owns near Southport.

Facing increasing pressure to head off the proposal, Democrat commissioners eventually agreed to enact a law prohibiting the mine. The ordinance passed despite no votes from Shaw and Jones, who is also a member of the planning board.

Vereen was defeated by Collier in

the general election last month. His removal of Short from the advisory committee may have resulted from her support of Collier's candidacy.

Collier's motion Monday to return Short to the committee was approved 4-to-1, with Sue dissenting. Commissioner Rabon joined the Republicans in voting to return the zoning committee to its original membership.

After the meeting, Sue criticized the replacement, insisting that Quinn has more knowledge about the issues likely to be addressed by the overlay committee.

"Bob Quinn knows more about zoning than anybody on that committee," Sue said. "He's studied it inside and out. He knows the laws. He knows zoning."

Collier defended her action, saying she felt the commissioners acted wisely in creating what she called a "very representative, well-rounded committee." She said Short "wanted to stay" on the board and was surprised to learn of her replacement.

"I've known her for a long time and I have a great deal of respect for her," Collier said. "I thought she brought great strengths to the committee, which is supposed to take a county-wide look at the zoning law. Mr. Vereen did a great job with her appointment. I'd like to give the committee a chance to get off the ground."

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Testimony Expected To Begin Thursday In Cummings Trial

BY ERIC CARLSON

Twelve jurors have been seated and opening arguments are expected to begin Thursday morning in the first-degree murder trial of a Robeson County man accused of shooting an Ash store owner to death during a robbery attempt last April.

After questioning more than 75 jurors in seven days, prosecutors and defense attorneys have agreed on a panel of eight women and four men to hear the case against Daniel Cummings Jr., 39, of Red Springs, Assistant District Attorney Lee Bollinger said Tuesday.

Both sides were expected to continue questioning Wednesday in hopes of approving two alternate jury members who must listen to the evidence and be willing to take the place of any juror who is unable to remain until the trial is over.

Cummings is accused of killing Burns Everett Babson, 74, who was found shot to death behind the counter of his Bamboo Corner Ash Beverage store on Whiteville Road April 22. Cummings also faces charges of robbery with a dangerous weapon and assault with a deadly weapon with intent to kill inflicting serious injury.

If convicted of first-degree murder, Cummings will face a second proceeding before the same jury, during which the panel must decide whether he should be put to death or sentenced to life in prison.

The state is expected to begin its case against Cummings Thursday with testimony from Brunswick County Sheriff's Detective Tom Hunter, who helped process the bloody crime scene where Babson was found shot in the face, the back and twice in the arm.

Hunter has also been credited with obtaining the statements from Cummings that are likely to be the prosecution's strongest evidence. In a series of interviews with Hunter at the Sampson County Jail, Cummings allegedly admitted entering the Bamboo Corner store with the intent of stealing money to buy crack cocaine.

According to copies of the alleged statements included in the court file, Cummings said he got into a struggle with Babson inside the store.

"I believe I heard or counted about four shots that went off inside the store. I took the old man's wallet. I got the money out of the cash register and left the old man lying face down in the chair," the statement said.



STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG BUTTER

Road Work

Workers with Apac-Carolina Inc. were busy last week widening and resurfacing Smith Avenue in Shallotte. In the future, town officials hope the road will become a major connector between U.S. 17 Business and U.S. 17 Bypass. The N.C. Department of Transportation also plans to resurface Shallotte's Main Street within the next few months.