

Mary Livermore Library
Pembroke State Library
Pembroke, NC 28372
Mary Livermore Library
Pembroke, NC 28372

PUBLISHED EACH THURSDAY



THE CAROLINA INDIAN VOICE

PEMBROKE, N. C.

"Building Communicative Bridges
In A Tri-Racial Setting"

ROBESON COUNTY

VOLUME 17 NUMBER 10

25¢

THURSDAY, MARCH 9, 1989

Pembroke Town Council Rejects Resolution to Abolish Housing Authority

by Sam Kerns

In a vote of three to two, Pembroke Town Council members voted to reject a resolution of intent to abolish the Pembroke Housing Authority and bring the operation under direct control of the town board. Voting against the

against the resolution were Councilmen Larry Brooks and Vernon Oxendine voting against the resolution and Councilmen Henry Oxendine and Harry Oxendine voting for the resolution. Mayor Milton Hunt was required to break the tie and did so by voting against the resolution.

In the previous meeting of the board, the council had instructed town attorney Ron Sutton to research the ramifications of bringing the operation under the control of the board. He gave the following information: he contacted the League of Municipalities, the Attorney General's Office, North Carolina General Statutes, and talked with officials in the town of Edenton who had gone through such a change in housing operations.

The procedure to abolish the Housing Authority would be to adopt a resolution of intent to abolish the Housing Authority, at which time the board would have had a minimum of 90 days to wait before a vote to abolish the authority. If the vote had been to abolish the Housing Authority, at that instance, the town board would have assumed the position of the current Pembroke Housing Authority Board. All property would have been transferred to the town, but without the liability to pay off any outstanding debt. The property of the housing authority would stand as collateral for bond debt. The board or any municipality can not obligate the citizens to any bond debt without their vote. If the bonds on property were to go sour for some reason, the repayment would not dip into the town treasury.

In the even the board did abolish the housing authority, the town board would assume the power and duties and responsibilities of administering the operation, according to Attorney Sutton. He also indicated that the town of Edenton stated with a Housing Authority and later abolished it due to some personnel problems. He stated that they had not had any problems with the operation but that the Edenton Town Attorney indicated that there was a general feeling that they may have had an overkill in trying to correct the personnel problems.

Sutton stated "This turns out to be a political decision and I do not want to get into it. You will see some minor things in changes. There are a lot of other things out there to be considered."

Councilman Henry Ward Oxendine stated that "we've been talking about this for some time now and I think that we should go ahead with the resolution of intent."

Councilman Vernon Oxendine stated "I would prefer to wait until the next meeting to think about doing it because I have heard some things here tonight that I would like to think about."

Councilman Larry Brooks asked "What is the rush? Let's wait 30 days and investigate by having the attorney talk with other towns."

Councilman Harry Oxendine said, "We would only indicate on intent by the resolution. We would have 90 days to investigate and work things out."

Councilman Brooks said the news headlines would be "Pembroke Abolishes Housing Authority." Whereupon Councilman Henry Oxendine stated that he would like to get citizen input. He indicated that many of the town's people had been encouraging this move.

The Mayor then said, "You people are more in command of the facts than anyone else and that is why we

were elected, to make informed decisions." He further stated, "When people find out that you are running the Housing Authority they will think you can part the Red Sea and get them housing overnight."

IN OTHER BUSINESS

The council conducted public hearings on a close out on the 1986 Community Development Block Grant; the 1989 Community Revitalization Public Housing Application; and the Economic Development Grant.

According to Reed Whitesell, program administrator, the 1986 project had projected 54 houses for rehabilitation or renovation and 57 were done, creating one of the best track records in the state for completing work in compliance with all state and federal laws. He indicated that due to late funding on the part of the state, Pembroke would have the 1988 and 1989 applications under consideration for funding at the same time. Funding can exceed \$750,000 under consideration at one time although Pembroke stands an excellent chance of funding for both years, but 1988 will be funded late.

According to Whitesell, the Economic Development Application can be submitted anytime during 1989. The maximum grant is \$60,000 and can be used to improve the waterlines low interest loans with payback or outright grants to create jobs for low to moderate income persons.

IN OLD BUSINESS

The board added Virgil Lowery to represent Union Chapel and Sanford Strickland to represent Union Elementary on the Recreation Commission. Wade Hunt, spokesman for the Recreation Commission, was asked to discuss with the commission the replacement of a position made vacant by James Locklear's move outside the city limits.

NEW BUSINESS

Dr. Adolph Dial requested that the town run water lines to the elderly resthome development behind Colony Shopping Center, just north of Pembroke Elementary School. He will be paying for the streets, curbing and sewer. The streets will be dedicated to the town and cost approximately \$13,000. After the dedication the town will be able to collect Powell Bill money for street improvement.

Mayor Hunt indicated that the board had set a precedent by running water to Brookfield Subdivision south of the town. He said, "Mr. Dial is one of our biggest tax payers and I have no problem trying to help him. We need to encourage economic development to expand our tax base."

Councilman Henry Oxendine moved to pay \$21009 to run the water line to the property. He said, "We need to promote business and Dr. Dial has been a good citizen in bringing business to the town. He could have gone elsewhere and \$2100 would be money well invested in the area."

Henry W. Oxendine moved to approve running the line with Vernon Oxendine seconding the motion. Councilman Harry Oxendine also voted to approve the expenditure with Councilman Larry Brooks voting no. Brooks indicated that it was a private development and he did not think the town should run the line across private property.

The board also voted to have the 911 emergency response number available for all persons with the 521 prefix; to support toll free dialing for the entire county and endorsed Robeson County Clean Community Plan being promoted by Wilton Wilkerson and Farm Bureau Insurance Company.

Plans for \$50 Million Indian Center Unveiled in Raleigh



Ray Littleturtle, right, is shown greeting Rep. Bill Hurley (D-Cumberland County) at the recent

reception for General Assembly members in Raleigh.

by Barbara Braveboy-Locklear
Special to The Carolina Indian Voice
North Carolina's Indian Tribes on February 28th unveiled plans for an ambitious Cultural Center, to be developed in Robeson County.

The \$50 million Center, to be located on a 500-acre tract near Pembroke on U.S. Highway 74, will

celebrate the history, heritage and culture of all North Carolina Native Americans.

The Center, which has been in the works since the mid-'70's, is scheduled to open its first phase in 1992 and to be completed in the year 2000. Planners envision it as a major tourist attraction off Interstate 95 and

as the largest Indian center in the United States.

At a reception for General Assembly members in Raleigh, Dr. Helen Scheirbeck, the Center's executive director, said, "The North Carolina Indian Cultural Center will be a lasting tribute to North Carolina's indigenous people. It will also become a great attraction for visitors, and as such make a major impact upon the economy of the entire southeastern part of our state."

Once established, the center is expected to employ 500 people and to generate an estimated \$30 million annually for the local economy, organizers say. The project will be self-supporting and will boost business for motels, restaurants and other services.

Robeson is one of the state's poorest counties, with a mostly rural population and an agriculture-based industry.

"The potential impact of the Center offers great hope for a part of our state which lags behind the rest of North Carolina in almost every measure of economic activity," Dr. Scheirbeck said.

"To be sure, that is a compelling reason for building it; however, the most important reason is that our Native Americans of North Carolina deserve a tribute which honors and preserves the 10,000 years of history that belongs to them," Dr. Scheirbeck added.

Reprinted for The State, Columbia, SC Sunday, March 5, 1989

TALENT ON TAP

By DOTTIE ASHLEY
Staff Writer

Scott Blanks clicks in staccato taps across the floor like a young Gene Kelly, but with such a Vegas twist that you might envision him in *Foies Bergere* at the likes of Caesar's Palace.

But a dance studio in the basement of a physical education center is a far cry from the dazzle of the Strip. And that's where Blanks was working on a recent winter afternoon, teaching an advanced tap dance class at the University of South Carolina.

Above the taped music, he called out to his students commands of the lightning-speed combinations of slapping-changes, pull-backs and traveling grab-off steps.

"I picked up a lot of my tap style in Las Vegas when I was a student at the University of Nevada. I worked in some of the lounges and big rooms at the casinos in the Sahara and other hotels and clubs," said Blanks, 29, a second year master of fine arts student in USC's Department of Theater and Speech.

In January, Blanks impressed Columbia audiences with his strong voice in selections from *Phantom of the Opera* in the musical special "Karla at the Koger" with singer Karla Devito.

But many Columbians also have seen Blanks in a role without any hint of Vegas glitz. His acting ability was exhibited in Harvey Fierstein's *Torch*

Song Trilogy, playing at Trustus Theatre's Late-Night Friday events.

One unforgettable scene in *Torch Song* features Blanks in the role of a homosexual who has sexual relations with a man whose face he never sees. The scenario is a brutally honest study of the ironic nature of such encounters, as Blanks' character tries to establish some kind of dialogue with his silent partner.

It is a controversial scene and one that several actors in town, both straight and gay, have said confidentially that they would never do because of the possible social stigma.

However, the scene didn't faze Blanks, who conveys the unblinking discipline of the consummate actor, of a man determined to make it in the big leagues.

"The part in *Torch Song* was very difficult, very grueling, but a challenging role to play because when you are having sex in the bar scene you are on stage by yourself. There's no real blocking that goes with it, and you have to talk to someone who doesn't exist, but with whom you are presumably having sex. You really have to use your imagination."

Blanks added, "To me, the whole point of *Torch Song* is to be yourself — whether you are gay or straight. The point is to be happy and don't let society force you into making choices in your life that you don't want."

Playing opposite Blanks in *Torch Song Trilogy* is Tony Lucchi, also an MFA acting student at USC who shares an apartment with Blanks near the campus.

"It's great working with Scott and in such an off-beat role," said Lucchi. "It shows what a fine actor he really is because the furthest thing that Scott is, in real life, is a drag queen!"

For Blanks, the decision to take on the role was a practical one.

"Most of my training and experience has been in musical theater, and, therefore, I want to get as much experience as I can in serious and classical drama," said Blanks, who will participate in the Shakespeare Theatre's program in Washington, D.C. next year.

Possessing the high cheek bones of a male model, and a slim dancer's body, Blanks is 6-feet tall and weighs 165 pounds. He is a native of Pembroke, N.C., where he took ballet at Pembroke High School. After graduation, he joined the U.S. Air Force.

"During the four years I was in the Air Force, starting in 1978, I took voice lessons, and, at whatever place we happened to be stationed, I would be in musicals, any kind of musicals," he said. "I really learned to tap dance when I performed for six months each year for about two years at the Busch Gardens at Williamsburg, Va. In my four years in the Air Force, I was in 25 shows."

After being released from the Air Force at a base near Las Vegas, Blanks enrolled in the University of Nevada, majoring in theater and taking tap.

"I'm not a real, traditional hooper, like Charles 'Honi' Coles or Sandman Sims, because I'm not as close to the floor in my steps as they are," he said. "I did have a teacher, Bob Fitch, who danced like that. He would say, 'If it's in your mind — if you can say it, then you can do it,' and then he would jump straight up in the air and come down tapping like crazy real close to the floor, like Greg Hines."

Blanks said he would enjoy going back to Vegas: "The dancers in the clubs there are really terrific, probably the best in the world, because that's what they do day in and day out. Also, I was paid a lot of money to dance."

So why doesn't he return to the glittering gambling capital of the world?

"You get burned out after awhile," he said. "You do 3,000 shows of *Foies Bergere*, and then suddenly you are over 30 and nobody wants you anymore. Out there, more and more young talented dancers and singers are coming in all the time, and so there's always someone to replace you, somebody faster, somebody better looking."

After leaving Las Vegas, Blanks auditioned for work at the Music Theatre of Wichita where he appeared in *On Your Toes*, *Girl Crazy*, *Brigadoon* and *Barnum*.

"For *Barnum*, I learned to juggle in 10 days," said Blanks.

Being a quick study seems to be essential to his life since it requires that he juggle his hectic schedule with being an absent husband and father.

"I met my wife, Cathy, in the Air Force, and she is still there working as a nurse, stationed at Fort Bragg," said Blanks. "We have two daughters, Sara, who is 6, and Caroline, 8 months. I try to get up there on weekends to see them. It's a three-hour drive." And starting next year he'll be even farther away in Washington.

For now, Blanks is looking forward to appearing in Chekhov's *The Three Sisters* at USC this spring. The play will be directed by visiting instructor and New York director Paul Giovanni, who directed *Hamlet* at USC last year.

"I don't know if working with Shakespearean actors is going to have a direct effect on my Broadway musical theater career," said Blanks. "But at least if people see I've had serious classical training, they will take me more seriously. I think all of this crazy juggling of my life to get my education will be for the good in the long run. It pays to cover all your bases in the world of the theater."

State Award Winners

Community Involvement Award

William Lonnie Revels Sr., Greensboro, North Carolina

RALEIGH—Governor James G. Martin recently presented recognition awards for achievements in the area of human relations. The ceremony took place at the Governor's Mansion in Raleigh.

The awards are made each year by the N.C. Human Relations Council in the Department of Administration for citizens, businesses and organizations for outstanding accomplishments in human relations.

Governor Martin presented awards to Consolidated Diesel Company, Whitakers, and Lorillard, Inc., Greensboro, Business and Industry Award; the Rev. Arlester Simpson, Montgomery County, and Ann Boseman, New Hanover County, Citizen Award; and Delmar P. Robinson, Cherokee, and William Lonnie Revels Sr., Greensboro, Community Involvement Award.

Representatives of the Human Relations Council who participated in the ceremony were Dr. Jimmie V. Morris of Oxford, chairman, and Jim Stowe, executive director, and Dr. Constance Johnson of Winston-Salem, Ken Blankenship of Cherokee, and Ronald K. Ingle of Raleigh.

"February is Human Relations Month in North Carolina, and we are proud to recognize these award recipients who have devoted themselves so unselfishly to the needs of others," said Governor Martin.

The N.C. Human Relations Council was created in 1963 to promote understanding, respect and goodwill among all citizens and to encourage equality of opportunity and employment without regard to race.

William Lonnie Revels is a Lumbee Indian and native of Pembroke, NC, and currently resides in Greensboro. Mr. Revels is first and foremost a spokesman for North Carolina's Indian community, but his concern and interest has extended to all

disadvantaged people throughout his career. He has worked as a volunteer advocate for disadvantaged people both in North Carolina and in other areas of the United States.

With an attitude of positive expectation, Mr. Revels began his official public campaign on behalf of human rights for all people in Greensboro in 1975 when he supported and worked to establish the Guilford Native American Association (GNAA). The GNAA was established to confront standard housing, high unemployment, alcoholism, the self-defeating lack of ethnic identity and pride, and the high rate of school dropouts among Indian youth.

In conjunction with that involvement, Mr. Revels was invited to serve on the Commission of Indian Affairs which subsequently named him as its chairman in 1985. In his work with the Commission of Indian Affairs, he has been involved in advocating and ensuring that Indian people in this state become visible, viable and a part of the state's policy and programming. He is not compensated for his time or his follow-up work, yet his door is always open.

Mr. Revels also serves nationally as a presidential appointee on the United States Department of Agriculture's Minority Advisory Committee. He travels nationwide, looking at Department of Agriculture's jobs and projects to make sure minorities are getting their fair share. During 1988, he worked to get the Department of Agriculture to step up its recruitment activities at traditionally black colleges in the South and land grant colleges in other areas of the United States.

He has demonstrated courage, determination and perseverance in his many pursuits, and his efforts have not been in vain. He has earned a right to be included in the annals of history as an Indian leader, a productive citizen and a "Keeper of the Faith." Indeed, his life and the service which he has rendered to others symbolize the deep commitment and concern, not for himself, but for others.



Dancer tries all theater has to offer