

THE STATE PORT PILOT

A Good Newspaper In A Good Community

VOLUME 44 NUMBER 9

14 PAGES TODAY

SOUTHPORT, NORTH CAROLINA

SEPTEMBER 20, 1972

5 CENTS A COPY

PUBLISHED EVERY WEDNESDAY

Criticism Of Road Work Unfounded, Says Parnell

Charges that highway funds for Brunswick County are being misused have brought a strongly-worded rebuttal from State Highway Commissioner David Parnell, who said the county is receiving its share and more of available road money.

"In view of the facts and figures," Parnell stated in a letter to William A. Kopp, Jr., chairman of the Brunswick County board of

commissioners, "I do not see how you, or any member of your board, can truthfully state or imply that highway funds for Brunswick County have been misused or misallocated."

He said copies of the letter have been forwarded to local newspapers, asking that information contained in the letter be made available to the public. "I think the residents of Brunswick

County will realize that highway funds have been expended in a fair and equitable manner," the commissioner added.

Parnell responded to recent charges by members of the Brunswick County board of commissioners concerning misuse, misallocation and unfair distribution of highway funds. At a Sept. 6 meeting, the county board voted to proceed with action

leading towards a lawsuit against the State Highway Commission, a measure Parnell said would not be in the best interest of Brunswick County residents.

The remainder of this article is the text of Parnell's Letter To Kopp.

At its monthly meeting in August, the State Highway Commission appropriated funds for construction for the fiscal year. Secondary

Construction Funds are appropriated on the basis of unpaved road mileage, and \$6,043,000 was appropriated on the basis of 22,907.54 miles, statewide. Brunswick County's share was \$51,000 for 194.8 miles of unpaved roads.

Funds for secondary road construction were reduced by approximately 50 percent from the amount allocated for the last fiscal year;

however, the overall road needs of the entire state had to be considered and not only the secondary road system. Other counties in District 1 and their allotments are New Hanover, \$7,000; Onslow, \$35,000 and Pender, \$36,000.

Approximately 39 percent (22,907.50 miles of 58,964.70 miles) of all secondary roads in the state are unpaved, and this percentage holds true for Brunswick County (194.8

miles of 495.20 miles).

Not since July 1, 1931, has any county had the authority to levy a road tax nor have any road taxes been assessed or collected by a county since that date. The collection of road taxes is a function of the state, and the State Highway Commission is charged with the responsibility for the allocation of funds for highway construction and maintenance. State law requires the Highway Commission annually to formulate a program for secondary road construction. County commissioners do not have the authority to dictate to the Highway Commission the expenditure of funds nor do they have the authority to approve or disapprove any expenditures; however, recommendations from county commissioners are taken into consideration in the formulation of road improvement programs.

The State Highway Commission has adopted a priority system as a guideline for secondary road improvements. This rating system is based on the number of houses and

businesses located on the road, the number of churches and schools, other land-use characteristics, whether or not the road is a school bus route, the average daily traffic and the value of the road as a connecting link between other roads.

Political party affiliation, race, color, creed and financial status of the residents are not a part of the rating nor are such factors considered in programming a road for improvement.

The \$51,000 allotted in August and a balance of \$9,000 remaining from the 71-72 allotment make a total of \$60,000 available to Brunswick County. I recommended the following allocations and they were approved by the Highway Commission at its meeting in September:

—\$5,000 was allocated to complete the grading, draining and stabilization of SR 1517, Swain Road, SR 1400, Cortez Smith Road, and SR 1515, Mill Creek Church Road, which were funded in 1971-72. These three roads total 3.5 miles in length and

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School Bus Help Asked

School Supt. Ralph C. King has asked for the cooperation of school patrons in helping to get school bus routes established.

King noted that parents in several school attendance areas are bringing carloads of children to school in the morning. "This poses several problems for school officials who are attempting to get permanent bus routes established and provide prompt and reliable service for children riding school buses," he said. "If parents will permit their children to ride the buses in the morning and in the afternoon, additional buses may be allocated and thus enable us to provide a more efficient transportation system."

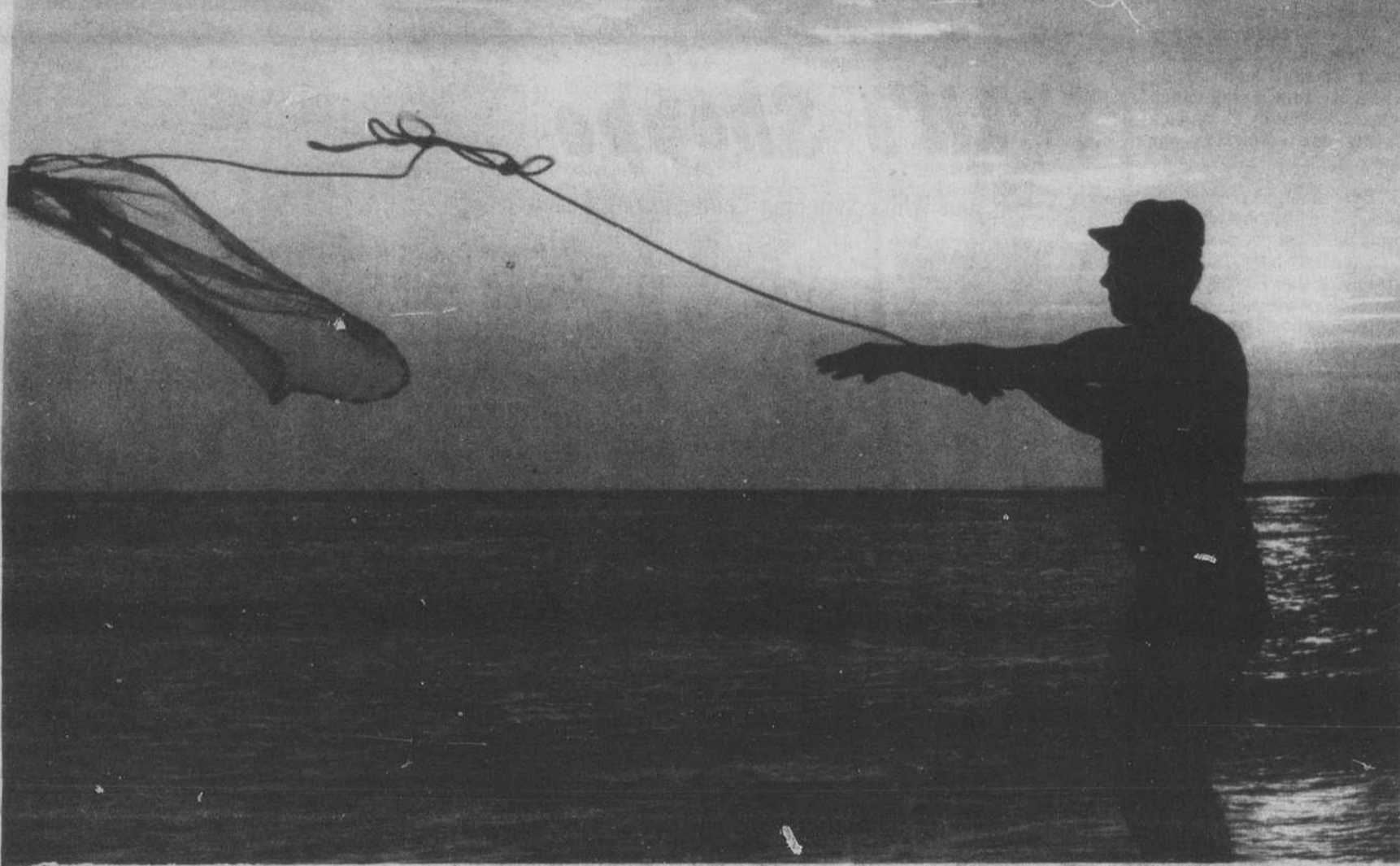
"It appears that many patrons are under the impression that a seat is provided for every child riding school buses. Although trends indicate this will be a reality in the near future, present state law does not provide seats for all children."

Section 115-186 General Statutes, N.C. School Law provides that 25 percent of the bus seating capacity be standees. For example, a bus with a seating capacity of 48 would have a total capacity of 60.

"Operating funds are allocated to the local units on this basis," King said.

King noted that this same statute establishes the guidelines which determine the minimum distance from the respective schools a child may live and receive transportation service. He indicated that at the present time, the law provides bus transportation for students living more than one and one-half miles from their respective schools.

Buses must be routed to within one mile of those persons who live as much as one and one-half miles from the school.



CASTING A GILL NET for bait, a fisherman enjoys the late afternoon near Lockwood Folly Inlet. Fishing along the Brunswick County coast does not

end with summer, but continues through the fall on the beaches, piers and charter boats that operate here.

'More At Stake Than Single Dune'

"Sometimes there is a little discrepancy in what the owner would like to do and what the law allows you to do," noted Assistant Shoreline Protection Officer Ed Clemmons, a witness at a special meeting of the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners that was called to hear arguments concerning the propriety of a dune permit issued to a Sunset Beach property owner.

Kason Keiger, a Winston-Salem attorney who owns a

cottage at Sunset Beach, presented the case of Beachhead, Inc., a North Carolina corporation he said stands for the protection of natural resources. The organization has filed a \$500,000 suit against property owner James T. Henderson, who reportedly has altered the main dune line in order to build a house. He did so with a permit from the county, and that is what the meeting was about Friday.

A response is expected from the county board after

written summations from both parties.

Evidence tended to show that while Henderson and neighbor A.O. King were adhering to rules set forth on the permit, the permit was not issued in line with an ordinance adopted by the board of commissioners. According to the county ordinance, to lower a dune below 15 feet would be to cause material damage, and testimony showed that the area in question now stands no more than 14 feet above sea level.

King, who applied for the dune permit with Henderson, said Clemmons came to their property August 18 and granted a temporary permit that he said was good for seven days. Friday, Clemmons said he did not know under what authority he issued this temporary permit but did so because the contractor was there ready to start work.

King said work started on Tuesday after the 18th (which was on a Friday) and that landscaping was finished that week. He said, however, that "there hadn't been any bulldozer work done when I posted it (the permit)."

County Manager Jerry Lewis, who also serves as Shoreline Protection Officer, said he did not inspect the affected area before the permit was issued but noted that the finished grade is six feet above road elevation, as prescribed in the permit. Road elevation was reported to him as eight feet, and the 14-foot total height of the property is above that of neighboring dune areas.

The county ordinance states there shall be no material weakening of the main dune line (where the affected area is located), and that a lowering of dunes below 15 feet would be considered a material weakening. Lewis said his interpretation of the ordinance was that if dunes were to be lowered below that

height, a permit would have to be issued and certain criteria met.

Keiger read a portion of the

\$55,000 For Library Books

The Board of Education has authorized \$55,000 to purchase library books for the new high schools so that a minimum of ten books will be provided for each student.

The action was taken at the last regular meeting of the board. Also, the distribution of New Testament Bibles by the Gideon organization to fifth graders on a voluntary basis was approved.

The board okayed funds for the employment of three additional custodians at \$400 a month and three part-time secretaries at \$200 a month for the new high schools.

Resignations were accepted from Sally Kirby, Brunswick County-Southport Middle School; Anna B. Williams, Lincoln; and Margie Candler, Union. Teaching contracts were awarded to the following teachers:

Brunswick County-Southport Middle School — Frances Kirkland (Title I); Leland-Janet Hart and Ella Davis; Lincoln — Lenora Chasten and Eva Gore Jones; Shallotte — Carolyn Marlowe; Southport — Patricia Allen and Rebecca Flourney (Title I); Union — Edna Faison and Patricia Watts (Title I); Loletha Ferrell and Betty Phelps; Waccamaw — Nancy Williams (Title I) and West Brunswick — Linda Miller.

The following non-professional workers were employed: Utha Grissett, teacher aide at Union; Madalyn Phelps, teacher aide (through Oct. 20) at Waccamaw; and Janie McCracken, teacher aide and temporary reading instructor through Oct. 20.

ordinance that stated, "The main dune line may not be disrupted in any manner," then asked the county manager if this did not mean that Henderson therefore was granted "permission to trade no dunes in that area?"

Lewis replied, "Technically speaking, I'd agree with you."

The county manager said that in his opinion the strength of the dune had not been materially weakened; "it has really increased the effectiveness," he suggested, in that 130 truckloads of clay material were hauled onto the two lots and thus made the property more resistant to wind or water erosion.

Clemmons, whose primary duty is director of Solid Waste Disposal in the county, said he did not know the elevations of the property when he issued the temporary permit August 18. He said it was a decision for the Shoreline Protection Officer whether the

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Truck Route Is Suggested

The Board of Aldermen has approved a truck route through Southport, not to restrict the haulers but to protect against further damage to city streets.

"State-maintained streets can support these loads, others cannot," said Alderman Pierce Horne. "It's as simple as that." Streets that would be involved in the proposed route are Howe, Moore and Leonard — all state-maintained roads.

Horne suggested that the heavy trucks hauling Brown & Root materials use the best streets, and that drivers be given directions adequate to prevent their getting lost on side streets. "We're not

talking about an ordinance or a law," he said, "but something to help them through town."

Not all heavy traffic is destined for Brown & Root, contractors for the CP&L nuclear power plant here, but the board members agreed that proper routing would eliminate much of the heavy traffic on streets other than Howe, Moore and Leonard. The state would erect the "Truck Route" signs.

The matter was discussed by the Southport Board of Aldermen at the regular September meeting on Thursday. Other business included:

—a transfer of \$300 in the

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Jetty Damage To Bring Fine

A fine of \$50 will be levied against anyone playing on or tampering with the nylon bags recently placed on the strand by the Yaupon Beach board of commissioners in an effort to help stop beach erosion.

The bags, which extend beyond the high-water mark to form a jetty, are filled with sand and are dangerous when wet. Yaupon Beach Mayor Clarence Murphy said that warning signs will be posted.

The board of commissioners, which met last Monday, has nominated William Smalley, III, to fill

the unexpired term of Miss Jackie Herring, who resigned from the board last month. He will serve until November, 1973, when Miss Herring's term expires.

The new commissioner was named after a petition signed by 78 residents was presented to the board. No other names were submitted and he was chosen unanimously.

Mayor Murphy read a "Right-of-Way" agreement between the State Highway Commission and the Town of Yaupon Beach pertaining to the new Oak Island bridge

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County Records Highest One-Cent Tax Collection

The highest single-month collection of the one-cent sales tax in Brunswick County has been reported by the N.C. Department of Revenue.

During August \$59,969 was collected here, compared to \$47,724 reported in July. The previous high month was June when \$55,738 was collected through the tax, which is applied to all purchases otherwise subject to the state's three-percent levy.

The collection of sales and use tax in Brunswick County has increased almost threefold since the first collection last October (\$10,630). By the first of the current year, collections had increased to \$35,000 and have continued to rise.

The tax was levied last fall by the county commissioners in an attempt to ease the burden on property-tax payers. The extra levy, which is applied in four of every five North Carolina counties, has brought needed revenue to Brunswick as well as nine municipalities in the county.

The money collected from the tax is distributed by the

N.C. Department of Revenue on an ad valorem basis. Under this system, Long Beach receives the greatest allotment, while Southport would get the most if figured on the basis of population, and Shallotte the most on the volume of retail sales.

The Construction of the Carolina Power and Light Company nuclear power plant at Southport has the greatest impact on the sales tax collection, however

Brown and Root, contractors for the project, purchase enough material out-of-county to make Brunswick the sixth-ranked North Carolina county in use tax, which is applied to materials bought elsewhere but used here.

The August receipts will be combined with the \$47,000 collected in July and the September collections to be distributed on a quarterly

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Time and Tide

Thirty-five years ago this week, the floating prep school Polaris stopped again for a stay in Southport. The handsome little yacht, which provided prep training for the Naval Academy, had several young recruits aboard and was enroute to its home port of Charleston.

An all-out attack on the Southport sandspur crop was begun during the past week by the city work forces; dove hunters had been anxiously awaiting the season's opening, and opening of the deer season was scheduled for October 1; a storage shed for all Brunswick County school buses was scheduled to be erected at Shallotte in the near future.

Thirty years ago this week Brunswick County highway patrolmen were warned to be on the lookout for reckless

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