

'Under-The-Table Politics'

Board Refuses To Alter Stand On Seat Change

By BILL ALLEN
Brunswick County commissioners refused to change their position on Rep. Allen Ward's county seat bill during a regular meeting Monday at the Hood Building in Southport.

A delegation of about 20 citizens from the lower end of the county attended the meeting and urged the commissioners to take a neutral stand on the bill to give the people the right to vote on moving the county seat and governmental offices to Supply.

The board voted unanimously last month to approve a resolution op-

posing "at this time" the bill introduced in the General Assembly by Rep. Ward.

"We are here to present one side of the question that deserves consideration," said Ed Gore, who served as spokesman for the delegation. "The issue is to provide a vote on the question rather than to move the county seat. This point has been missed."

"It might be in the best interest of this board and the county for you commissioners to take a neutral position," Gore continued. "I think it would be one of the worst tragedies in the history of this county to deny the

people the right to vote on this matter."

Gore showed commissioners a large number of petitions supporting Rep. Ward's bill. He said the petitions had 4,500 names on them.

James Bellamy said the delegation was asking the board to let the people decide the issue. "The people have the wisdom to make the choice," he stated. "I don't know what the voters will say, but I will support it 100 percent."

Chairman Franky Thomas told the delegation that he opposed the way the matter was handled since he had to be informed by a neighbor. "I think this is a poor way to handle anything as critical as

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BRUNSWICK COUNTY schools were accredited by the State Board of Education last Thursday and proudly displaying the certification are, seated, Barbara Yount and Board of Education Chairman Wilbur Earl Rabon; standing, left to right, are Franklin Randolph, W.T. Bowen, Supt. Ralph King, Associate Supt. Robert Elkins and William Sue.

Hearing Held Today

A House of Representatives committee on local government heard arguments this morning for and against a bill that would allow a vote on moving the Brunswick County seat to Supply.

Speaking in favor of the bill, introduced by Rep. Allen Ward, were Col. Davey Stanley, James Bellamy and Ed Gore. Speaking against the bill were Grover Gore, Eugene Tomlinson, V.A. Creech, Jr., and Franky Thomas, chairman of the county board of commissioners. Each side was allotted 20 minutes.

Following the committee hearing, a delegation representing interests of the proposed Clarendon County, met with Sen. Edd Nye to ask him to draft legislation calling for the division of Brunswick County into two separate governmental bodies. The delegation brought with them petitions signed by more than 2,600 persons since the drive to separate started 12 days ago.

Secretary Gets Raise

Stephenson Is Renamed As Resources Director

Members of the board of directors for the Brunswick County Resources Development Commission Monday night reinstated Jackie Stephenson as executive director of that organization, effective immediately. The vote was 5 - to - 3.

The motion for Stephenson's re-employment was made by J.A. Francis and was seconded by O.W. Cleaton. Those voting in favor were Francis, Cleaton, David Broadway, Harris Thompson and Benny

Ludlum. Voting against the motion were Odell Blanton, Ralph Frazier and L.H. Stanley.

Stephenson was invited to come into the meeting room from the anteroom where he was waiting and was informed by Chairman George Inman of the board's action. Asked if he were ready to go to work Stephenson replied, "I never stopped working."

When his services were terminated in February the board agreed to pay Stephenson for one month, plus accumulated vacation

time of two weeks. It was agreed by the board in unanimous action to pick-up his pay where it left off, making his employment continuous.

Earlier in the meeting James R. Prevatte, Jr., Southport attorney, explained the Open Meetings law and spent some time answering questions from board members, who sought clarification of its provisions. Later a discussion was held concerning the advisability of having the full-time services

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'Time Element' Blamed

Consolidation Vote Dead After 5-1 Board Action

By BILL ALLEN
The movement to give residents an opportunity to vote on the consolidation of Long Beach and Yaupon Beach this year suffered a major setback Thursday night.

The Long Beach Board of Commissioners voted, with Commissioner Nancy Leggett in opposition, to inform Rep. Allen Ward that the town does not wish to hold a referendum on the question this year "because of the

time element."

Chairman Woody Vennel told the board that the Long Beach Consolidation Committee decided to make the recommendation during a meeting March 21. He said that committee members believe that more time is needed to inform the public about the issues involved.

Commissioner Ellis Dudley, a member of the committee, said Rep. Ward told him he needed information to introduce the

bill by April 15. "People need to be informed before they vote," Dudley stated. "We can't provide all the information people need before June since a tremendous amount of study must be done."

Mrs. Leggett said she was concerned because the board had given the people the impression they would be able to vote on the issue soon.

Any bill introduced in the General Assembly, she pointed out can be changed in

committee before it is approved. "I am bothered by the fact that if the bill is not introduced this session, the General Assembly might not meet again for another two years," Mrs. Leggett declared.

More than one commissioner and citizen attending the meeting said they did not want Rep. Ward associated with the Long Beach bill. "He (Rep. Ward) does not represent Brunswick County," said Planning

Board Secretary Rosetta Short. "He is representing (Shalotte) Attorney Mason Anderson, his nephew."

The board voted unanimously to hold a public question-and-answer meeting Monday, April 14, at 7:30 p.m. to hear citizens view about consolidation.

The board voted to pave 62nd Street East and to start on Yacht Drive after hearing an appeal voiced by Mrs. Joyce Bowen.

Mrs. Bowen, who has been

urging that something be done about 62nd Street at recent meetings, told commissioners that she did not believe that the planning board had looked at the needs of the people in deciding to recommend the paving of Yacht Drive.

She requested that the board rescind previous action and pave 62nd Street "and others." She said the board could either make a political decision or help the people. "The fact is that the street

needs to be paved," she added.

The planning board, which is charged under town ordinances with the responsibility to recommend street paving, requested that commissioners re-affirm the original decision to start on the Yacht Drive project.

"The planning board considers it imperative to pave Yacht Drive as quickly as possible to relieve congestion on Oak Island Drive, which is particularly

acute in the summer, and to provide another artery for school buses during the remainder of the year," said the planning board recommendation read by Mrs. Short. "When paved, no one in this area would be more than half a block from a paved main artery."

The recommendation noted that Yacht Drive is one of the three main arteries on the island which run parallel to Oak Island Drive. It is un-

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Action In Closed Session

Meeting Appears 'Flagrant Violation'

By BILL ALLEN

The Yaupon Beach Board of Commissioners voted to fire John Thompson Monday night in an apparent flagrant violation of the law.

Thompson, who has served as supervisor of the water department for over one year, was fired on a 3 - to - 2 vote during a closed executive session that lasted 37 minutes.

When the doors were re-opened to let people back into the meeting room, commissioners voted on another split decision to end the meeting. The majority of the commissioners rushed from the building.

However, Commissioners Bill Smalley and W.E. McDougle stayed behind to inform the public about what had happened behind the closed doors.

They said the board voted 3 - to - 2 to fire Thompson while in executive closed session. Commissioner Ted Wood made the motion to fire Thompson and Commissioner Marvin Watson seconded it. Wood, Watson and Commissioner Gib Barbee supported the motion while McDougle and Smalley were in opposition. Mayor C.E. Murphy did not cast a ballot.

The North Carolina Open Meetings Law, which permits boards to discuss personnel in closed session, says "that final action on the discharge of any employee for cause after hearing shall be taken in open session if such discharge is within the executive jurisdiction of said governing body."

Town Attorney A.H. Gaine, Jr., who attended the closed session, told The Pilot that he believed the law allowed the board to take final action behind closed doors. "Everyone thinks he is a lawyer these days," he added.

Thompson, who has not been "officially" told he was fired, reported to work Tuesday morning and took annual leave. He said he would continue to look after the water system since

Yaupon Beach has no one else to do the job.

Mayor Murphy has called a special meeting Wednesday morning at 11 a.m. to discuss "terminating John Thompson's time."

Smalley told citizens after the meeting ended that Wood made the motion to fire Thompson, who was outside during the session, after reading a three - page statement. "Wood said he was representing the people

and was going to protect the people," Smalley reported.

"But Ted Wood was not elected to the board. He was appointed to serve despite the fact Ralph Cammack had the support of 131 residents who signed their names to petitions. Ted Wood does not represent the people. He comes up for election this fall and I am going to do everything I can to beat him."

Wood said in the statement

that he wanted to bring the board "complaints that have come to my attention in regards to the positions that John Thompson now holds and the ability and discretion he has been using to execute the duties thereof."

He said that he saw a "conflict of interest" in Thompson serving as chairman of the planning board and as building in-

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County Schools Are Accredited

Brunswick County schools were accredited by the State Board of Education last Thursday, the seventh of North Carolina's 149 school districts to be so recognized.

A certificate noting the accreditation was presented to the Board of Education by Supt. Ralph King during the board's regular meeting Monday night. "We should give credit to the teachers and school personnel in the system who made the accreditation possible, and

especially to Associate Supt. Robert Elkins," King said.

The board unanimously re-elected Wilbur Earl Rabon chairman and named W.T. Bowen to serve as vice-chairman. In other major action, the board voted unanimously to oppose a bill introduced by Rep. Allen Ward that would stop area schools from receiving a share of profits from the Shalotte ABC store. Board members referred to campaigns to establish the store

that "promised" that profits would go toward helping the schools.

Supt. King said he had determined from conversations with Ward that it was the intent of House Bill 525 to eliminate aid to the Shalotte area schools. Board Attorney Mason Anderson, Ward's nephew, said he was speaking "not in defense" of the bill when he noted that various ABC store don't give

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