



## Bolivia Site Approved For New County Complex Location

By BILL ALLEN  
Staff Writer

The new Brunswick County seat will be located outside the town limits of Bolivia.

The Brunswick County Board of Commissioners voted on a split decision Monday to relocate the county seat and build the new complex on the Brown-Knox site.

The motion to select the Brown-Knox site was made by Commissioner Ira Butler, Jr., and seconded by Commissioner Willie Sloan. Chairman Franky Thomas voted in favor of the site to give it the majority.

Commissioners Steve Varnam, Jr., and W.T. Russ, Jr., voted in opposition during the roll call vote. But they did not nominate another site for consideration by the board.

Chairman Thomas urged commissioners to base their votes on their conscience

since they have been under a "tremendous amount of pressure" on the question of location of the complex.

"We have been threatened and cussed out," the chairman pointed out. "I think that you should vote your conscience, and I would certainly think we would be honorable people if we just did that."

The Brown-Knox site, which has 156 acres including 1,800 feet of road frontage of US 17, is located about one mile south of Bolivia on the northwest side of the highway. The price of the land has been set at \$187,200.

George Frink of Bolivia only offered the land to the county on October 6 during a regular board meeting. It is owned by C.W. Knox, the J.H. Knox heirs and the John Brown heirs.

The property had not been offered the county when the

Site Selection Committee overwhelming voted to recommend the Canal Wood property, which is located about four miles down the highway toward Supply from the Brown-Knox land. The 199-acre Canal Wood tract was offered to the county for \$149,250.

Although the selection of the site was not of the official agenda at the meeting, Chairman Thomas asked commissioners if they were ready to make their selection "at this point in time" early in the meeting. "I think we need to get it over with," Varnam suggested.

Butler immediately made a motion to select the Brown-Knox site and it was seconded by Sloan.

Phil Yount of Bolivia, who served on the county Site Selection Committee, told Varnam that the final price

for the 156 acres of land was \$1,200 per acre.

County Planner Johnny Sutton told Varnam that no detailed soil tests have been made on the property. But he said tests have been made based on general soil information.

"Canal and Brown-Knox have the most suitable soils of the four sites for construction," Sutton told the board. "There is no drainage problem with the Brown-Knox site."

Kenny McKeithan of Bolivia told the board that the valuation of the 140-acre Brown property is listed at \$142,000. The property has \$30,000 worth of timber on it, he reported.

"You are getting a valuable piece of property when you get Mr. Brown's," McKeithan declared.

Yount said the site extended

farther back than the property map showed. "It is much deeper than it appears," he explained.

Butler, who walked to the county map to point out the land, said he wanted to explain why he recommended the Brown-Knox site to the board.

"Our whole county is oriented towards Wilmington," the commissioner pointed out. "It would catch people going to Wilmington. The land is accessible to all areas of the county, especially since the population center is moving east and south."

"It (the Brown-Knox site) will be a giant step toward reuniting the county," said Board of Education Member Franklin Randolph. "If you select a Town Creek site, I believe it will end this talk of splitting the county."

Randolph pointed out that Bolivia has agreed to furnish water to the Brown-Knox site. "This will save the taxpayer money, along with reuniting this county," he declared.

Bolivia Board Member Edward Mintz told Chairman Thomas it was "definitely" the intention of his town to supply water to the Brown-Knox site if it was selected.

Sloan told the board that he checked out the four sites from a mileage standpoint last Monday. "We are really not talking about that many miles between the sites," he pointed out. "The real good land is the Brown and Canal property."

Chairman Thomas said he didn't think anyone "could feel hard at the commissioners" because of their selection of the new site.

"It would be much more important for a hospital to be dead center than for a county seat or complex because the average person makes more trips to the hospital in a year's time than to their county seat," he stated. "I think that anything this board does, they have nothing to be ashamed of."

Chairman Thomas announced.  
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## Strong Cleared From Prisoner Release Charge

By BILL ALLEN  
Staff Writer

Brunswick County Sheriff Herman Strong was acquitted of two charges of unlawfully releasing a prisoner during trials in District Court in Shallotte Thursday and Friday.

Special District Court Judge F. Fetzer Mills of Wadesboro acquitted Sheriff Strong of the first charge seconds after allowing the opposing attorneys five minutes each to present their closing arguments.

He said he based his decision on testimony provided the court by former Chief District Judge Ray Walton. Walton said he authorized the release of Daniel Eugene McGinty, 18, of Yorba Linda, Calif., for medical reasons.

Applause broke out in the courtroom after Judge Mills announced his decision. The applause was quickly stopped by the judge, who said he was prepared a fill the jails in Shallotte, Southport and Raleigh to avoid any demonstrations in the courtroom.

All seats in the courtroom in Shallotte were filled with

spectators during the Thursday trial. About a dozen persons had to stand at the back of the courtroom at times to hear the testimony.

A total of 14 witnesses took the stand to testify during the trial, which last almost five hours.

Sheriff Strong did not take the stand to testify in his own defense during the trial. However, he has publicly admitted releasing McGinty, but denied any wrongdoing in the matter.

The sheriff was charged with "unlawfully, willfully and feloniously" ordering the release of McGinty on a criminal summons issued September 9 "upon information furnished under oath" by former Deputy Sheriff Robert Wayne Long of Rt. 1, Freeland.

McGinty, who is now serving time in a California youth camp, was taken to the North Carolina - South Carolina state line and released after being given \$5.

Judge Mills, who was assigned to preside over the trial by North Carolina Supreme Court Chief Judge Susie Sharpe, expressed concern that judicial

procedures were not being followed in Brunswick County.

"It is apparently a practice in this county, according to testimony, to disregard the judicial procedure," Judge Mills said at one point in the trial.

The judge expressed particular concern that no bond was ever set in the case, that McGinty, who was indigent, was not provided a court-appointed attorney and that no fugitive warrant was issued. "He (McGinty) could have been charged with violating a lot of salute, but he was not," Judge Mills noted.

Southport Attorney A.H. Gainey, Jr., who represented Sheriff Strong, made several motions during the trial to dismiss the case because he said McGinty was not charged with a crime in Brunswick County. Judge Mills denied the motions.

Gainey argued that the law required that a person had "to be charged with crime or sentenced to jail" before he could be unlawfully released.

The arrest warrant, the attorney pointed out, charged  
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KEZIAH MEMORIAL PARK next to the Southport - Brunswick County Library was dedicated Friday afternoon, with Mayor Eugene B. Tomlinson doing the ribbon-cutting honors. Assisting the mayor are project co-chairman

Dorothy Hardee (left) and Dee Loughlin of the Southport Garden Club. Featured attraction of the park is the Indian Trail Tree. (Photo by Kenny Hewett)

## Tax Records Obtained, Reflect Changes Made

By BILL ALLEN &  
DIANE MCKEITHAN

The Brunswick County Board of Equalization and Review placed new values on several hundred parcels of land during its final meeting earlier this month.

The board - acting with only a three - member majority present - approved the new values after individually examining folders apparently containing the proposed values of the various properties under consideration.

While the meeting was held in public, the sheets within the folders showing the various values were not openly discussed or made known to persons attending the session. Commissioners initiated the sheets containing the values and approved all of them in one motion.

Acting Tax Supervisor K.T. Bellamy and Commissioners W.T. Russ, Jr., Ira Butler, Jr., and Willie Sloan said they did not believe the information

should be made public when 'The Pilot' asked for a list of the changes made the property owners affected.

The Pilot, however, obtained the property re-appraisal reports, which were reviewed and acted upon during the last Equalization and Review meeting held October 7. The changes made are reported below in this article.

Attorney William C. Lassiter of Raleigh, who represents the North Carolina Press Association, said that the way the board approved

the values was in apparent violation of the Open Meetings Law.

In addition, Lassiter said that there is no question in his mind that all action taken by the Board of Equalization and Review is open to public inspection.

"In other words, it is my opinion that all of the proceedings of the Board of Equalization and Review from the time of the initial appeal to and after the time when the Board takes action with respect to appeals are proceedings open to the public

under the statutes of North Carolina, and all records in connection with those proceedings are public records open to the public under the statutes of North Carolina," the North Carolina Press Association attorney declared.

Officials in the county Tax Supervisor's office refused to allow 'The Pilot' to see the "public records." They said that only Bellamy, who was spending the week attending an Institute of Government school to qualify to be a tax supervisor, could show the information to the public.

After obtaining Lassiter's opinion about public records, 'The Pilot' questioned County Manager Don Flowers, Jr., about the matter. Flowers said the records were open to the public and had County Personnel - Purchasing Director David Swain arrange for 'The Pilot' to obtain the information.

It was agreed that 'The Pilot'  
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## Social Service Dept. Will Be Investigated

A state agency has agreed to "conduct a full-scale investigation" of the Brunswick County Department of Social Services at the request of the county commissioners.

Regional Director Leon Norman of the Department of Human Resources, Division of Social Services, said his agency would be "glad" to conduct the investigation while attending a county board meeting Monday.

The request was made after Norman told the commissioners that a recent audit showed that some of the department bookkeeping procedures were "highly irregular." Chairman Franky Thomas asked Norman if he knew of any agency that could evaluate the Social Services department in Brunswick County. Norman said his staff could handle the job.

"How do I get you to conduct a full-scale investigation of our

department?" Chairman Thomas asked.

"You just did," Norman answered. "We will be glad to do it for you."

Regional Auditor Bill Conley told the board that his recent audit of the Brunswick County Social Services department showed that a better bookkeeping system was needed to control refunds received.

"The department needs to have more documentation on refunds," Conley pointed out. "This needs looking into and at least control established to determine when money comes in and where it goes."

Conley said the problem has been caused because the department has "no established procedure" to handle the matter.

Norman said the problem was "highly irregular." But he said the state would accept part of the blame because the last regular audit of the  
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## Post Office In New Site

The new Southport Post Office will be built at the corner of 12th and Howe streets.

The Southport Board of Aldermen voted unanimously to approve the location and offered the cooperation of the city during a special meeting last Wednesday afternoon.

William D. Bennett of Memphis, Tenn., real estate specialist, said Post Office officials decided that the new facility in Southport should be located between 5th and 12th streets on Howe Street.

He said the area was selected after a survey was made based on a 20-year growth projection.

Bennett said he investigated all "suitable" locations and recommended the site on the southeast corner of 12th and Howe streets. The land had to contain 45,000-square feet.

Mayor E.B. Tomlinson, Jr., and the aldermen said they would like to have the new Post Office located in the central business district.

Bennett said a location had to be selected where the Southport Post Office could also serve both the Long Beach and the Boiling Spring Lakes post offices.

Postmaster Marjorie Livingston told the board that the Post Office served about 14,000 persons in Southport, Long Beach and Boiling Spring Lakes.

"I think 12th Street would be  
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## Extra Hour Of Sleep

Turn back the hands of time this Sunday morning at 2 o'clock.

That's when Daylight Savings Time ends for this year. Before retiring Saturday evening, "fall back" from 11 to 10 o'clock, or from 10 o'clock to 9, etc. This is when you get that extra hour of sleep you'll lose again next spring!