

# Fired landfill director to appeal his dismissal

By Terry Pope  
County Editor

Brunswick County's solid waste director has appealed his firing and will make his case before county commissioners April 19.

Leo Hewett of Supply, employed since August, 1978, was placed on a three-day suspension by former county manager David Clegg and then fired by interim county manager John Harvey on March 17.

His firing apparently stems from violations uncovered by the state at the county landfill in Supply.

Hewett was the department head in charge of landfill operations at the 75-acre site and earned \$28,534 yearly. Those duties have now been turned over to Darry Somerset, head of the Operation Services Department.

Harvey says he will not hire a replacement for Hewett.

County commissioners voted Monday to allocate \$70,613 from the county manager's emergency fund to pay for landfill improvements mandated by state inspectors. They also reluctantly voted to pay a \$7,500 fine in a compromise with the N. C. Department of Environment, Health and Natural Resources' Division of Solid Waste Management.

"It's not like we have a choice, is it?" asked commissioner Wayland Vereen.

The state issued a compliance order on September 24, 1992, with administrative penalties for three major violations at the Supply landfill. In a compromise with the state, the county agreed to submit a corrective action plan, to make improvements and to pay the fine.

The county's plan was submitted to the state on February 22, just three weeks before Hewett was suspended and then fired.

"That could have been \$7,500 for each of the 60 days," said commissioner Don Warren.

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Leo Hewett

That would have placed penalties at more than \$450,000.

Because of its lack of compliance at the Supply landfill, the county now will not be eligible for grants available for its recycling program, said Harvey.

"It's another of our bad-luck stories," he added.

Terry Dover, eastern area supervisor of the Solid Waste Management Division, said the county plan will correct problems at the landfill and allow it to stay in compliance.

The county was cited for three violations: 1) allowing all solid waste entering the landfill to spread out over a large area and not restricting the site to a compact area; 2) not covering solid waste at the end of each operation day with a minimum of six inches of soil; and 3) not covering nonactive areas of the landfill with at least a foot of intermediate soil coverage.

The state agreed to fine the county \$1,500 for the first offense and \$3,000 each for the other two, said Dover, if the county made the improvements and agreed to stay in compliance.

"There have been checks made at the landfill since the order was issued," said Dover. "The most recent thing is we were working together to try to reach a settlement agreement."

Hewett received a letter from Clegg on March 12 telling him he would be suspended for three days effective March 15, the day Clegg resigned as county manager. Harvey then conducted an investigation before firing Hewett on March 17.

In a letter to county commissioners dated March 24, Hewett states there are several issues he would like to discuss at the hearing. He had scheduled the appeal for Monday but asked to delay it until the April 19 meeting.

Hewett stated that he "had to make the best of some very bad situations" while working at the landfill.

"However, I feel that the action taken against me was not fair since I was not solely responsible for all the citations against the landfill," he wrote. "Those responsibilities were shared by several other people."

Waste Industries Inc. of Wilmington was hired last year to collect the county's garbage. The county is still responsible for operation of the landfill.

The \$7,500 fine has to be in the state attorney general's hands by Thursday to avoid further action by the state, said Harvey.



Photo by Jim Harper

Views like this will again be possible this weekend with the reopening of the Bald Head lighthouse on Bald Head Island. The Old Baldy Foundation, which has provided for repair of walls and stairs of the historic structure, says only six people should climb to the top at one time.

## Holden to serve on panel

Southport mayor Norman Holden has been appointed to serve a two-year term on the Finance Administration and Intergovernmental Relations (FAIR) Policy Committee by the president of the N. C. League of Municipalities.

As a member of this committee Holden will participate in the league's efforts involving the areas of finance, administration and intergovernmental relations.

"Naturally, I'm honored that I was selected," Holden said this week. "I'm excited and looking forward to serving on the committee."

The top priority of the league is to restore the long-term stability of the local revenue structure, and league members work with legislators to find solutions to fiscal problems facing local governments. In particular, the group is concerned about reimbursements for repealed local taxes and the traditional state-collected taxes.

The league opposes legislation that would convert any of these local-option taxes into state revenue sources, as well as any legislation that would interfere with established local acts.

League president Derryl Garner said he was pleased and grateful that Holden agreed to serve on the FAIR Policy Committee and contribute to the league's efforts.

"I regard the appointment of municipal officials to boards, committees and commissions seriously, and I have spent some time assessing the considerable talent in our cities and towns," Garner said in a letter to Holden. "That is why I am delighted that you have graciously agreed to fill this vacancy."

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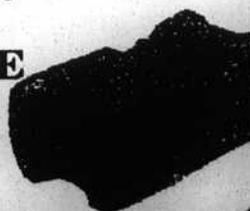
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