

County negotiating with fired animal control officer Babson

By Terry Pope
County Editor

County officials are negotiating a deal with former animal control supervisor Zelma Babson of Ash who was fired from her job two years ago.

The former employee's two-year legal struggle appears to be drawing to a close after a State Personnel Commission's ruling was issued two weeks ago.

Findings indicate the county violated personnel policy when Ms. Babson was suspended and later fired from her job.

"It looks like we're going to have to work out a settlement," said Don Warren, chairman of the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners. "She appears to have a pretty good defense. It would appear that there were violations of the personnel policy."

The State Personnel Commission upheld an administrative law judge's decision that recommends Ms. Babson get her job back along with lost wages, benefits and reasonable attorney fees.

She was fired from her job by health director Michael Rhodes in 1991 and appealed that action in a closed session before the Brunswick County Board of Health.

When the health board upheld the decision, Ms. Babson's attorney, Shelia McLamb of Shallotte, carried the appeal to the state. An outside law judge heard evidence for several days from both sides before he issued a legal opinion that Ms. Babson should be reinstated and given back pay.

Interim county attorney Michael Ramos said Monday the county is working on a settlement and that Ms. Babson would likely be "getting a job" of some kind.

"The particulars haven't been ironed out," said Ramos.

Robert Grissett, the current animal control supervisor, was listed for employment in the proposed 1993-94 county budget.

However, another animal control employee was cut from the proposal

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by interim county manager John Harvey, apparently with no explanation to health officials.

Dee Lee, a three-year veteran of the animal control shelter, is employed as a clerk typist III at a salary of \$14,467 per year.

"That position was in there in the proposal," said Rhodes.

The health board had also approved the position. He said there has been no explanation as to why Harvey cut it from the budget.

"I can't speculate," Rhodes said, when asked if it could relate to Ms. Babson's settlement.

Ms. Lee learned her job had been cut when she read it in a local newspaper.

"I really don't have any comment to make right now," said Ms. Lee.

"It's hard enough to handle right now."

The county has 30 days to either comply with the State Personnel Commission's ruling and give Ms. Babson another job or to ask a Superior Court judge to review the case.

An appeal isn't likely since it would cost the county even more in legal fees, said Warren.

"If we could reach a settlement, I would be agreeable to try to get off the cheapest way we can," said Warren.

However, a petition may be filed to give the county more time to work out details, added Ramos, since the 30-day deadline is approaching.

If Ms. Babson isn't satisfied with an offer, she can appeal the case to Superior Court. A judge there would not listen to new evidence but would read over transcripts of the previous hearing.

"They're in the driver's seat," said Warren. "We're just on the road. In every one of the lawsuits, if people had followed proper procedure we wouldn't be losing them."

There is no position for Ms. Babson in the current budget, added Warren.

"Unless she takes something similar somewhere else with a like salary and like qualifications," he added.

Two lawsuits were filed by former employees against the county last week, bringing the total to six that are currently pending. The county has spent \$210,000 in outside attorney fees to defend those cases, said Ramos.

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Rose-mobile visits county

Congressman Charlie Rose's mobile office will make six stops in Brunswick County in June.

A representative from Rose's office will hold individual conferences at the following post offices:

• Tuesday, June 1 -- Southport, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.; Shallotte, noon to 2 p.m.

• Tuesday, June 15 -- Leland, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.; Winnabow, noon to 2 p.m.

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<div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p style="background-color: gray; color: white; padding: 2px;">MAY 28</p> <p>Hollywood Pictures'</p> <h3 style="margin: 0;">SUPER MARIO BROS.</h3> <p style="font-size: x-small;">Inspired by the phenomenal popularity of the Super Mario Bros.™ video game, Brooklyn's favorite plumbers - Mario and Luigi - are pulled into a hidden dimension where they must battle eight-foot-tall Goombas, deadly fireballs and a crazed lizard king, in order to save a princess, a pendant and life as we know it on this planet.</p> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p style="background-color: gray; color: white; padding: 2px;">JUNE 11</p> <p>Touchstone Pictures'</p> <h3 style="margin: 0;">Life with Mikey</h3> <p style="font-size: x-small;">Michael J. Fox stars as a former child star reduced to scratching out a living as an agent to a clientele of no-talent kids, until he "discovers" a little con artist named Angie who tries to pick his pocket, and ends up proving she can act her way out of any situation - and into big time success.</p> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p style="background-color: gray; color: white; padding: 2px;">JUNE 25</p> <p>Hollywood Pictures'</p> <h3 style="margin: 0;">GUILTY as SIN</h3> <p style="font-size: x-small;">Rebecca DeMornay stars as hotshot criminal defense attorney Jennifer Haines, a tough, confident and beautiful lawyer who is about to meet her match in David Greenhill (Don Johnson), a charming and manipulative playboy charged with first degree murder.</p> </div>
<div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p style="background-color: gray; color: white; padding: 2px;">JULY 2</p> <p>Walt Disney's Classic</p> <h3 style="margin: 0;">Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs</h3> <p style="font-size: x-small;">The first full-length animated feature, this landmark Disney masterpiece has enchanted audiences for over half a century. Walt Disney's Classic "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" has never been on videocassette - so don't miss it on the big screen!</p> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p style="background-color: gray; color: white; padding: 2px;">JULY 16</p> <p>Walt Disney Pictures'</p> <h3 style="margin: 0;">HOCUS POCUS</h3> <p style="font-size: x-small;">Three 17th-century witches (Bette Midler, Sarah Jessica Parker, Kathy Najimy) are in for a devil of a time as they brew the perfect potion for comedy and adventure when they are conjured up in present-day Salem, Massachusetts to fulfill their vow to steal the youth from all the children in town.</p> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p style="background-color: gray; color: white; padding: 2px;">JULY 30</p> <p>Hollywood Pictures'</p> <h3 style="margin: 0;">THE SON-LAW</h3> <p style="font-size: x-small;">Totally hip and city slick, Pauly Shore stars as a college student from L.A. named Crawl, who trades the campus for the country and winds up shoveling his special brand of wit in the pastoral heartland when he's invited by a fresh-scrubbed co-ed to spend Thanksgiving on her family's farm.</p> </div>
<div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p style="background-color: gray; color: white; padding: 2px;">AUGUST 13</p> <p>Touchstone Pictures'</p> <h3 style="margin: 0;">STAKEOUT 2</h3> <p style="font-size: x-small;">The long-awaited sequel to the 1987 comedy hit starring Richard Dreyfuss and Emilio Estevez, this all-new caper finds the two Seattle detectives relocating to a posh community and pretending to be father and son while flushing out a key witness in a mob trial.</p> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p style="background-color: gray; color: white; padding: 2px;">AUGUST 27</p> <p>Touchstone Pictures'</p> <h3 style="margin: 0;">Johnny ZOMBIE</h3> <p style="font-size: x-small;">Not about to let a little thing like accidental death stop him from dating the most popular girl in school, teenager Johnny Dingle comes back from the grave as a zombie to keep his date with an angel.</p> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p style="background-color: gray; color: white; padding: 2px;">SEPTEMBER 10</p> <p>Hollywood Pictures'</p> <h3 style="margin: 0;">FATHER HOOD</h3> <p style="font-size: x-small;">Patrick Swayze stars as a small-time crook who springs his kids from their foster care homes and takes to the road on a cross country adventure that transforms him from hood to good and awakens his paternal instincts.</p> </div>

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