

## Pageant

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running it," Simmons declared. "I don't like the way it's being handled. None of the former queens I've talked to has had a pleasing reign, and even the parents are disappointed in the way the pageant is being run. The other thing I'm concerned about is what they're doing with county money, and when budget time comes up that's going to be a big question."

Specifically, Simmons said she is concerned about apparent discrepancies between financial statements filed with the county by the Miss Brunswick County Pageant Association, and reports from two former queens about money spent on them during their reigns.

Kaufman said she had a very difficult time dealing with personality conflicts that evolved with former queen Dawn Baldwin and that negative statements surrounding the pageant stem from that ordeal. She said past queens have been more cooperative, making appearances when asked to do so, and have represented the county well.

"We have nothing to hide," said Kaufman. "We do the very best we can with the \$5,000 that the county provides us. You have to spend it on the girl to make the girl."

Kaufman said most of the county funds involved are used to pay for wardrobes and college scholarships for the winners. Scholarship money is specifically set aside in a separate account. She said state pageant officials are aware of the accusations being made but have indicated there is nothing wrong with the way the Brunswick County pageant is operated.

"They (state officials) would be on me sooner than the commissioners if there were something wrong," said Kaufman. "We do everything we can for the girl. We take the girl anywhere she is asked to go. We don't ask the parents to pay for it. We spend it on the girls. How far can you stretch that money out over the course of a year?"

The Miss North Carolina Pageant Association is investigating complaints about Miss Brunswick County Pageant operations, said Allen Clouse, executive director of the state association.

Clouse said the Miss North Carolina Pageant Association has the power to revoke franchises for Miss North Carolina preliminary pageants like the Miss Brunswick County Pageant, if the pageants are not in compliance with state rules and regulations for preliminary pageants. Each franchise must be reviewed and renewed annually, he explained, and can be revoked if a franchisee has been found to have violated state regulations.

"It's our role to make sure things are done correctly and in compliance with the rules," Clouse said. "We are aware of the complaints about the Miss Brunswick County Pageant and we'll certainly be looking into them, there's no doubt about that, and not with one eye."

The accusations center around how funds were spent on former queens -- Miss Brunswick County

1996-97 Dawn Baldwin and 1994-95 Miss Brunswick County Renee Ward -- and how much they paid from their own pockets while serving as Miss Brunswick County.

For example, while the pageant's 1996-97 financial report lists \$2,576 in wardrobe expenditures, Baldwin said her records indicate about \$1,000 was spent on her wardrobe by the association, and that her out-of-pocket expenses for clothing totaled \$1,156.

The report also states \$1,840 was spent during the year for room, board, traveling expenses and vocal and dance lessons, but Baldwin asserts that she paid many of her own travel expenses and her family spent about \$1,225 for her voice lessons. To date, Baldwin said she's received \$454 of her \$1,000 scholarship award.

"You are working with young girls who really think they've won a pot

**'The other thing I'm concerned about is what they're doing with county money, and when budget time comes up that's going to be a big question.'**

**Jo Ann Bellamy Simmons**  
Commissioners' chairman

of gold at the end of the rainbow," said Kaufman. "They swear they read the contract, but suddenly the day after the pageant the contract is nonexistent. There has never been a single queen that I have given just one outfit to. We usually give them an entire wardrobe."

Miss Brunswick County 1994-95 Renee Ward said her parents kept a record of how much money they spent on her during her reign, and totaled about \$9,000 in out-of-pocket expenses for clothing, travel expenses and photography. Ward said she did not receive the \$1,000 scholarship because she opted not to enroll in college.

The total budget for the Miss Brunswick County Pageant in the 1996-97 fiscal year was \$10,219.50; the total budget for fiscal year 1994-95 was \$8,593.07. County finance officer Lithia Hahn said her office does not have a financial report for the pageant for fiscal year 1995-96.

Expenses include costs associated with participating in the Miss North Carolina Pageant, wardrobe, travel expenses for appearance, scholarships, photography and rental of the Odell Williamson Auditorium. Brunswick County has for several years allocated \$5,000 each year to the Miss Brunswick County Pageant.

County commissioner Leslie Collier said she has heard "complaints from the community" about

the pageant and specifically about the amount of money spent on queens during their reigns.

"I've heard other queens say they weren't getting financial support, and that's why I made a motion at budget time that any money allocated by the county for the pageant be used for the queen and her needs," Collier said. "When we give money we're giving county tax money, and it's certainly our right to see their records, and we can request to see their whole budget. That may be an area the county needs to look."

Simmons said she simply wants to know what the money is being used for if it is not being used for the queen's expenses.

"Until they can show us what they did with it, I don't think the county should give them any more money," she said.

Kaufman said she believes the complaints stem from disagreements during Baldwin's reign. She said Baldwin canceled appearances at the last minute, leaving pageant officials embarrassed, and that the two or three appearances she did make were to benefit her own community service project.

"The only time Dawn went was when it profited her community service," said Kaufman. "If she could talk about the work she was doing for the children, she would go. If it was to attend another pageant, she wouldn't attend."

Kaufman said the figures do add up on the reports given the county finance director and that nothing improper has occurred.

"There is not a day that goes by where I'm not in my car on pageant business one way or another," she said. "Why pick on a program that tries so hard to improve the education of these girls? They didn't speak to Christy Small, who was the best queen I've ever had."

## Erosion

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Under terms of a proposal from the committee, the town will be asked to appropriate \$26,000 from the town's general fund to foot the cost of beach maintenance, research on beachfront dynamics and experiments in erosion control. He said that sum this year may be spent to

purchase a dump truck to haul sand.

The committee has requested another \$40,000 in accommodations tax money be set aside for beach projects. The additional two-percent occupancy tax is expected to generate about this much.

In a final recommendation, the committee has asked that \$60,000 be set aside in a "Special Beach Reserve Fund" for future nourishment projects. This is about what the original three-percent occupancy tax generates annually. If this sum is set aside exclusively for the beach, it must be replaced as a source of funding for police, fire, rescue and sanitation services. Commissioners to date have used the funds for these government services, saying the cost of service is hiked by the higher seasonal population. The original three-percent occupancy tax may be used to pay the cost of "any tourist-related" service, under state law.

Bausch said the estimated cost of nourishment -- pumping sand back onto eroded beaches -- is \$5 million per linear mile.

"By and large, we don't have anywhere near the wherewithal to do anything like that," Bausch said.

In a comprehensive report to the board, Bausch reviewed erosion dynamics which, at Caswell Beach, result in a steady erosion of the westernmost sections of the beach and a shoaling of sand east of Caswell Beach, beyond the Cape Fear River mouth.

Discarded options, other than nourishment and periodic renourishment, include building groins or seawalls -- difficult under existing coastal regulations -- and doing nothing at all.

"A lot of people think this is a good idea, but I'd like to say it is not without its costs," Bausch said of the option to do nothing.

If the decision were made now to proceed with a beach nourishment project, Bausch estimated it would take five years before the first grains of sand were spread on the beachfront, given the history of other nourishment projects.

"The government will not work quicker," he said.

A detailed assessment of beach concerns and erosion control techniques has been published in a March edition of "Caswell Beach News," a newsletter Bausch edits which was mailed by the town to over 600 property owners last week.

## The estimated cost of nourishment -- pumping sand back onto eroded beaches -- is \$5 million per linear mile

The newsletter contains a questionnaire which aims to gauge the level of support for municipal funding of beach nourishment projects.

"Analysis of existing data indicates the beach nourishment is a feasible way to protect Caswell Beach and that substantial federal, state and county monies could be available for cost-sharing purposes sometime in the future. If this analysis is correct, would you support the town saving money on a regular basis so as to be able to participate in a major beach nourishment project sometime during the next ten years?" the questionnaire asks.

The questionnaire next explores levels of support for various revenue-generating techniques including trust funds, use of ad valorem taxes, use of accommodations taxes and a reallocation of funds from other town enterprises.

The questionnaire also asks residents if they are willing to share the cost of short-term stabilization projects, such as sand pushing to save a "few endangered homes."

Consultant William Farris told

commissioners of the town's participation with six other local government partners in formulation of a Brunswick Beaches Management Plan. A report on this regional approach to coordinate beach stabilization efforts is expected in June and commissioners will likely be asked to endorse it in July.

Farris said the report will address, "How do you become advocates for the cost-sharing (with other levels of government) that is going to be necessary?"

"We'll be coming back to you with strategies and proposals and we'll be coming back to you as a council for approval," Farris said.



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