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SBSD has new chairman

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

After more than a week of contentiousness at several sessions both open and closed, Gene Formy-Duval emerged Tuesday afternoon as new chairman of Southeast Brunswick Sanitary District.

He replaces long-time chairman James W. (Bubba) Smith, who stepped down as chairman at a chaotic session Friday. Smith resigned as district chairman only. He remains a district commissioner.

At this time, the district is without the services of secretary-treasurer. Commissioner Lucille Laster resigned those positions last Monday but she, too, remains a member of the sanitary district board.

Formy-Duval Tuesday afternoon said his first priority as district chairman will be to seek to hire a professional administrator to oversee affairs of the district.

"As far as the manager, I will be in touch with the (N. C.) League of Municipalities," Formy-Duval said. "It will be a board decision, but we need a professional - someone who knows zoning and who can write grant applications."

Formy-Duval said he prefers to call the employee he seeks an "administrator" rather than a manager.

It was the search for a district manager that set off a hectic sequence of events over the last week at the SBSB office on Long Beach Road.

Commissioner Ginger Harper said when Laster forfeited her duties as secretary and treasurer of the board last week she asked commissioners to hire her as "manager" of the district. Laster told commissioners she is building a house outside the district and will move to it soon. Residency is a requirement for being a district commissioner, but Laster did not resign the seat to which she was elected.

According to Harper, commissioner Charles Welling offered a motion to hire Laster, offering her the three-year "management contract" she had requested.

Welling's motion died for lack of a second, with Smith chairing.

Friday, in closed session, the manager's post again came before commissioners. According to Harper, chairman Smith believed he was not privileged to vote on matters put before the board as chairman and resigned that post. With Laster unable to vote to give herself the job, Smith apparently hoped Formy-Duval would emerge as chairman so Smith could team with Welling to give Laster the job.

But, neither Formy-Duval nor Harper would take the chairman's post. After a call to SBSB attorney Jim Prevatte, during which Formy-Duval was assured he could sit as chairman for a single purpose, he did so and the

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FRAMEWORK



Over the past week steel has virtually leapt out of the ground, and the waterfront skyline has been drastically altered by the Southport community building project. The All-Span Building Systems crew installed the last major roofing support Tuesday.

Photo by Jim Harper

N. C. 133 access

Olde Towne says county has failed to curb traffic

By Terry Pope
County Editor

Olde Towne residents hope the main entrance to their subdivision can become a road less traveled.

Traffic from the adjacent 180-lot River Ridge subdivision currently travels along their streets, which they say isn't what county planners had in mind when they approved the project back in January, 1996.

Residents are fed up with what they say has become a safety problem and want the county and Town of Belville to force River Ridge developer Tommie Little to build another entrance to N. C. 133.

Last week, more than 130 Olde Towne and 35 River Ridge residents signed a petition presented to commissioners which asks for legal support to have a new road constructed.

"We are looking to the Brunswick County commissioners for leadership and protection," said Stuart Smith, president of Olde Towne Community Association and a member of the Brunswick County Planning Board.

There are two subdivisions and an expansion of Olde Towne that cur

See Traffic, page 7

'Children play near and in the road, ride bikes and roller blade. The chances of serious injury increase with the increase in traffic. There is a disaster waiting to happen.'

Stuart Smith
Olde Towne resident

Power Play

BEMC extends offer to buy Southport utility

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

Brunswick Electric Membership Corporation has offered to buy the City of Southport's electric distribution system.

In a February 19 letter, BEMC executive vice-president and general manager David Batten said if Southport officials agree to pursue sale of the electric system to BEMC, it would propose a purchase price to be paid Southport for electric infrastructure. BEMC would offer to lease existing space for the system at fair market value and would purchase system vehicles, equipment, materials and supplies.

Employees of the city electric department would be offered jobs with BEMC and offered the same salary schedules and benefit packages paid co-op employees with similar responsibilities.

"If the town of Southport is interested in moving forward with discussions as suggested in this letter, we expect that a formal agreement-in-principle could be developed and executed on behalf of both parties," Batten wrote.

He called for "informal discussions" to be held between the city and BEMC in an effort to identify any other issues that would need to be resolved before a

'With deregulation coming, we are going to have to evaluate our position carefully. We are just not going to be competitive with investor-owned utilities.'

Rob Gandy
Southport manager

sale and transfer of the Southport electric system could occur.

"Brunswick EMC is available for immediate discussions," Batten wrote. "Please advise."

Aldermen got a first look at the BEMC letter of interest at a special meeting Monday night, but took no

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'Bizarre' review process

Oak Island bridge saga may not end

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

Yaupon Beach commissioner Marty Wozniak meant it last week when he said he would ferret-out objectors to the proposed second bridge to Oak Island and a direct roadway corridor between North Middleton Street and N. C. 211 at Midway Road.

He found some objectors all right, but what he didn't expect to encounter was a process for bridge decision-making that could be never ending.

"This all could fall into a deep, deep, deep, dark, dark, dark hole," Wozniak said this week. "The possibility exists that, through the current procedure, this could never end."

The current crisis in siting the second bridge to Oak Island began in February, 1997, when N. C. Department of

Transportation released an environmental assessment and recommendation for three direct roadway corridor alternatives between Middleton Street and the Midway Road area of N. C.

211. Environmental reviewers have steadfastly resisted the Midway-to-Middleton roadway corridor and have insisted DOT review other western roadway alternatives through Sunset Harbor.

At present, DOT is performing a revised Environmental Assessment of the western alternatives, a process which will take up to a year and a half to complete at a cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars, Wozniak says.

And, if environmental reviewers continue to object, there is no provision for ending the review period with a decision, the soon-to-be Oak Island town

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Time
Line
page 7

County says equipment was misused

Town Creek chief retracts accusation

By Terry Pope
County Editor

Town Creek Rescue Squad chief John Bellamy offered a public apology after accusing county Emergency Medical Services director Tracy Jackson of racist actions and of stealing property from the Town Creek squad.

The allegations were made in an address last Monday before the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners, which abruptly called for a closed session to discuss personnel. The dispute was over a county-purchased defibrillator which Bellamy had allowed Brunswick

Medical Transport Inc., a private, for-profit business, to use.

A defibrillator is an item of emergency equipment that applies electrical shock to the chest to stop fibrillation of the heart muscles.

"My earlier statement that Tracy Jackson might have been prejudiced, I retract that," said Bellamy, after the 30-minute closed session. "The statement about him stealing the defibrillator, I retract that, too."

In his prior address to commissioners, Bellamy said Jackson took possession of the defibrillator for servicing under false pretense, and added that false pretense "in my book

amounts to stealing." He accused Jackson of "snooping" around the Town Creek squad building.

"If he wants to know anything about my building he can call me," said Bellamy. "I'm afraid he's going to take something else."

Bellamy accused county officials of treating Town Creek rescue unfairly, stating that county manager Jim Varner even attended a meeting involving the squad's contingency fund request "to make sure we wouldn't get the money." He added that he felt his squad was being punished for selling Brunswick Medical Transport a used vehicle and questioned if the

unfair treatment was because Town Creek is being successful or "because it's the only squad in the county with a black chief?"

"I am prepared to answer if you want to air all of this out," replied Varner when commissioners asked if the county staff wanted to go into closed session.

Varner said he was asked to attend the contingency fund meeting by former commissioner Tom Rabon Sr.

"I was asked to be there by Mr. Rabon, and I was there," said Varner. "I didn't know I was going to a fund-raiser."

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Southern Living
Vacations, a specialty publication of the popular magazine, features Bald Head Island in its most recent cover.