

How Fast Is Growth?

Brunswick County's population is expected to double by the year 2000. The chart and story are on page 12-C of this issue.

Island Living

Supplement included in this issue.

Off To Good Start!

Area pier and marina owners say the fishing season is off to a good start. The report is on page 10-B of this issue.

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STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

Sprucing Up Sunny Side

Shallotte Junior Woman's Club volunteers sprayed, dabbed and brushed paint Saturday as they freshened up old Sunny Side School to the beat of beach music playing on a car radio. Since its relocation to land adjacent to Shallotte Municipal Park in 1980, the building has been awaiting renovation for use as a community facility. Built in the early 1900s, the three-classroom building served three generations of Shallotte-area

schoolchildren before its retirement. Among those helping out are, from the left, Britt, Megan, Jeff, Kristen and Gail Williams, with Jimmy Register perched on the outside extension ladder and Woodman of the World agent Danny Cartrette on the inside ladder, Cindy Champion and Brenda Batchelor. The Town of Shallotte scraped the building for the painting crew and has a fund for donations toward its renovation.

Murder Suspect Indicted After Surrendering

BY SUSAN USHER

A Brunswick County Grand Jury Monday afternoon indicted Ronnie Lee Clemmons with first degree murder in the February shooting death of a Shallotte man, Joe S. Reeves.

Clemmons, 30, of Leland, turned himself into the State Bureau of Investigation Sunday after eluding arrest for three months, said Shallotte Police Chief Don Stovall. He is being held in the Brunswick County Jail without bond. He is charged with murder and assault with a deadly weapon in connection with the Feb. 6 shooting.

Trial has been set for July 21 in Brunswick County Superior Court.

At a first appearance hearing Monday in Columbus County District Court in Whiteville, two lawyers, Roy

Trest of Thomasboro and Bill Fairley of Southport, were appointed to represent Clemmons.

Reeves, 31, was found dead in his home at 2 Bellamy Lane off Mulberry Street, Shallotte. He had been shot once in the back.

The search for Clemmons began based on information given officers by a woman in the Reeves house at the time of the shooting. Officers searched the Leland area after Clemmons' car, with a handgun inside it, was found near a mobile home park there. The search involved a helicopter, officers on horseback, dogs and roadblocks of major highways.

Clemmons has been on the run since February and his flight taking him across several states and to "quite a few places," Stovall in-

dicated after questioning Clemmons.

At about 5 a.m. Sunday, Clemmons called SBI Agent Rick Gainey in Wilmington from Columbia, S.C., saying he wanted to turn himself in. His brother drove him to Wilmington, where he was questioned by Gainey and Stovall before being taken to the Brunswick County Jail mid-afternoon Sunday.

"We took his statement," said Stovall. "He said he was tired of running and wanted to tell his story."

Clemmons told officers he was afraid he would be shot on sight.

He had been previously arrested in Brunswick County on Jan. 11 on a larceny charge.

Reeves was scheduled to appear Feb. 9 in Brunswick County Superior Court on drug charges.

Ocean Isle Police Chief Resigns

BY TERRY POPE

Ocean Isle Beach Police Chief Jerry Gurganus resigned Monday following a meeting of the town board of commissioners.

Gurganus cited "personal reasons" for leaving the department where he has been employed for the past 14 years. His resignation will become effective June 1.

The board on Monday also accepted the resignation of Connie Duncan, a town employee on the accounting staff. Ms. Duncan, whose resignation was effective immediately, also cited "personal reasons" for leaving her job.

Mayor LaDane Bullington said that based on conversations Gurganus has had with board members for the past two weeks, "I think they were ready" for his announcement Monday.

"The town board feels really secure with the situation," Ms. Bullington said. "It's a position that we'll need to fill. It's not like we feel that we won't be able to carry on."

She said the town will begin advertising for a new police chief. Gurganus will remain on patrol until June 1 so the town will have "a good period to tie over and to begin finding a replacement," she said.

When contacted Tuesday, a person at the town hall said, "Jerry will not be available today."

Ms. Bullington said she will work with Commissioner Terry Barbee to oversee the recruitment of a new police chief to Ocean Isle.

"We will want someone that is well qualified," Ms. Bullington said. She added that the board will not rush to fill the position by June 1.

"The board members are willing to give their time to find a very qualified person," she said. "It is a good situation. We feel it will be an attractive situation. So why not hire the best?"

The town is also advertising for a town administrator, a position the town will create in a reorganization of staff.

In other business Monday, the board amended the dog ordinance which it passed last week to allow dogs on the beach strand only during certain hours.

An ordinance unanimously adopted last week prohibited dogs from the strand at all times from May 1 to Sept. 30. The amended ordinance restricts dogs from the strand from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Dogs will be allowed on the strand at other times, but they must still be on a leash. The fine for allowing a dog on the strand during the restricted hours is \$100.

The board also passed a resolution Monday asking for Sen. Jesse Helms' help in having dredge fill material pumped onto the west end. Commissioners are asking Helms to contact the U.S. Corps of Engineers to see if dredge material from the Shallotte Inlet can be pumped onto the beach strand.

Election Changes Spark Oratory, Pleas To Return Old Precincts

BY SUSAN USHER

Brunswick County Commissioners hope to convince election officials to rescind recent changes in four precincts.

Spurred on by speeches of support Monday, they adopted a resolution asking the Brunswick County Board of Elections to reconsider its consolidation of Waccamaw and Exum precincts into Freeland precinct in the western section of the county and the division of the coastal Oak Island and Seclusion precincts into two smaller precincts each.

Members said they didn't know if their action would make any difference, since the State Board of Elections has already approved the changes.

Brunswick County Democratic Party Chairman W.A. Stanley Jr., Exum Precinct Chairman Boyd Evans and Commissioner Chris Chappell, who grew up in Exum precinct, encouraged the board's unanimous vote for returning to the old precinct lines.

Stanley told the board there exists a broad base of support for small community precincts such as Exum and Waccamaw that foster

"Why single us out to take away a heritage we've had 100 years?"

—Boyd Evans
Precinct Chairman

cohesiveness and are the center of community life. They help preserve the traditional values of "independence and self-determination that help make Brunswick County a place we all want to live," he said.

Such small precincts shouldn't be eliminated unless there is "great fiscal liability" to the county in maintaining them, added Stanley.

Evans told the board that Exum precinct, which now has about 200 voters, was established in 1898. The change would cause some residents to drive 30 miles to vote, he pointed out.

He said Exum was the only precinct in the western section of the county to support the county's water bond referendum.

"The next thing that happened was our township got taken away from us. Now it looks like they're going to take away our precinct.

"The only things left are four green boxes. If we can't get our precinct back, we want you to pick up the boxes and at the same time relieve us of paying property taxes," said Evans.

"Why single us out to take away a heritage we've had 100 years?" Chappell said his childhood precinct has always had a good voter turnout. Without giving specifics, he added he thought the motive in eliminating Exum precinct was "not political, but personal."

Evans' comments about losing a township referred to redistricting several years ago in which five voting or electoral districts were established, eliminating Waccamaw Township's separate representation on the board of commissioners and board of education. Now District 1 encompasses both the coastal area from Calabash to Shallotte and the rural area west to the Columbus County line. Township lines are still used for demographic purposes.

Commissioner Jim Poole questioned the splitting of the coastal precincts, asking why Leland wasn't also divided since it's about the same size as Oak Island.

While poll capacity was cited as a reason for the division, he said, the voter turnout for the island to his knowledge has not exceeded 1,500, though there are more voters.

Commissioner Benny Ludlum didn't comment at the meeting, but expressed similar concerns to the Beacon.

"We were getting along all right for a long time. Why change?" he asked. "I don't like it."

If growth creates a problem at the polls during the next general election, he added, "we'll do something about it then."

In an interview, Chappell also criticized the election board's failure to inform county political organizations and the general public of the changes it proposed. "There's a communication problem," he said.

The issue came under discussion last week as both parties nominated individuals for appointment to the county board of elections.

Elections Board Supervisor Lynda Britt cited growth along the coast as the reason for the precinct changes, which left the county with one additional precinct and only one spare voting machine.

Holden Beach Light Goes Up Next Week

BY SUSAN USHER

A signal won't be up at the Holden Beach intersection in time to handle the Memorial Day weekend traffic, but motorists won't have to wait much longer.

"We've promised the mayor the signal will be working by the 29th, in about 10 working days," said Roger Hawkins, division traffic engineer for the N.C. Department of Transportation, on Monday. "We got the traffic signal plans in the mail this morning. We're on flat go."

Due May 22, the plans actually arrived early. The signal equipment is due in at mid-week and a crew is expected to set poles at the end of the week. Signal installation is to begin May 26.

The only delay might come in getting an electrical connection, since a request had not been made to Brunswick Electric Membership Corp. as of Monday. "But we don't foresee any problems," Hawkins added. "They've always been very helpful."

The fully-actuated light will respond to loops set in the pavement on each side of the intersection, he said, moving from one location to the other. If a car is there, it will get a green light; otherwise, the signal will skip on to the next location.

Hawkins said the first movement is set for S.R. 1239, Fulford Road; then S.R. 1120, Sabbath Home Road; then the traffic leaving Holden Beach.

The traffic signal became a political issue last fall. Holden Beach officials and State Rep. David Redwine had been lobbying for the light, but DOT had said repeatedly that its studies didn't show a high enough need.

Changes it proposed to improve the intersection in lieu of a light included moving the stop signs, which prompted objections from local residents.

In October, two Republican candidates for local public office invited Highway Commissioner Tommy Pollard, also a Republican, to an "emergency" meeting at the intersection. There Pollard promised to reverse the stop signs again and to work toward getting a signal. He also traded barbs with audience member Redwine, a Democrat.

Redwine later worked with House Speaker Liston Ramsey to obtain the estimated \$25,000 needed for the project, while Pollard pushed the signal request with the Board of Transportation.