

Lockwood Folly River Oyster Beds Re-Open For Harvesting

The most productive shellfish beds in Lockwood Folly River reopened to harvesting this week, but state officials aren't sure how long the opening will last.

The area, which opened Tuesday at sunrise, includes waters downstream of a line from Genoes Point on the west bank to Gore's Landing on the east bank. That usually productive region includes shellfish management areas at Galloway Flats, Spring Branch and Drum Slough, which are off limits to clambers.

George Gilbert, assistant director of the state's shellfish sanitation branch, said the river was opened following analysis of a water sample

taken Dec. 5 and water and shellfish meat samples taken Dec. 7.

He added, however, that the river could shut down again any time. "The first time we get some bad samples or heavy precipitation we'll have to close it back up."

The last time the Lower Lockwood Folly River was opened, in mid-November, it was shut down after only two days of harvest. There was no rainfall and run-off at that time to cause the closure.

Before that, the lower section of the river had been closed since August because of high counts of fecal coliform bacteria.



Named Realtor Of Year

Evelyn Madison was named Realtor of the Year Monday night by the Brunswick Islands Board of Realtors. The story is on Page 6-B.

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SUPPLY TO WINNABOW

U.S. 17 Four-Laning Will Begin Next Year

BY SUSAN USHER

Four-laning of the remainder of U.S. 17 through Brunswick County is scheduled to begin during the federal fiscal year (FY89) which ends next Sept. 30, according to the N.C. Department of Transportation.

The U.S. 17 work leads the list of Brunswick County projects included in the state's \$3.1 billion Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

U.S. 17 is considered a "strategic corridor" for the coastal area, a high

traffic volume route with great economic potential of primary importance to the region and of value to the entire state.

A new ferry for the Southport-Fort Fisher crossing and a number of bridge projects round out the list approved by the state Board of Transportation last Friday in Raleigh.

The TIP is used to set road-building priorities statewide for the next eight years, beginning with federal fiscal

year 1989 which began Oct 1, 1988.

Topping the Brunswick County priority list is the four-laning of U.S. 17 from N.C. 211 at Supply to N.C. 87 at Bell Swamp, which has been moved ahead of its schedule in last year's plan. Design is underway. Construction is expected to begin before October 1989.

The 13.7-mile stretch has been plagued with accidents along its southern end. To accommodate the four-laning, completion of a related

bypass around Bolivia will be delayed one year. The four-laning and bypass are expected to cost \$19.8 million; and all work should be completed by the end of FY93.

Construction of the Shallotte bypass is under way, with right-of-way acquisition continuing along the route of the four-laning of U.S. 17 from Supply to the state line. This 21.5-mile project is expected to cost \$43.25 million when completed in early FY95.

Construction of the new "Cherry class" ferry to serve the Southport-Fort Fisher ferry route is planned in FY89, at a cost of \$3 million.

Related work will include improving the basins and bulkheads at the Fort Fisher and Southport ferry docks.

While design work continues, as announced several months ago, construction of the highrise bridge to Sunset Beach has been delayed due to the permit application process.

Construction is to begin in FY91, at an estimated total cost of \$7.88 million. So far the bridge has cost \$885,000.

Approaches to the highrise bridge to Ocean Isle Beach are to be landscaped during FY90, at a cost of \$12,000.

Planning of a second bridge to Oak Island is to begin in FY91, with construction to begin in late FY95. Right-of-way approaches are to be provided (See BY-PASS Page 2-A)



STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

To Wear Crowns In '89

Crowned Saturday night, Tamala Grissett of Grissett and Melisia Gayle White of Shallotte will represent the area as Miss and Little Miss Brunswick County respectively during the coming year. The story and photos of the runners-up are on Page 3-B inside.

Shallotte Referendum Gets Another Chance

BY DOUG RUTTER

Shallotte residents will get a second chance to vote on the issue of unfortified wine sales for off-premises consumption in a special election Feb. 7.

On a request from town aldermen, the Brunswick County Board of Elections confirmed the referendum date last Friday, said elections supervisor Lynda Britt.

Shallotte voters addressed the same issue during the November general election. However, the referendum was later invalidated because it violated state law prohibiting alcoholic beverage elections on the Tuesday after the first Monday in November of even-numbered years.

That provision was adopted in 1985; it wasn't noticed by town or

county officials until after the local election had been conducted.

During last month's referendum, town voters indicated their overwhelming support of the sale of unfortified wines. The final tally of 293 to 145 represented more than a two-to-one margin of voters in favor of the measure.

The town board decided at its regular meeting last Wednesday to request a new referendum, with the knowledge the town would not be billed for last month's election.

Ms. Britt said that since the referendum was held in conjunction with the general election, the town would not be charged. However, the special election will cost the town between \$350 and \$400.

Although board members voted unanimously last week to request the

special election, Alderman Wilton Harrelson suggested the town also look into requesting state legislation to validate last month's referendum, thereby saving the town money on another election.

Board member Jody Simmons agreed, stating, "The people did speak, even though it wasn't legal."

Town Attorney Mark Lewis, however, said he was unsure whether the General Assembly would pass such legislation. He said he believed a special act of the General Assembly was not in order since the referendum had already been invalidated.

Lewis added that the pertinent restriction on alcoholic beverage elections is included in annotations to state law books and is easy to overlook. He said state legislators

probably passed the provision to keep alcohol sales from becoming an issue during general elections.

Meanwhile, Jim Wallace, chief of the elections branch for the state attorney general's office, said there should be no problem with holding another election in February so long as proper notification is given.

He said a provision of state election law requiring a period of at least three years between alcoholic beverage referendums does not apply in this case because last month's vote was invalid.

In addition to Shallotte, the Town of Holden Beach will also hold a special election Feb. 7. That referendum will allow voters to decide the fate of a proposed switch to the council-manager form of government.

County Manager Heads Off 'Illegal' Park Projects

BY RAHN ADAMS

Acting on advice that three projects might be considered "illegal" if carried through as planned, Brunswick County Manager John T. Smith nixed two lame duck county commissioners' efforts to obtain \$81,500 in paving work for three district parks last month.

The projects, which involved the Shallotte, Waccamaw and Smithville Township District Parks, were to be funded by monies that are set aside in the Brunswick County Parks and Recreation budget for discretionary use by commissioners, Smith said.

Smith told the Beacon that then Commissioners Chris Chappell and Jim Poole "signed off" on three separate purchase orders for asphalt work at the three parks. The work was to be done by a single Shallotte construction company.

According to County Finance Director Lithia Hahn, the orders

amounted to \$20,000 for the Shallotte Park, \$28,500 for Waccamaw Park and \$33,000 for Smithville Park. All three purchase orders were forwarded to the finance department on Nov. 28, she added.

If a project is expected to exceed \$50,000, state law requires a local government to seek bids for the work. Even though the purchase orders were for three separate park projects, Smith said he stopped the expenditures because they were processed on the same day and involved the same vendor.

The county manager said he became aware of the purchase orders while he and the new board of commissioners were attending a conference Nov. 28 through 30 at the Institute of Government in Chapel Hill.

Noting that he checked with Institute officials about the matter, Smith commented Monday, "Was it legal or illegal?—I really don't know.

The best information I can get is that it was illegal or at least it didn't carry out the spirit of the law."

When asked what action was taken, Smith replied, "I didn't honor them (the purchase orders)." He also indicated that whether or not the projects are eventually done will be determined by the current board of commissioners.

Chappell told the Beacon last Thursday that he asked about the status of the park funds during an executive session at a Dec. 5 commission meeting, even though he had called the secret conference to discuss "personnel" (see related story).

However, the former commissioner maintained that his inquiry wasn't addressed by the board. "It wasn't discussed," he said. "I asked a question, and it wasn't answered, and that was the end of it . . . I said that was the last question I was going

to ask as a commissioner." Chappell said he had hoped to get credit for his efforts "to better the park situation," since he had been saving monies each year in his discretionary accounts for capital projects.

Poole could not be reached for comment before presstime.

Smith said Monday that Parks and Recreation has done "phase work" before, which was what the paving work would be considered. Park projects have been broken down into phases, with the idea being to save money by doing some of the work in-house, he said.

Even if the purchase orders in question actually were improper, the county manager said he didn't feel Parks and Recreation Director Bobby Jones was at fault. "I don't know that he did anything wrong," Smith

(See MANAGER Page 2-A)

Chappell Explains Secret Session; Says Inspections Job Was Addressed

BY RAHN ADAMS

Although Brunswick County officials won't comment in detail on a secret meeting last week by the county's lame duck board of commissioners, former Commissioner Chris Chappell has confirmed that a building inspections job—a position sought by former Brunswick County Clerk of Court Greg Bellamy—was discussed behind closed doors.

The building inspections job, however, wasn't the only personnel matter discussed, Chappell told the Beacon last Thursday. Commissioners also talked about an "investigation" that involves a current county employee, he said.

The 20-minute executive session in question occurred at the commission's Dec. 5 meeting, right before Chappell and Jim Poole were replaced by newly-elected Commissioners Kelly Holden and Gene Pinkerton. Chappell requested the secret conference to discuss a personnel matter which he described as "something that's got to be taken care of."

Back in open session, Chairman Grace Beasley, who later was replaced as chairman by Frankie Rabon,

said no action was taken during the closed-door conference. She later declined to comment specifically on the personnel matter, only to say, "It was important to Mr. Chappell, and I respected that."

Hiring Discussed

Chappell last Thursday would neither confirm nor deny reports that he used the executive session to promote Bellamy's hiring. The former commissioner simply stated, "The building inspection position was spoken about . . . It was addressed."

In a joint interview last Thursday, County Manager John T. Smith and Chief Building Inspector Billy Ingram said 11 individuals had applied for the \$18,790 per year job, but they would not discuss individual applicants. "If Bellamy was or was not one of the applicants, I will not answer," Smith said. "We just have a basic policy that we don't divulge who has applied."

Ingram said six of the 11 applicants were being interviewed. He added that a decision on the hiring possibly would be made as early as Tuesday (Dec. 12). Ingram's recommendation would be forwarded to the county manager for final consideration, Smith said.

"As a commissioner, you can make a recommendation, but you might not get your way."

—Chris Chappell
Former Commissioner

Smith also serves as the county's chief personnel officer.

According to the county's notice of position vacancy, the inspections position requires a high school diploma, experience in residential or commercial construction work, and certification from the N.C. Code Officials Qualification Board which Ingram said can be earned on the job.

The 39-year-old Bellamy, who resigned as clerk of court in August 1987 after he pleaded guilty to felonious

cocaine possession and received a two-year suspended sentence, told the Beacon Saturday that he applied for the inspections position but had not been interviewed. He currently is "on leave" from a bookkeeping job at a Shallotte supermarket.

"I honestly never thought that this would be a newsworthy item," Bellamy said. "I felt I was qualified for the job and could do a good job. It was an area I'd had past experience in. I never intended to put anyone in any awkward position, and I'm surprised it has evolved as it has."

He said his qualifications include experience doing carpentry work at Sunny Point Military Ocean Terminal during his college years, work on a local construction crew after college, and later experience supervising residential and commercial construction projects for a local bank.

Although Bellamy maintained that he did not approach Chappell for help in getting the job, Bellamy said he discussed the position with the former commissioner. He added that he also talked informally with In-

(See CHAPPELL Page 2-A)