

THE BEAUCON

HOAG & SONS BOOK BINDERY
PO BOX 162
SPRINGPORT MI 49284
12/31/99

Twenty-seventh Year, Number 9

1989 THE BRUNSWICK BEAUCON

Shallotte, North Carolina, Thursday, January 5, 1989

25c Per Copy

22 Pages, 2 Sections

Aycock Hired As Inspector

BY RAHN ADAMS

Chief Building Inspector Billy Ingram last week announced the hiring of a Leland man as Brunswick County's newest building inspector—a position that was sought by the county's former clerk of court.

Ingram said Friday that Delaney Aycock, formerly employed by a Wilmington building contractor, would begin the \$18,790 per year inspections job immediately.

According to County Manager John T. Smith, Aycock has worked as a carpenter for about eight years. Aycock is not a state certified inspector, but will obtain certification on the job, Smith said, adding that no applicant for the position was already state certified.

The search for a new building inspector came under public scrutiny last month after the position was discussed by county commissioners during a Dec. 5 executive session.

Former Commissioner Chris Chappell denied speculation that he called the closed-door session during his last meeting as a commissioner to promote the hiring of former Clerk of Court Greg Bellamy, who was one of 11 applicants for the inspections post.

Chappell, however, confirmed that the job was discussed in secret by commissioners and that he earlier had recommended Bellamy to Ingram and Smith.

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 last month that he applied for the inspections position due to his past experience in construction-related work. He said, though, that he was not among six applicants interviewed for the job.

According to Smith, the county plans to hire another building inspector within the next several weeks. The vacancy was advertised last month prior to a decision by the board of commissioners to impose a county hiring freeze effective Jan. 1. Both Smith and Ingram said the second new inspector probably will be hired after the inspections department is reorganized. Commissioners may discuss that reorganization during a work session Thursday, Smith said.

Denying a report that Bellamy had withdrawn his application, the county manager said Tuesday that the former clerk of court technically is still an applicant for the second vacancy, since the initial set of applications was carried over into the second job search.



STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

First Baby Of 1989

It was more than 40 hours into the new year before the first baby of 1989 was delivered at The Brunswick Hospital near Supply. Lacerasha Shantel Robinson, daughter of Melissa King and Dexter Robinson, both of Shallotte, arrived Monday, Jan. 2, at 4:26 p.m. Lacerasha weighed eight pounds, seven ounces, at birth and measured 21 inches in length. In this photo taken Tuesday, she is pictured with postpartum nurse Melissa Sims. Last year 208 babies were delivered at The Brunswick Hospital, said Administrator John Marshall.

Drenching Rains Shut Down Lockwood Folly Shellfishing

Steady rains which drenched Brunswick County for most of Tuesday prompted the state to close all shellfish beds which had been open in Lower Lockwood Folly River.

Following a recommendation from the state's shellfish sanitation branch, N.C. Marine Fisheries Director William Hogarth issued a proclamation Tuesday morning calling for the immediate closure of all waters which had been opened since mid-December.

That section, which features shellfish management areas at Galloway Flats, Spring Branch and Drum Slough, includes all waters downstream of a line from Genoes Point on the west bank to Gore's Landing on the east side.

George Gilbert, assistant director of shellfish sanitation, said the closure was not related to water sampling, but rather was due to rainfall and the resulting run-off. During times of heavy precipitation, counts of fecal coliform bacteria in the water commonly increase beyond safe levels for shellfish harvesting, he said.

Despite this closure, Gilbert said the river has recently been showing...

(See RAINS, Page 2-A)

Tax Foreclosures 'On Hold' Until Officials Choose Between Methods

BY RAHN ADAMS

If your 1988 property taxes aren't paid by today (Thursday), the Brunswick County Tax Office will start adding interest to your bill—a measure which is, in effect, the only penalty for nonpayment of taxes now, until the county decides how it should pursue tax foreclosures.

County Tax Collector Nancy Moore indicated last week that no foreclosures have been initiated since September, when Brunswick County Commissioners voted not to renew the contract of Thomas Heller, the tax office's foreclosure attorney.

"Everything (concerning foreclosures) is on hold until they (commissioners) make a decision," Ms. Moore told the Beacon. She added, however, that her staff has continued to prepare statements on delinquent accounts that eventually may be considered for foreclosure, depending on the commissioners' eventual action.

Ms. Moore pointed out that the foreclosure process is an important tool in collecting unpaid taxes. "People will tend to not put off paying their taxes if they know we'll foreclose," she said.

That apparently hasn't been a problem so far, though. According to Ms. Moore, approximately \$7,327,000 in 1988 taxes were collected as of last Wednesday, with more than \$14.7 million left to be paid. She estimated that about 90 percent of the county's \$22.06 million tax billing will be paid by today's deadline.

"Since the bills went out early this year (in August), we had a whole lot more collected by the end of November," Ms. Moore said. "We're going to get most of our revenue on the fifth of January, because that's our deadline."

Two percent interest for the month of January will be added to tax bills that are not paid by today. Ms. Moore said tax payments that are mailed to her office will not be considered late if the envelope bears a Jan. 5 postmark. Three-quarters of one percent interest will be added for each additional month that bills are left unpaid.

Ms. Moore said the local tax office will publish the names of delinquent 1988 taxpayers probably in early April. Advertising delinquent accounts is a legal requirement before foreclosures can be initiated, she said, adding that the advertisement also encourages individuals to pay because "they just don't like to see their names in print."

"Before they make any foreclosures, (commissioners) have to make a decision."

—John T. Smith
County Manager

Still, delinquent taxes that have accumulated over the 10-year statute of limitations period in Brunswick County amount to approximately \$1.8 million, Ms. Moore said. As of the end of November, \$762,000 in 1987 taxes remained to be paid.

She added that between November 1983 and November 1987, the county collected \$717,516 in delinquent taxes involving 3,300 accounts. Also, some 71 pieces of property were sold.

In May when tax officials were questioned about the county's foreclosure method, they estimated that Heller, who handled tax foreclosures since 1984, had collected about \$500,000 in revenue for the county and had received about \$100,000 for his services.

When Heller's contract was not renewed in September on a motion by then Commissioner Chris Chappell, the board instructed Ms. Moore, Tax Administrator Boyd Williamson, County Manager John T. Smith and County Attorney David Clegg to study the county's foreclosure process and recommend a preferred method.

Smith told the Beacon last Thursday that he probably would present the matter to commissioners at one of their work sessions this week. The board was scheduled to meet Wednesday (Jan. 4) and today (Thursday) at 10 a.m.

Commissioners can choose between the mortgage foreclosure method—a lengthy process in which any liens against the property in question are identified—or the simpler "in rem" method, which does not require title searches, Smith said.

The county can charge a legal fee in a mortgage foreclosure if an outside attorney is used. However, if the foreclosure is handled in-house, no fee can be charged. Heller was paid \$300 per foreclosure.

"Before they (commissioners) make any foreclosures, they have to make a decision (about which method to pursue)," Smith said.

Ms. Moore noted that tax officials generally prefer mortgage foreclosure because liens against property are clearer than they are in an "in rem" foreclosure.

The county manager said the "in rem" method has met mixed results in other counties across the state. For example, Alamance County has a 99 percent collection rate using that type of foreclosure, he said, while the method was tried with unfavorable results several years ago in Gaston County.

Although he pointed out that a decision between the two methods is for commissioners to make, Smith said mortgage foreclosure is sometimes considered a "disservice to citizens" because the \$300 legal fee is tacked onto the account of a taxpayer who faces foreclosure, no matter how minimal the initial tax bill is.

Smith said the county's remaining delinquent accounts are individually "very small." He added, "Anything that would make a sizeable difference in collections has been foreclosed or settled."

Ms. Moore said that the old board of commissioners had instructed her office to pursue foreclosures only on accounts that were delinquent for at least three consecutive years.



STAFF PHOTO BY RAHN ADAMS

BRUNSWICK COUNTY TAX COLLECTOR Nancy Moore totals a stack of property tax bills paid last week in Bolivia.

Appellate Court Upholds Willis' Prison Sentence

The N.C. Court of Appeals last week denied an appeal by a former Shallotte businessman who was sentenced to a 35-year prison term and a \$250,000 fine for conspiracy to traffic in cocaine.

According to the clerk's office for the appellate court, the state panel on Dec. 30 upheld the sentence of Alvin Bryan Willis III, 33, of Shallotte, who was one of 32 defendants indicted on cocaine trafficking charges in June 1987 by the first investigative grand

jury in Brunswick County and the state.

Willis initially was indicted on 12 counts each of conspiracy to traffic in cocaine and trafficking in cocaine. However, as part of a plea agreement with the 13th District Attorney's office, he pleaded guilty in November 1987 to the single conspiracy count.

In December 1987, Judge Napoleon Barefoot Sr. sentenced Willis to the

35-year prison term and \$250,000 fine—the mandatory minimum sentence—after the judge failed to find that Willis had provided "substantial assistance" to the state in its drug investigation.

Under North Carolina's drug trafficking laws, a judge may impose a more lenient sentence if a finding of substantial assistance is made.

During the sentencing hearing in Columbus County Superior Court,

Willis' attorney—William Shell of Wilmington—maintained that the defendant merited no more than a 12-year sentence because he had helped the state.

An SBI agent, however, testified that Willis did not give investigators an accurate account of his drug dealings. Also, the district attorney's office said Willis violated the terms of his plea agreement by not providing full and truthful information.

Redwine Is Primed For 'Important' Assignments' In Upcoming Session

BY RAHN ADAMS

When the gavel falls next week on the 1989 session of the N.C. General Assembly, State Rep. E. David Redwine figures to be a key player in what he sees as a "hard" legislative session.

On Jan. 11 at noon, the Ocean Isle Beach Democrat begins his third full term in the State House, having represented the 14th District since 1983 when he was appointed to complete the unexpired term of Tom Rabon Jr. "I'm looking forward to this session because I really think I've been there long enough to receive a number of important assignments," Redwine said in an interview last week. "I'll be closer to the heartbeat of what's going on than I have been."

According to Redwine, the "heartbeat" of the upcoming session undoubtedly will involve some key environmental and transportation issues which could potentially affect Brunswick County.

The local legislator, who was re-elected by an over-



Redwine

"I'll be closer to the heartbeat of what's going on than I have been."

—E. David Redwine
State Representative

whelming margin in November, apparently is in the running to serve as the State House's first majority leader, a new position that may be created to "help articulate some of our (Democratic) positions due to Republican gains" in the fall election, Redwine said.

Various Democratic lawmakers across the state have asked Redwine to seek the proposed position, he said, adding that the Raleigh News and Observer recently listed him as one of the top five Democrats in line for the job. "If it is created," Redwine told the Beacon, "I plan at this point to make a run for it."

While the majority leader post is only a good possibility, Redwine already knows he will serve as

chairman of a major committee this session. He will find out exactly which committee next week when appointments are made by State House Speaker Liston Ramsey.

Redwine said he has asked to serve on the appropriations, natural and economic resources, judiciary, public utilities, insurance, marine fisheries, water and air resources, constitutional amendments, transportation and health committees. He already has served on all but the latter four panels.

Environmental Issues

One of the main environmental issues facing the General Assembly this year is site selection for a proposed low-level radioactive waste disposal facility, Redwine said. Final selection is expected by August.

A New York consulting firm recently identified areas in North Carolina that are "potentially suitable" for the facility, which will handle the low-level radioactive waste generated by eight Southeastern states from 1993 to 2012.

While most of Brunswick County isn't included in the 13.1 million acres considered potentially suitable across the state, small sections in the county's Northwest and Ash areas remain on the list for further consideration, Redwine said.

Redwine noted that the relatively isolated Ash area probably won't be selected due to transportation considerations. However, the Northwest area, which contains Leland Industrial Park, is located close to major highway and railway routes. Still, the legislator said he feels both local areas will "wash out" during the selection process.

"I don't think it would go there—I really don't," Redwine said, noting that a sufficient amount of land for the facility probably isn't available in the Northwest area. "I don't think the people in the Northwest section of our county want it, and I know I don't."

A factor that makes Brunswick County more "vulnerable" than other counties in the selection process, Redwine said, is the Brunswick Nuclear Plant near Southport.

While some state officials think the waste facility should be located near one of the state's three nuclear power plants, Redwine said he feels Brunswick County shouldn't be subjected to the "possibility of double jeopardy" by having to host both a nuclear power plant and a low-level radioactive waste facility.

(See REDWINE, Page 2-A)