

# Next Week's Vote To Settle Shallotte Wine Sales Issue

BY DOUG RUTTER

Final word on the issue of unfortified wine sales in Shallotte will come next Tuesday when voters go to the polls for the second time in less than three months.

"I think it's going to pass again," Mayor Jerry Jones said last week. "But I haven't heard very many comments about it from others."

Next week's election will mark the second time in recent months that town voters have cast ballots on the

issue of off-premises consumption of unfortified wines. Voters overwhelmingly supported the measure during the November general election, passing it by a margin of 293 to 145.

However, the vote 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.

Mayor Jones said as far as he knows, there is nothing to cause next

week's election from being the one that decides the issue once and for all. "I certainly don't know of anything, and I hope there's not any problem this time."

On Tuesday, polls at the Shallotte Volunteer Fire Department building will be open from 6:30 a.m. until 7:30 p.m.

According to the Brunswick County Board of Elections office, there are 840 voters registered for the referendum. That total is up sharply from

last fall when only 653 town residents were registered to vote.

The mayor said he thinks the additional 187 registered voters indicates more interest in the issue. He speculated that most of the new registered voters are newcomers to the area who are accustomed to purchasing finer wines in local stores and will help pass the referendum.

Jones also noted, however, that a low voter turnout could cause the measure to be defeated. "I think the

greater the turnout the better the chance it will pass," he said.

The referendum on unfortified wines was first requested last April by managers of four area grocery stores.

Currently, stores in town are permitted to sell fortified wines for off-premises consumption, but not the less-potent unfortified variety, also known as dinner wines. Fortified wines have an alcohol content between 14 and 20 percent, while unfor-

tified wines have less than 14 percent alcohol.

Shallotte ABC store is the only place in town where unfortified wines are sold, but those wines must be produced in North Carolina.

Store managers from Hill's, Wilson's, Food Lion and Piggly Wiggly requested the vote to boost business in town and to prevent potential customers from making special trips to neighboring towns such as Ocean Isle Beach for their better wines.

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SOUTHERN BELL ENGINEER Bob Fuller (right) shows how Brunswick County's telephone services are divided between his company and Atlantic Telephone Membership Corporation, in relation to installing a 911 emergency telephone system here. Also pictured are (from left) County Manager John T. Smith and Emergency Management Coordinator Cecil Logan.

## County Is 'On A Roll' With 911 Phone System

BY RAHN ADAMS

Brunswick County Commissioners will have the chance to put their mouths where their money is Monday concerning a proposed 911 emergency telephone system.

At the close of a 1 1/2-hour work session last Thursday afternoon in Bolivia, Commission Vice Chairman Grace Beasley instructed County Attorney David Clegg to draft a letter of intent that, if approved, will formalize the county's aim to install a 911 system here. Last June, commissioners appropriated \$250,000 in the 1988-89 budget for 911 but have taken no action to implement the system since then.

Ms. Beasley's instruction to Clegg was met by applause from most of the 40 individuals who attended last Thursday's 911 work session, which featured a presentation from Southern Bell engineers Jeff Ritz and Bob Fuller. Other commissioners present included Kelly Holden and Gene Pinkerton. Chairman Frankie Rabon and Benny Ludlum were absent.

Clegg said Monday that he plans to present the proposed letter of intent to commissioners at their Feb. 6

meeting. He added, however, that board members probably would discuss the 911 issue at a work session that was slated for Wednesday (Feb. 1) in Bolivia.

"I think we're on a roll now, and I think we'll have it (911) within the next 24 months if things keep going like they did in that meeting," Brunswick County Emergency Management Coordinator Cecil Logan told the Beacon Monday.

Logan noted that he is working on estimates of how much 911-related expenses—such as a facility, equipment and personnel—would cost the county. Ms. Beasley asked Logan to formulate recommendations on the location of 911 answering points and have cost estimates ready "ASAP (as soon as possible)," preferably by the Feb. 6 meeting.

### 911 Explained

The emergency management coordinator indicated he was "well pleased" with last Thursday's work session, which he said he feels corrected at least one misunderstanding about 911—the misconception that its implementation would automatically outmode the county's volunteer rescue squads or at least their dispat-

chers. The information presented last week showed that "nothing will be taken away, just added to," Logan said.

Ritz explained to the gathering last Thursday that 911 is an emergency reporting system—available in about 35 percent of the United States—that allows individuals to punch those three digits on any telephone to summon police, fire or rescue help. With an enhanced 911 system, the person who answers the emergency call receives an almost immediate computer readout including the caller's phone number, street address and the agencies that would respond to that particular location.

Depending on how the county's police, fire and rescue communications are handled, the individual who answers the 911 call could either dispatch help himself or push a button and automatically reroute the call to the proper agency to be dispatched. Ritz said another feature of enhanced 911 is that the answerer, not the caller, controls when the phone call is disconnected.

In response to a question from citizen Pegge Jaynes about how 911 (See COUNTY, Page 2-A)

## New Utility Board Member At Odds With Authorities

BY RAHN ADAMS

Four days after he was appointed to the Brunswick County Utility Operations Board, John T. Boney's name was read Monday on the arraignment calendar in Brunswick County Superior Court.

Boney, 33, of Route 3, Leland, has appealed his month-old convictions in Brunswick County District Criminal Court on misdemeanor charges including assault on a law enforcement officer, and being drunk and disruptive in public.

Represented by Southport attorney Mary Easley, Boney's arraignment was waived Monday morning. The case also was listed on this week's Superior Court trial calendar but was not heard Monday, according to the clerk of court's office.

Last Thursday afternoon during a 1 1/2-hour county commissioners' work session in Bolivia, Boney was appointed to fill the unexpired term of the UOB's District 5 representative, Jimmy Oldham, who recently resigned due to a conflicting work situation, according to District 5 Commissioner Grace Beasley. Oldham was reappointed to a two-year term on the utility board last September.

Ms. Beasley, who nominated Boney for the UOB seat, told the Beacon Monday she was unaware that he was involved in the criminal cases. Prior to last Thursday's

meeting, Boney had contacted her and expressed an interest in serving on the utility board, she said, adding that she discussed the appointment with "two or three people" who said they thought Boney would make an excellent UOB member.

Ms. Beasley said other "criteria" she used in selecting Boney was his "genuine interest" in serving on the utility board. When asked if the charges against Boney would have made any difference in her decision, the commissioner responded that she might have waited until his court case was resolved before considering the appointment.

Chairman Frankie Rabon and Kelly Holden—the only other commissioners present last Thursday when the vote was taken—supported Boney's nomination without discussion. Commission members generally do not oppose an appointment that is made by a commissioner for his or her own respective district.

According to County Attorney David Clegg, convictions on misdemeanor offenses "in and of themselves" would not preclude Boney from serving on the UOB, an eight-member board which advises commissioners on the growth and operation of the Brunswick County Water System. State law does not allow individuals to hold public office who have lost their citizenship rights due to a felony conviction, Clegg

said. Boney, a Belville merchant, could not be reached for comment Tuesday afternoon.

According to court records on file in the Brunswick County Clerk of Court's office, Boney was charged by the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department with assault on a law enforcement officer and with being drunk and disruptive on Aug. 27, 1988, following an incident the same day in the parking lot of his business, Holiday Beverages.

In the defendant's arrest warrants, Deputy R.N. Spencer alleged that Boney appeared intoxicated, and that he "cussed and shouted in a loud voice" and challenged the officer to a fight. The warrant for assault also states that Boney struck and kicked Spencer while the officer was checking a vehicle that displayed no license plate.

Boney pleaded not guilty to both misdemeanor charges when his case was heard Dec. 21, 1988, in Brunswick County District Criminal Court. He was found guilty of both charges and was sentenced to a \$100 fine and a 29-day jail term that was suspended for two years. He appealed the convictions.

The maximum penalty for assault on a law enforcement officer is up to two years in prison and a fine; for being drunk and disruptive, up to 30 days in jail or a fine of up to \$50.

## Survey Reveals No Septic Tank Violations Near Lockwood

BY DOUG RUTTER

Septic tanks have apparently played little or no role in the recent pollution and natural resource damage in Lockwood Folly River, a state environmental official said last week.

Following a recent examination of septic tanks in the Lockwood Folly area, state officials have concluded that there are no tanks known to be contributing to the pollution problems experienced in the river, said Bob Benton, director of the state shellfish sanitation branch which conducted the survey.

"We found no septic tank violations in the survey," he said, adding that more than 400 tanks were checked between Jan. 9 and Jan. 17. "We really haven't come up with anything definitive."

The survey area included both sides of the Lockwood Folly River and its tributaries between the inlet and U.S. 17, said Benton. He said state employees examined the septic tank site looking for possible drainage problems and probed drain lines in some cases.

However, because shellfish sanitation staff conducting the survey were only able to check the septic tank if the homeowner was home at the time, Benton said many areas on Holden Beach were missed. He said a closer look at the island is planned for the spring or summer.

Instead of malfunctioning septic tanks, Benton said a more likely source of river pollution is runoff. During times of moderate or heavy rainfall in the river basin, he said stormwater picks up bacteria from rooftops, roads, ditches, cleared fields and other areas and carries it into the river.

Lockwood Folly River, which traditionally accounts for approximately 40 percent of the county's oyster and clam harvest, has been

"We feel it's got to be just runoff."

—Bob Benton, Shellfish Sanitation

closed to shellfishermen almost continuously since late August because of high levels of fecal coliform bacteria, a natural organism which indicates pollution.

Although the river has been showing recent signs of recovery in its battle against pollution, it is still shut down with each rainfall.

"I really never thought it was (septic tanks) and this doesn't change that opinion," said Benton, adding that pollution patterns indicate something other than septic tanks. "We haven't found enough sewage problems to cause that amount of pollution."

"We feel it's got to be just runoff," he said. "The runoff is the vehicle by which the bacteria gets into the waters."

The shellfish sanitation survey is part of a large-scale look at the Lockwood Folly River by various state agencies.

The state Division of Environmental Management (DEM) is currently studying the quality of water which drains from the Green Swamp into the river basin as well as its impact on the river.

Bob Jamieson, Wilmington regional manager with DEM, refused to discuss preliminary results of the study. He said a full report will be available in early March when state officials plan to meet in Raleigh with representatives of Brunswick County.

"We want to analyze the results and then present them at that point in time," said Jamieson.

## Shellfish Beds Reopen In Lockwood Folly River

After a five-day waiting period, shellfishermen are once again harvesting oysters and clams in Lower Lockwood Folly River this week.

The lower portion of the river, downstream of a line running from Genoes Point on the west shore to Gore's Landing on the eastern bank, was temporarily reopened to shellfish harvesting Saturday morning after being closed last Monday due to rainfall and the resulting runoff.

In addition to the reopening of the lower section of the river, a state official this week had more good news for area shellfishermen.

George Gilbert, assistant director of the state shellfish sanitation branch, said waters upstream of the open area have cleared to the point where they can be harvested as soon as samples of oyster and clam meats test clear of pollution. He added, however, that he had no idea when that may be.

"The whole river has seemed to improve some in the last two months," said Gilbert. "If we can get the water and meat samples to get better at the same time, then we maybe can do something upstream."

## Charges Filed After 6 Stores Sell Beer To Teen

Cashiers in six of the 13 stores in Shallotte which offer beer for sale were charged over the weekend with selling the alcoholic beverage to someone less than 21 years of age.

The charges stemmed from what Police Chief Rodney Gause said was the police department's first operation aimed at discouraging store employees from selling to underage individuals.

The charges were filed by the town department Friday and Saturday after illegal alcohol sales were made at Wilson's Food Store, Party Mart, GoGas, Revco Drug Store, Rite Aid and Food Lion, according to Gause.

Gause said an 18-year-old female was sent into each of the stores to purchase beer while police officers waited outside in unmarked vehicles. The purchaser was wired to provide a tape recording of the conversation with each cashier, he added.

Stores which did not sell beer to the underage female were Scotchman, Handy Hugo's, Minuteman, Piggly Wiggly, Port station, Hill's Food Store and Market Express. The Shallotte ABC store also refused to sell liquor to the teen, said Gause.

Assisting town police in the operation were David Crocker of the Brunswick County Sheriff's Depart-

ment and Billy Nichols of the state Division of Alcoholic Law Enforcement.

Gause said he thought the operation was very successful and said he was surprised at the number of stores in town which sold beer to underage individuals.

He warned that the police department will conduct similar operations in the future. "We may turn around and do it next week," he said.

Chief Gause said the operation was conducted in response to numerous complaints from parents who have said their underage children have been purchasing beer in town.