

Holden Beach Blunder Postpones Referendum For Third Time

BY DOUG RUTTER

Holden Beach officials undoubtedly hope the old adage about the third time being the charm is reliable. After withstanding two previous delays of a special election concerning a change in town government, commissioners learned this week that the referendum will have to be postponed one more time.

First planned for February, a special election on a proposed switch from the mayor/council to council/manager form of government was later rescheduled for March and then again for April before this latest mishap pushed the date even deeper into the spring.

A new election date has not been set, but it will probably be in late April. Holden Beach Commissioners are expected to discuss the matter during a board workshop next Monday at 10 a.m.

The mistake this time around deals with the required advertisement of a public hearing on the proposed change in the town charter. Town commissioners had scheduled a public hearing on the charter amendment for Monday, Feb. 6.

However, the town failed to meet advertising requirements for the hearing. Public hearings must be advertised at least 10 days prior to the hearing date, ac-

"No matter how much trouble it is, we want to do it right and get the public's input."

—Gil Bass
Holden Beach Commissioner

ording to a recent memorandum from the town attorney.

Instead of advertising the public hearing in the Jan. 26 issue of The Brunswick Beacon, the town board of elections ran a public notice providing information about the referendum and voter registration.

"We got a notice in the paper," said Town Tax Collector Sylvia Bissell. "It just wasn't the right one."

Town Administrator Gus Ulrich said the election will likely be set for Tuesday, April 25. That date, he said, will allow time for the town to set and advertise

another public hearing.

Once a public hearing is held, he said the town board will have to adopt two items: a resolution calling for the special election and an ordinance calling for an amendment to the town charter subject to voter approval in the special election.

Since the ordinance must be adopted during a regular meeting, Ulrich said the board will not be able to complete that step until the March 6 meeting. "We're nailed down on that one, unfortunately," he said.

The town will then be required to provide public notice of the election at least twice during the 20 days prior to the close of voter registration. Once registration books close, the town must wait 21 business days before holding the election.

Although the referendum was first slated for Feb. 7, the board later postponed it one month after failing to meet state statutes which require advertisement of the election prior to the last day of voter registration.

The election was then postponed from March 7 until April 4 because the earlier date would have fallen 93 days after the town board adopted the ordinance amending the charter. State statute requires that referendums associated with charter amendments be held no

more than 90 days after the ordinance is adopted.

Despite the problems experienced in setting up an election, commissioners have openly supported the change in town government since it was first discussed last summer. Although a referendum is not required to amend the form of government, board members have also indicated that such a revision in town operations is worthy of a special election.

"If you make a mistake, you make a mistake and go from there," Commissioner Gil Bass said in response to the latest delay. "No matter how much trouble it is, we want to do it right and get the public's input."

Under the existing system, town commissioners have responsibilities as both administrators and policy-makers. With a council/manager format, the board would be able to concentrate solely on formulating policy and allow the town manager to implement those policies.

Ulrich, who will become town manager if the referendum passes, noted that there is a bright side to all of the delays. "It will allow more time for voter registration."

"I think we'll have (911) within the next 24 months if things keep going like they did in that meeting."

—Cecil Logan
Emergency Management Coordinator

County Is 'On A Roll' With 911 Phone

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would help residents on "no-name dirt roads," Ritz emphasized that Southern Bell recommends the system only if all roads are named and all houses are numbered throughout the county. "If you're only going to use post office boxes and route numbers (as addresses for the computer readout), you're wasting your money," Ritz said.

Logan and Ms. Beasley said road-naming and house-numbering efforts are underway in certain areas of the county. They added that the projects could be completed on a county-wide level within 18 to 24 months—the amount of time Ritz said it would take to install a 911 system here.

911's Price Tag
According to Ritz, installing 911 here would cost \$194,000, while maintaining the system would cost \$10,993 per month. He noted, though, that the county would incur no installation-related expenses until the system was in place. Then, the county could pay the non-recurring funds in one lump sum or over several months, or Southern Bell and Atlantic Telephone

Membership Corporation could bill subscribers for the installation costs, adding about 25 cents to 35 cents to their monthly statements until the installation costs are covered.

However, Fuller said Southern Bell does not recommend that the installation expenses be paid through subscriber billing, because the companies would have to poll subscribers to get their approval. The extra expense would be added to the installation costs. Also, the county still would have to pay for the poll if it didn't pass.

One factor that will affect installation costs is the number of answering points the 911 system requires here. Ritz said the \$194,000 estimate involved a primary answering point "in the Bolivia area" and a backup point in either Southport or Long Beach.

Ritz said answering points also could be installed in other areas of the county but at additional costs. Logan has indicated that the difference in installation costs between having only one answering point and adding the backup point is about \$40,000.

Health Department Warns About Measles

Although local officials aren't seeing "spots" here yet, the Brunswick County Health Department is encouraging residents to make sure they have been immunized against measles.

According to public health nurse Nancy Leggett, the local health department has received

"hundreds" of telephone queries over the past couple of weeks, ever since a measles outbreak was reported in the Piedmont section of the state.

"We've been very busy with it," Ms. Leggett said, adding that individuals have been asking either for information about the disease itself or about their individual immunization records.

Ms. Leggett said Tuesday that no measles cases have been reported yet in Brunswick County. But "with every little rash, people suspect it's measles," she said, noting that the closest reported case of measles has been in New Hanover County.

The current measles outbreak is concentrated in Rowan and Cabarrus counties, Ms. Leggett said. But due to the highly contagious nature of the disease, the health department recommends that specific groups be immunized. They include:

- Individuals between 15 months and 32 years of age who have not already had measles inoculations or are unsure of their immunization record.

- Persons 32 years of age or younger who were immunized prior to 1968 and may have received an in-

effective measles vaccine.

- People who were immunized before they reached 15 months of age and wish to boost their immunity (recommended only in counties where measles outbreaks have occurred).

- And individuals who were immunized before 12 months of age.

Symptoms of measles include fever, cough, red eyes, runny nose and the characteristic rash which

starts on the face and spreads to the rest of the body. Anyone with these symptoms should stay at home and call their physician or the health department.

Free measles immunizations are given at the Brunswick County Health Department on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and from 12:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. No appointments are necessary for the general clinic.

Warm Temps, Low Rainfall Are Forecast

Above average temperatures and below normal precipitation are expected in the Shallotte area over the next several days, according to Shallotte Point meteorologist Jackson Canady.

Temperatures through the weekend should range from the low 40s at night to the low 60s during the day, while rainfall should measure less than one-half inch.

For the period of Jan. 24 through 30, the daily average temperature in the Shallotte area was 55 degrees, which Canady said was 10 degrees above normal.

The daily average high temperature was 70 degrees, and the daily average low temperature was 40 degrees.

The maximum high temperature during the period was 73 degrees, occurring on Jan. 27. The minimum low temperature was 31 degrees, occurring on Jan. 25.

Canady measured .39 of an inch of rain during the seven-day period.

Ash Man Charged With Possession

Shallotte Police last week arrested an Ash man and charged him with simple possession of a controlled substance.

Eddie Jerome Marlow, approximately 34, of Rt. 1, Ash, was arrested last Friday at 8:15 p.m. and charged with one count of possession of less than one ounce of marijuana, according to a report filed by Police Chief Rodney Gause.

At the time of the arrest, Gause said Marlow was driving toward Shallotte on N.C. 130 West near its intersection with Bridgers Road.

The chief said the department was following up on a tip that Marlow was transporting drugs. During a search, the controlled substance was found in one of Marlow's pants pockets, the chief added.

Local Teen Gets Probation For Southport Boy's Death

A Shallotte area teen-ager received a probationary sentence this week in Brunswick County Superior Court after admitting that he accidentally shot his friend last July at a Varnamtown residence.

William S. Faircloth, 17, of Shallotte Point, pleaded guilty Monday to involuntary manslaughter in the July 1988 shooting death of Terry Williamson, 13, of Southport, according to the Brunswick County Clerk of Court's office.

Judge James R. Strickland sentenced Faircloth to a three-year suspended prison term, with five years of supervised probation. Also, he was ordered to pay \$4,250 in restitution for the victim's funeral expenses, perform 500 hours of community service work within three years and complete his high school education.

The fatal shooting occurred July 13, 1988, at the Roy Hewitt residence on Sabbath Home Church Road. Authorities said Williamson, Faircloth and an unidentified juvenile were inside the dwelling

when the victim suffered a single wound to the head from a .357 Magnum handgun.

Investigators initially said it appeared that Williamson accidentally shot himself. An autopsy at the regional medical examiner's office in Jacksonville was inconclusive as to whether or not the shooting was self-inflicted, Brunswick County Sheriff's Det. Lindsay Walton said in August.

Faircloth was arrested and charged with involuntary manslaughter on Aug. 6, after "evidence obtained from the scene showed that it was not a self-inflicted wound," Walton said. He indicated that both Williamson and Faircloth were playing with the gun and apparently didn't know it was loaded.

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