



STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTHER

LESLIE SMITH, traffic control technician with the N.C. Department of Transportation, installs an emergency traffic light control at the intersection of Main and Wall streets in Shallotte. The device allows firefighters quick access to U.S. 17.

New Traffic Light Device To Help Shallotte VFD

Gaining access to U.S. 17 should be easier for Shallotte firefighters following installation last week of a device that allows them to control the traffic light at the intersection of Main and Wall streets.

"It's mainly to give them access to the street without having to stop," said Leslie Smith, traffic control technician with the state Department of Transportation in Wilmington.

The Shallotte VFD building is situated on Wall Street off U.S. 17 in the downtown business district. In the past, firefighters often had to wait at the intersection, either for motorists to stop and let the trucks through or for the light facing them to turn green.

A switch box installed at the fire department last Thursday allows firefighters to control the light simply by pushing a button. Once the button is pushed, Smith said it takes about five seconds for the traffic light facing Wall Street to turn green. The light will remain green for 20 seconds or 30 seconds, he said, which is enough time to get two or three fire trucks through the intersection.

Although the device is quite common across the state, Smith said he believes it is the first to be installed in Brunswick County. Most area volunteer fire departments don't experience traffic problems like those in Shallotte or do not enter the highway at an intersection or traffic light.

According to Smith, the emergency traffic control device was requested by the town and the fire department. Installation followed a state feasibility study which concluded the device was needed.

The need was based, he said, on low visibility at the intersection, the volume of traffic on Main Street and the fact that the intersection is off-set, with Wall Street and Shallotte Avenue controlled by different traffic light sequences.

Smith said the cost of device, which was absorbed by the state DOT, was approximately \$450. The cost would normally have been more than \$1,000, he said, but most of the supplies needed were already in stock.

Two Charged In Freeman Murder

BY RAHN ADAMS

A Shallotte man and his girlfriend were arrested Tuesday in connection with the September 1988 slaying of local businessman Darwin Kingsley "King" Freeman.

Brunswick County Sheriff John C. Davis said Tuesday that Henry Levi Pigott, 33, of Airport Road, and Carole Jeanette Moore, 19, of Route 1, Bolton, both were charged with first-degree murder, first-degree burglary and first-degree arson.

Pigott, who allegedly shot Freeman, also was charged with armed robbery, Davis said.

Officers from the sheriff's department and the SBI arrested the pair without incident Tuesday around 10 a.m. at Pigott's residence, Davis



Pigott

Moore

said. Both suspects were placed in the Brunswick County Jail without bond pending a first court appearance within 96 hours of their arrests.

"Naturally, I feel good about (making the arrests)," Davis told the Beacon, "but we've still got some more work to do."

When the murder occurred on Sept. 25, 1988, Pigott was an employee at Freeman's business, Anchor Lumber Company on U.S. 17 south of Shallotte, Davis said, adding that Pigott has not been employed by the company for some time now.

The body of 74-year-old Freeman was found in his efficiency apartment at the business by firemen called there to extinguish a small blaze apparently set to destroy evidence, authorities said. The victim, whose hands and feet had been tied behind him, died of a single .22-caliber gunshot wound to the head.

Davis said Tuesday that the apparent motive in the killing was robbery. About \$110 was taken from the business, he noted.

The sheriff said Tuesday's arrests resulted from "a chain of evidence we developed and surveillance" of the suspects. No other arrests are expected in the case, he added.

A \$5,000 reward offered by the governor's office had no bearing on the arrests, Davis said, although he indicated that one unidentified "informant" may be eligible for part of the reward.

Davis also stated that the murder appears to have been an "isolated case" unrelated to an unsolved triple murder case that occurred in the Winnabow area on Maco Road last October. The case was similar in that the victims' house was set on fire following the murders.

Property Owners To Question Officials

BY RAHN ADAMS

Disgruntled north Holden Beach area property owners will get a long-awaited second chance Saturday afternoon to confront the Brunswick County Utility Operations Board over being charged for water lines in their subdivisions.

According to Holiday Acres resident Shelba Thornton, who was spokesperson for the group last October, the property owners will ask county officials to waive assessments in Special Assessment District 1.

Conducted by the UOB, the hearing will be held Saturday at 4 p.m. at the Public Assembly Building in Bolivia. County commissioners also are expected to attend.



Thornton

"I don't think the feeling among my neighbors has changed a lot," Ms. Thornton said Friday, referring to objections expressed by property owners at a public hearing on their proposed assessments last October.

Commissioners slated the upcoming hearing after the property owners said they weren't given adequate time to air their concerns in October.

Controversy has surrounded the SAD 1 project from the start. At an initial public hearing in March 1987, property owners asked the UOB not to include them in a special assessment district—a method of extending water lines at the owners' expenses. However, SAD 1 was created and water lines were installed.

According to water system records, 238 property owners in SAD 1 had applied for water service as of Friday. Water officials said last fall that there were about 450 potential

customers in the district, which consists of 788 separate parcels of land.

Since last October, the county has bowed to objections expressed by property owners' demands. Commissioners granted the new hearing and scheduled it for a Saturday when out-of-county land owners could attend.

The board agreed to notify the owners of the hearing date by certified letters, after many of them said they hadn't received earlier mailings about the project. Also, an installment payment plan was worked out to handle the assessments in "hardship cases."

And commissioners deleted a 10-percent administrative fee, which decreased the owners' share of the project from \$322,067.16 to \$294,460.08. That measure reduced the SAD 1 assessment rate from \$6.64 to \$5.98 per foot of frontage.

But Ms. Thornton indicated that the property owners want the county

board to go one step further. "I feel like that (measures already taken by the board) is just fine if we still have to pay the assessment," she said, "but I feel it isn't fair in the first place."

Commissioner Benny Ludlum, who represents the voting district that includes SAD 1, said Monday that he had heard "very little" from property owners until he got several calls this past weekend.

One property owner said the certified letter he recently received was his first notification about the project, while other individuals "just basically say it (assessing them) isn't fair," Ludlum said.

However, the District 2 commissioner indicated that he thinks the county board should stand firm on the assessments. "If we set the policies," he said, "we have to go through with those policies."

Suspect Says He Contacted DEA Before His Drug Arrest

BY RAHN ADAMS

A Calabash man who was arrested on drug charges in South Carolina last month claims he was working undercover at the time of his arrest.

Jerry Lynn High, 37, was charged by the federal Drug Enforcement Administration with possession with intent to sell cocaine, following a three-to-four-month investigation by the DEA office in Charleston, S.C., and the Horry County (S.C.) Narcotics Division.

High also was charged with distributing marijuana and attempting to possess more than 400 grams of cocaine by Horry County authorities following his Jan. 26 arrest at a Myrtle Beach, S.C., area

motel. Agents seized more than two kilograms (4.4 pounds) of cocaine from High, according to Horry County Narcotics Det. Darris Fowler.

Last week, High was being held by the U.S. Marshal's Service in Charleston, after the defendant was denied bond in federal district court, Fowler said.

However, in a Feb. 9 letter to the Beacon, High wrote that he had contacted Special Agent Mike Grimes of the Wilmington DEA office before he became directly involved in the drug deal that resulted in his arrest.

"On or about the first week in January... a confidential informer came to the store where I worked

(to) try to get me to buy 50 to 100 kilos," High wrote. "I told (the informant) five or six times I was not interested in the deal."

High went on to say he talked with Grimes in Wilmington, and that the agent "told me to check into it, and when I saw some drugs or money to give him a call."

High suggested that he was targeted by the DEA due to his involvement in marijuana smuggling in the early 1980s. "The reason I'm in jail is my past record 10 years ago," he wrote. "I was trying to correct that and help to keep drugs off the street. But I (will) probably get 30 years for being involved in try(ing) to stop drugs."

Grimes told the Beacon Tuesday that High has asserted in court "that he (High) was working for the DEA when he was arrested by the DEA," according to information Grimes received from the U.S. Attorney's office in Charleston.

However, Grimes would neither confirm or deny that High had contacted him in January. Instead, he asked, "What would anyone with any sense think about whether or not he (High) was working for the DEA?"

Grimes said the Wilmington and Charleston DEA offices stay abreast of each other's activities, and that he "wouldn't touch" an individual being investigated by the other office.

Shellfish Beds Closed In Lockwood Folly River

The victory was short-lived for local shellfishermen as upstream waters in Lockwood Folly River opened to harvesting last Wednesday were shut down again early this week.

The closure Monday morning came just five days after state officials had opened a large section of the river which had been off limits to clambers and oystermen for nearly six months.

"It has shown some improvement in the last two or three weeks so that's why we opened it up," George Gilbert, assistant director of the state's shellfish sanitation branch, said last Thursday.

He warned at that time that state environmental officials considered the opening a temporary one. "If we get any appreciable amount of rainfall, this one's going to have to close back up," said Gilbert.

It was rainfall over the weekend that caused the shellfish ban to be reinstated in the 153 acres, he said.

The section of river temporarily opened last week was first closed Aug. 17, 1988, following a long-term study of fecal coliform bacteria levels in the waters. The naturally-occurring bacteria is an indicator of pollution levels in the water and shellfish meat and is transported into the waters by stormwater runoff.

Annie Smigiel, a shellfisherman from Varmamtown and president of the local Save Our Shellfish organization, said the harvest was good while it lasted, but that oystermen were still disappointed when it was shut

down again. "There were pretty oysters in there," she said. "We were satisfied with the opening."

Gilbert said the state will have to sample the river water before it can reopen the beds to harvesters, but

said he had no idea when that might be. "As long as there is rain in the forecast and rain coming down, it doesn't make sense to go back in there," he said.

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Calabash Goes Outside Town For New ABC Store Property

Calabash Town Council can expect a request for satellite annexation sometime in the next few years from one of its own appointed boards.

Although construction of a new ABC store may be several years away, Calabash ABC Board last month took a step in that direction when it purchased a site for the proposed building.

But the land lies outside the town limits and its boundaries are not contiguous with the town's perimeter. Unless the town extends its boundaries before the store is built, the lots will have to be "satellite" annexed into town before any liquor can be sold from the new store.

Suzi Moore, one of three members of the town ABC board, said the board recently bought two 10,000-square-foot lots fronting N.C. 179 just west of the town limits. She said the land was purchased from Mr.

and Mrs. Francis K. Galovich on Jan. 16 at a cost of \$118,000.

Due to the unusual circumstances, the town ABC board had to send a letter to the state ABC Commission promising that the land would be annexed before the store was built, according to Town Clerk Janet Thomas.

The town ABC board currently leases a building on N.C. 179 at the east end of town.

Store manager Roy Wrenn said the board now pays \$375 per month for rental of the 90-foot by 35-foot store. A five-year lease on the property will expire in about four more years, he said, at which time the owners plan to increase the rent an unknown amount.

And regardless of the rent increase, Wrenn said the town needs a bigger store to handle the increased traffic created by rapid growth around town and several area golf courses.

Ms. Moore added, "We really need a bigger store with all of the people

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STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

All's Fair In Bowl Game

The rules were loosened and the fun increased Friday during the third and final game of Brunswick Community College's first quiz bowl. BCC's National Vocational-Technical Honor Society team defeated a West Brunswick High School team with the first two games. However, West won the third game, which was

played against four audience members that included the parents of three WBHS team members. In the photo above, from left, special team members Sue Chapman, Jimmy Marshall, William Jackson and GiGi Lewis consult with each other to come up with an answer.