

Neighboring Communities To Vote Next Month On Consolidation

BY DOUG RUTTER

Residents of Calabash and Carolina Shores will vote Aug. 22 in a special election to decide whether the two distinct areas should become one municipality.

Brunswick County Board of Elections Supervisor Lynda Britt said eligible voters of Calabash will go to their normal polling place at the fire station, while residents of Carolina Shores will cast ballots at the property owners association building. The voter registration deadline for the election is July 24.

Rejection by either group would cause the consolidation proposal to die. Calabash then would hold an emergency filing period Aug. 25 through Sept. 8 for candidates for the mayor's post and the five seats on the town council, all of which are up for election in November.

However, if both communities were to agree to consolidation, a special filing period would be held to accommodate those who desire to run for elected offices in the enlarged Town of Calabash, which would include all of Carolina Shores.

"Both will have to vote in favor for it to pass," said Ms. Britt. "If either votes against it, it will not pass and

"I just don't think the people in Calabash will vote for a 5-to-2 split on the town board."

—John High
Calabash Councilman

they will not consolidate."

If approved by voters in both areas, the merger would take effect Aug. 31. The action would bring approximately 875 acres into the Town of Calabash, increasing the size of the existing town by about 400 percent.

On the new town board, there would be five seats elected from Carolina Shores and two seats elected from the existing Town of Calabash. The mayor could run from either area, and all voters in the town would vote for candidates from both areas.

To create staggered terms, in November only the

highest vote-getter from the Calabash district would be elected to a four-year term, while the other winning candidate from that area would serve a two-year term. The three highest vote-getters from Carolina Shores would serve four-year terms and the two other winners would serve two-year terms.

When the seats occupied for two years come up for election in 1991, persons elected at that time would serve four years. Under this system, terms would be staggered and the full board of commissioners would not be up for election at one time. The mayor would always serve a term of four years.

The upcoming election on the consolidation of Calabash and Carolina Shores stemmed from the work of a committee that organized in March to work out differences between the two areas.

Legislation introduced earlier this year that would have allowed a vote on the incorporation of Carolina Shores drew opposition from Calabash officials, who have said they would like to have the option of annexing the community into the town limits in the future.

After a consolidation plan was worked out by the committee, Calabash Town Council and the Carolina

Shores POA Board of Directors agreed last month that the merger proposal should go to a referendum.

The Carolina Shores incorporation bill then was amended in the Senate to allow for a referendum on consolidation, and it was ratified last Thursday, according to State Rep. David Redwine, the sponsor of the original bill.

Redwine said last week he's not sure how next month's referendum will turn out. In all elections, he said there are going to be some for the measure and some against it.

"I don't have an opinion," he said. "I'm going to leave it up to the voters to decide."

State Sen. R.C. Soles, who has been against incorporation of Carolina Shores because of its proximity to Calabash, said in a recent telephone interview that he hopes residents of both areas accept the plan.

"I personally don't think there should be two towns that close together," he said. One large municipality can provide better services than two smaller towns, he said.

Robert Noe, manager of the Carolina Shores POA, (See NEIGHBORING, Page 2-A)

Man Pleads Guilty To Drug Count

A California man who was among 13 drug defendants indicted last month by a local investigative grand jury has pleaded guilty as charged and received an active prison sentence.

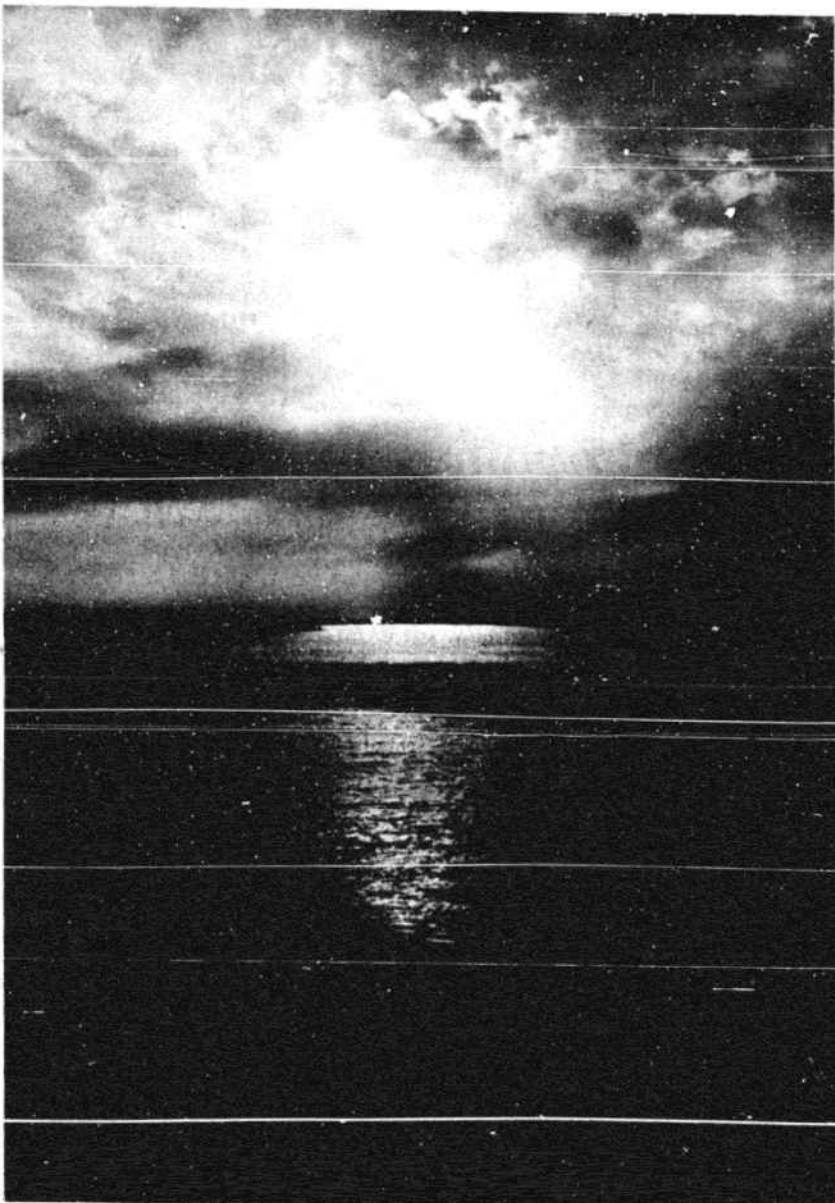
Robert Fowler Hewett, 25, entered a guilty plea Monday in Brunswick County Superior Court to conspiracy to traffic in more than 28 grams of cocaine, according to the Brunswick County Clerk of Court's office.

Judge Thomas W. Ross sentenced Hewett to a 4½-year prison term and a \$5,000 fine, after finding that Hewett had provided substantial assistance to investigators. An SBI agent testified during the sentencing hearing.

Prior to the substantial assistance finding, Hewett faced a mandatory minimum sentence of seven years in prison and a \$50,000 fine.

According to information supplied by the 13th District Attorney's office, Hewett's offense occurred between March 27, 1988, and April 6, 1988. The true bill of indictment listed Shallotte area resident Perry Dean Moore as an alleged co-conspirator. Moore also was indicted in June.

Hewett was the first of the 13 investigative grand jury defendants to be prosecuted. When the indictments were announced June 5, District Attorney Michael Easley stated that "each defendant will be tried on all charges in which he has been indicted and there will be no plea negotiations."



Storm On The Marsh

Ocean Isle homeowner Dorothy R. Leckie of High Point took the blue ribbon in the High Point Fine Arts Guild Annual Juried Show last month with this photograph of the west end marsh at Ocean Isle Beach. She took the photo during a storm this past April.

Brunswick Seeks Ruling To Clarify Points In Proposed Water Contract

BY RAHN ADAMS

Brunswick County officials have decided to meet legal questions arising from contract talks with the Lower Cape Fear Water and Sewer Authority head on, instead of "finessing the problem," according to County Attorney David Clegg.

Clegg, who also serves as chairman of the water authority, more or less took himself to court today (Thursday), to seek a declaratory judgment on three money-related provisions of the proposed contract between the county and the authority.

A hearing was scheduled for today at 11 a.m. in New Hanover County Superior Civil Court, with Judge Henry Stevens of Kenansville presiding, Clegg said Tuesday. The county is represented by Raleigh attorney A.P. Carlton. The authority's legal counsel is William Lynch.

Clegg indicated that the fundamental issue is whether or not the contract can be written to legally allow the authority to charge Brunswick County less for water than other customers, to recognize the county's sole support of the authority for the past eight years.

"I think it's time for us to quit finessing the problem and get into it," Clegg said, adding that he feels a

judgment on differentiated rate structures would have "statewide implications," not just a local impact.

The legal action was filed Tuesday in Wilmington, after Brunswick County Commissioners voted unanimously Monday night to seek a decision in the case. Commissioner Grace Beasley, also a member of the water authority board, made the motion for the action. The motion followed a 15-minute executive session called by Ms. Beasley to discuss "litigation."

Clegg and Lynch have been renegotiating the contract since mid-June, when the county commission and authority board informally agreed on the general terms of a new contract. Provisions were based on recommendations from Carlton and Raleigh engineer Frank Stephenson, who were hired on an hourly basis by the county.

However, commissioners refused to allow the authority to proceed with a proposed \$8.3 million expansion project until a formal contract was drawn up and signed. The county's current contract gives it the right to refuse any new customers.

The current project, which has been in the planning stages for over a year, would pipe untreated water to

Cape Industries and Takeda Chemical Products USA, both located in New Hanover County, and the City of Wilmington.

Clegg said Tuesday that bids on the water line construction project recently were extended until August. The deadline for choosing a contractor has been extended four times since bids were received last October.

Besides the differentiated rate structure issue, the county also wants the court to rule on whether Brunswick County would be liable for revenue bonds issued by the authority for system improvements that do not involve the county.

Another issue is whether the authority may reimburse Brunswick County for the balance of a \$6.2 million contribution that the county made to the authority out of proceeds from the county's \$37 million bond referendum in 1981.

Clegg indicated Tuesday that the authority was not refusing to agree to the county's terms on the contract; the authority's position was simply "we don't know" about the three issues, he said.

Clegg noted that the county would appeal an unfavorable Superior Court ruling in the case to the N.C. Court of Appeals if necessary.

SCHOOLS SAY SUM NOT ENOUGH

School Board, Commissioners To Try Again Monday On Budget

BY SUSAN USHER

Brunswick County Board of Education members will try again next Monday to make their case with county commissioners for more money when the two boards resume meeting at 5:30 p.m. in the Public Assembly Building at the county complex at Bolivia.

Meeting jointly Monday night, school officials told commissioners that without more money they stand to lose classroom personnel and possibly reaccreditation of county elementary schools this coming year by the Southern Association.

Commissioners voted 3-2 against a motion by District 1 Commissioner Kelly Holden that would have granted the schools another \$746,984—the difference between the funds it had sought from the county and was actually allocated in the 1989-90 budget. Holden had moved to appropriate the funds from the county's operating reserve fund on the condition that any additional state funds received later in the year by

the schools be reverted to the county. Holden said that the schools' requested budget, the first he's worked with, appeared to be a good one.

Voting with Holden on the measure was District 2 Commissioner Benny Ludlum. In voting against the measure Chairman Frankie Rabon of District 4 was joined by District 5 Commissioner Grace Beasley and District 3 Commissioner Gene Pinkerton.

None of the commissioners said they opposed granting the schools extra money; Rabon said he had expected the board to listen only Monday night and to make its decision later.

Rabon, Beasley and Pinkerton want assurances the school system has done the best it can in tightening its budget.

Rabon, who consulted with other commissioners during a break before recessing the meeting, said he wants County Finance Officer Litha Hahn, who will return soon from vacation, to review the school budget figures.

Before the county considers an additional allocation he wants to make sure the request is justified and an appropriate expense for county taxpayers, he said.

"I don't feel they (school board members) realize the responsibility we have as much as they should," he continued. "I know it's a lot easier to ask for money than to hand it out."

Pinkerton said he wanted to make sure the school board had scrutinized its budget thoroughly. "I think they're going to have to have some help, but I think they're going to have to help us with it," he said.

Agreed Beasley, "It needs to be fine-tuned a little bit, probably from both sides."

With the two boards seated at an L-shaped table in the public assembly hall, commissioners faced an audience of between 80 and 100 people, mainly school system employees.

The schools had requested \$6.92 million for current operating ex- (See SCHOOL BOARD, Page 2-A)

Police Calling Area Farmer's Death Suicide

BY DOUG RUTTER

A Brunswick County farmer found dead last week on the lawn of a lending institution in Shallotte apparently committed suicide, according to police.

William Eugene "Shorty" Bellamy Sr., 55, of Rt. 4, Shallotte, was found dead with a gunshot wound in the right temple area of his head last Friday at about 6:42 a.m. outside the Farm Credit Service branch in Shallotte.

The man was found lying on his back with a blue steel .25-caliber Sterling automatic pistol in his right hand and his index finger on the trigger, according to a police report filed by Shallotte Patrolman George Samek.

Brunswick County Coroner Greg White said last Friday the cause of death was a single gunshot to the head. He estimated the time of death as between 4 a.m. and 5 a.m.

The body was reported to the Shallotte Police Department shortly after 6:30 a.m. Friday by a manager of McDonald's, which is located across from the Farm Credit Service on U.S. 17.

Police Chief Rodney Gause said there were no signs of a struggle or any evidence of foul play at the scene.

He said the pistol and fingerprints were sent to the SBI lab in Raleigh to determine for sure whether or not the death was a suicide. Results should be available in approximately two or three weeks, said Gause.

The police report said a 1980 Chevrolet Chevette owned by Bellamy was parked in front of the Farm Credit Service office near his body. Samek said in his report that he searched the vehicle but found nothing out of the ordinary.

No note was found at the scene, the

police report indicated.

A native of Brunswick County, Bellamy was a farmer in the Hickman's Crossroads area who was experiencing some financial problems at the time of his death.

On Sept. 1, 1988, he had filed for protection under Chapter 13 bankruptcy laws in the U.S.

Municipal Filing Off To Slow Start



STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER
SHALLOTTE MAYOR Jerry Jones was waiting at town hall to file for re-election when the filing period opened at noon Friday.

Filing for local municipal offices got off to a slow start last week.

Since the filing period opened at noon Friday, four persons are known to have filed for office, either at the Brunswick County Board of Elections or with local town officials.

The deadline for filing is August 12 at noon. The voter registration deadline is Oct. 9.

Shallotte Mayor Jerry Jones filed Friday at Shallotte Town Hall for re-election to the post he has held for four years.

Caswell Beach Commissioners William A. Boyd Jr. and Duncan R. Stuart also filed for re-election Friday, at the county elections office. Mayor Jack Cook's seat is also up for election.

At Holden Beach, elections board member Mabel Dutton said Odis Aleck Alexiou has filed for commissioner.

Countywide, 63 seats on 15 municipal boards and three seats on the Doshier Hospital Board of Trustees will be filled.

A special filing period will be held later this year in Calabash, with residents filing either for all five council seats and the mayor's post, or two district seats and the mayor's post, depending upon the outcome of a referendum on consolidation with the Carolina Shores community.