

# Commissioners Hear Point Residents' Water Request

BY RAHN ADAMS

Before Monday night's confrontation with county commissioners over the need for county water service at Shallotte Point, former commissioner Rozell Hewett commented that "the squeaky wheel gets the grease."

After a 20-minute discussion with commissioners, Hewett and at least 30 other Shallotte Point residents who packed the commission chambers found out that their squeaky wheel won't be greased at least until the results of a county-wide water system study are available this fall.

The \$20,000 study, being done by the Daniel and Associates engineering firm of Cary, is expected to identify "missing links" in the water system. The study initially was expected to be finished by April, but has been delayed until October.

Commission Chairman Frankie Rabon told the gathering that commissioners "certainly haven't forgotten about you," and that hopefully the study will give the board additional direction in expanding the water system where service is needed most.

But Hewett pointed out that studies done over the past eight years already have shown that Shallotte Point needs water service. When plans for system expansion were first announced, Shallotte Point initially was seventh on the priority list for water service and then 14th on a subsequent list, he said.

However, after the county formed its Utility Operations Board in late 1986, Shallotte Point was not

included on the UOB's priority list of special assessment water districts (SADs). Utility officials have said Shallotte Point was left off the list because the community is not located on an existing trunk line.

By the end of August, the county will have completed water line construction in nine districts in the two-year-old SAD program. Those SADs are located near Holden Beach, Ocean Isle Beach, Seaside, Calabash and Long Beach.

"It has a good name," Hewett told commissioners. "It's a 'SAD' situation, the way it's being run now... I think the general public thinks it's all for the developers." The former commissioner added that he has "called the Attorney General's office to find out ways to get (the UOB) investigated."

Hewett also noted that the 1,800 households in the Shallotte Point community were justification enough for the county to build the five-mile water line. The entire water system now has only about 2,300 accounts, he said. His figure apparently did not include individual customers in local municipalities that buy water from the county.

The Shallotte Point residents' appearance before the county board Monday was prompted by the commissioners' Aug. 7 action defeating Commissioner Kelly Holden's motion for the county to build a \$1.2 million water line to Shallotte Point. Commissioners Holden and Benny Ludlum supported the motion; Rabon, Grace Beasley and Gene Pinkerton voted against it.



STAFF PHOTO BY RAHN ADAMS  
SHALLOTTE POINT RESIDENTS crowd the county commissioners' chambers Monday as spokesman Rozell Hewett (right) asks commissioners to extend county water service into the group's community.

Holden's plan was to allocate \$600,000 to begin the project in the current budget and designate another \$600,000 next year for the water line. Commissioners who voted against the motion based their opposition on what they said was an unavailability of county funds for capital projects.

On Monday, Pinkerton reminded the residents that the county is involved in other "mandated" capital projects such as construction of a new Social Services Building and

an addition to the county jail. He also mentioned that school officials were in attendance Monday to ask for capital funds (see related story).

"I can assure you that the problem is being worked on and studied and worried about as much as any problem before the commissioners," he said. He added later, though, that "just to pull something out of the hat and say spend a million over here and a million over there is not the way I think it should be done."

However, Pinkerton and Holden differed over whether or not county funds are available now for capital improvements such as a Shallotte Point water line. Holden said the county has \$1.7 million in capital improvement funds that were carried over from the last fiscal year. That amount should be enough to pay for the DSS building and jail addition, he said.

Also, Holden noted that almost \$900,000 was left in an "operating reserve" account that commission-

ers funded this year with a property tax rate increase. Later in the meeting, the board allocated \$300,000 from that account to the Brunswick County Economic Development Corporation (see related story).

But the need for good water—not money—was what speakers from Shallotte Point had on their minds at Monday's meeting. "If there's any place in Brunswick County that needs water, it's Shallotte Point," said Hewett. He added that groundwater is both in short supply and of poor quality in the community.

Allison Hughes of Hughes Marina told commissioners that her business had to run 3,200 feet of water line from a well at Milliken's Oyster House in order to get usable water.

Bill Alexander told the group that he recently had his water supply tested and that it contained "tolerable" levels of mineral elements. Still, he speculated that many Shallotte Point residents might be drinking seepage from their neighbors' septic tanks.

R.C. Eaton observed that wells in one mobile home park at Shallotte Point appear to be located within 25 feet of septic tanks. "We need water," he said. "It's gotten to where we can't drink it."

One of the last speakers, Edna Milliken, translated her feelings by referring to a billboard on the North Carolina-South Carolina state line that says North Carolina is dry for individuals under 21 years of age. She commented, "It's dry for everyone at Shallotte Point."

## Woman Charged With Assault

A Bladen County woman was arrested Saturday after she allegedly stabbed her boyfriend at a Leland area mobile home park.

Ida Belle Robinson, 42, of Route 1, Kelly, was charged by the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department with assault with a deadly weapon with intent to kill and inflicting serious injury, according to Det. Larry Joyner.

Joyner said the victim—Juaquin Garcia, 38, of Leland—was listed in serious condition Sunday at New Hanover Memorial Hospital in Wilmington. Garcia underwent surgery Saturday for stab wounds to the chest.

The detective and a sheriff's department report indicated that the assault apparently followed a domestic argument between the couple at Garcia's residence in Chadwick Mobile Home Park, Leland. The man was stabbed with two steak knives.

The incident was reported to the sheriff's department Saturday at 8 a.m. When officers arrived on the scene, they found Ms. Robinson in an "incoherent" state on the ground outside the residence. Joyner said she apparently suffered from a medical condition unrelated to the altercation.

Garcia already had been transported to New Hanover Memorial Hospital by the time officers arrived at the trailer park. Ms. Robinson was treated at the hospital, then taken into custody.

Joyner said Ms. Robinson was released Sunday from the Brunswick County on a \$10,000 bond.

## Club Sets Fish Fry

The Artisans Club of Zion Hill community will sponsor a pre-Labor Day fish fry at Cox's Landing on Saturday, Sept. 2, beginning at 6 p.m.

The landing is located near Sunset Harbor.

Plates will cost \$3.50 each, with a discount for senior citizens. Proceeds will be used to finance the club's charitable work in the community.



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