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20 Different Ballots Involved In Tuesday's Municipal Elections

BY SUSAN USHER

The Brunswick County Board of Elections and its staff won't forget Nov. 7, 1989, any time soon.

That's when the board will conduct 15 municipal elections, two special district elections and a countywide referendum on four alcoholic beverage control issues. "Eighteen ballots—that's the most I've ever had," said Lynda Britt, elections supervisor.

"It's more complex," she continued. "Because of the types of ballots, we have to make sure we get every precinct programmed as it should be." Some machines must be set up to handle as many as four ballots, others only one.

In addition, Holden Beach and Ocean Isle Beach are conducting their own municipal elections, bringing the total number of ballots out Tuesday to 20.

In all, 133 candidates—including one write-in—are seeking 80 seats.

The number of registered voters in the towns range from a low of 82 in Belville to a high of 2,389 in Long Beach.

Three towns are holding their first elections: Varnamtown, Sandy Creek and Leland. Also conducting elections are the recently expanded town of Calabash, Sunset Beach, Shallotte, Bolivia, Yaupon Beach, Caswell Beach, Long Beach, Southport, Boiling Spring Lakes, Bolivia,

Belville and Navassa. The only town not conducting an election is the Village of Bald Head Island, which names its governing board in another fashion.

Voters will also elect members to the boards of two quasi-governmental bodies, the Leland Sanitary District and the Doshier Memorial Hospital Board of Trustees.

Countywide, 25,550 people are eligible to vote in the countywide ABC referendum, said Mrs. Britt. All issues apply to only unincorporated areas, those outside towns and cities.

Four issues are on the ABE ballot:

—Whether to permit sale of malt

beverages such as beer for on- and off-premises consumption;

—Whether to permit sale of unfortified (table) wines for on- and off-premises consumption;

—Whether to allow the sale of mixed beverages in hotels, restaurants, private clubs, community theaters and convention centers; and

—Whether to allow the operation of ABC stores.

If the county votes to permit ABC stores to sell liquor, said Doug Robinson, assistant administrator of the State Alcoholic Beverage Control Board, "a dividend of that would be the automatic sale of unfortified and fortified wines" in businesses such as grocery and con-

venience stores in the unincorporated areas.

Alcohol sales of one sort or another are legal now in a majority of the county's municipalities. Also, golf courses in the unincorporated areas of the county can obtain ABC permits as a result of special legislation obtained two years ago by Rep. David E. Redwine.

Referring to this and earlier special bills, Robinson quipped, "Don't you think there's been enough special legislation passed for Brunswick County so that those who want to drink can?"

Should any or all of the issues pass, Robinson said he was not certain of the effect on the municipal

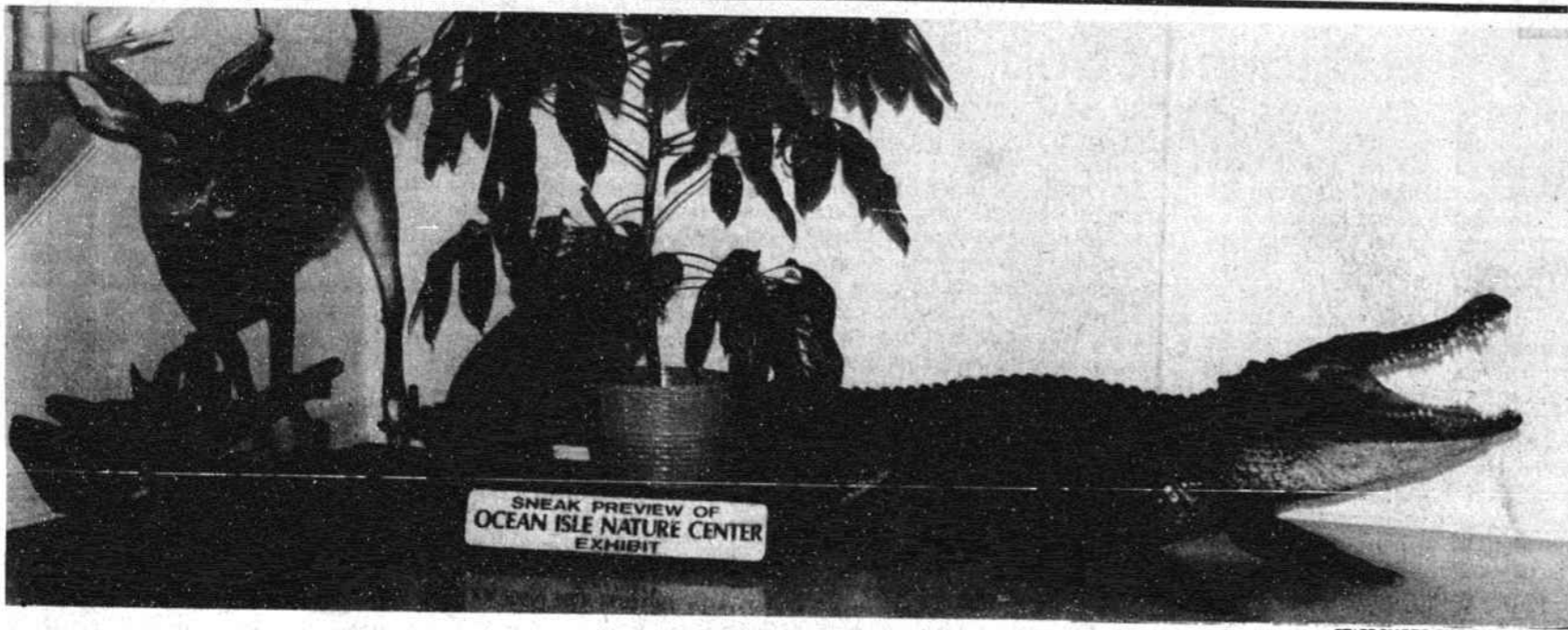
ABC systems.

Meanwhile, even with 18 ballots to deal with, Elections Supervisor Britt said that by using voting machines for all issues, returns should come in rapidly.

"If all goes well we should have the results quickly except where they have these write-in candidates," she said.

There is at least one write-in candidate at Sunset Beach, with rumors of one or more write-in candidates for seats on the Leland Sanitary District board.

Candidates Profiled,
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THIS SNEAK PREVIEW of the Ocean Isle Nature Center is on display at town hall.

STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

Ocean Isle Board OKs Site For Nature Center

BY DOUG RUTTER

Construction is to begin immediately on a natural museum at Ocean Isle Beach that organizers hope will eventually showcase the area's wildlife and marine specimens.

The town's zoning board of adjustment Monday cleared the way for construction of the Ocean Isle Nature Center with a unanimous vote to allow the facility to be built in a residential district.

Board action was required because the proposed nature center is to be built in an R-1 or residential zoning district. Town Building Inspector Druid Roberson said recreational facilities such as museums can be built in R-1 districts as long as they are approved by the board of adjustment.

With Ocean Isle Museum Foundation President Stuart Ingram the only person in the audience and no

public objection to the structure, the board needed only five minutes Monday morning to approve the permitted use.

Following the vote, board chairman Debbie Fox said, "I think, even though it abuts a residential area, it's a quiet activity. It isn't a noise maker."

The nature center will be built between East Second Street and a dirt road extension of East Third Street across from a row of canal homes on Laurinburg Street. The area has been staked out, and Ingram said Monday that work on the building would begin as soon as the weather cleared up.

The museum foundation has contracted with R.H. McClure Builders of Ocean Isle to construct the center. Ingram said the structure will be built this fall and the interior completed during the winter.

He said the museum foundation has raised more than \$100,000 and will continue to seek donations. Another \$100,000 will be needed to complete the interior of the nature center and build a reef room that will feature marine specimens common to the area.

"It's going to take a lot more than the \$100,000 we have to complete the building and build the reef room and purchase the displays and exhibits," said Ingram. "But we intend to make something nice."

Roberson said the exterior of the building will resemble the new town hall. "It has more of a large residence look than an office building," he added.

The nature center will have about 7,000 square feet of interior space and will face the extension of East Third Street. That road is just a dirt path now leading into the town

park, but town officials indicated Monday there is a good chance it will be improved in the future.

First proposed last September, plans for the nature center solidified about a year ago when Ocean Isle developer Odell Williamson agreed to a long-term lease of the land. The half-acre tract is situated about one block east of the causeway.

Organizers eventually hope to exhibit animals common to the area, shore and land birds, shells and local artifacts.

A sneak preview of the nature center featuring a stuffed deer, raccoon and alligator can be viewed in the town hall lobby. All three animals were donated to the museum foundation. Ingram said the alligator was caught in Brunswick County and presented by the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission.

Varying Legal Opinions Cited On Annexation

BY DOUG RUTTER

Candidates for the Holden Beach Board of Commissioners aren't the only ones with different opinions on a divisive mainland annexation issue.

Experts trained in municipal law are also spreading conflicting opinions over whether an ordinance to annex the causeway area can be overturned before it takes effect next year.

After several years of study and debate, the town board voted 3-2 in July to annex approximately 67 acres on both sides of the mainland causeway. The annexation is scheduled to take effect June 30, 1990.

However, since the vote there has been talk of rescinding the ordinance. Whether or not to annex the causeway has emerged as a major election issue.

Four candidates for town board—incumbent Bob Buck and challengers Kenner Amos, Gloria Barrett and Judy Bryan—have openly said they would vote to rescind the annexation ordinance.

Meanwhile, three other candidates—George Bradshaw, Don Pollard and Carole Rogers—have campaigned on the basis that the decision to annex cannot be reversed.

With the differing legal opinions and the municipal election set for next Tuesday, Mayor John Tandy said the issue has divided the town.

"I think some good friendships have been split on this thing and it's not worth it."

Legal opinions vary on whether the town board can rescind the annexation ordinance. However, attorneys agree on one thing: That there is nothing in the state annexation statutes addressing the issue. They also say there is no case law relating to the matter.

Jake Wicker, an assistant director of the N.C. Institute of Government, is one of three persons contacted by *The Brunswick Beacon* who is knowledgeable in municipal law and who said they think the annexation ordinance can be repealed.

But like others, he stressed that it is only his opinion. The state statute dealing with annexation does not address whether or not an annexation ordinance can be rescinded.

"At this point, it's a matter of opinion and not absolute by any means," he said. "It's a question of interpretation."

Wicker said if the new town board votes to rescind the annexation ordinance, it could be challenged in court. He said annexation ordinances have been overturned elsewhere but have never been challenged.

Town Attorney Doug Ledgett said he believes the annexation can be stopped if the ordinance is rescinded before it takes effect in (See VARYING, Page 2-A)

Welcome Center Back On Front Burner, Details Of Agreement Not Available

Despite threats of postponement by Transportation Secretary Jim Harrington, a rest area or welcome center planned for the Shallotte bypass will still be built next spring.

The facility, to be built off N.C. 130 West when the bypass is paved, replaces a rest area now located on U.S. 17 near Bolivia.

Department of Transportation spokesman Bill Jones said the department had received a letter from Joe Augustine of the Greater Wilmington Chamber of Commerce, representing the local parties involved, regarding agreement not to use state monies for operation of the center. "I can't comment on its exact contents, however," he said, "because it's still in our legal department getting worked on."

The agreement should be worked out in sufficient time for construction to proceed on its original schedule, in conjunction with paving of the bypass. The facility is to be completed by fall at a projected cost of \$1,150,000.

Area chambers of commerce had high hopes for the facility, expecting it to evolve into much more than a rest area. While operated locally at first, sponsors had hoped that, with a track record established, it could someday join the ranks of state welcome centers.

In an agreement reached with the state several years ago with the help of Rep. David Redwine, the South Brunswick Islands, Southport-Oak Island and Greater Wilmington chambers of commerce had agreed to staff the facility as a visitor information center if the state agreed to build a suitable facility.

A similar agreement was worked out for a comparable center that was recently completed on U.S. 17 near the Virginia state line, at Camden. The facilities were intended to provide information on not just local attractions, but those statewide. A third locally-operated facility, near Tuxedo in western North Carolina, fell into the same category.

However, two budget provisions approved near the close of the past legislative session last week put that agreement in jeopardy.

Secretary Harrington announced construction of the center would be postponed indefinitely. The move came in response to the General Assembly's decision in August to divert money from the Department of Transportation's personalized license tag revenue fund

to support for the local/state welcome centers.

"That just threw me for a loop," said Redwine, who added that he was never contacted by Harrington regarding the decision. Shortly after hearing of the postponement, Redwine called Harrington in an attempt to intervene. Reminding Harrington that he is a Brunswick County taxpayer, Redwine said he told Harrington, "I can't believe you're going to punish us for trying to do

something good to help the people down here."

With a four-laned U.S. 17 a major north-south thoroughfare, he continued, "What better way is there to promote tourism in eastern North Carolina or all of North Carolina?"

Harrington later agreed to reinstate the project, provided local sponsors agreed not to use state funds for operations.



Barn Takes The Prize

STAFF PHOTO BY RAYN ADAMS

For the second consecutive year, The Seafood Barn restaurant captured first place in the N.C. Festival By The Sea parade Saturday. Its fun-loving, laid-back theme set the tone for the festival, which drew an estimated 30,000 visitors to Holden Beach. Coverage of Festival events can be found throughout this issue.

But when the legislature reconvenes in early 1990, Redwine said he'll try to address the issue again. He has also brought the question of funding to the attention of the General Assembly's Government Operations Committee, an oversight panel that monitors departmental activity when the legislature is not meeting.

A majority of the vanity tag revenues finance DOT's roadside wildflower and beautification program. However, portions of the fund have been used for non-departmental projects in the past, said Rep. Redwine, noting that the bill set no new precedent.

What specifically incensed Harrington?

The legislature adopted, first, a measure introduced by three Democrats, Reps. Vernon James of Pasquotank, Charles Beall of Haywood, and Redwine, that required DOT to spend \$50,000 in vanity tag revenues during 1989-90 and \$150,000 during 1990-91 to help underwrite staffing of the local/state visitor information centers.

Since the Camden facility opened, the Albemarle Commission has spent more than \$100,000 in cash and in-kind staffing it, said Redwine. Its immense popularity with the traveling public prompted the legislators to seek state support. He joined the effort, seeing the opportunity for partial support of the local center upon its completion next year.

In addition, the legislators approved a measure by Sen. Marc Basnight, D-Dare, that doubled the cost of personalized plates from \$10 to \$20. The extra money goes not to the Department of Transportation, but to the Natural Heritage Trust Fund to help buy pristine or other sensitive lands endangered by development.

Harrington objected to both measures, saying visitor information centers are not to be likened to the network of eight welcome centers operated by the Department of Commerce's Travel and Tourism Division. Funding the three centers, he feared, would set precedent for the state being asked to finance other visitor information centers, especially given the state's current surge of highway construction activity.

He was concerned also that the higher tag price would dampen sales of the personalized license tags.

In addition to postponing construction of the center, Harrington also delayed approximately 20 beautification projects pending outcome of the feud.