

# Shalotte Christmas Parade Saturday Heralds Holiday Season

(The story and line-up are on Page 2-A)

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## County To Answer SOS's Call For Help With Staff Support

BY RAHN ADAMS

When the "Save Our Shellfish" organization initially asked for county support over a month ago, Brunswick County Commissioners said they needed time to review the request. The board took the time during two work sessions over the past week and decided to come to SOS's rescue not with dollars, but with manpower.

After a 90-minute discussion Nov. 21 of the group's work to restore shellfishing in the Lockwood Folly River, SOS officials left the commissioners' special work session without receiving a definite response as to whether or not the county would hire a coordinator/lobbyist to work on the river preservation issue.

But during a followup work session Tuesday, the county commission tentatively agreed to assign the coordinator's duties to county Planner Don Eggert. As far as creating a new coordinator position was concerned, Chairman Frankie Rabon commented Tuesday, "I just don't see us hiring a full-time person for this...With the resources our planning department has, I just think they can do it."

Rabon instructed County Manager John T. Smith to talk with Eggert and Planning Director John Harvey, and to report back to commissioners at their Dec. 4 meeting.

All five commissioners were present at both work sessions. SOS representatives at last week's meeting included President Annie Smigiel, Wallace Smith, John Holden, Marlene Varnam and Carson Varnam, who also is a member of the N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission.

The county board last week also instructed its staff to contact the N.C. Department of Environment, Health and Natural Resources, and request that chemical studies be done of the river and of adjacent agriculture lands where treated sludge is used as fertilizer. Mrs. Smigiel said the studies are needed to help pinpoint sources of pollution.

SOS's main thrust continues to be its effort to convince the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to reopen Lockwood Folly Inlet's "Eastern Channel"—the original inlet channel that is now blocked by a sandy peninsula on the far western end of Oak Island.

Experts including Dr. Walter Stanaland of USC-Coastal Carolina have advocated reopening Eastern Channel as a means of restoring the now-polluted river's natural flow. Stanaland also has recommended the construction of jetties on either side of Lockwood Folly Inlet to improve sluggish water flow and reduce frequent shoaling there.

Mrs. Smigiel told commissioners

last week that only three of 90 shrimpers and charter boats that sail out of the Varnamtown/Holden Beach area can navigate the shallow inlet, and those three vessels can pass through the channel only at high tide, she said.

Eastern Channel, located south of Sheep Island near the mouth of Lockwood Folly River, once served as the inlet between the river and ocean. When the Atlantic Intra-coastal Waterway was dredged years ago, the Corps cut the present inlet about a mile west of the original channel.

Over the past five years, the federal government has spent an average of \$440,000 per year to keep the new inlet open. Earlier this year, the federal Energy and Water Appropriations Bill allotted \$535,000 for maintenance dredging of the inlet during the current fiscal year.

In March, Holden was the first to publicly suggest that reopening Eastern Channel would allow the river to flush itself of pollutants that state agencies have determined come from septic tanks and stormwater runoff in the Lockwood Folly drainage basin. Holden's theory was based on his study of maps dating back to 1733 and aerial photographs of the inlet.

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STAFF PHOTO BY RAHN ADAMS

"SAVE OUR SHELLFISH" OFFICIALS discuss with county commissioners the organization's request for a county-funded coordinator/lobbyist to work with local, state and federal efforts to clean up Lockwood Folly River. Pictured (clockwise from left) are Commissioners Frankie Rabon, Grace Beasley, Gene Pinkerton, Benny Ludlum and Kelly Holden; and SOS officials Wallace Smith, John Holden, Annie Smigiel, Marlene Varnam and Carson Varnam.

## Developers May Scale Down Marina Proposal

BY DOUG RUTTER

Plans for a controversial marina on Lockwood Folly River may be scaled down to include only a pier and boat ramp, according to a state official involved in the permitting process.

Jim Herstine, regional director of the N.C. Division of Coastal Management, said developers verbally agreed earlier this month to scrap plans for a 50-slip marina and building a pier and boat ramp

instead.

Channel Side Corp., which is developing the 500-acre Lockwood Folly golf community near Holden Beach, had proposed building a marina on the river to serve property owners. The corporation applied for a major CAMA permit last year that would allow construction of the facility.

Herstine, whose agency handles coastal development permits, said Channel Side officials indicated a

change in plans was forthcoming at a meeting in early November. During the meeting, he said the developers promised formal sketches of the pier and boat ramp plan within a few days, but nothing has since been submitted.

Shalotte attorney Mason Anderson, who is a principal in Channel Side, refused to confirm or deny the report of doing away with the proposed marina and building a pier (See DEVELOPERS, Page 2-A)

## County Delays Action On 911; Looks At New Funding Formula

BY RAHN ADAMS

Even with \$500,000 already budgeted for an emergency telephone system in Brunswick County, commissioners last week put 911 on hold until they can get local municipalities on the line to talk about the system and a new funding plan.

At a work session last Wednesday in Bolivia, Brunswick County Emergency Management Coordinator Cecil Logan informed the board that the N.C. General Assembly this year passed legislation which allows local governments to fund 911 systems through a monthly surcharge added to telephone subscribers' bills. Funds that are raised can be used to install and maintain the system, Logan said.

On a motion by Commissioner Grace Beasley, the board voted 4-0, with Commissioner Benny Ludlum absent, to delay consideration of 911 until the Dec. 18 regular commission meeting. The specific date for a decision was requested by Commissioner Kelly Holden, who earlier in the meeting had commented that the matter has been discussed for too long without action.

In May 1987, commissioners went on record in favor of implementing 911 here and allocated \$250,000 for it in both the 1988-89 and 1989-90 budgets.

However, the board has yet to give local telephone companies—Atlantic Telephone Membership Corporation and Southern Bell—the official go-ahead to begin installing the system. Installation would take approximately two years.

Logan said the estimated installation cost is \$233,000 for three "answering points"—locations in the system where emergency calls would be received and then dispatched to individual public safety agencies. The ongoing monthly maintenance cost has been estimated at approximately \$11,000.

The emergency management coordinator noted that the installation cost would be recovered in 18 months if each of the county's 26,000 telephone subscribers were billed an additional 50 cents per month. The surcharge, which would raise about \$13,000 per month, could then be used to cover the monthly maintenance cost.

County Manager John T. Smith said he felt that an additional \$200,000 should be allocated for 911 in the 1990-91 budget, to raise the 911 fund to \$700,000. Even with subscribers bearing the installation and maintenance costs, the county would still have to contribute, since the surcharge could not be used to pay for a 911 communications center or telecommunicators' salaries.

Last Wednesday's vote to delay signing an official letter of intent came shortly after Logan told the board

that last Wednesday—the day of the work session—was the deadline that the phone companies had set for a decision from the county. He said both the proposed installation and maintenance costs would increase by several thousand dollars after the deadline.

Even as Logan talked by phone with Southern Bell official Bob Fuller about a possible deadline extension, commissioners voted to put off their decision. Minutes later during a break in the meeting, Logan told Commission Chairman Frankie Rabon that Fuller said the county could probably avoid the cost hikes with action no later than Dec. 18. However, the official deadline was extended only until Nov. 30.

County Attorney David Clegg last Wednesday was instructed to revise a letter of intent that he originally drafted after a 911 public information meeting and board work session held in January. At that January meeting, Ms. Beasley made the motion for the proposed letter of intent to be drafted. The board, however, never voted on the letter.

Ms. Beasley's main objection to approving the letter of intent last week involved her concern about two secondary answering points that Logan said would be located in Southport and Long Beach. Both she and Rabon said they felt other communities would want their own answering points, since the two points would be located in the Southport area.

Logan explained that the three overall answering

points would correspond with the three full-time radio dispatching systems currently in operation in the county—in Bolivia (county sheriff's department), Southport and Long Beach. He indicated that other municipalities have not expressed interest in hiring telecommunicators to staff 911 answering points of their own.

He added that individual volunteer fire departments and rescue squads could continue dispatching their own calls, even without an answering point in their respective communities. After receiving the call, the 911 telecommunicator could reroute it to the proper responding agency.

Another concern was related to the telephone surcharge. The board told Clegg to contact the county's 17 municipal boards and ask for their support of an ordinance to levy the charge. Clegg said each town must concur with the county's ordinance before subscribers within the respective towns can be charged.

Also, Planning Director John Harvey and Planner Tom Birmingham reported to commissioners on county road-naming and house-numbering projects—work that must be completed before 911 goes into operation.

County planners have worked for the past year on eliminating duplicate road names within individual postal zones. A countywide house-numbering project cannot be undertaken until road names are finalized. Harvey said proposed road name changes possibly will be presented to the county Planning Board on Dec. 20.

## Fishermen Gathering Modest Oyster Harvest

BY DOUG RUTTER

The oyster season is barely six weeks old, but it's already the worst one ever in the mind of Luree Chadwick, who helps run a family seafood business at Shell Point.

"It's the worst year I've ever seen," she said. "We've been here about 40 years, and I've never seen this."

Most years, Mrs. Chadwick said they purchase hundreds of bushels of oysters from shellfishermen who work in Shalotte River. This year, they've bought only four bushels since the season opened Oct. 15.

"We're not seeing a whole lot of oysters, especially down there," said Rich Carpenter, district manager with the state Division of Marine Fisheries in Wilmington. "We weren't real optimistic going into the season, and we've seen just about what we expected."

One reason for the small harvest, he said, are two oyster-killing parasites that were identified in state waters for the first time last fall. Tests for Dermo and MSX this year have shown that they still exist, but in smaller concentrations than a year ago.

"Overall, we haven't seen as much mortality this year," said Carpenter. "It seems to be more isolated this season."

"Anybody who can get a bushel on the tide's doing good."

—Larry Holden  
Holden Seafood

Larry Holden, owner of Holden Seafood at Shalotte Point, estimated that about 90 percent of the oysters in Shalotte River are dead and cannot be harvested.

"There's not much out there," said Holden. "Anybody who can get a bushel on the tide's doing good." Due to the scarcity, he said shellfishermen are getting about \$20 a bushel for oysters, which is a few dollars higher than last year.

Oyster harvests are below average statewide. But Carpenter said the problem has been compounded in Brunswick County because one of the best sources of oysters—Lockwood Folly River—is closed to shellfishing.

Since 1980, bacterial pollution has gradually resulted in the closure of more and more shellfish beds in Lockwood Folly River. In recent years, the river has accounted for about 40 percent of the county's commercial oyster harvest.

Over the past 16 months, howev-

er, pollution has forced the state to frequently stop harvesting in the lower section of the river, which contains some of the most productive oyster beds in the state.

All of Lockwood Folly River was closed to harvesting when oyster season opened in mid-October. The lower section was later opened to harvesting for five days before being shut down again due to pollution.

George Gilbert, assistant director of the state's Shellfish Sanitation branch, said the state has been sampling the river water on a weekly basis since Lockwood Folly was closed to harvesting. He refused to speculate whether the river will reopen to shellfishing before the end of oyster season.

"We're just going to keep on sampling and keep on hoping that we can get it open," said Gilbert. "If we have an extended dry period, there's a possibility it could be harvested."

Due to the lack of available oysters and pollution problems, the Dixon Chapel Oyster Roast in Varnamtown supplemented its menu with fish for the first time ever this year. There is a chance the 30-year-old roast won't be held in future years. (See FISHERMEN, Page 2-A)



STAFF PHOTO BY RAHN ADAMS

## Homeward Bound At Sundown

With a gorgeous Ocean Isle sunset as a backdrop, a lone vehicle whirs across the Odell Williamson Bridge toward the mainland Sunday evening at the end of the long Thanksgiving weekend and, for many part-time residents, the close of another all-too-short year in the South Brunswick Islands.