

New County Engineer Prepares To Tackle Coastal Challenges

BY RAHN ADAMS

When former County Manager John T. Smith hired Robert Tucker in late November, Smith wasn't sure where the new county engineer's office would be located at the Brunswick County Government Center. But when Tucker reported to work last week, an office was ready and waiting for him, even though it was Smith's old office.

Tucker, whose last job was as assistant Wake County engineer, accepted the \$54,098 per year Brunswick County position less than a week before county commissioners fired Smith, who had picked Tucker as the top prospect out of 32 applicants for the engineering post. Smith also helped convince the county board to increase an initial salary offer more than \$11,000 to lure Tucker here.

The new engineer told the *Beacon* Friday that he isn't concerned about the administrative changes under way in Bolivia, since commissioners also played a role in his hiring. Commissioners Gene Pinkerton, Benny Ludlum and Kelly Holden interviewed Tucker Nov. 6, then spoke highly of him before the full board decided to offer him the highest salary of any county employee.

"I think that's kind of normal that county administrators go from one place to another every couple of years," Tucker said of Smith's recent departure. "I think that's sort of part of the game."

Tucker is only the second staff engineer ever employed by Brunswick County. The first county engineer, Dan Shields, worked here from May 1984 to December 1986. The position was not funded in the 1987-88 and 1988-89 budgets, after Shields resigned to take a job with a private firm in New Hanover County.

In the interim, the county hired consulting engineers to handle some tasks that might have been performed in-house, if a staff engineer had been on board. With little discussion, commissioners reinstated the engineer job in the 1989-90 budget, then directed Smith to advertise the post in July. The hiring was delayed several months due to a shortage of office space at the county complex, according to Smith.

Temporarily set up in Smith's old office while space was being made in the Operations Services Building, Tucker last week began familiarizing himself with his new surroundings. "I've spent most of this week touring the county, looking at the water and sewer facilities," he said Friday, adding that he also met various department heads with whom he will closely work.

As Smith told commissioners in November, the engineer's immediate task will be to begin reworking an engineering plan to extend the life of the county landfill located between Supply and Bolivia north of U.S. 17. Current estimates are that the landfill will reach capacity in two years. "That'll be the key area I'll be working in," Tucker said. He also will work with the water system and other current projects such as construction of a jail addition and new Social Services building.

Since Tucker's professional background is in Wake County, he said he must also become more familiar with coastal restrictions. "The only real difference in coastal-type work and work other places is the way CAMA (Coastal Area Management Act) regulations apply here," he observed.

Tucker was assistant Wake County engineer for two years, beginning

in December 1987. In that position, his primary responsibility was to oversee Wake County's solid waste program and direct its long-term solid waste study. He also was a Wake County sanitary engineer from April 1984 to December 1987. In that position, he was responsible for implementation of the solid waste program, including redesign of the 218-acre North Wake Sanitary Landfill.

Other previous jobs included work as an estimator and project manager at both Gelder & Associates Inc., a paving company; and Jack Doub Inc., a grading and utility company. Both firms are located in Raleigh.

A 1976 graduate of N.C. State University, Tucker has a bachelor's degree in civil engineering and is a state-certified professional engineer. He is affiliated with the National Society of Professional Engineers, Professional Engineers of North Carolina, Governmental Refuse Collection and Disposal Association and the National Association of County Engineers.

Tucker and his wife, Betsy, have a 17-month-old daughter, Ashley. They currently live in the Southport area, as they try to sell their house in the Raleigh area and look for a permanent home here. The Tuckers aren't complete strangers to Brunswick County, because they have spent several vacations at Holden Beach.

"My wife and I have always been attracted to the coast, and we've always wanted to live in a coastal-type environment," he said, "so that attracted me here, I guess, as much as anything."

"I see Brunswick County on the borderline of exploding growth-wise, so I'm really looking forward to getting started."



NEW COUNTY ENGINEER Robert Tucker (left) chats with Commissioner Kelly Holden Friday in Bolivia.

Two Motorists Slightly Hurt

Two drivers escaped serious injury in a two-vehicle wreck Friday near Southport, according to Highway Patrol spokesperson Ruby Oakley.

The collision occurred Friday at 6:10 p.m., 1.2 miles north of Southport on N.C. 87, and involved Elizabeth Freeman Lesh, 42, of Boiling Spring Lakes, and Eli Fadual Courie, 58, of Carolina Beach.

Ms. Oakley said Ms. Lesh was headed south on N.C. 87, when she attempted a left turn and was struck by Courie's northbound 1980 Dodge truck. Trooper D.B. Harvell charged Ms. Lesh with a safe movement violation.

Both motorists complained of minor injuries and were taken by ambulance to Doshier Memorial Hospital, Southport. Ms. Oakley reported. Property damages were estimated at \$100 to Courie's truck and \$1,000 to the Lesh auto.

Boosters Reset Golf Tournament

The West Brunswick High School Band Boosters have rescheduled their benefit golf tournament for Saturday, Jan. 13, at 9 a.m. at Brick Landing Plantation.

The event was set for last Saturday but was postponed due to rain. The cost is \$100 per foursome.

The tournament was originally scheduled for Dec. 16 but was changed when it conflicted with another charity event.

Man Receives Active Sentence For Assaulting Two Local Men

A Southport man was sentenced to four years in prison after he pleaded guilty last week in Brunswick County District Criminal Court to assaulting a Southport man and a Shallotte man in separate incidents.

Aaron Thomas Swain, 20, of Lord Street, Southport, entered guilty pleas Jan. 2 to charges of assault with a deadly weapon and assault inflicting serious injury, according to the Brunswick County Clerk of Court's office.

Judge David G. Wall sentenced Swain to two consecutive two-year prison terms on the misdemeanor charges. Two years is the maximum penalty for assault. Wall also ordered that the defendant pay \$1,808 in restitution and \$200 in attorney fees, if he is released on parole or work release.

Court records indicate that Swain was arrested Nov. 6, 1989, in connection with a Nov. 4, 1989, assault involving Gary L. Davis of St. George Street, Southport; and on Dec. 29, 1989, in connection with a Dec. 22, 1989, assault involving Samuel Eugene King of Shallotte. The Brunswick County Sheriff's Department made both arrests.

Arrest warrants state that Swain assaulted Davis by cutting him on the hand and chest with a razor. The defendant assaulted King by striking him twice and breaking his jaw.

Also during the Jan. 2 and 3 term of Brunswick County District Criminal Court, Judge Wall heard the following cases:

Donna Woods Babson, unsafe movement, \$10 and costs.

Al D. Gore, reckless driving, no registration for vehicle, 30 days, suspended, \$10 and costs.

Brenda Starnes, speeding 64 in a 55 zone, costs.

Katrina Ann Bell, larceny judgment, prayer for judgment continued and costs.

Michael Blackwell, simple assault, Brunswick County Jail not less nor more than 30 days, suspended sentence two years, costs, not violate any criminal laws.

James Rondell Bryant, no driver's license, Brunswick County Jail not less nor more than 30 days, suspended sentence two years, costs and \$25, not violate any criminal laws.

Edith Benton Carroll, hunting deer at night, Brunswick County Jail not less nor more than 60 days, suspended sentence two years, unsupervised probation two years, costs, \$250, rifle be retained by Wildlife Commission. Appealed.

George Martin Carroll, hunting deer at night, Brunswick County Jail not less nor more than 60 days, suspended sentence two years, unsupervised probation two years, costs, \$250, rifle be retained by Wildlife Commission. Appealed.

William E. Clayton, Sr., larceny by trick, voluntarily dismissed.

Larry Dane Clemmons, assault on a female, resisting / obstructing public officer, intoxicated and disruptive, Brunswick County Jail 60 days, suspended two years, costs, not violate any criminal laws, \$100 attorney fees.

Eunice Davis, assault on a female, prayer for judgment continued and costs remitted.

John Alburn Evans, hunting duck with more than four shotgun shells, prayer for judgment continued and costs—recommends Wildlife Commission not take license.

Michael John Hankins, probation violation out-of-county, admits violation, probation revoked.

James Allen Hannel, hunting on registered property without permit, voluntarily dismissed; taking and possessing antler deer, Brunswick County Jail 60 days, suspended sentence two years, supervised probation two years, costs, restitution \$279 to North Carolina Wildlife Commission, not violate any criminal laws, \$100 fine.

Abel O. Hernandez, first degree trespassing, voluntarily dismissed.

Kenneth Earl Poteet, no navigation lights, costs; operating a motorboat under impairing substance, voluntarily dismissed.

Frank Proulx, worthless check \$463.39 to Brooks Davis, Brunswick County Jail not less nor more than 30 days, suspended two years, costs, restitution \$363.39, credited for \$100, not violate any criminal laws. Appealed.

Gerald A. Rutherford, driving while license revoked, voluntarily dismissed.

Duane Smith, cruelty to animals, motion to dismiss at close of State's evidence.

Johnnie Wayne Smith, taking bird over daily bag limit, Brunswick County Jail not less nor more than 30 day, suspended sentence two years, \$30 restitution to N.C. Wildlife Commission, costs, not violate criminal law, at recommendation of Wildlife Commission not take his license.

Jermaine Chadwick, possession of stolen property, voluntarily dismissed.

Ernest Creech, litter on access area, using access area other than intended purpose, Brunswick County Jail ten days, suspended sentence two years, costs, not violate any criminal laws for two years.

Aubrey E. Meadows, possession of stolen property, voluntarily dismissed.

Lechristopher Parker, no hunting license, no big game license, Brunswick County Jail not less nor more than 30 days, suspended sentence two years, not violate criminal laws, \$25 and costs.

Crosby Nixon, DWI, level 4, Brunswick County Jail 120 days, suspended sentence two years, unsupervised probation two years, \$100 and costs, assessment—follow course, surrender license, not operate motor vehicle until valid license.

Jack Glover, reckless operation, Brunswick County Jail 30 days, suspended sentence two years, pay cost of court and \$25 fine.

Top Recyclers To Win Prize

Seventh grade science classes at Shallotte Middle School will be competing this month to see which group can collect the most newspapers and plastic containers for recycling.

The winning class will receive a prize from the contest sponsor, Volunteers for Recycling. The contest is a follow-up to presentations on recycling being made Wednesday and today (Thursday) by Marcia Warring, a member of the Volunteers for Recycling speakers' bureau. She is also encouraging parents and family members of the seventh grade students to help them in the recycling effort.

The volunteer group also sponsors a recycling center, which is located behind the Sunset Beach Volunteer Fire Department off N.C. 179 in Sunset Beach. The center is open all daylight hours.

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