

# School Board's Baxley Steps Aside To 'Promote Harmony'

BY SUSAN USHER

Faced with mounting tension and dissension among members, Brunswick County Board of Education Chairman Douglas Baxley stepped aside Monday night so as not to block a sought-after change of leadership. Named to replace him was District 2 member Dot Worth, a candidate for re-election. James Clemmons of Leland, also seeking re-election, will continue as vice chairman. Worth was nominated by District 3 member Donna Baxter. In turn, Worth attempted to nominate Baxter

for vice-chairman, only to learn the seat had not been vacated by Clemmons. Worth said she felt that every board member should have the opportunity to serve as chairman sometime during their multi-year term on the board. In the past she has also expressed concern publicly that fellow board members were not open to proposals she's made and have attempted to "shut her out" of board decision-making. That split is just one of several among board members that prompted Baxter to suggest the need for a

board retreat in order to air those differences and learn to work better together. When held last month, however, the retreat ended up as an educational session on existing programs and staff goals for the coming year. Worth will serve as chairman until the first meeting in December, filling Baxley's unexpired term as chairman. Baxley will continue on the board as the District 1 representative. Regular board elections will be held at the board's December meeting. A change in the method of electing board officers was first proposed by District 3 member Robert

Slockett in late 1989. At the board's January meeting, when a proposed amendment to the board policy was presented for first reading, Slockett pushed for the board to allow its adoption at that meeting instead of waiting until after a second reading as required by board policy. That effort failed on a split vote. The measure did pass on second reading Monday. As amended, the board's policy now provides for election of officers each December, rather than only in December of the years during which new members are (See DOT WORTH, Page 2-A)

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Too Cold For Coppertone

STAFF PHOTO BY RAHN ADAMS

A bundled-up Holly Kay Baxley keeps an eye on her frisky little dog, Cricket, during a chilly afternoon stroll recently at Ocean Isle Beach. Four-year-old Holly is the daughter of Elbert and Sue Baxley of Shallotte.

## Holden Board Rejects Annexation

BY DOUG RUTTER

Four Holden Beach Commissioners lived up to a campaign promise Monday when they voted to rescind an ordinance annexing approximately 67 acres on the mainland side of the bridge.

Commissioners voted 4-1 at their regular monthly meeting to overturn the controversial annexation ordinance, which was adopted last summer and set to take effect June 30. Bob Buck, Gloria Barrett, Kenner Amos and Judy Bryan voted to repeal the ordinance Monday, while Gay Atkins opposed the motion.

The vote brought applause from some of the 45 people attending the town meeting and no reaction from others. This week's vote ends—at least temporarily—talk of annexing the causeway and surrounding property, which has been discussed for more than three years.

Upset by Monday's turn of events, Commissioner Atkins said the four board members who voted to stop the annexation were throwing away years of work done by two previous town boards and a special annexation committee consisting of island and mainland residents.

Also, Ms. Atkins said she was upset that the three new commissioners who took office in December never spoke to her about annexation before this week's vote or sat in on any of the early meetings when annexation was discussed.

"Where are you going to have commercial growth on this beach?"

she asked. The commissioner added later that mainland property owners will never allow the town to build a sewer system in the area without annexation.

Ms. Atkins repeatedly asked board members to put off the vote for one month, saying the commissioners should study the matter further. Most of her comments were quickly dismissed by other board members.

In voting to overturn the annexation ordinance, the four commis-

sioners kept promises they made last November when all five seats on the town board were up for election. All four said they would vote to stop annexation before it took effect, and all four were elected.

Buck, who was in the minority when he voted against annexation last June, made the motion Monday night to rescind the ordinance. Based on an annexation feasibility study completed last year, he said annexation is not in the best interest (See ANNEXATION, Page 2-A)

## River Closed To Shellfishing

The status of shellfishing in Lockwood Folly River has run full circle during the past week, but at press time Tuesday evening the river was once again closed.

The state Division of Marine Fisheries closed the lower section of the river Monday morning after water samples taken Sunday indicated that bacteria levels were unsafe for oyster and clam harvesting, said Bob Benton, chief of the state Shellfish Sanitation branch. Benton said the half-inch of rain the area received over the weekend was apparently enough to push pollution levels in the river beyond the critical point. Rainfall and stormwater runoff often carry bacteria into the river and make shellfishing unsafe.

After being closed to harvesting for three months, the lower section of the Lockwood Folly River was opened to clammers and oystermen Jan. 23. Since that time, the river has been closed, opened and closed again.

"That river is right on the borderline as far as water quality goes. It doesn't take much to push it over the edge," Benton said Tuesday. "That's what we're faced with."

State environmental officials believe septic tanks and stormwater runoff are the two most likely causes of pollution in the river.

## Former Commission Chairman Hired As New County Manager

BY RAHN ADAMS

While no one voiced objections about the man who was chosen, Brunswick County Commissioners were split Monday over the surprise hiring of former board chairman William Kopp as the county's new manager.

Kopp, who will assume the \$56,000 per year job March 1, is presently employed as controller for the N.C. Department of Crime Control and Public Safety in Raleigh. The 53-year-old Southport native replaces John T. Smith, who was forced to step down from the county manager's post Dec. 4. County Attorney David Clegg has served as interim county manager.

A Republican, Kopp served as chairman of the Brunswick County Commissioners from 1970 to 1974, while he was a partner in Kopp Brothers Inc. of Bolivia. His familiarity with Brunswick County was a major factor in his hiring, according to Chairman Gene Pinkerton.

"This is an opportunity to get someone who is a native of the county, has county and state experience, and has expressed a desire to return to Brunswick County," Chairman Gene Pinkerton said after the meeting. "I just think it's an opportunity to take advantage of."

The board's 3-2 vote to hire Kopp followed a 25-minute executive session called by Commissioner Frankie Rabon to discuss "personnel." Commissioners Kelly Holden and Benny Ludlum cast the dissenting votes. Prior to the vote, Holden stated he felt that commissioners should be allowed to interview a prospective manager before his hiring.

After the meeting, Holden told

the Beacon that the board consulted with Clegg behind closed doors over whether or not the commissioners could hire a county manager without advertising the position. "You can do it," Holden said, "but I don't think it's the ethical thing to do." He also noted that he didn't know Kopp was under consideration until Monday's executive session.

Ludlum commented Tuesday, "I was told about Thursday or Friday that the three (Pinkerton, Rabon and Grace Beasley) were going to hire Bill Kopp . . . You and it know that they didn't just pick him up off the street." Ludlum added that he thought highly of Kopp. "It's just the way they went about it," he said. "I expect things to be brought in before the commissioners."

Pinkerton indicated to reporters Monday that he had spearheaded the move to hire Kopp after meeting him during Hurricane Hugo recovery efforts here. "Mr. Kopp indicated to me that he wanted to return to Brunswick County," Pinkerton said, adding that he met with Kopp "a couple of times" in Raleigh and eventually discussed the prospective county manager with Crime Control and Public Safety Secretary Joseph Dean.

However, when contacted Tuesday in Washington, D.C., Kopp said he was initially contacted about the county manager's post about four weeks ago by Rabon, a life-long acquaintance, and then on at least two subsequent occasions. Kopp said he told Rabon over the weekend that he would accept the job, if it were offered.

Kopp said he came to Brunswick County in an official capacity im-

mediately after the September hurricane. He returned here last month with Dean, to deliver public assistance checks to the county and local municipalities.

"I look forward to coming back to Brunswick County," Kopp said, "and to the challenge of the position of county manager . . . I don't anticipate any problems at all. I've always exhibited fairness in public office."

Ironically, Kopp was chairman of the commissioners when the county board was successfully sued by *The Brunswick Beacon* and *The State Port Pilot* over a violation of the N.C. Open Meetings Law.

"You learn from experience, and experience teaches you well," Kopp said Tuesday of the legal episode in the early 1970s. "I think it will help me in dealing with the media, because I believe in openness, and I will not be a party to secret meetings that aren't within the strict confines of the open meetings law."

A 1961 graduate of East Carolina University, Kopp also has worked as assistant director for administrative services and business manager of youth services in the N.C. Department of Human Resources. He was previously a managing partner for Associated Insurance Agency of Wilmington Inc., chief deputy clerk of U.S. District Court's Eastern District, and a New Hanover County school teacher.

Kopp also served as a member of the Cape Fear Council of Governments from 1970 to 1974, and was a charter member of the N.C. Coastal Resources Commission from 1974 to 1976. He completed the Governor's Executive Management Program in 1988.

## May 8 Primary Elections Set; Seven Seek Sheriff's Office

BY RAHN ADAMS

Brunswick County voters of both political parties will have a bevy of races to decide when primary elections roll around May 8, thanks to a flurry of last-minute filings Monday in Bolivia.

According to county Elections Supervisor Lynda Britt, seven candidates—including three Republican sheriff hopefuls—tossed their hats into the political ring Monday prior to the noon filing deadline. The filing period opened Jan. 1.

After a purge of local voting records last October, 25,550 Brunswick County residents are registered to vote this year, including 15,903 Democrats, 8,684 Republicans and 963 unaffiliated voters, Ms. Britt said. New voters have until April 9 to register for the May primary; that is also the deadline to change party affiliation or precincts.

Nominations that aren't decided in the May 8 primary will be settled June 5 in the state's second primary. An expected change this year is that a candidate will be able to win the first primary with 40 percent of the vote, rather than 50 percent as in previous years. The change, which was approved last year by the General Assembly, has yet to be endorsed by the U.S. Justice Department.

Sheriff

The race for Brunswick County sheriff is by far the most hotly-contested election this primary season, with five Republicans and two Democrats seeking the post held by Democratic incumbent John C. Davis, 61, of Bolivia.

The three GOP sheriff candidates who filed Monday were Charlie

Long, 51, of Leland; Carl Collins, 42, of Long Beach; and James Brown, 41, of Southport. They join David L. Gause of Shallotte and William "Bill" Sisk of Long Beach on the Republican ticket.

In the Democratic primary, Davis will be opposed by J.R. "Jim" Vaughan of Boiling Spring Lakes.

Clerk of Court

Until the last day of filing, Democratic incumbent Diana Morgan, 37, of Long Beach figured to be the first local clerk of court candidate in 24 years to be elected without opposition in either the primary or general elections.

There will be no clerk of court primaries; however, Ms. Morgan will face lone Republican challenger Donald L. "Don" Willetts, 50, of Bolivia, in the November general election. Willetts, a local businessman, filed Monday.

Commissioner, Dist. 2

Three Democrats and two Republicans vie for the District 2 Brunswick County Commissioners seat now held by Benny Ludlum, who announced in December that he would not seek re-election.

Democrats include Allan Dameron, 41, of Holden Beach; W.A. "Alfonza" Roach, 54, of Route 3, Supply; and Joseph Stevenson, 41, also of Route 3, Supply.

Republicans running for the District 2 nomination are Eugene Hewett, 67, of Route 1, Supply; and Jerry Jones, 44, of Shallotte.

Commissioner, Dist. 5

In the District 5 commissioners race, incumbent Democrat Grace Beasley, 53, of Route 3, Leland, faces three Democratic challengers. J.N. "Joe" Gaaney, 65, of Leland,

filed Monday, joining fellow Democrats Mike Holmes, 40, and V.A. Creech Jr., 63, both of Leland.

Former county building inspector Rudy Benton, 49, of Leland, filed Monday to oppose Donald Shaw, 50, of Route 1, Leland, for the Republican nomination. Benton was dismissed in December after he failed to obtain required state inspections certification and then chose not to accept a job transfer and cut in pay offered by county commissioners.

School Board, Dist. 2

Democratic incumbent Dorothy A. Worth, 56, of Shallotte, filed Friday for re-election to her District 2 seat on the Brunswick County Board of Education. In May, she will face fellow Democrats Joseph B. "Joe" Carter, 58, of Route 2, Supply, and Polly G. Russ, 39, of Shallotte.

Republicans Richard F. Bangs, 65, and W. James Payne, 29, both of Shallotte, seek the GOP nomination.

School Board, Dist. 5

Incumbent James "Jimbo" Clemmons, 69, of Leland, is opposed by Julie Strickland, 37, also of Leland, for the Democratic District 5 school board nomination. Republican Yvonne Lewis Bright, 46, of Route 1, Leland, is unopposed.

State Representative

Like Clerk of Court Diana Morgan, 14th District State Rep. E. David Redwine was headed for an unopposed re-election bid until the final day of filing. Monday, former Brunswick County Public Schools Superintendent Ralph C. King, 56, of Route 1, Ash, filed against Red-

(See ELECTIONS, Page 12-A)