

Pilkey: Sunset Beach Is 'The Best Beach Community In North Carolina'

BY RAHN ADAMS

Duke University professor Orrin Pilkey and local "Save Our Bridge" supporters expected several television news crews to be on hand at the Sunset Beach Pier Tuesday morning for the renowned geologist's announcement that Sunset Beach is his pick as the "best" barrier island community in the state.



PILKEY

But as the news conference wound down with Sunset Beach Taxpayers Association officials' comments against the proposed replacement of the island's 30-year-old pontoon swing bridge, three television news crews and at least one dai-

ly newspaper reporter waited on the mainland for unannounced bridge repair work to be completed.

Despite the reduced attendance for the informal press conference, Pilkey and N.C. Coastal Federation Director Todd Miller presented their rankings of North Carolina's 25 barrier island communities. Sunset Beach stood at the top of the list. Of Brunswick County's other island towns, Long Beach and Bald Head Island were listed in ninth place; Holden Beach, 15th place; and Ocean Isle Beach, 21st place.

Minnie Hunt, an SBTA official and former town councilwoman, told reporters that Sunset Beach's top ranking was a mixed blessing. "It's going to make this the premiere place to be," Mrs. Hunt said, "and that (high-rise) bridge is going to make it easy to get here."

SBTA President Clete Waldmiller pointed toward a

single high-rise condominium unit on the west end of Ocean Isle Beach, then toward the row of high-rise buildings to the southwest at North Myrtle Beach, S.C. "That's what we would like to prevent from happening on Sunset Beach," he said.

Warren "Bud" Knapp, who heads the taxpayers association's "Save Our Bridge" committee, asked for the media's support in opposing the N.C. Department of Transportation's plans to replace the Sunset Beach pontoon bridge with a high-rise fixed span.

"We're trying to protect this island for our children," Knapp said, "and we hope you will help us in this 10-year fight...Unless we get support from people such as yourselves, we are going to lose."

DOT officials say construction bids on the new bridge are scheduled to be received in mid-September.

Construction of the \$7.88 million structure is expected to take two years.

Traffic across the one-lane bridge initially was halted for 45 minutes Tuesday morning as DOT workers began replacing a section of wooden decking on the island side of the bridge. Sunset Beach Town Administrator Linda Fluegel told the *Beacon* that traffic was stopped several other times later in the day while repair work was under way Tuesday. She added that DOT did not give town officials prior notice that the repairs were going to be made.

Tuesday's event was part of a three-day news media tour which began Monday at Folly Island, S.C., and was to conclude Wednesday at Bogue Banks. The

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LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS waited for more than two hours outside the Shallotte area residence of Jerry C. Scott last Friday before the man surrendered.

STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

Shallotte Man Holds Children At Gunpoint

BY DOUG RUTTER

A Shallotte man remained hospitalized Tuesday, four days after he held off police with a shotgun and threatened to kill himself and his children.

No shots were fired and nobody was injured during the two-hour standoff last Friday outside Shallotte. Charges in connection with the incident were pending as of Tuesday afternoon, said John Marlow, chief deputy with the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department.

The incident started Friday at 4 p.m. when sheriff's deputies went to Green Bay Village north of Shallotte to arrest 30-year-old Jerry C. Scott Jr. on misdemeanor charges of assault on a female and communicating threats. The charges had been filed by Scott's girlfriend, Laurie Curtis, said Marlow.

When officers arrived at the mobile home,

Scott met them at the front door carrying a shotgun and holding two young children. "He said he wasn't going to jail," said Marlow.

Officers backed away from the trailer immediately and called for backup. For the next two hours, officers pleaded with Scott to throw down his weapon and release his seven-year-old son and five-year-old daughter. Ms. Curtis was also brought to the scene to talk with Scott.

About 10 patrol cars and 20 officers lined the road leading to the trailer by 5 p.m. While officers negotiated with Scott, the dirt roads leading to the neighborhood were blocked off and the few nearby residences were evacuated.

In addition to sheriff's deputies, law enforcement officers with the N.C. Highway Patrol and N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries and police officers from Shallotte and Ocean Isle Beach responded to the scene. Also, an SBI officer and a negotiator from the Wilmington Police Depart-

ment assisted, said Marlow.

Scott surrendered to authorities at 6:15 p.m., but only on the condition that his son be handcuffed to him. About three hours later at the county jail, officers and Ms. Curtis persuaded Scott to release the boy.

Marlow said Sgt. Carl Pearson of the sheriff's department was the first officer on the scene. He arrested Scott on the misdemeanor charges after the man's surrender.

Immediately after the incident, authorities said no additional charges had been filed because Scott had not held the children against their will.

Marlow said Scott was taken to Cherry Hospital in Goldsboro last Friday night for a psychiatric evaluation. A hospital spokesman confirmed Tuesday that Scott had been admitted as a patient, but officials refused to release any other information.

Brunswick Officials 'Lay Out' Concerns About Northern Loop

BY RAHN ADAMS

Three Brunswick County representatives last week "bypassed" a regional transportation advisory board by taking their concerns involving the proposed route of Wilmington's "Northern Outer Loop" directly to N.C. Department of Transportation Secretary Tommy Harrelson.

Based on what Brunswick County Commission Chairman Gene Pinkerton called DOT's "receptive response," commissioners this week decided to continue paving the way for more local representation on the advisory board, which as it now stands allows Brunswick County's lone member to be steamrolled on transportation planning decisions.

"We certainly desire more representation on that board," Pinkerton told commissioners Monday. "The TAC (Wilmington Urbanized Area Transportation Advisory Committee) should not be the voice to extend boundaries into our county."

Commissioners Vice Chairman Frankie Rabon added, "I think we should be the ones making the decisions for our county—not New Hanover County."

The advisory committee—which meets today (Thursday) at 5 p.m. at Thalian Hall, Wilmington—is composed of two members from Wilmington, one from Wrightsville Beach, and one each from Bruns-

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Vice Chairman
Brunswick Commissioners

wick and New Hanover counties. Commissioner Grace Beasley is the Brunswick County member.

Interim County Manager David Clegg told the *Beacon* that he, Pinkerton and Planning Director John Harvey met with Harrelson, Assistant State Highway Administrator Bill Marley and other DOT officials March 27 in Raleigh.

"We just laid it all out," Clegg said of the meeting. "I felt that the trip was well worth it to articulate our concerns. If we hadn't met with them face to face, we would have just been trading letters."

In last week's meeting with Harrelson, the three local representatives reiterated the county commission's objections to being allowed only one member on the five-member committee. However, Clegg noted Monday, "Our concerns about percentage representation on that board have not been addressed."

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Oyster Relay Shifts To Lockwood Folly River

The state's oyster relay program shifted to the Lockwood Folly River Tuesday morning when resources started drying up in Shallotte River after only four days of transfer.

"We moved to Lockwood Folly because we weren't sure there were enough oysters to continue relaying in Shallotte River," said Rich Carpenter, southern district manager with the state Division of Marine Fisheries, which sponsors the relay effort.

Under the program, the state pays fishermen \$1 per bushel to move oysters from polluted areas closed to shellfishing to clean waters where the oysters can cleanse them-

selves and become safe for harvesting.

The state originally planned to relay oysters for two weeks this spring in Shallotte River and to postpone any oyster relay in Lockwood Folly River until the fall, said Carpenter. Plans changed, however, when oysters became scarce in Shallotte River after only one week of relaying.

Eighteen fishermen relocated 6,823 bushels of oysters during the four-day relay in Shallotte River, March 20-23. Carpenter said officials didn't think there would be enough oysters to last another four days, and the relay was moved to

Lockwood Folly.

About a dozen shellfishermen moved oysters in Lockwood Folly Tuesday, said Carpenter, and the relay will continue through Friday.

Oysters are being shifted from the Davis Creek section of Lockwood Folly River to the Sheep Island Management Area at the mouth of the river.

"That's about the only place we have left down there that we can depend on being open with any regularity," Carpenter said of the management area, which was closed to shellfishing Tuesday and will remain closed until the start of oyster season this October to protect the

relocated oysters.

Pollution problems in Lockwood Folly River have gradually worsened over the past 10 years, and the river has been closed to shellfishing off and on for the past two years.

State environmental officials have said septic tanks and stormwater runoff are the most likely sources of pollution in the river, but specific sources have not been pinpointed.

The lower section of the river, about 400 acres, opened to clambers last Wednesday, but was closed to shellfishing one day later due to heavy rainfall and stormwater runoff.

Sheriff's Department Probe Fails To Find Stolen Money

BY RAHN ADAMS

Polygraph examinations administered to seven county employees were "inconclusive" in solving the apparent theft of \$225 from a cash drawer in the Brunswick County Building Inspections Department, Interim County Manager David Clegg said Monday.

Brunswick County Sheriff John C. Davis reported to Clegg Monday on the missing money investigation, which was requested last September by county commissioners. Clegg distributed copies of the report to commissioners after their regular session Monday night; the matter was not mentioned during the meeting.

Davis told the *Beacon* Monday that the probe revealed no evidence that could be turned over to the District Attorney's office for criminal prosecution. In February, the sheriff noted that a confession would be the only admissible criminal evidence that could be drawn from the tests.

According to Davis and Clegg, all seven employees who had access to the department's cash drawer—including former inspections department Director Billy Ingram—were polygraphed in Wilmington by the SBI. The alleged theft occurred last year before Ingram assumed a new job as county purchasing agent.

"All of the tests were negative," Clegg said, reading from the report. He later commented, "I am somewhat at a loss to know how to pursue it. It has just been inconclusive up to this point."

However, Clegg said the matter was not closed. He also would not say whether the sheriff's department investigation yielded any information that could lead to administrative action on his part.

Brunswick County Personnel Officer Deborah Bowling said Tuesday afternoon that no changes have occurred in the job statuses of the seven employees as a result of the investigation.

Calabash Vet Drops Appeal; Relocates Over State Line

BY RAHN ADAMS

A local veterinarian who last week dropped his appeal of recent animal cruelty convictions has moved his Calabash office across the state line to the Little River, S.C., area.

Dr. Kenneth Neal, 30, owner of Calabash Animal Hospital, withdrew his Superior Court appeal last Wednesday, according to a court document on file at the Brunswick

County Clerk of Court's office. The handwritten notice of withdrawal was signed by Neal's attorney, Carter Lambeth of Wilmington.

Court records also indicate that the veterinarian paid \$2,200 in fines and fees last Wednesday afternoon when the appeal was withdrawn.

Neal was convicted March 19 in Brunswick County District Criminal Court of four counts of cruelty to animals. At the close of the day-

long trial, Judge Jerry Jolly returned the guilty verdicts and sentenced the defendant to four suspended one-year prison terms, five years of unsupervised probation and fines totaling \$2,000.

Jolly also ordered that a copy of the judgment be sent to the N.C. Veterinary Medical Board, which licenses veterinarians who practice in the state. A board spokesman told the *Beacon* that the license of a vet-

erinarian who is convicted of animal cruelty can be revoked or suspended after the case is reviewed by the board.

Dr. Thomas Zweigart, executive secretary of the veterinary board, said Tuesday that his office was notified that Neal was convicted of the animal cruelty charges and that the veterinarian last week withdrew his appeal. Zweigart added that the

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Registration Period Closes Monday For Voters In May Primary Elections

BY RAHN ADAMS

Would-be voters have through April 9 to register for the May primary elections—which, as a result of a recent change of law, are now more likely to decide party nominations without the need for second primaries in June.

According to Brunswick County Elections Supervisor Lynda Britt, 25,550 local residents are registered to vote this year, including 15,903 Democrats, 8,684 Republicans and 963 unaffiliated voters. However, those figures—drawn after voting records were purged last October—undoubtedly will increase by the upcoming deadline.

Ms. Britt said voters can register or change their registrations by visiting the board of elections office by April 9 at 5 p.m. Registrars in individual county precincts also can take voter registrations before the period ends.

As the result of an elections law change approved last year by the N.C. General Assembly, a candidate can

win a party nomination with only 40 percent of the vote in the May 8 primary—a change that reduces the likelihood of June 5 second primaries in most races. Ms. Britt said the new law was endorsed recently by the U.S. Justice Department.

Under the new rule, a nominee can be selected with a 40-percent tally plus one vote in his or her respective race, instead of needing 50 percent plus one vote to win, as was the case in previous primaries. Ms. Britt noted that the change was made to help minorities win nominations when they are top vote-getters in the first primary.

Still, second primaries remain likely in tightly contested races that feature more than two candidates, the supervisor said. In that respect, strictly local primary races that could easily go to second primaries are the Democratic races for both county commissioner nominations to be decided and the District 2 school board nomination; and the Republican race for sheriff.

Brunswick County primary ballots include the fol-

lowing races and candidates:

Democrats

•U.S. Senator—Mike Easley, Harvey B. Gantt, Lloyd Garner, Robert L. (Bob) Hannon, John Ingram and R.P. (Bo) Thomas.

•Court of Appeals Judge—Eugene H. (Gene) Phillips and Ellen Bradshaw Scouten.
•District Court Judge—Wayne Long and David G. Wall.

•District Attorney—Tom Aldridge Jr., Rex Gore and Michael T. Mills.

•State Representative—Ralph King and E. David Redwine.

•Sheriff—John Carr Davis and J.R. (Jim) Vaughn.

•Commissioner, District 2—Allan Dameron, W.A. (Alfonza) Roach and Joseph Stevenson.

•Commissioner, District 5—Grace Beasley, V.A. Creech Jr. and Mike Holmes.

•School Board, District 2—Joseph B. (Joe) Carter, Polly G. Russ and Dorothy A. Worth.

•School Board, District 5—James (Jimbo) Clemmons and Julie Strickland.

Republicans

•U.S. Senator—Jesse A. Helms, L.C. Nixon and George Wimbish.

•U.S. Representative—Robert C. Anderson and Fries Shaffner.

•Sheriff—James Brown, Carl G. Collins, David L. Gause, Charlie M. Long and William (Bill) Sisk.

•Commissioner, District 2—Eugene Hewett and Jerry Jones.

•Commissioner, District 5—Rudy Benton and Donald Shaw.

Ms. Britt noted that the name of former District 5 Commissioner candidate J.N. (Joe) Gainey also appears on the Democratic ticket. Gainey withdrew from the race after ballots were printed.