

# Investigation Continues Into 'Suspicious' Southport Fire

BY BOB HORNE

Investigation is continuing into a Friday night Southport fire that "is of a suspicious nature," according to Brunswick County Sheriff's Det. Gary Shay.

The fire, which Shay says apparently began before 6:30 p.m., destroyed five businesses, three of which were owned by Brunswick County Board of Commissioners

Chairman Gene Pinkerton, who also owned the 20,000-square-foot building that housed the Nice N Pretty Inc. shopping center. The building was located on the Long Beach Road at the entrance to the Sea Gate subdivision.

Destroyed were the Nice N Pretty furniture store, the Clothes Horse women's clothing store and the Wicker Place furniture store, all

owned by Pinkerton, and Beachview Florist & Gifts and Carolina Security Insurance Group.

Although estimates of about \$700,000 and more than \$500,000 in damages have been published, Pinkerton told *The Beacon* Tuesday that he has no estimate on the amount of damages and that it will be a few days before he has an estimate.

The fire started in a warehouse located at the rear of the building, on the northeast corner, according to Shay, and was reported by James Melton Warren Sr. of Yaupon Exon, who saw the fire and made the call from a cellular phone in his wrecker while on a service call.

Six firefighters — two from Southport, two from Yaupon Beach,

and one from Long Beach and one from the Sunny Point Fire Department — were taken to Doshier Memorial Hospital for treatment for smoke inhalation, according to Shay. All were released and there were no other injuries, he said.

Shay, who is heading the investigation, requested assistance from the State Bureau of Investigation

and the United States Division of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

Firefighters from five fire departments—Long Beach, Southport, Yaupon Beach, Sunny Point and Boiling Spring lakes fought the blaze, under the direction of Southport Fire Chief Greg Cumbee, Shay said. Two rescue units from Southport and one from Long Beach were on the scene, he said.

## Tires Dumped On 2 Farms

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loaded, Williams said, which was sometime around 5:30 p.m. Tires were mounded at the edge of the one field and spilled over into the dirt roadway, the only access road serving several fields on the farm. The truck that dumped the load of tires had driven over a section of the field that had been planted in corn only a few days earlier, Williams said, pointing to the tracks.

Susan Carroll, Chip Carroll's wife, said she saw a delivery-type truck with a stripe on the side coming out of the access road on the farm Wednesday evening. She said she thinks it probably came from nearby Wilmington.

"I could identify it if I saw it again," she continued. But without a license tag number or company name, she said, "there's not much the Sheriff's Department or anyone else can do about it."

The incident left the Carrolls with the chore and expense of having to arrange for legal disposal of the illegally dumped tires at an "extremely active" time on the farm — planting season—Mrs. Carroll said. The tires were to have been removed by Friday morning, because crews needed access to the field to continue planting corn.

Another Northwest area farmer, H.O. Peterson, in mid-March reported to local authorities a similar incident that occurred on the Harry Perkins farm across from his own farm.

"Somebody slipped in (and dumped some tires, right across

from my house; there is a branch between here and there. ...Right where those tires are, there's a big pond stocked with fish and it has geese and ducks and all," he said. "There's no telling what might happen if those tires caught fire."

Perkins could not be reached for comment; a message indicated the telephone had been disconnected.

The tires on the Perkins farm were dumped along a right-of-way that services a natural gas pipeline, as well as water pipelines running from King's Bluff in Bladen County to Brunswick County's Northwest Treatment Plant and to the city of Wilmington's treatment plant. The same lines run along the field on the Carroll farm where the other tires were dumped.

Peterson said he guessed the pile at the Perkins farm held about 1,000 tires. However, he said Martha Harper, litter control officer for the Brunswick County Solid Waste Department, estimated the figure at between 1,500 tires and 2,000 tires when she came out to check the site approximately one week after the dumping occurred.

As litter control officer, Mrs. Harper investigates incidents of illegal dumping and prosecutes whenever possible.

Both Mrs. Carroll and Mrs. Peterson described the tire-dumping as a "very serious" situation that is becoming more widespread with time.

"Something needs to be done about it," Mrs. Carroll said. "People need to at least be aware that it is happening."

## School Board Chairman Calls, Cancels 'Emergency' Meeting

A noon Tuesday "emergency" meeting of the Brunswick County Board of Education called by Chairman Dot Worth was abruptly canceled Tuesday morning.

"It was resolved," she said Tuesday. "We resolved that the need was not an emergency."

If the meeting had been conducted, at least one board member would have boycotted it, if former board Chairman Doug Baxley of District 1 held to Monday night comments. Baxley said he didn't consider the meeting to be legal.

"I've not been made aware of anything that would constitute an emergency, nothing that would warrant that short of notice," he said. "It's another attempt to operate the school system by ambush. I don't plan to be there unless I hear before noon tomorrow of something that qualifies as an emergency."

Mrs. Worth said Monday the board needed to meet to discuss personnel and attorney/client matters. "We want what we decide to be in this week's paper," she added.

However, on Tuesday, Mrs. Worth said she had since discussed the matter—which she identified as "pending litigation" against board members—with an attorney other than board Attorney Glen Peterson and decided a meeting was not necessary after all.

After he was fired last month by the school board on a 3-2 vote,

Superintendent John Kaufhold announced his intent to file suit against the board collectively and individually against Mrs. Worth, Donna Baxter and Robert Slockett —the members who voted not to renew his contract.

As of mid-afternoon Tuesday, the Brunswick County Clerk of Court's office had no record of those suits having been filed.

In addition to discussing pending litigation behind closed doors Tuesday, Mrs. Worth said the school board had also planned to take up at least two other items in open session at the same meeting: adoption of the final budget proposal for 1990-91 and a report on how the school system has cut its current budget in order to return \$304,524 to the state as part of a \$40 million statewide cost-cutting effort.

Under the N.C. Open Meetings Law, for a meeting to qualify as an "emergency," two criteria must be met: It must concern "generally unexpected circumstances" and those circumstances must require "immediate consideration" by the public body. Generally, the meeting may be held as quickly as the public body's members can gather.

"At best," suggested Baxley, who is a practicing attorney in Shallotte, the circumstances he knew of regarding Tuesday's meeting might have warranted a special meeting, for which a minimum of 48 hours' notice is required.

## Budgeting Begins At Calabash Meet

BY DOUG RUTTER

Calabash Commissioners got the ball rolling on next fiscal year's budget by reviewing more than 50 individual line items during a three-hour workshop Tuesday night.

When the dust settled, the method of handling residential and commercial trash pickup emerged as the major item that town officials will have to decide before adopting the budget later this spring.

Currently, a contractor goes door-to-door in Calabash's District 1 to pick up trash at residences and commercial establishments. In District 2, residents dump their trash at community green boxes.

District 1 Commissioner Ed Rice said Tuesday the pickup should continue in his area and that people pay taxes so they can have their trash picked up for free.

But Commissioner George Taubel and others from District 2 said the amount of taxes paid in District 1 doesn't cover the cost of trash pickup. Taubel suggested that all town residents use the community dumpsters on Persimmon Road or sign a contract with a sanitation firm for weekly pickup. He also said taxpaying residents should not help pay for daily pickup of trash at businesses.

For the purpose of the budget workshop, the sanitation fund was left alone. Commissioner Jon Sanborn said the two sides will have to "fight it out" next Tuesday when commissioners meet in regular session at 7 p.m.

Meanwhile, commissioners anticipate receiving \$42,500 in state Powell Bill money and at least \$100,000 in state sales tax in the general fund next fiscal year. The town budgeted \$4,400 in Powell Bill money and \$16,000 for sales tax revenue this fiscal year.

Commissioners expect the increases based on the addition of about 15 miles of non-state roads in the town and the higher population

that came as a result of last year's consolidation of Calabash and Carolina Shores.

On the expenditure side, commissioners tentatively budgeted \$30,000 for expansion of town hall, \$20,500 for street lights and \$18,000 for the purchase of a computer system. Citing personnel reasons, commissioners met in executive session to discuss possible changes in salaries.

The board has also proposed setting up a new emergency fund that would be used in the event of a hurricane or other natural disaster. Officials discussed putting \$2,000 in the fund next fiscal year and adding to it each year the money is not used.

No major changes are proposed in the area of public safety, where the town board is looking at minor increases in the amount of money donated to the fire and rescue squads.

Mayor Pro Tem George Anderson asked if any board members wanted to budget funds for police protection to supplement the law enforcement the town already receives from the Sheriff's Department. But none of the commissioners indicated an interest in hiring off-duty deputies or setting up a town police force.

Throughout the workshop, commissioners referred to budgets from the towns of Shallotte and Boiling Spring Lakes, which have populations and tax bases similar to the enlarged town of Calabash.

Calabash officials used rough estimates in starting the budget process, but that didn't keep them from pinching pennies when given the opportunity. To save about \$500 in postage, commissioners agreed to have property owners send self-addressed stamped envelopes with their 1990 tax payments if they want receipts mailed to them. In the past, the town has covered the postage bill.

## 2-Year Term Sought

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adopted at the convention.

In other convention action, county Democrats elected 29 delegates to their 7th Congressional District and state conventions and appointed members to various committees.

Those delegates are as follows: Jim Poole, Janet Simmons, Ronald Hewett, Hobson Bryant, Ouida Hewett, Jimmy Moore, Eileen Kellagher, Crawford Hart, Eugene Gore, Moses Stanley, Julius Adams, Roscoe Butler, Tom Simmons, Norman Bellamy, Jesse Bryant, Bill Stanley, Mary Stevens, Etherine Butler, Sue Franks, A.J. Williams, Walter Reinheimer, Glen Peterson,

Franklin Randolph, Felecia Stanley, John McMillian, Debra Thomas, Barbara Holcombe and Julia Strickland.

Committee appointments were as follows: Sylvia Ludlum and Tom Simmons, judicial district; Donna Baxter and Elizabeth Dameron, state senatorial executive committee; Ouida Hewett and Moses Stanley, state house district.

The 75 to 100 party members present heard from keynote speaker Everett Ward, executive director of the N.C. Democratic Party, and from several candidates for state office. Candidates of local office introduced themselves to the group in 15-second time slots.

## Large Voter Turnout Forecast

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percent rule is "good, fair and legitimate."

Two other races to watch are those in which the winners face no opposition in November: the Democratic primaries for the 14th District House seat and the 13th Judicial District judgeship. Names of the primary winners will be placed on the ballot, because of the provision for write-in candidates, Ms. Britt said.

In the House race, former Brunswick County Schools Superintendent Ralph King of Ash is challenging incumbent E. David Redwine. In the 13th Judicial race, incumbent David G. Wall is being challenged by Wayne Long.

Republicans will choose nominees for four November races: U.S. Senate, 7th Congressional District, Brunswick County sheriff and District 2 county commissioner seats.

Democrats must nominate candidates for nine races: U.S. Senate,

Court of Appeals judge, district attorney, sheriff, District 2 and District 5 county commissioner, and District 2 and District 5 sets on the county Board of Education.

Candidates for the Board of Education and Board of County Commissioners run from a specific district and represent that district. However, they are elected countywide. District 2 includes Shallotte Point, all of the town of Shallotte, Holden Beach and Supply. District 5 includes Northwest Township plus the Olde Towne community and south to Goodman Road.

After the polls close Tuesday at 7:30 p.m., votes will be tallied in the Public Assembly Building at Bolivia, where the Brunswick County Board of Elections will tally results.

One race not covered in the candidate profiles inside is the Democratic primary for Judge of Court of Appeals. Seeking the nomination are Eugene H. (Gene) Phillips and Ellen Bradshaw Scouten.

## Near-Normal Weather Expected

South Brunswick Islands residents can expect near-normal rainfall and temperatures over the next few days, Shallotte Point meteorologist Jackson Canady said Tuesday.

The forecast calls for temperatures to range from around 60 at night to around 80 during the daytime, with about one-half inch of rainfall.

For the period April 24 through 30, Canady recorded a minimum low of 47 degrees, which occurred on the 24th, and a maximum high of 91 degrees, which occurred on the 26th.

A daily average high of 83 degrees combined with a nightly average low of 56 degrees for a daily average temperature of 69 degrees, which Canady said was approxi-

mately two degrees above average. For the period he measured .26 inch of rainfall.

The measurement period ended at 5 p.m. Monday, before a series of thunderstorms moved through the area (see related story in this issue.)

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