

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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Cleaning Up Sign Mess Calabash's Brave Goal

Calabash commissioners envision a growing little town where visitors still drive from miles away for its world famous seafood and an evening stroll along the riverfront. Huge billboards, flashing arrows and misplaced signs, thank goodness, are not a part of that vision.

Since February, the town has been fighting to keep its sign ordinance enforced, an ordinance that has been on the books since 1982 but had been virtually ignored. Things were getting ugly until the town appointed a code enforcement officer earlier this year to help clean up the mess.

Someone forgot to tell Ed Schaack to look the other way, that sign regulations are a confusing bunch of garbage meant to be ignored. He has had the nerve to do his job and to cite people for violating the sign ordinance.

Judging from the four lawsuits filed against owners of illegal signs, you would think the town is trying to protect something, like maybe the beauty of the town and its residents' right not to be bombarded with tasteless billboards and portable signs obstructing the view of drivers.

They won't allow off-premises signs when it clearly states in the zoning ordinance, "Off-premises signs are prohibited." They won't allow signs mounted on rooftops when the ordinance clearly states "roof signs" are prohibited. Have you ever heard of such ambiguous wording?

At least 70 signs were found to be in violation of the town ordinance. Considering the size of Calabash, that number is alarming. The town's tougher stance against such violations is the only way to pull everyone in line with the law.

It's a little embarrassing now for the town to admit it has failed to enforce its own sign ordinance for eight years. Still, those who took advantage of the system should now be made to comply with the law. Sign regulations are for everyone to follow.

It is a brave fight the commissioners are waging in an effort to save Calabash from becoming the "Seafood Capital of the World" to the "Sign Capital of the World."

Boards Missing Chance To Be County Leaders

The Brunswick County Board of Health did not hold its regular monthly meeting in September. Neither did the Board of Social Services. Better luck this month.

Those appointed to serve on the two boards are having trouble getting enough people together to make up a quorum. People are renegeing on the oaths they took when joining the boards.

A backlog of business could start to weigh heavily on the minds of Health Director Michael Rhodes and Social Services Director Jamie Orrock. They are caught in a tough position of having to manage departments where policy is established by board members who, through their own inactive participation, offer no support to county programs.

The last time the social services board had a quorum, it changed its meeting time from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. to make it easier for board members who work later hours to attend. Two meetings have since passed, and still no quorum.

Serving on a county board can be a thankless job at times. Those who serve, for the most part, are volunteers. Some reimbursements are made for travel expenses. However, if a person accepts an appointment, then he or she should accept the responsibility that goes along with such an appointment or else pass up the opportunity to serve to someone else.

A strong board that becomes involved in the department it watches over will also be a strong and positive sign to the community it serves. A lot of county residents are served by the health and social services departments. The board members who serve those departments are missing their chance to be the kind of strong leaders we want them to be.

Study On Tourism Should Be Interesting

An interesting study presented to the N.C. Rural Economic Development Center in Raleigh last week should tell us a lot about the effect tourism has on employment in Brunswick County.

Unfortunately, as bureaucracy would have it, that report won't be released by the center until later in the year, in the winter, when the tourism season is over temporarily. But then again, maybe we'll need the dead of winter to digest what two professors from Western Carolina University have to say about our beautiful coast.

John Wade and Steve Jarrell, economic professors at Western Carolina, were given a \$12,000 grant from the RED center earlier this year to study the effects of tourism on local economies in two tourist-heavy counties in North Carolina. The professors chose Brunswick County on the coast and Macon County in the mountains.

Macon County is the home of Franklin, a town nestled deep in the



Terry Pope
 Appalachians, and a couple of the most photographed waterfalls in the south, Dry Falls and Bridal Veil Falls along U.S. 64. It's relatively close to Cullowhee, home of Western Carolina and, no doubt, the professors' homes.

To choose Brunswick County as the other spot to survey among 100 North Carolina counties is worth noting. No doubt it was chosen because of its rapid coastal growth and already thriving tourism industry. It's also not a bad way for two highlanders to spend the summer at the beach, and get paid for it to boot.

Their study includes a survey of

tourist-related businesses. They were looking at employment issues, such as wages and benefits of seasonal workers, and how the seasonal nature of the tourist business affects the local economies of the two counties. Personal interviews were conducted with area businessmen and the RED center established a committee from our county to review their preliminary findings.

"We are studying the impact of tourism on employment to see whether tourism has created jobs that are compatible with other industries or are a poor cousin to development in those counties," Wade said. "We're trying to answer the question, is tourism a viable employment strategy for these counties versus factory jobs?"

Well, I wonder if Wade and Jarrell strayed far enough from the sandy shores to take a look at other parts of Brunswick County? Our county is unique in one aspect in that it has some of the most accessible family beaches along the entire East coast. It also has those factory

jobs, with more being added each year, that Wade mentioned. To compare coastal tourism with the industry in Brunswick County would chew up an entire state grant alone it would seem.

Their goal is to develop an "econometric model" for each county that can be used to determine how to make tourism more of a year-round business, if that's what local people want, Wade adds.

When I heard that their report was complete and had been presented to the RED center last week, I jumped at the chance to find out what all the fuss was about. I'm eager to see how the highlanders treated our county.

However, Jackie Langston at the RED center said the data is still in its raw form and will need to be compiled before released to the public.

About seventy pages of information were presented to the center, that much I do know. What's on those pages, well, we'll have to wait until winter.



Please Don't Ask Me To Spell It

I'm glad I wasn't selected to represent *The Brunswick Beacon* in the Brunswick County Literacy Council's spelling bee last month. Spelling just isn't my cup of tea.

There are several dictionaries floating around the newsroom. But I'm the only staffer with a *Bad Speller's Dictionary* on my desk.

News Editor Susan Usher gave it to me shortly after I started working for the paper. She has the first crack at editing anything I write. I think she was trying to tell me something by giving me that *Bad Speller's Dictionary*.

Right on the cover of the book, it says, "How do you look up a word in a dictionary if you can't spell it? You find it here among thousands of words listed by their wrong spelling."

Here's how it works. Let's say you're flipping through the *Bad Speller's Dictionary* and run across the word "numbskull." On the right side of the page, they give you the correctly-spelled version, which is "numskull."

Then, you can look in a regular dictionary and find out that a numskull is a dull or stupid person or a



Doug Rutter
 dance. See how it works?
 In the introduction of the *Bad Speller's Dictionary*, it says everyone has trouble with spelling at one time or another, even doctors, lawyers, teachers and presidents.

"This book is designed for those of you who are bright, educated, and hold responsible positions, but who are—let's face it—bad spellers." They're talking about people just like me.

The *Bad Speller's Dictionary* says it's not my fault I'm a bad speller, which is something I knew all along. "It's due to the fact that very often there is no rhyme or reason for the spelling of a great many words in the English language," the dictionary says.

Anyhow, I wasn't really sur-

prised when publishers Eddie and Carolyn Sweatt didn't threaten to fire me if I refused to compete in the literacy council spelling bee. There's a certain amount of pride involved in these friendly competitions, you know.

No sir, the team of Susan Usher and Tammie Galloway was just fine with me, even if they didn't get very far.

You see, I had a bad experience in a fifth-grade spelling bee that still haunts me to this day. I was so psyched up for this class spelling bee, and so disappointed when I missed my first word and had to take a seat.

While other kids were getting easy words like "ridiculous," "labyrinth" and "disestablishmentarian," my first word was "ugh." Don't worry, I looked it up just to make sure I got it right this time.

I can sympathize with the team from Atlantic Telephone Membership Corp., the first team eliminated from the literacy spelling bee.

There's nothing worse than being the first one knocked out of a spelling bee and having to sit there

while everyone else gets words you could spell with your eyes closed and one arm tied behind your back.

By the way, Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary defines "ugh" as an interjection used to indicate the sound of a cough or grunt or to express disgust or horror.

It's also the sound Charlie Brown makes each year on his Thanksgiving special. Charlie runs toward the football and that dastardly Lucy pulls the ball away just as poor Charlie is about to kick it. When Lucy pulls the ball away, it causes Chuck to miss the ball, do a backflip and land flat on his back. That's when he makes the "ugh" sound.

Write Us

The Beacon welcomes letters to the editor. All letters must be signed and include the writer's address. Under no circumstances will unsigned letters be printed. Letters should be legible. The Beacon reserves the right to edit libelous comments. Address letters to The Brunswick Beacon, P. O. Box 2558, Shallotte, N. C. 28459.

Getting Away Is Good For You

Susan Usher



Getting away is good for body and soul; there's no doubt in my mind. Those feelings were confirmed Sunday by a business columnist who cited more vacation time as a highly welcomed benefit by employees of small businesses who work long hours and don't routinely get to take comp time.

Don and I certainly appreciate vacations. We just spent a very restful week enjoying the "off season" in the North Carolina mountains. We got away, but not too far away to be reminded of home rather frequently.

From our two-story unit at Smoketree in the Foscoe/Grandfather community near Linville, we had a marvelous view of Grandfather's profile, with a massive tree in the foreground just falling into glorious shades of gold.

We also had a good view of vehicles winding slowly up a steep grade along N.C. 105, a two-lane

road where movement slows to a virtual crawl behind any heavy vehicle, or when the leaves turn in the fall. Coming out of Boone the road is being widened to four lanes, what DOT calls "improvements." We got to wait, just like at home.

N.C. 105 was a good reminder that this mountain area, like our own South Brunswick Islands, is a popular place to visit much of the year. For the locals, growth there is a mixed blessing as well. The community we were visiting, Foscoe/Grandfather, has just taken two bold steps. First, it's working with Watauga County to develop zoning for the area, with the hope of "setting an example" for other areas of the county.

The community council has just compiled a petition seeking incorporation sometime next year after the General Assembly convenes. These people want some control over their future; they don't want

Watauga County, Boone, Linville or local development groups making most, if not all, growth-related decisions for them. Among other things, they plan to prohibit multi-family housing along the N.C. 905 business area.

There were other reminders of back home, marked by trees. Driving along the Blue Ridge Parkway we saw visible reminders of Hurricane Hugo's path one year ago to the week. Parkway employees said that more than 200 miles of the roadway looked like a disaster area after Hugo slashed his way across the mountains, uprooting trees or snapping them into from Linville to Peaks of Otter, Va. Damage was estimated at \$1.5 million.

While the clean-up began immediately in primary visitor areas, Hugo will have long-term effects on the parkway, just as it will on other woodlands across the Caro-

linas. How? First, clean-up in other areas will be limited, because the parkway is supposed to be managed with as little interference with natural processes as possible. Threat of fire will increase because of the burnable fuel left on the forest floor, especially along the steep east-facing slopes where the most tree-fall occurred. To a lesser extent, there's the possibility of dead or leaning trees falling over in the backcountry areas on windy days.

There were other reminders of home, and how we're all linked together. At Blowing Rock, the town manager had just returned from a stint with the U.S. Army Reserves in Wilmington, loading ships bound for the Middle East. In an interview in an area paper there, he said the State Port in Wilmington lost about two months' worth of cargo shipments mainly because of the performance of the local International Longshoremen's Union's. A Brunswick County man is chief

of the union, and a lot of local men are members.

When the Army thought that work should be going faster, the Union balked, the reservist said, and instead of upping production, members threatened to strike. Instead of bending, the Army simply uprooted itself, moving its shipments of equipment on down to Charleston, S.C., he said. For safety reasons, ammunition continues to be shipped out of Sunny Point.

There was one last link to note. Motoring along among the trees bordering a back road above the community of Rominger, we encountered a car bearing a Holden Beach tag on its front. Whether he was a Watauga County man who enjoys fishing at the beach, or a Brunswick County man who likes the mountains, one thing's pretty certain: The man behind the wheel of that car likes to get away once in a while, too. Rest and a change of perspective are good for all of us.