

GOP Precincts To Elect Officers

Local Republicans will elect precinct officers as well as convention delegates at GOP precinct meetings Thursday, Feb. 21, at 7:30 p.m.

Chairman Malcolm Grissett said meetings are planned at each of the county's 22 polling places.

Attendees will elect a precinct chairperson, vice chairperson and secretary as well as naming delegates to the GOP county convention to be held in March. Precincts will select a total of 182 delegates. Precincts may also take up other business, such as resolutions to present at the convention.

"This is an important grassroots event," said Grissett, encouraging participation.

The GOP state convention will be held in Wilmington May 31-June 1.

Information on precinct polling locations is available from Grissett at 579-6599, Millie Murrow, 278-5824, or the Brunswick County Board of Elections, 253-4338.

Spill Probed At Oak Island

Investigators are trying to locate the source and contents of an apparent spill in the Intracoastal Waterway at Oak Island.

The N.C. Division of Environmental Management took water samples Monday morning from where investigators believe something is leaking into the water at an old fish plant just south of the Oak Island Bridge on Long Beach Road.

"It doesn't appear to be fuel or anything hazardous at this time," said Brunswick County Emergency Management Coordinator Cecil Logan.

The Brunswick County Health Department received a call about a possible fuel spill from another nearby fish plant, but that turned out to be a false alarm, Logan said.

Environmental health workers then spotted a stream just south from that location that had "a little bit of a sheen on it," Logan said. "It's not enough to excite the Coast Guard at this point."

Logan said there are three large tanks on the property site that apparently were once used to store fish oil while the factory was in operation. He said the recent heavy rains may have washed out a holding pond on the property or that the "leak" may be coming from one of the tanks.

"It definitely needs to be cleaned up," Logan said. "So far, there have been no fish killed."

Logan estimates the tanks have sat idle for about 20 years, the contents unknown at this point.

Investigators were checking tax records Monday to determine who owns the property while awaiting results of tests on the samples taken from the site.

This Week's Tide Table

FEBRUARY					
Day	Date	HIGH		LOW	
		A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.
Thursday	14	7:42	7:47	1:20	1:51
Friday	15	8:18	8:26	2:01	2:28
Saturday	16	8:51	9:05	2:42	3:04
Sunday	17	9:28	9:47	3:21	3:43
Monday	18	10:05	10:30	4:05	4:22
Tuesday	19	10:50	11:24	4:52	5:08
Wednesday	20	11:42	—	5:47	6:01

ADJUSTMENTS
 SHALLOTTE INLET—add 17 min. high tide, add 32 min. low tide.
 LOCKWOOD FOLLY—subtract 22 min. high tide, subtract 8 min. low tide.
 BALD HEAD ISLAND—subtract 10 min. high tide, subtract 7 min. low tide.
 SOUTHPORT—add 7 min. high tide, add 15 min. low tide.
 LITTLE RIVER—add 7 min. high tide, add 7 min. low tide.

Local Waters Open To Shellfishermen

Some Brunswick County shellfish beds including those in sections of the Shallotte and Lockwood Folly rivers opened to fishermen last week after being closed to harvesting for almost two weeks.

The N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries opened harvesting last Wednesday sections of the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway and Shallotte River downstream of the south shore of Shallotte Creek and the Swash.

The lower Lockwood Folly River downstream of Genoes Point was reopened on a temporary basis, according to a Marine Fisheries proclamation.

The shellfish waters had been closed to harvesting Jan. 23 following a period of heavy rainfall. The oyster and clam beds were reopened to harvesting due to satisfactory bacteriological results, the notice indicated.

The Olde Gun Club & Shooting Range
 with shooting classes, black powder, skeet, archery and handguns.
 Hwy. 211, across from Water Plant
 Memberships Available. Call Chuck, 278-3763.



STAFF PHOTOS BY EDDIE SWEAT

New Power Squadron Officers Installed

Clete Waldmiller of Sunset Beach (right in photo above) is sworn in as commander of the Shallotte River Power Squadron at a change of watch ceremony and dinner Saturday night. Administering the oath is Joseph Hardee, district commander. Joe Huber, who has served as commander since the squadron was chartered last summer, and his wife are seated in front. Other officers taking the oath (in photo below) are Charles (Buzz) Lambert, executive officer; Lucy Keefer, secretary; Franklin Forrest, administrative officer; and Joseph Borrell, treasurer for another term. Fr. John Richardson (not pictured) will serve another term as education officer.



IT'S A \$200,000 PROJECT

Overhaul Of Computer System To Weed Out The 'Dinosaurs'

BY TERRY POPE

A complete overhaul of Brunswick County's computer system, expected to take about two years, began recently with the hiring of a computer analyst who is a county native.

County Manager David Clegg said the computer equipment that county departments now operate has become antique and unreliable. The last modification made to the computer hardware was in 1984.

The overhaul project is expected to cost around \$200,000.

"It's something that we have been anticipating," Clegg said. "We have been saving for this for years."

The overhaul will replace the county's first-generation computer equipment with more modern fourth-generation hardware. With advancements in technology, the new Hewlett-Packard (HP) hardware will be about 13 times smaller than the present Data General system but will have five times the storage capacity, said Jerry Hewett, who was hired two weeks ago to head computer services.

"It's going to do what we want it to do," Clegg said, "and that is to help in financial accountability."

Hewett, a native of Ash, said he jumped at the chance to return to Brunswick County when he heard of the job opening. He has over 20 years of experience in working with HP systems for Duke University in Durham and for two semi-conductor firms at Research Triangle Park in Raleigh.

"There's a lot to do here," Hewett said. "This is probably the biggest challenge I've ever undertaken. Within two years, it should be looking pretty good, as long as I can get

the financial support to do it with. From what I've seen, that's not going to be a problem."

Clegg said the county had waited as long as it could to upgrade its computer equipment. The current computer cannot count over \$30 million, he said, while the county's budget exceeds that figure.

"Our budget was not a budget," Clegg said. "It was a bunch of little budgets."

The county's operations are now run on two computers, a Data General system that handles the county's finance department records, and a HP 42 system that handles information for the tax and environmental health departments. Hewett said the Data General system is the "dinosaur that probably should have been taken out of here 15 years ago."

Both systems will be phased into one unit, a HP 932 system, which has been purchased and is ready to install.

"I envisioned this convoy of Hewlett-Packard trucks rolling in with all of this equipment," said Clegg, "and then one day it shows up on the back of a UPS truck, about the size of my desk."

Hewett said all computer equipment is getting faster and smaller.

"It seems like each time you upgrade, you get smaller equipment," Hewett said.

The computer services department will also house the county's Geographical Information System (GIS) computer that will store information for the county's 911 emergency communications program. The 911 dispatcher monitors will be connected to the GIS system.

When the new HP system is installed, it will also store data for the board of elections, building inspec-

tions, water, tax and finance departments, said Lithia Hahn, county finance director.

It will help make the county's budgeting process much easier, she said.

"We found that we were pushing a pencil a lot to get those reports," said Ms. Hahn. "This is something that Brunswick County has really needed to do for a long time. When you're planning, you can project a change in computer equipment about every five years."

Ms. Hahn said the county was having to pump a lot of money into the Data General system for maintenance.

"The older it is, the more it breaks down," Hewett agreed. "Maintenance is pretty high on the Data General right now."

By the end of February, Hewett said the first big step will have been taken in the upgrade, the switch from the old HP to the newer HP system.

"There's a lot of work for us to do," Hewett said. "We're on the way to getting our goal accomplished. Time and a lot of work will do it."

Hewett said that since joining the department three weeks ago, he has been working 11 to 14 hours a day studying the new HP system.

"He came in here and hit the ground running," Ms. Hahn said. "He has a great background in Hewlett-Packard systems. I was very, very happy to acquire him."

Clegg approached county commissioners last month to increase the salary scale for a computer analyst from \$26,473 to \$37,354 to attract qualified applicants.

"It's great to see someone go off and be successful and want to come back to work for Brunswick County," Clegg said.



STAFF PHOTO BY TERRY POPE

BRUNSWICK COUNTY COMPUTER ANALYST Jerry Hewett says the county has a few "dinosaurs" in computer hardware that must be replaced.

Meeting Set On New Stormwater Discharge Permits

New rules mandating stormwater discharge permits for landfills, airports, school bus garages and other land uses will be the topic of an informational meeting next week in Wilmington.

The N.C. Division of Environmental Management will conduct the meeting Tuesday, Feb. 19, from 2 p.m. until 5 p.m. in the New Hanover County Health Department Auditorium.

The public meeting will give people the chance to find out how the permit application process will work and how their facility may be affected, according to a state news release.

Bill Mills, coordinator of the stormwater permit program in Environmental Management's water quality section, said manufacturers will be affected most by the new federal rules.

Permits also will be required for construction activities disturbing five acres or more of land, storm sewer systems in large cities, land application sites and open dumps that receive industrial waste and other activities.

Mills said the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) man-

dated that the state agency get involved in the stormwater discharge permit process.

As part of the amended Clean Water Act of 1987, the EPA was required to devise a permit program for stormwater discharges in various locations. Mills said the federal agency has not yet decided what the permits will require.

Although North Carolina has implemented its own stormwater regulations over the last few years, Mills said the state doesn't have anything to control stormwater runoff from existing development.

Under the old federal guidelines, Mills said facilities with polluted stormwater runoff were the only ones that had to have permits. The new rules will apply to existing and future development and whether the stormwater is polluted or not.

The meeting next week in Wilmington is one of seven public meetings the Division of Environmental Management is holding this month to explain the new stormwater permits.

For more information, call the division office in Raleigh at 733-7015.

Ash Woman Sues Hospital After Husband's Suicide

An Ash woman has filed suit against the New Hanover Regional Medical Center in Wilmington and the clinical director of its psychiatric unit over her husband's death.

Roberta Simmons filed suit in Brunswick County Superior Court against the hospital and Dr. John Parkinson, director of psychiatric inpatient services at The Oaks, charging that they were negligent in caring for her husband, Elijah Culbert Simmons, 62, who shot himself in the head on Feb. 8, 1989, and died two days later.

Simmons was released from The Oaks on an overnight pass on Feb. 7 and shot himself with a rifle the next day, according to the suit. The plaintiff is asking for damages in excess of \$10,000 in the suit filed Jan. 25.

According to the lawsuit, Simmons was a patient of Dr. Parkinson in the late summer of 1988 and in January 1989 for "insomnia, depression, self-concern and hopelessness." On Jan. 12, Simmons was prescribed an antidepressant drug, Amitriptyline, and later was seen again by the doctor in "an agitated state, was anxious and complained of life not being worthwhile," the suit claims.

He was admitted to the psychiatric unit on Feb. 2 after having "suicidal and homicidal thoughts, a decreased ability to cope, increased depression, increased anxiety, a reduction in his ability to sleep and with a decreased appetite, and having many serious medical problems

including a heart condition," the suit states.

The lawsuit claims that after being in the hospital for three days, Simmons was given a pass to go out of the hospital on Feb. 5 and was given an overnight pass on Feb. 7 while the patient "remained suicidal."

On Feb. 8, Simmons shot himself in the head with a rifle, the suit claims, and died two days later. Simmons had also threatened to kill his wife and daughter before being admitted to the hospital, the suit states.

The suit also alleges that Dr. Parkinson did not follow standards of psychiatric practice by allowing a pass from the hospital to be issued within a few days of admission to the hospital when the patient showed no signs of improvement from depression. It also alleges that the doctor did not take into consideration Simmons' heart condition when antidepressant drugs were administered.

The suit claims the patient was given drugs with "cardiotoxic risks without clinical improvement in a suicidal patient," that the doctor failed to obtain a thyroid screen to rule out Simmons' depression as a result of hypothyroidism.

Ms. Simmons is suing for damages plus loss of society, companionship, comfort, guidance, advice, services, net income, protection, care and assistance she was entitled to from a person with a life expectancy of 15.02 years, the suit states.

Next Medifast Classes Start March 5

Call today to sign up.

Marilyn J. Boehm, M.D., Ph.D.
 Village Pines, Shallotte

919-754-5581
 919-754-9949

J. Mark Saunders, O.D.
 Family Optometry

- Comprehensive Eye Examinations
- Ocular Emergencies
- Contact Lenses and Glasses Prescribed
- Diagnosis and Treatment of Diseases of the Eye

Suite 3, Promenade Office Park
 143 Holden Beach Road, Shallotte

Office hours by appointment.
 Evening and Saturday appointments available.

Phone 754-9687

Member American Optometric Association

©1990 THE BRUNSWICK BEACON