



STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

THIS WAS THE VIEW from JR's Steakhouse on Holden Beach Road mid-afternoon Friday. The lineup of cars headed into Shallotte extended beyond the new traffic light at Red Bug Road and backed up several miles north of Shallotte on U.S. 17. Still, at least one local businessman said the detour didn't make traffic any worse than it has been over past Easter weekends.

Weekend Gets Mixed Reviews

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said it took 35 minutes to get from the north side of Shallotte to JR's Steakhouse on Holden Beach Road. Mike Blandino of TJ's Auto Electric said traffic seemed to be moving smoothly until noon Friday. By mid-afternoon, however, cars

were backed up so far north of his shop on U.S. 17 that he couldn't see the end of the line.

"It's seems like every year on Good Friday it's always backed up past our shop," Blandino said. "I don't think the detour made it any worse than usual."

Wages May Be Taken For Taxes

(Continued From Page 1-A)

targets would be people who are four years or more behind in payments. A county printout could show who those people are and how much each owes, added Clegg.

"Conceivably, you would be garnishing for everything that was not paid," he added, "because all of it's still due."

District 3 Commissioner Gene Pinkerton said he wanted to make sure residents were given a warning and time to pay up before their paychecks were touched.

"That's a really, really touchy and embarrassing situation for any employee," Pinkerton said.

The county's property tax rate is 68.5 cents per \$100 of valuation. According to Tax Collector Nancy Moore, about 85 percent of county residents pay their taxes before the deadline in January. Another 10 percent usually pay before the delinquent list is printed in April.

Other Business

In other business Monday, the board:

- Took no action on Parks and Recreation Director Bobby Jones' request to allow park managers to drive county vehicles home. Jones said a policy requiring that vehicles stay parked at the government complex in Bolivia is putting unnecessary mileage on them. Clegg had denied the request.
- Accepted \$5,400 from the state to pay for weatherization work on four housing units.

- Established an inspection fee of \$21.25 for electrical inspections of cable television booster stations for county franchisees.
- Clegg informed the board of a letter from the Brunswick County Airport Commission that the town of Boiling Spring Lakes wishes to withdraw its representative on the board while Yaupon Beach has requested a seat. Commissioners appoint one member to the board while Long Beach, Southport and Boiling Spring Lakes also appoint members.
- Agreed for Rabon to represent Brunswick County at a meeting in Lake Waccamaw Thursday, April 4, to discuss with paper company officials beaver damage in area counties.
- Adopted county proclamations making April 1-7, National Community Development Week; April 15-20, National Public Health Week; April 22-27 National Volunteer Recognition Week; and April as National Keep America Beautiful Month.
- Approved two budget amendments, one to accept \$1,154 from the state for the county's child health program, and one to transfer funds for the county's \$733,000 in lease purchase payments.
- Agreed to advertise a bid of \$2,660 for property the county originally bought for a trash green box site near Town Creek. A higher bid could be accepted by commissioners. The county no longer needs the land for trash boxes.

ANNEXATION EFFORTS QUESTIONED

Sunset Beach Owners Spotlight Security

BY SUSAN USHER

When Sunset Beach police officers recovered property stolen in a series of more than 50 break-ins on the island in January, they ran into a problem of a different sort, Police Chief J.B. Buell told members of the Sunset Beach Taxpayers Association Saturday.

"None of it was marked and we couldn't identify who it belonged to," he said. "Some of it we still have at the office."

The department was invited to discuss crime prevention with SBTA members, many of whom are non-resident property owners.

The brief program and question-and-answer session highlighted a quiet two-hour meeting that drew approximately 70 property owners to the fire department. The police department's actions in apprehending suspects in the break-ins won an ovation from the group.

Now the police chief and his officers are seeking property owners' cooperation in marking items in their home and in posting house numbers outside their residences to improve response by emergency personnel.

They also urged those present to write the district attorney's office, seeking the maximum sentence available for the three Columbus County men charged in connection with the break-ins.

All three suspects, Bobby L. Watts, Roger Dale Godwin and Albert Lee Soles, all have "long" prior arrest records. They are trying

"Our goal is to reduce or eliminate the opportunity (for crime)."

—Anna Redmond
Crime Prevention Officer

to negotiate a plea bargain with the prosecutor's office.

Officers are marking the recovered property as it is returned, with the owner's permission.

In addition, Anna Redmond, crime prevention officer for the department, was busy Saturday setting up appointments with individual property owners. Owners were signing up for either a security survey to learn the most economical way to secure their property and/or engraving of items such as microwaves, television sets, 35mm cameras, radar detectors and car radios with their driver's license.

Ms. Redmond said a license number is easier to trace than a Social Security number, speeding the return of recovered stolen property. She said pawn shops tend not to buy items that are marked unless the license number matches that of the holder.

As more people move to the island, she said, the potential for crimes increases. "We want to do as much prevention as possible," she said. "Our goal is to reduce or eliminate the opportunity."

Officers also answered questions about the town's noise ordinance

and dispatching of calls through the sheriff's department.

Buell said "excessive noise" is not allowed any time of day, but that the noise level must be "pretty loud" to be considered excessive. Only limited construction site activity is allowed before 8 a.m. If called, Buell said an officer will respond to the scene. He discouraged property owners from making any contact with those responsible for the noise.

Response time may vary, depending on whether the officer on duty is busy, and the priority given the call if it is routed through the sheriff's dispatcher.

One audience member had an answer to concerns raised about the town's dune protection ordinance and damage to the dunes. Saying it was an "educational process," the speaker suggested owners support the Museum of the Coastal Carolinas, which will open this summer at Ocean Isle Beach. Its educational programming will include information on dunes formation and their importance to beach stability.

SBTA President Cletus Waldmiller briefed members on the status of the suit filed against state and feder-

al transportation agencies to block construction of a planned high-rise bridge to Sunset Bridge. He also expressed his personal concerns about the town's growth-related activity.

"We hope the U.S. Attorney's office decides in favor of an environmental impact statement rather than the appeal," said Waldmiller, "but we have no indication it will do so."

The transportation agencies have appealed the lower court ruling to the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond, Va. No date has been set for oral arguments.

Meanwhile the SBTA owes \$15,124 in legal fees relating to the bridge case. Should the appeal fail to overturn the lower court decision, the SBTA and other plaintiffs in the suit can seek to recover that money. SBTA has already paid \$8,000 in legal fees relating to the bridge.

The town has begun seeking funds for a sewer system, which would have an estimated cost of between \$7.5 million to \$9.5 million. A second sewer project workshop scheduled Tuesday, April 16, at 7:30 p.m. at the town hall.

The town recently annexed a tract of land that extended the town limits to the Seaside intersection and is proposing to annex Oyster Bay Colony condominium project and Sugar Sands patio home subdivisions I and II.

"What I see is they are annexing areas with additional people, additional voters," said Waldmiller. "The voice of the people who live on the beach will be diminished."

Bankruptcy Auction Marks End Of Caribbean Carriers Battle

BY TERRY POPE

Persistence is starting to pay off for Brunswick County.

After a lengthy bankruptcy court battle involving a former shipping company, the county has received \$58,000 and hopes to collect more at a public auction in Wilmington this Saturday, April 6.

Possessions of Carolina Caribbean Carriers, a company that had its home office in Puerto Rico, will be sold to the highest bidder. The county once stood to lose about \$60,000 in the court proceedings, but it now hopes to add much more than that to its general fund instead.

Caribbean Carriers filed bankruptcy in September 1987, two years after receiving \$750,000 in federal money to help open a shipping company along the Cape Fear River on Eagle Island in northern Brunswick County. The company imported and exported furniture and other items on container barges.

The federal Community Development Block Grant was awarded in 1986, channeled by the state to the Brunswick County's Resources Development Commission, which issued CCC \$735,000 to begin the business and kept \$15,000 to cover the county's administrative costs.

CCC was to repay the county in installments. The county had planned to place the money into a devel-

opment fund to aid future industrial projects.

When the company folded, state officials gave up the hope of ever recovering any of its money, said Brunswick County Manager David Clegg.

"I didn't really believe that," Clegg said. "I just wouldn't let it go."

Files containing court records of the four-year struggle fill boxes in Clegg's office. The case entered in and out of court in Puerto Rico, where the company originally filed for bankruptcy, and in the United States.

"You have to stay aggressive," Clegg said. "You should not just roll over and play dead if one of these companies goes belly-up."

Brunswick County contends it acted as a banker would when it issued the grant to Caribbean Carriers. The county successfully foreclosed on the property in September 1988 and, in the process, managed to keep other creditors who lost money in the company from filing countersuits against the county.

"We are now out of the case," Clegg said. "I wanted reimbursement for what it cost to save the county from lawsuits. What I got was basically a complete repayment of all of my costs. I think all things considered, we've done extremely well."

When the air had cleared, Brunswick County had possession of all items seized from the Caribbean Carriers location. The equipment and office supplies will be sold Saturday, at 10 a.m., at the Cardinal Moving and Storage Co., North 23rd Street, Wilmington.

Sale items include marine loading and shipping equipment, a 1952 GMC tank truck that has "Thelma Vol. Fire Department" painted on its red tank, desks, chairs, computers, typewriters, lamps, telephones, shelving, file cabinets and other office supplies.

"What we've got is marketable. It just sat in a warehouse for three years," said Clegg.

After Caribbean Carriers filed for bankruptcy, the state relieved Brunswick County of all responsibility for the \$750,000 block grant. The county, arguing that it held a security interest in the Brunswick County property where CCC was located on the west bank of the Cape Fear, sued to gain ownership and rights to auction the supplies.

"Our case became a magnet for all of these other creditors who jumped in right behind us," said Clegg. "A lot of other creditors were upset because the county was so well-secured."

Money from the auction will go into the county's general fund.

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VISION SQUARE will open at a site that has been vacant for at least five years.

New Business

(Continued From Page 1-A)
Vision Square

A sign went up last week announcing a planned fall opening for Vision Square on U.S. 17 at the site of a former convenience store.

The center is expected to house a number of health-related specialties including a pharmacy and medical, dental, and vision care.

The property has been vacant for a number of years. Most recently dentist Harry Rickenbacker had announced plans for an office at the site.

Neither he nor optometrist Chris Moshoures, who is also involved in the project, could be reached for comment before press time.

Democrats Change Convention

The Brunswick County Democratic Party has rescheduled its annual convention to Saturday, April 13, at 2 p.m. at the party headquarters on U.S. 17 north of Supply.

The event had been set for Saturday, April 6.

The change is being made to accommodate the schedule of Rep. E. David Redwine, said Glen R. Peterson, county party chairman.

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