

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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Let's Put Those Cheap Guys Out Of Business

County Commissioner Kelly Holden says local developers and home builders are overreacting. County Manager David Clegg says he's tired of helplessly listening to county residents complain about the sorry state of their neighborhoods.

The county leaders are drumming up support for a new county subdivision ordinance, a document that we can all live with.

Ten years ago, the county thought it might need a new one, seeing how so many people were starting to discover Brunswick County and were calling it home. Since then, only about 20,000 more people have moved in and new subdivisions—of varying quality—have popped up in every corner of the county.

Finally, a board of commissioners and county manager have come together who are concerned about quality growth and the direction our county needs to take over the next 10 years, during which our population is expected to double.

Ten years. That's how long some shady developers have been allowed to operate in Brunswick County under a subdivision ordinance that is terribly weak and certainly outdated.

Some developers have cut corners and stacked homes on lots the size of postage stamps. They have established roads on the barest of right of ways. To pave the muddy trails to state standards would cut through many a living room.

It's time to put those people out of business if they're unwilling to develop communities that meet the minimum standards included in the proposed ordinance. The expectations of the new ordinance are not too much to ask of anyone.

This is not to take away from the numerous developers who have painted a more beautiful picture of Brunswick County, who have kept an eye toward quality growth even in the absence of a strong subdivision ordinance.

There are plenty of local developers who have not cut corners and are proud, and should be, of their latest projects. Just compare and you'll see what a difference a little integrity makes.

There's not much we can do to correct the sorry projects that residents are so angry about, but Holden and Clegg are right. It is the developers who should be held accountable for their subdivisions, not the people who purchased land or homes there thinking they were buying paradise.

It's a shame county leaders tabled the matter 10 years ago. It'll be even more of a shame if the ordinance is put on hold again.

At a commissioners' meeting last week, some people opposed to the ordinance raised some legitimate questions, concerns that can be cleared up quickly.

The Brunswick County Planning Board was to meet again this week to iron out any problems with the ordinance before a public hearing is held next Monday night at 7 p.m. in the public assembly building at the government complex in Bolivia.

It is a public hearing that residents should plan to attend. People who are against something tend to be the ones to speak up. But someone should be there to let commissioners know they are right in pushing for this ordinance.

Beavers Starting To Test Man's Patience

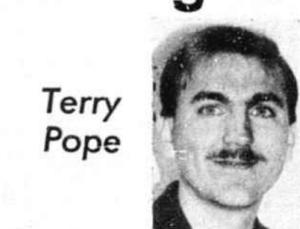
A lot of fuss has been raised recently over a furry, little, semi-aquatic rodent that wants to call Brunswick County its home. It has left me with mixed feelings.

Usually, in this neck of the woods, any creature that's able to adapt to rapid coastal development and a growing human population as well, we welcome with open arms.

But people have been saying such terrible things lately about the North American beaver that I fear the poor guys don't stand a chance.

Once beavers had been essentially extinct in southeastern North Carolina. Native to the area, beavers were nearly wiped out by extensive trapping when pelts were very valuable.

However, times change. Local fur prices dropped for southern beavers in favor of the northern variety, where winters are more severe and



Terry Pope

the pelts grow to a long, dense, reddish brown. For trappers, it's hard work and if it's not profitable, why bother?

In the sunny South, the beaver population over recent years has skyrocketed, creating problems for farmers, developers, homeowners, timber companies and transportation officials.

The beavers are causing problems and don't even realize it because they are only doing what comes naturally. By instinct, the animals build dams in local waters out of sticks, fallen trees and mud. That's where they live and raise families, in their little condos on the waterfront with great views and swimming allowed.

Such home construction also stops the flow of water, clogs up drainage systems and floods timber acreage, crops and roadways. They are being damned, pardon the pun, for doing what nature has drilled them to do in order to survive as a species.

When placed in captivity, beavers persist in building useless dams. Even in the wild, they attempt to reinforce concrete, manmade dams with their sticks and tree limbs, as if they are questioning man's intrusion into their domain.

I've Got A Pair Of Black Thumbs

They say people who are good with plants have green thumbs.

Personally, I've never had much luck with plants. If anything, I've got a pair of black thumbs.

It seems odd because both of my parents are good with plants. I couldn't have inherited black thumbs from them.

I've often wondered if black thumbs are determined in the genes, like hair and eye color. It just might be that black thumbs skip a generation. Maybe my grandparents had black thumbs.

Whatever the reason, every last plant I've ever owned has died. I would imagine that most of them have died slow, painful deaths.

It doesn't really make sense because I received extensive horticulture training as a high school student.

I was a part-time employee at the local garden center for what seemed like 10 years of my early adult life. It was my job to water the plants,



Doug Rutter

sweep the floors and stock the shelves.

Oh yea, I also had to carry bags of fertilizer and pine bark nuggets to the parking lot and load them in customers' cars. Sounds like a fun job, doesn't it?

To be quite frank, I hated working at that garden center. But my brother had worked there when he was in high school, and I was the next in line. You might say that I inherited his job.

Christmas was the best time of year. In fact, it was the only time of

year that I actually enjoyed working at the garden center.

We sold live Christmas trees at the nursery, and I got to help people choose their tree and load it on top of their car.

It always amazed me how picky some people were about their Christmas tree. Some folks would look at every tree we had in the yard before making a decision. They treated the purchase of that Christmas tree like most people treat the purchase of a new car.

One thing about Christmas, though, the shoppers were always in good spirits. That usually meant a nice tip for the guy who helped carry the tree and tie it on the roof of the car.

In the dog days of August, I could lug a dozen 100-pound bags of peat moss to the parking lot and not get a dime. Most people are miserable grouches when the temperature tops 90 degrees and the relative humidity is 98 percent.

Anyway, all of this early training hasn't helped me with plants. The greenest thing in my house is my bean bag chair, alias The Frog.

At one point last year, I had five living plants in my house. That didn't last long. One of them died, and the other four became very ill.

I took them to my parents' house to see if they could be saved, and sure enough, the plants recovered under my mother's supervision.

I was permitted to take two of the four back home, and I'm happy to report that they are both still alive. To say that they are thriving would be a tall tale indeed.

Mom told me to talk to the plants, but I really don't know what to say to them. I just can't force myself to say, "My, you're looking exceptionally green today."

If water, sunshine and a good view of the television aren't enough, they'll just have to go back to Mom's house and get along without me.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Shrimperoo Served Worthwhile Purpose

To the editor:

This is in response to my friend Francis Niland's letter (April 11) regarding wasting taxpayer dollars to hold a Shrimperoo for N.C. legislators in Raleigh. Not mentioned in his letter is that the Shrimperoo was sponsored by Pender, New Hanover and Columbus counties along with Brunswick County. These four counties, also known as South-

eastern N.C., have too long been ignored in State funding of our programs.

As a Brunswick County member of the area board of directors of Southeastern Center for Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services, I was invited to the Shrimperoo. The SE Center relies on federal, state and county funding to exist. The

budget we present to each contains no frills—just what we must have in order to provide service to the citizens of our ever-growing counties. The SE Center has never received a proportionate share of state revenues.

For example, statewide, there are 100 counties serviced by 41 area MH/DD/SA programs. By population, Southeastern N.C. ranks anywhere from 9th to 12th in population (depending upon whose statistics you use). By contrast, of the 41 Area MH/DD/SA programs, the S.E. Center ranks 37th in per capita funding received from the state to support the center. Now, that is unconscionable!

The purpose of the Shrimperoo is to meet with legislators in a friendly, informal setting to bring matters such as described above to legisla-

tors from counties other than our own. Our representatives are well aware of our problems and are doing the best they can, but we need other legislators to understand our concerns. In fact, our own David Redwine, working with Harry Payne, was able to get an additional \$250,000 for the SE Center so that we could keep our doors open this year.

Unfortunately, also, Brunswick County has been unable to fund our proportionate share to the SE Center in the past few years, despite the expansion of services in Bolivia. However, with the addition of Commissioner Donald Shaw to our area board, I am optimistic that Brunswick will be able to do better this coming year.

Ginger Sugrue
Shallotte

Be Number One In Both Athletics And Academics

To the editor:

Can you believe that at a time when North Carolina is 49th in school testing and, I'm told, Brunswick County is 49th out of 100 counties in test scores, that someone has come up with the idea to add soccer to the school athletic program?

This, instead of seeking a way to raise the academic level of our students so industry will want to locate in Brunswick County, offering more jobs when jobs are so hard to find.

When I came here to live and teach in 1972, I was shocked at the low level of education I found among students and teachers. I attended the 2nd, 3rd and 4th grades in northwestern N. C. in three different school districts until my family returned to South Carolina.

I got an excellent education and one school was in a community about the size of Supply. It only had a freight station, a convenience store and a four-room schoolhouse (with outhouses).

A local politician told me that "sports-minded parents" control the schools even to the point of approving the principal. What kind of people do we have here that place

sports above education?

I understand that around \$1½ million is allocated to parks and recreation. Instead of shorting academics, I have a suggestion:

All of the schools are located within easy access to the citizens. Sell all of the land owned by Parks and Recreation. With building like it is today, that land should bring a lot of money. Use that money to buy enough land around each school for all of the athletics needed by the schools and Parks and Recreation. Also build an indoor swimming pool at each high school.

Then use that \$1½ million for the athletic program and let the school use their athletic fund to bee up academics. If a law is needed to permit that, David Redwine is in the General Assembly now and can write it.

Maybe with that creative approach, Brunswick County would have a better year-round academic program and maybe Brunswick County would wind up being number one in the state in both sports and academics. Think about it.

Teddi Neal
Bolivia

(Letters Continue Following Page)

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