

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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Committee Of 100 Could Help Balance Local Economy

Past efforts to establish a "Committee of 100" in the South Brunswick Islands have never gotten past the talking stages. The latest push—by a steering committee of 17 that would welcome more help—looks like it will succeed where others have failed.

With one of the highest unemployment rates in the state, Brunswick County needs not only more jobs to offer its people, but better jobs.

Tourism has been very good to the South Brunswick Islands and to all of Brunswick County. Many of the visitors it draws to the area return later to live, sometimes bringing businesses or other family members with them.

It has boosted sales tax revenues and provided jobs in the food service, hospitality and recreational fields to replace those lost in agriculture and on the water.

But the blessing is mixed. Tourism also increases demand on the local infrastructure—roads, water systems, law enforcement, fire and rescue, solid waste collection. Local towns have used accommodations tax revenues to help offset some of these added costs, while at the same time promoting more tourism.

While there are continuous efforts to expand the "shoulder" seasons, tourism is primarily a seasonal venture, as were fishing and farming for the most part. And many of the associated jobs don't pay the kind of wages on which one could support a family.

And, in the wake of a natural disaster such as a hurricane, a local economy based heavily on tourism could be in disarray for some time.

No community should rely to heavily on a single industry—be it the local towel factory or tourism.

That is why efforts to establish a Committee of 100 warrant the community's enthusiastic support. Light industry that takes nothing away from the area's natural beauty and doesn't harm the environment is very much needed here to create a more balanced economy.

Young people—as well as their parents and grandparents—need more employment alternatives if we want them to consider staying in Brunswick County. And too many of our residents must commute to jobs outside our borders.

Can a Committee of 100 make a difference? You bet.

The Committee of 100 steering committee suggests taking a look at Columbus county, where an ailing agriculture-based economy and out-migration have been a more serious problem than here.

Since its formation in 1983, that county's Committee of 100 has assisted its Economic Development Committee with most of the 19 new manufacturing firms that have located there. It has purchased land for two shell buildings and is purchasing land for a third one. More than 1,300 new jobs have resulted since 1983.

The numbers also talk on a national level.

According to a 1985 study by the U.S. Department of Commerce, addition of just 100 manufacturing jobs can make a big difference in a community. In the U.S. it can mean, on average:

- 64 new non-manufacturing jobs, as follows: 45 in wholesale, retail, entertainment and recreation; seven in transportation; three in finance, insurance and real estate; three in business repairs and service; three in construction; and three in public administration.
- A \$13 per person reduction in the tax burden;
- Seven new retail establishments;
- A 202 increase in population if all 100 employees are brought in from outside;
- \$1,477,453 in new retail sales; and
- A \$245,000 new property tax increase.

After All, What's In A Name?

There was a time when I wished desperately (seems kind of silly now) to live near where my mother grew up on Midway Road, between Bolivia and Southport.

Then, I could draw myself up straight at the question "Where do you live?" and answer, "Half Hell."

They could then quip something smart back, like, "That figures" or "I should have known better than to ask."

While it wouldn't do in marketing a fancy resort, truth is, I liked the name, just as my mother liked wandering down to the branch and playing there as a young girl.

Up in Caswell County there's a place locals call Hell's Half Acre. Makes you wonder, doesn't it.

I've never been there, but it's just one of the fascinating place names preserved in William Powell's *The North Carolina Gazetteer*. I took a course in North Carolina history from Powell in 1971, the year Smithville Township contemplated

Susan Usher



becoming the state's 101st county. We had lively class discussions that year, to say the least.

He was a witty, wise and a thorough researcher, so I jumped for the book at first sight. There, in dictionary form, are names of North Carolina places, past and present—all that he could come up with and that is a considerable number.

You can tell there were no chambers of commerce or tourism bureaus around in the state's early days. Otherwise, surely we wouldn't have places named Aho (Watauga County) or Worry (Burke County). There's even a place called Rabbit Shuffle.

Truth Is A Whole Lot Stranger Than Fiction

There's an old saying that truth is stranger than fiction.

After three long years in the newspaper business, I'm beginning to become a big believer in that statement.

I've never read any fiction that was stranger than the stuff I read each week in local newspapers.

If you don't believe me, take a peak at our crime report. Some of the stuff in there is just too weird for somebody to make up.

I've been wanting to write something on this topic for several weeks, and reading last week's paper was the straw that broke the proverbial camel's back.

It seems beavers, the buck-toothed blue collar workers of the animal kingdom, are causing big problems in Brunswick County.

The eager beavers have been building dams and lodges, stopping the flow of water in drainage ditches and causing considerable flooding.

Doug Rutter



Milton Coleman, director of the Brunswick County Cooperative Extension Service, says local people have reported flooded fields, blocked canals and timber loss.

Those industrious little rodents have even built a beaver lodge, not to be confused with a Moose Lodge, alongside U.S. 17 near Grissetown. When it rains, the highway is flooded.

I thought beavers only did that kind of stuff in cartoons when they wanted to get back at humans who

ruined their habitat in the name of progress. It apparently happens in real life too.

Anyway, officials from Brunswick, Bladen and Columbus counties have come together to form an alliance against beavers. They want contributions from the federal and state governments and timber companies to control these furry creatures.

One option under the so-called "Beaver Pact" is to put a bounty on the head of every troublesome beaver in the tri-county area.

No lie. Our elected leaders are actually considering paying hunters and trappers \$25 for each beaver they catch or kill. I haven't been able to find out if that's \$25 with or without the pelt.

Another alternative being considered is contracting with a trapper to get rid of the destructive pests. Who are they going to call? Beaver

Busters?

If you ask me, this whole thing sounds like a bad episode of *Bonanza*, maybe one of the lost episodes.

I can see it now. An unshaven man rides into town on a stately white horse. A dusty, wide-brimmed hat casts dark shadows across his face.

The townsfolk file out of the saloon and form a semicircle around his horse. The man drops a heavy load of beaver pelts at the sheriff's feet, tips his lid and rides into the sunset.

"Who was that kindly gent?" asks Jim the barber.

"That was no kindly gent," the sheriff mutters. "That was Trapper Jake, meanest beaver man this side of the Pecos. He's cleaned up another county."

You see what I mean. Truth is stranger than fiction.



Learning To Play It By Ear Is Never Easy

When most people see an ear, they think of hearing. When they see a nose, they think of smelling.

Last September, I took my ears and nose in for a 30,000-mile checkup. Sneezing fits, sinus headaches and a bum right ear were getting the best of me. Some eight months later, I can write a book about the nose, ear and faulty Eustachian tubes.

The doctor stuck things up my nostrils and shined a light into my ear. His instruments allowed him to visit places that I've never even seen.

They pumped in air to put pressure on my ear canal and got this reading of vibrations behind the eardrum. My head felt like it would pop. My fingers dug crevices into the armrests, brave soul that I am.

They taped both ears forward and made me hold my cheek against the glass on an X-ray machine. The radiologist ran and hid behind a wall as the machine took pictures of my head. That made me feel comfortable.

I quickly found out that noses and ears do far more than just smell and hear. They are complicated and

Terry Pope



delicate devices.

To relieve the sinus pressure and to correct the inner ear problem would take several steps, two operations and a third one to come. Hopefully, that will do it.

Brunswick County may be a beautiful spot, but unfortunately its climate doesn't do much for sinus or allergy sufferers. One day last month, I learned my next door neighbor had had enough. She has lived in Maco for over 30 years. She and her husband suddenly packed up and moved to Florida, all because of her sinus condition.

I called a friend in Chapel Hill last week and his wife answered the phone. I thought she was crying until I heard her sneeze, twice. Then she explained how her allergies had

her in bed.

These people know about the other things that noses and ears can do. They can make a grown man cry. They can make a nature lover curse Mother Nature herself.

There are ways to fight back.

My doctor showed me a model of the inner ear and explained in baby talk just what he planned to do. In medical terminology, it was a septoplasty, turbinate extraction and tympanoplasty with mastoidectomy that he scheduled for two trips to the hospital. Some of the procedures were done only to aid the healing of other procedures, he said.

But back to the baby talk. There is a set of canals that connects the ear, nose and throat running through the head. When they work right, fluid in the canals should drain and the head should feel okay.

When they don't, you've got constant pressure. You've got a headache this big, as the man on the television commercial says. You will also have clogged up Eustachian tubes that can affect the hearing in your ears, your equilibrium and finally, when you're just tired of it all, your personality.

This spring, the pollen returned. The winter weeks spent with a plugged up nose and ear have been worth it, as far as the nose is concerned. Spring months can be a nightmare for people with sinus conditions.

I've also discovered that there are many more sinus sufferers out there than I ever knew existed, acting as an informal support group. Some share their success stories with me while others say they haven't the nerve to fight back. They always ask if it is worth it. Let me answer that by describing this brief moment in May.

While driving home last week, I crossed the run of Pinch Gut Swamp, an appropriate name, just south of Bolivia on U.S. 17. I had my car windows rolled down and in swept this aroma of sweet wildflowers, possibly honeysuckles, growing by the thousands along the creek there.

Normally, I probably would have started sneezing. My eyes would have watered, blurring my vision of the highway.

However, this time I kept my sight on the road ahead.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Fire/Rescue Tax, Whose Idea?

To the editor:

After seeing the May 9 edition of the *Beacon*, the main headline struck home with mixed emotions. "County Likes Southport's Idea On Fire/Rescue Tax Districts." I feel that tax districts are the way of the future for our fire/rescue departments. Increased revenues from forming tax districts are vital to our future needs.

Building is increasing, our elderly population is growing, and tourism is booming. Residents and visitors alike deserve improved emergency protection. Unlike some taxes that residents see little or no effect from, improvement in the fire departments alone can reduce home insurance premiums by as much as \$150 per household. Not to mention lives saved by being able to buy new modern medical equipment. That would definitely show results from tax dollars.

I have sat on the board of directors of the Fire/Rescue Association for the past 2½ years and am in my second term as president. In all that time I can't remember even once that one of the county commissioners joined our board meetings. Even attempted meetings with them were either put off or we were politely put aside. Explanations like "it won't work" or "they won't go for it" are heard from county officials when we mentioned tax districts.

With 31 fire and rescue departments and over 600

volunteers, we have plenty of good ideas that should be heard. These dedicated men and women have been protecting their communities for decades. They have a wealth of knowledge and experience that is unequalled in Brunswick County. Just below that headline was a photo of three firefighters from Civictown (my department) and Tri-Beach VFD. They had just put out a blaze from an 18-wheeler. This photo didn't show the eight or ten firefighters or equipment that was supporting them. Since this call was around 3:30 in the afternoon, most of these men (including myself) left their jobs to answer this alarm. If the hourly wages lost by all the volunteers in a year's time were added up, I'm sure the total would make the next big headline. And this does not include the hundreds of hours of training. The \$13,500 we get from the county won't even pay the bills so more hours are spent fundraising just to make ends meet.

No, the idea of tax districts may not be new to us, but the fact that the county "likes" it is good news. Please encourage your area officials to support it. And if they need a few good ideas just call 754-9024. We would be glad to help.

Al Nord, President
 Brunswick County Fire/Rescue Association
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