

Visitors' Center Endangered In Feud Over State Funding

BY SUSAN USHER

Depending on who you talk to in Raleigh, a visitor's information center scheduled to open in Shallotte this fall could be in jeopardy once again.

Efforts by Rep. E. David Redwine to obtain state funds to help operate the new Southeastern Welcome Center, Inc. are running into stiff opposition from State Transportation Secretary Thomas Harrelson. The dispute is a renewal of a funding feud that began at least two years ago.

"If the local parties are not willing or able to support them and the tourism industry is not sophisticated enough to raise the money for operating the centers, maybe they aren't needed," Harrelson said in a telephone interview Tuesday from Washington, D.C.

The building could be put to some other good use, Harrelson said.

The secretary, who is from Southport, said the latest budget bill moves by Redwine and several other legislators violate an earlier agreement between the state and the center to operate without state funds.

"They're killing the concept," said Harrelson. "This would be the last one—if it opens. And I'm not sure it would or should."

'Bait And Switch'?

In a letter written this week to a newspaper in the northern coastal area, Harrelson

wrote, "Such a move would make it less likely for us to accept any other agreement of this kind in the future."

"It's not right or honorable to 'bait and switch' the state after we've built the visitors' information centers for local operation."

But Redwine said he was simply trying to help the local project get off to a sound start. Two years of limited state support, he said, would give the centers time to either 1) prove they warrant becoming part of the state-operated welcome center program or 2) develop the local support they need in order to continue.

He said a state agency can't keep the General Assembly from giving funds to a program if that is what legislators choose to do.

With a bill he introduced, Redwine and fellow legislators representing Camden and Macon counties, where similar state/local visitors' center exist, have included in the proposed budget \$50,000 for each center next year and the year after.

Center Completion Mandated

They have since negotiated addition to the proposed budget of wording that would require DOT to complete the Brunswick center by Sept. 1 and not shut down the oth-

er two.

It would violate state law for DOT to attempt to abrogate the legislature's right to set public policy, Redwine said. "I don't want it to come to that," he said.

Money for the centers would come from personal license tags revenues, specifically tapping but not depleting a fund set aside for highway landscaping and wildflower planting statewide.

Since \$100,000 in tag revenues is already allocated for traffic control at large functions drawing 30,000 or more vehicles such as the State Fair (or, according to Redwine, the Charlotte Motor Speedway) Redwine said the fund should be available for other purposes as well.

Harrelson contends that the proposed use is inappropriate, taking money for a local program from a statewide one.

"We had a fair fight in the House and appropriations committee and he (Harrelson) lost," said Redwine.

The District 14 representative said he thinks it is "very unfortunate" that DOT might shut down the three centers as a result, "that folks down there could be punished for my trying to help them."

Betsy Harrison, DOT director of public affairs, said Harrelson is concerned that once the state provides staffing for these centers, any community that operates a visitors' center will expect state support.

Agreement Negotiated

In 1985 then Transportation Secretary

Jim Harrington negotiated an agreement with Albemarle area legislators and local leaders. Rather than increase the number of state-operated welcome centers, DOT would build a rest area and add on room for a "visitors information center" that would staffed and operated with locally-generated funds.

Similar agreements were then reached for a center built in Macon County in western North Carolina and one under construction now in Brunswick County off the U.S. 17 bypass of Shallotte.

"Almost immediately," said Harrelson, legislators from the Albemarle area came to Raleigh and started trying to raise money, despite the agreement. When a bill was proposed, legislators from the other two areas decided to tap the "pork barrel" as well, he said, including Redwine.

The Macon and Camden centers each received \$50,000 that time around, and the Brunswick center none since it had not yet been built.

Said Harrelson of the episode, "He almost lost it (the center). Harrington canceled the center two years ago. The only reason he put it back was because of the agreement."

However, Redwine said when he learned

of a contract being negotiated that would restrict the local center from accepting state funds, he sought a legal opinion from the legislature's legal staff.

That opinion, he said, indicated that an agency of state government could not take an action that would override the wishes of the General Assembly, which sets state policy. "They said DOT couldn't force the welcome centers not to accept money from the General Assembly," he said. "We would give it to them whether they want it or not."

Local parties involved in that agreement with the state knew of Redwine's research, the legislator said Tuesday. "They knew that," said Redwine. "I gave them a copy of the letter."

Those individuals—officers of Southeastern Welcome Center Inc.—could not be reached Tuesday regarding that claim.

Redwine said he first started out to get the \$50,000 the local center missed receiving two years ago. Instead he and legislators representing the other center service areas got together on the two-year proposal.

Whatever the outcome of that legislation, Redwine said Tuesday he doesn't intend to ask for money for the center again.

However, if he runs for re-election in 1993 and is elected, Redwine said he might try to get the centers accepted as state-operated welcome centers. They are funded by the state Department of Economic and Community Development.



REDWINE



HARRELSON

Hospital Staff Opposes Food Worker AIDS Tests

BY DOUG RUTTER

The medical staff of The Brunswick Hospital is urging the Brunswick County Board of Health to reject a proposal to require testing of local food service workers for syphilis and AIDS.

Health board member H.J. "Skip" Davis proposed earlier this month that every person who prepares or serves food in restaurants, school cafeterias or nursing homes in the county be required to obtain a health card.

Food service workers would have to be tested for tuberculosis, syphilis and the HIV virus, which is associated with Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

In a June 25 letter to the health board, the Supply hospital's medical staff objects to the proposal in part because they believe food service workers would not threaten the public's health even if they had syphilis or AIDS.

Dr. Marcus Williams, chairman of the department of emergency services for the hospital's medical staff, listed four reasons for the staff's position in the letter.

He wrote that food service workers who test positive for syphilis or the HIV virus "pose no threat to co-workers, employers or patrons in the workplace under normal circumstances. Requiring testing falsely suggests that they do, and will cause unnecessary fear among county citizens."

Williams also says in the letter that AIDS testing could cause un-

due hardship since there are no laws in North Carolina to protect employees who test positive for the HIV virus from discrimination.

The hospital medical staff supports widespread testing of the population, the letter states, when laws are in place to protect people from losing their jobs, health insurance, income and "overall personal dignity."

Williams also wrote that the medical staff urges the health department to support educational activities which emphasize avoidance of the real risks of exposure to the HIV virus.

Leading researchers agree that AIDS is transmitted in only two ways, by exposure to infected blood or infected semen. Syphilis is a sexually-transmitted disease.

Davis, a chiropractor with an office near Ocean Isle Beach, said at the health board's June meeting that all of the local restaurant employees he has talked with favor the plan.

He has said the program would show that the health department is trying to do something to "curtail this disease epidemic."

Davis has estimated that there are more than 700 workers who handle food in Brunswick County who would have to obtain health cards if the proposal is approved.

To become county policy, the health board would have to adopt a local ordinance requiring that food service employees obtain a health card.

Sunset Beach Keeps Tax Rate, Adopts \$1.36 Million Budget

BY SUSAN USHER

Sunset Beach residents will pay the same property tax rate during fiscal year 1992 as this year, but will pay more for water.

Town council members adopted a \$1.36 million budget Friday afternoon without discussion and without making any changes other than those agreed on at a budget work session last month.

"We've got a good budget," said Mayor Mason Barber before the vote. "It's higher than normal as a result of the occupancy tax. The good Lord willing the people will keep on coming."

In a related vote, they adopted a new rate schedule for water and new fee for tap-on and meter installation.

Councilman Al Odom had a scheduling conflict and could not attend the meeting.

With the tax rate of 16.7 cents for each \$1,000 in property value, the owner of a \$100,000 house would pay \$167 in property taxes. The rate is based on an estimated property valuation of \$171,496,310.

Sunset Beach water customers inside and outside town pay the same water rate. Starting July 1, the minimum rate will increase from \$8.50 to \$8.75 per month for the first 3,000 gallons of water per month, for an annual minimum cost of \$105.

For each 1,000 gallons over the minimum used each month, customers will pay \$1.85, up from \$1.75.

The increases reflect an increase in the wholesale cost of water purchased from Brunswick County, as well as the need to establish a larger capital reserve fund for upkeep of the aging town system

The tap-on and meter installation fee was increased to cover the current cost of the tap-on "plus a little more" as a hedge against rising costs, indicated Town Administrator Linda Fleugel. A one-inch service will cost \$400, up from \$325; a 1 1/2-inch service, \$475, up from \$375; and a 2-inch service, \$550, up from \$425.

The general fund budget is \$798,000 and the water fund budget, \$563,000.

Major revenue sources for the general fund include anticipated collections of \$257,759 in property taxes along with at least \$150,000 in accommodations tax revenues. The budget includes approximately \$138,401 in carry-over money that was not spent this year.

Included is money to develop Lot 1-A, the extension of Sunset Boulevard to oceanfront, as a parking and public access point. The work will be contracted out in stages, starting with paving of the parking and sidewalk construction.

It also includes money to help pay for a sewer system study, to install informational signs for visitors, and to promote tourism in cooperation with the South Brunswick Islands Chamber of Commerce.

Major allocations in the general fund are as follows: \$209,980, police; \$168,335, streets; \$95,091, administration; \$48,139, sanitation; \$135,900, cultural and recreational (includes \$130,000 for Lot 1-A work); \$35,121, planning and zoning; \$16,942, public buildings; \$15,000, Sunset Beach Volunteer Fire Department; \$7,500, Calabash EMS; and \$12,000, economic development (tourism promotion with South Brunswick Islands Chamber of Commerce).

TOWN EXPANDS MOWING PROGRAM

Calabash Cuts Tax Rate To 10.5 Cents

BY DOUG RUTTER

Calabash officials adopted a \$438,809 budget Tuesday night, cutting the last year's tax rate by 30 percent in the process.

Commissioners lowered the tax rate from 15 cents to 10.5 cents per \$100 of property. That will save the owner of a \$70,000 home \$31.50 when taxes are due in January.

Based on the town's assessed value of \$88 million and a 97 percent tax collection rate, Calabash leaders expect to receive \$89,886 in taxes in the coming fiscal year.

The town board had originally proposed a tax rate of 8 cents per \$100 and took that figure to a public hearing June 5. But several expenses were added during Tuesday night's regular meeting.

Commissioners added \$5,000 for mowing grass along the roadsides, \$5,000 for reimbursing elected officials for their travel and telephone expenses and \$2,516 to mow the large drainage ditches.

Board members also added \$5,000 to the san-

itation fund in case the county starts charging tipping fees at the landfill.

In addition to local tax dollars, commissioners expect to receive \$135,000 in state sales tax next year, \$46,000 in Powell Bill money and \$32,500 in utility franchise tax.

The budget includes \$50,773 which will be carried over from the present fiscal year. The general fund totals \$408,809.

Major expenses include \$154,157 for sanitation, \$105,165 for administration, \$100,016 for the street department and Powell Bill fund and \$13,500 for planning and zoning.

Besides \$50,000 for contracted services, the sanitation budget includes \$78,407 for the purchase of land and \$15,000 for other improvements.

The town board has budgeted \$28,516 for mowing and maintaining the large drainage ditches, \$25,000 for the smaller roadside ditches, \$21,500 for street paving and \$19,000 for street lights.

About \$5,000 has been added to the budget to

cover mowing both the street side and house side of roadside ditches twice during the year where it's needed. Commissioner Ray Card said it will cost the town \$5 per lot.

An earlier proposal from Mayor Pro tem George Anderson to include \$20,000 in the budget to cover a possible lawsuit over the sign ordinance was rejected Tuesday.

Town Attorney Mike Ramos assured the board that even if the lawsuit was filed and the town lost, it wouldn't happen during the coming fiscal year.

In the water and sewer fund, the town expects to collect \$30,000 next year, including \$26,000 in state sales tax.

Expenses budgeted in the water and sewer fund include \$28,500 for capital expansion.

Calabash officials are negotiating with two engineering firms—The Wooten Company of Raleigh and Powell Associates of Myrtle Beach, S.C.—to study the town's sewage treatment needs.

Grand Jury Indicts Lakes Teen On First-Degree Murder Charge

BY TERRY POPE

A Boiling Spring Lakes teen accused of shooting his mother was indicted by a Brunswick County grand jury Monday on a charge of first-degree murder.

The 15-year-old boy is scheduled for a juvenile court hearing Friday before a District Court judge, who must decide if the youth should stand trial as an adult.

He was one of 14 persons indicted on various charges Monday.

The indictment accuses him of acting with malice and aforethought in the May 15 shooting death of Virginia Anderson, of Pierce Road, Boiling Spring Lakes.

Assistant District Attorney Thomas Hicks is listed as the prosecutor in the case. Evidence was presented to the grand jury by Boiling Spring Lakes Police Officer J.R. Vaughn.

According to the police report, Ms. Anderson had been shot in the head and was found in a locked bedroom inside the home. Her body had been inside the home for several days before officers approached and noticed a foul odor coming from inside.

The teen agreed to let officers search the home after Ms. Anderson had failed to report to work for several days. She was employed by Doshier Memorial Hospital in Southport.

The teen has been held on juvenile petitions at a New Hanover County juvenile center, but prior to the indictment he had not been for-

mally charged with the alleged crime.

The following indictments were also handed down Monday:

■Aaron Michael Burke, 18, of 2914 E. Beach Drive, Long Beach, on charges of safecracking, removing a safe from premises, breaking and entering, larceny pursuant to breaking and entering and possession of stolen goods. He is accused of breaking into Bob's Pizza Shack, at 6212 E. Oak Island Drive, Long Beach, and taking a safe valued at \$240.

Burke allegedly used tools on March 19 to break into the safe after removing it from the business. He is also accused of breaking into The Deck, a business at 5524 E. Beach Drive, with intent to commit larceny on March 19.

■Harry Harrison Cave, 27, of Route 6, Shallotte, on charges of felonious sell and delivery of marijuana. Cave is accused of selling .25 ounces of marijuana to an undercover officer on Jan. 10, according to the warrant filed by K.T. Moser, SBI agent.

■Jamie Carroll Deans, 19, of Route 3, Selma, on charges of first-degree rape involving a girl under the age of 13. According to the indictment, the alleged incident occurred between Sept. 15, 1990 and April 15, 1991.

■Harold Dean Garretson, 23, of 306 N. Fodale St., Apt. 3, Southport, on charges of arson. He is accused of setting fire on June 4 to an apartment on North Fodale owned by

John L. Barbee. Another man, Paul Crawford, was inside the building when it was allegedly set on fire, the indictment states.

■Larry Edison Hewett, 16, and Kerry Douglas McCall, 16, both of Shallotte, each on charges of breaking and entering, larceny pursuant to breaking and entering and possession of stolen goods.

Both teens will be tried as adults. They are accused of breaking into Shallotte Middle School on March 24 and taking a box of Rice Krispies, a jar of spaghetti sauce, box of spaghetti, bag of marshmallows, bag of Tootsie Rolls, a baseball book, Nintendo tape and \$57 in cash, all having a value of \$224.

■Stanley Christopher Klecz, 36, of West Bay St., Southport, on a charge of cocaine possession. He is accused by Southport Police Officer C. A. Williamson of having cocaine in his possession on May 11.

■Darrell Flynn McCracken, 27, of 555 Jabbertown Road, Southport, on a charge of second-degree arson. He is accused of setting fire to a home owned by Carolyn E. Beach, at Paradise Acres Mobile Home Park in Southport, on Sept. 9, 1987.

■Johnny Morris, 30, of 612 Eighth St., Wilmington, on a charge of possession of cocaine. Morris is accused of having cocaine in his possession on May 11, according to the indictment sought by Lt. David

Crocker of the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department.

■Larry Franklin Potter, 41, of 106 West St., Southport, on a charge of possession of cocaine. Potter is accused of having in his possession cocaine on May 5, according to the indictment sought by Southport Police Officer C. A. Williamson.

■Debra Robbins, 33, of Ballard's Mobile Home Park, Leland, on a charge of possession of cocaine. She is accused of having in her possession cocaine on April 24, according to the indictment sought by Det. Doug Todd of the sheriff's department.

■William Kay Rodriguez, 46, of Route 5, Seapines Drive, Southport, on charges of possession with intent to sell and deliver marijuana, sell and delivery of marijuana, and maintaining a dwelling or motor vehicle to keep and sell drugs.

Rodriguez is accused of selling 5.8 grams of marijuana to an undercover officer on Feb. 21 and with operating a 1981 Datsun vehicle for keeping and selling a controlled substance, according to the indictment sought by Det. Mike Speck of the sheriff's department.

■Harry Tyndall Willetts, 28, of Route 2, Bolivia, on charges of crime against nature. He is accused of two counts of crime against nature involving two 13-year-old girls on March 4.

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