

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON



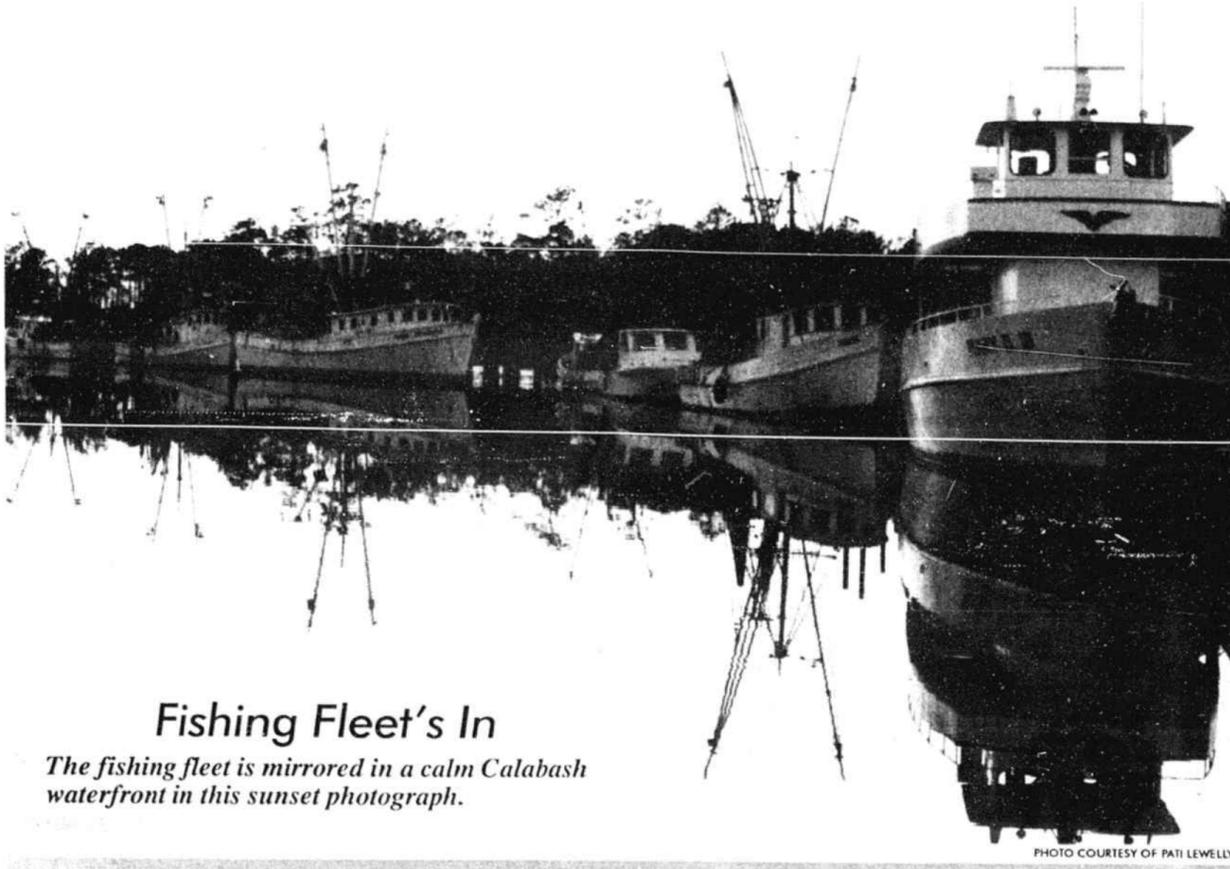
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Fishing Fleet's In

The fishing fleet is mirrored in a calm Calabash waterfront in this sunset photograph.

PHOTO COURTESY OF PATTI LEWELLYN

State Assembly Passes Holden Annexation Bill

BY DOUG RUTTER
State legislators passed a local bill last week that allows but doesn't require a referendum of Holden Beach voters before any property is annexed.

The N.C. General Assembly ratified House Bill 739 last Thursday, six months after town officials first discussed the idea of allowing residents to vote on any proposed changes in the town boundaries.

"I can't tell you how happy I am," Commissioner Judy Bryan said Monday after reading the ratified bill. "It's a victory for the people really."

State Rep. David Redwine, who introduced the bill and helped get it through the legislature, said he doesn't know of any other towns in North Carolina with similar legislation.

Under the new law, any annexation at Holden Beach could be subject to a referendum of the town's registered voters.

A referendum would be held if the town board of commissioners decides to call for a vote in the annexation ordinance.

Commissioners would be required to call a referendum if a petition containing the names of 40 percent of the town's registered voters is filed with the board no more than 20 days after an annexation ordinance is adopted.

Mrs. Bryan, who was elected two years ago partly because of her position against mainland annexation, is pleased with the new law even though it's different from what commissioners had requested in March.

Town officials wanted the law to say that 10 percent of the registered voters could call for a referendum, but it was changed to 40 percent in the final version of the bill.

Holden Beach officials originally wanted to include registered voters and non-resident property owners in the bill. But the board changed its mind after learning that state election law wouldn't allow non-residents to vote.

Redwine said the town's original request had to be changed to get the bill out of a House committee.

"That bill, quite frankly, was not one of the favorite bills of the local government committee," Redwine said.

The committee tried to kill the bill at one point, but Redwine intervened and agreed to increase the percentage of petitioners and make other changes.

Local government committee members objected to the bill partly because it goes against state policy by allowing petitioners to call for a referendum on annexation, he said.

North Carolina statutes set up the procedure for annexation. Redwine said the general policy is to elect local representatives and allow them to make most decisions.

At Holden Beach, however, that state policy led to a one-issue election in 1989, when four candidates for commissioner opposed to annexation were elected.

They later voted to overturn an annexation ordinance that had been adopted by a previous board and would have brought about 67 acres of mainland property into the town limits.

Redwine said the N.C. League of Municipalities also was concerned about the bill but did not actively oppose it. "They let it go, but they were not happy about it."

If any towns try to copy the Holden Beach bill, Redwine said the League of Municipalities would oppose it "very strongly."

Paychecks Targeted For Those Owing Taxes

BY TERRY POPE

Some Brunswick County property owners have noticed their paychecks and bank accounts shrinking, but inflation isn't the culprit.

The money is being collected by the Brunswick County Tax Department to pay for delinquent taxes.

Since the county began garnishing wages and dipping into personal bank accounts recently, \$112,488 has been collected, said Tax Collector Nancy Moore.

"If we had not been garnishing, a little of it might have dribbled in," she said.

The county's collection rate for 1990 property taxes stands at 95 percent. Residents still owe the county more than \$1.3 million in taxes that were due in January.

Brunswick County Commissioners voted in April to begin garnishing wages and drawing from bank accounts to collect 10 years' worth of back taxes. Since 1980, more than \$2.9 million in taxes levied against property owners has gone uncollected, said Ms. Moore.

In December, the county was facing an 80 percent collection rate during a tight budget year, said County Manager David Clegg. Since the

budget is based on the previous year's collection rate, county officials panicked.

"I think we raised the issue to a lot of people then," said Clegg. "Once we began garnishment, that made a believer out of many."

The county can garnish up to 20 percent of a person's paycheck to pay for delinquent taxes. By state law, employers must give the tax office a roster of its employees. It is a misdemeanor not to do so, said Clegg.

The first to feel the heat were Brunswick County government workers and those employed by larger businesses and industries in Brunswick County.

According to Ms. Moore, the following amounts are owed the county in delinquent taxes: \$1,362,815 for 1990; \$656,987 for 1989; \$332,253 for 1988; \$200,888 for 1987; \$125,021 for 1986; \$64,301 for 1985; \$62,154 for 1984; \$52,252 for 1983; \$37,272 for 1982; \$34,628 for 1981 and \$2,962 for 1980.

Every one cent on the current tax rate generates \$300,000 in revenues, said Clegg. A percentage of the general levy cannot be budgeted each year because it does not have a history of being collected.

That means if everyone paid their taxes, the county tax rate could go down, Clegg added.

"You're living in a dream world if you think you're going to collect 100 percent," said Clegg.

"However, 98 percent is within the realm of

comprehension."

In previous years, commissioners had never authorized the county to garnish wages or to draw from personal bank accounts to collect back taxes. It is the newness of the policy that has stunned some people, said Clegg.

From 1982 to 1987, the county chose to foreclose on some property placed on tax liens. Often, the property was useless to the owner, who didn't care if the county took it, said Clegg.

"A lot of those foreclosures did not net us anything," he added. "We were spending money for property that no one would buy."

Persons who have trouble paying their taxes in one sum can arrange a payment plan with the tax office. If a person feels a tax is unfair, they can appeal it to a review board.

"It is becoming known in the community," said Clegg, "that Brunswick County is going to pursue any means available to encourage those who choose not to participate in Brunswick County government to do so."

Those who owe back taxes had previously been notified by the tax office to pay or to risk having their wages or accounts garnished or attached.

"I know it's hard to pay taxes," said Clegg. "I'm not saying that attachment is pleasant. But people are not losing their homes. We're not creating situations like that."

Taxes are easier to pay when people feel that everyone is carrying their fair share, he added.



MOORE

Ocean Isle Mayor Files For Third Straight Term

BY DOUG RUTTER

Ocean Isle Beach Mayor Betty Williamson filed for a third term of office, but activity was generally slow in the South Brunswick Islands during the first full week of the 1991 municipal election filing period.

No more candidates have filed at Calabash or Sunset Beach in the past week, and the Brunswick County Board of Elections is still waiting for the first candidates from Shallotte and Varnamtown.

Mrs. Williamson, who owns and operates Betty Williamson Realty, has served as mayor since July 1987 and filed Tuesday for her third two-year term, according to Town Clerk Daisy Ivey.

Mayor Williamson was on the town board from 1980 until 1987, when she was appointed to fill the unexpired term of former mayor LaDane Bullington.

Ocean Isle Beach Commissioner Debbie Fox also filed Tuesday for election to a third consecutive term. The real estate agent with Sloane Realty has been on the board since 1983.

At Holden Beach, Larry McDowell has filed for one of the five available seats on the board of commissioners, said Mabel Dutton of the Holden Beach Board of Elections.

James Shafor, a member of the town's planning and zoning board, has filed for mayor. It was incorrectly reported in last week's issue of *The Brunswick Beacon* that Shafor had filed for commissioner, based

on information from the board of elections.

Southport/Oak Island
In the Southport/Oak Island area, two ballots have started to fill up with candidates over the past week, according to the Brunswick County Board of Elections.

Southport Mayor C.B. "Cash" Caroon filed for re-election and will face a challenge from former mayor Norman R. Holden.

Alderman Mary H. "Meezie" Childs has filed for re-election from Ward I, and **Ward II Alderman Nelson Adams** also is seeking another term.

At Long Beach, Commissioner Jean Gray has filed for re-election and former commissioner H. Michael Oxford has filed for mayor. He was defeated in a bid for election as mayor in 1987.

William D. Easley III, who made an unsuccessful election bid in 1989, has filed for a seat on the Long Beach Board of Commissioners.

Caswell Beach Mayor Jack Cook has filed for re-election. Nobody has filed for the one seat available this year on the board of commissioners.

Three candidates, including one incumbent, have filed for seats on the Doshier Hospital Board of Trustees in the last week.

They are incumbent Charles D. Johnson of Long Beach, Gib Barbee of Long Beach and Eugene Tomlinson Jr. of Southport. Smithville Township voters will elect three

hospital trustees in November.

Elsewhere
In northern Brunswick County, **Kenneth D. Messer Sr.** filed for a fourth two-year term as mayor of Belville.

A second candidate, **Brenda Gaye Mitchell**, has filed for the Sandy Creek Town Council.

As of Tuesday, the county board of elections reported that nobody had filed for office in the towns of Shallotte, Varnamtown, Bolivia, Yaupon Beach or Navassa.

Also, there were no candidates for the two seats up for election this year on the Southeast Brunswick Sanitary District Board, which will hold its first election in November.

The filing period ends Friday, Aug. 2, at noon. The \$5 filing fee can be paid at the county elections office in Bolivia or at town halls

where forms are available.

Candidates who filed for office prior to July 10 and were included in last week's issue of the *Beacon* are listed below:

Calabash: Jon Sanborn, commissioner, District II.

Sunset Beach: Mason Barber, mayor; Cheri Cheek, council.

Holden Beach: Sid Swarts and David Sandifer, commissioner; James Shafor, mayor.

Boiling Spring Lakes: Steven Mark Stewart, mayor.

Southport: William W. Delaney II, alderman, Ward II.

Long Beach: Bobbie H. Larrison, commissioner.

Leland: Rev. S.L. Doty Jr., mayor; Jane Gilbert and Thomas Hyatt, council.

Sandy Creek: Louis A. Blouir, council.

Supply Teen Killed In Wreck

A Supply teen-ager was killed when the car she was driving ran off the road and overturned east of Shallotte last Tuesday, July 9.

Julia Carol Evans, 16, of Route 3, Supply, died after the car she was driving ran off of Boone's Neck Road (S.R. 1137) about five miles east of Shallotte, reported State Trooper B.L. Wilkes.

A passenger in her 1981 Plymouth, Issac Hines, 17, of Shallotte, was seriously injured and taken to the Brunswick Hospital in Supply.

According to Wilkes, Ms. Evans' car was traveling at a high rate of speed when it ran off the right pavement, crossed to the left shoulder, came back onto the roadway and overturned.

The car came to rest upside down in the southbound lane, Wilkes said. He estimated the car was traveling 75 mph when it ran off the road.

(See SUPPLY TEEN, Page 2-A)

Murder Charge Filed

A Leland man charged with the murder Sunday of a Wilmington resident was being held Monday in the Brunswick County Jail under \$75,000 bond.

Bond for **Tony Leon Kelly**, 39, of Eldorado Mobile Home Park, was set Monday morning during his first appearance in Brunswick County District Court.

He is charged in the shooting death of **Dwayne Abbot Musselwhite**, 35, of 502 Murrayville Road, Wilmington.

Officers received a call around 1:35 a.m. Sunday that someone had been shot in the Phoenix community north of Leland, said Capt. Phil Perry with the Brunswick County

Sheriff's Department.

The shooting occurred near a ballpark at the intersection of Mt. Misery and Cedar Hill roads.

When Deputy **Randy Robinson** arrived at the scene, he found Musselwhite lying at the rear bumper of an automobile, said Perry. The victim, shot twice in the left side, was pronounced dead at the scene.

Kelly was also at the scene when officers arrived, said Perry. Following an investigation, he was arrested and charged with murder.

A .22-caliber revolver, thought to be the murder weapon, was recovered at the scene.

"I don't know if we really have a motive at this point," said Perry.

Census Admits Error In Shallotte Count

The U.S. Census Bureau is finally admitting it erred in figuring the 1990 population for Shallotte—something town officials have known all along.

Preliminary and revised head counts were too low for Shallotte because the census bureau thought that some people who live inside the town limits resided outside of the town.

Edwin B. Wagner Jr., assistant division chief for operations with the census bureau's planning division, acknowledged the mistake in a recent letter to State Rep. David Redwine.

Redwine had contacted the bureau at the request of town officials, who wanted its count corrected.

Wagner indicated in his letter that the census bureau planned to increase both the number of living quarters and the population of Shallotte based on information provided by Mayor Sarah Tripp.

"Our review found an error in the geographic assignment of living quarters and associated population around the legal boundary of Shallotte..." Wagner wrote.

Preliminary census figures released in September had the population of Shallotte at 828. A revised figure released in January bumped the head count up to 965.

But town officials contended that the number was closer to 1,400, and protested the bureau figures. They objected, in part, because some state revenues are distributed to towns based on population.

Shallotte's revised certified census count won't be available until later this summer when the census bureau issues a "supplemental user note," Wagner wrote in the letter. Meanwhile, some census-related materials will be published with the incorrect figures.

Final counts for Brunswick County and its other municipalities were released this week, but were not available Tuesday from the Brunswick County Planning Department.

Brunswick County officials also protested the preliminary and revised census figures of 50,681 and 50,985. Planning Director John Harvey said the population was around 55,000.