



STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

FOUR RIVERVIEW RETREAT Apartments were destroyed by fire Saturday night in Calabash. At least five others were damaged by smoke and water, a fireman reported.

ARSON SUSPECTED

Calabash Apartment Fire Sends Residents Fleeing

BY TERRY POPE

A fire that sent residents fleeing from their apartments in Calabash Saturday night is believed to have been deliberately set.

Quick action by a passerby and a nearby homeowner, who noticed smoke and flames shooting through a roof, helped a number of residents escape uninjured.

An arsonist may have set fire to the Riverview Retreat Apartments on Riverview Drive around 9:30 p.m., reported Brunswick County Sheriff's Deputy George Stanley.

As of Monday, no estimate on the damage was available. At least four apartments were destroyed and others received extensive smoke or water damage, said Lt. Dale Snow of the Calabash Volunteer Fire Department.

All of the damaged apartments were being rented, said Snow. The owner of the apartment building lives in Virginia, he said.

The passerby, Ernie Leonard, was on his way home when he noticed smoke coming from the west end of the building, said Stanley.

He was joined in the lifesaving efforts by Robert Green of Southern Pines, a Calabash property owner who owns a home adjacent to the apartments. Green was down for the weekend.

Leonard lives on a boat called Peggy Ann that was docked on the Calabash River. He jumped from his car and began waking people inside their upstairs apartments so they could escape, said Stanley.

"Some were in their beds asleep," said Snow, the first firefighter to arrive on the scene at around 9:35 p.m. "If it hadn't been for him (Leonard), there might have been some injuries, or deaths."

Calabash resident Waban Thomas said Green should be honored by the town for his heroic efforts. "He really did a big thing there," said Thomas. "He saved those people's lives."

Snow said flames were already coming through the roof of the building when he arrived. The fire is believed to have been set near a washer and dryer or storage area downstairs, the site of repeated vandalism in the past, reported Stanley.

Leonard and Green first ran upstairs to help evacuate the building and then helped people leave their downstairs apartments before firefighters from five departments arrived.

Calabash, Sunset Beach, Grissetown-Longwood, Shallotte and Little River fire departments responded and battled the fire for three hours, said Snow.

"Everybody did a super job," said Snow. "They contained the fire the best that they could, under the circumstances."

One resident told deputies that vandals have constantly damaged the washer and dryer near a downstairs storage area to steal coins inside. Another resident said someone kept taking the hose off the washer and had once hot-wired the dryer.

The landlord would repair the damage, then more would occur, she said.

On Friday night, residents said, someone drove by the building and fired a couple of gunshots, Stanley reported. No one was injured.

Sheriff's detectives and Brunswick County Fire Marshal Cecil Logan are investigating the fire.

Logan was out of town this week attending a water rescue class and was not available for comment.

Former Shallotte Mayor Challenging Sarah Tripp

BY DOUG RUTTER

Former Shallotte Mayor Beamon Hewett is challenging incumbent Mayor Sarah Tripp in her bid for election in November.

He is one of four people to file for office this past week at Shallotte Town Hall. Four candidates also have filed for seats on the Ocean Isle Beach Board of Commissioners since last week.

Brunswick County Elections Supervisor Lynda Britt said candidates have until noon Friday to file at town halls or at the elections board office in Bolivia. The filing fee is \$5.

As of Tuesday, candidates were still needed in several Brunswick County towns, including Calabash, Sunset Beach and Holden Beach.

Hewett is seeking the seat he held for 17 years prior to 1985. Mrs. Tripp, a town alderman from 1985 to 1991, was appointed mayor earlier this year to fill the unexpired term of Jerry Jones, who resigned as mayor to serve as county commissioner.

Shallotte Aldermen Wilton Harrelson and Jody Simmons have filed for re-election. Harrelson has served on the board since 1983, and Simmons was elected to his first term in 1987.

Gene Frink also has filed for a seat on the Shallotte town board, said Sandy Hewett, clerk.

Ocean Isle Beach Town Clerk Daisy Ivey said four people have filed for commissioner at Ocean Isle Beach in the past week.

Town board candidates are Raymond Erickson, Janet Sanders, Kendall Suh and William T. Bullington Jr., who chairs the town's planning board and is the husband of former mayor LaDane Bullington.

In Varnamtown, Alderman John David Dawson has filed for re-election. Jeff Whitfield and Faye Galloway also are seeking seats on the town board.

Bolivia Mayor Ina Mae Mintz has filed for re-election to a sixth two-year term. Alice Lesh is seeking a seat on the board of aldermen.

Hewett Seeks Return

Hewett, who served four years as alderman and was mayor of Shallotte from 1969 to 1985, said he wants to return to local politics.

"I didn't complete the job and I want to finish it up," Hewett said in a telephone interview Tuesday.

"You can ride through the Town of Shallotte and see it dying on the street, dying on the branch," he said. "I just think that we need to get the town cranked back up and get it going again."

Hewett said there are too many vacant buildings in the downtown business district, and there haven't been enough new businesses locat-

Holden Beach Mayor Tandy Calling It Quits

Holden Beach Mayor John Tandy will not seek a fourth consecutive term in office, saying the rapid growth of the island is putting too much demand on his time.

Tandy said the island plays host to more vacationers every year, and the larger number of people creates the need for more controls by the town.

The mayor estimated that there were 15 percent more people on the island this Memorial Day than last year. The tourist season also has extended into the fall in recent years.

"With more people, it's just natural that you're going to need more controls," he said. "All of that takes time."

Tandy, who is a former high school principal and football coach, has served as mayor since 1985 and previously served from 1979 to 1981. His term expires in December.

"It's time for a change anyway in my estimation," Tandy said. "There's plenty of people on this island who would do a good job."

Tandy said he and his wife, Elizabeth, are considering building a smaller house on Holden Beach or moving to Chapel Hill to be closer to their children.

While neighboring towns like Holden Beach and Ocean Isle Beach have seen steady growth, Hewett said Shallotte's growth has declined.

"I'm in business myself," said Hewett, who owns a hardware store on Main Street. "If it hurts Shallotte, it hurts me too."

Hewett wouldn't say what changes he would make if he were elected mayor, but said the town needs to expand its sewer plant to handle growth.

"I know what I'm going to do, but I'm going to hang onto it," he said. "I've got some answers to our problems."

Hewett said he didn't want to

criticize anyone presently serving the town as an elected official. He said they are doing the best they can with the experience they have, but that he has more than 20 years of experience to offer.

Southport/Oak Island

At Yaupon Beach, three incumbents and one other candidate have filed for the three seats up for election on the board of commissioners.

Incumbents May Moore, James Poole Sr. and Joseph Broyles have filed for re-election. Michael Edward Keane also is seeking a town board seat.

Also last week, Southport Alderman Paul Sweeney filed for re-

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Health Department Fears Another Permits Backlog As Two Inspectors Resign

BY TERRY POPE

Two resignations, and possibly a third, threaten to create a mid-1980s-type backlog for septic tank permits, causing concern for local developers and the Brunswick County Health Department.

"It puts us in a real bind," said John Crowder, environmental health supervisor. "It brings us back to where we were in 1985."

As of Friday, a backlog of 157 applications for septic tank permits had already accumulated at the health department, said Crowder.

"We will be busy in the next few weeks," he said. "I hope the people will bear with us."

The resignations come just as the health department is getting over a period of shorthandedness within the animal control division, said Rita Hatcher, public health educator.

That unit was back on its regular schedule Monday morning, she said.

Nancy Marley, an environmental health specialist, resigned for personal reasons, said Crowder. She was qualified to conduct soil evaluations and to issue septic tank permits.

In June, Brunswick County Commissioners voted to transfer her husband, Walter Marley, county soil scientist, to a post in the engineering department. While not a health department employee, Marley worked closely with its environmental health unit.

Program Specialist Sonya Remington, who inspected and graded restaurants, motels and swimming pools, has also resigned to accept a similar job in Pender County, said Crowder.

Ms. Marley's last day is Aug. 9. Although Ms. Remington's last day is Aug. 16, she is using vacation time that she had accumulated, said Crowder.

The employee shortage is hampered further by a Brunswick County Board of Health mandate adopted last month that said inspectors of restaurants, motels and swimming pools would not be pulled from their jobs to do soil evaluations should a backlog of septic tank permits develop.

In 1985, developers argued that

getting soil tests to see if lots were suitable for septic systems was taking too long. The staff was increased to handle the growing number of applications.

Citing top heaviness within the department, commissioners voted in June to cut back by firing Gary McDonald, environmental health specialist I, who was in charge of permitting larger sewer systems, reviewing subdivision plats for the planning board and performing second evaluations when requested by an applicant.

It was McDonald's firing that angered the health board into adopting the mandate to keep specialists responsible for restaurant and motel inspections at their posts.

In asking for the mandate, Health Board Chairman Bill Rabon said he did not want the department doing "an overall poor job" and wanted to keep the public's trust by staying at 100 percent in motel and restaurant inspections.

Crowder said Monday that another health specialist has indicated that he would also "probably" resign soon.

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Minor Changes Are Expected After New County Electoral Lines Drawn

BY TERRY POPE

Brunswick County's five electoral districts must undergo changes again.

District lines must be redrawn before the end of the year to reflect the county's population growth since the 1980 U.S. Census, but county officials are predicting only minor changes.

"I'd like to see it done by the middle of October," said County Manager David Clegg. "I don't see any reason why it could not be done by that point."

The Brunswick County Planning Department will use 1990 U.S. Census figures to determine new district boundaries.

The current district lines were established by the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners in August 1983. Local legislation adopted in 1981 requires that commissioners redraw the county into five electoral districts as nearly as equal in population as possible every 10 years.

The districts are the same for both commissioners and the Brunswick County Board of Education, with five members—one from each district—elected to each of the two boards. While candidates run from and represent the district in which

they reside, they are elected by voters countywide.

Clegg said he believes Brunswick County's permanent population growth has also been countywide during the past decade. Non-permanent residents, those who own summer homes on the coast, do not figure into the redistricting plan.

"I think statistically you're going to see pretty even growth patterns," he said. "There is no electoral district in which there has not been population growth."

Final Census data arrived last month to get the ball rolling toward redistricting, he said. Those figures show the county grew in population by 43 percent between 1980 and 1990.

Following the November 1990 election, the Brunswick County black community called for its own electoral district. Clegg said black leaders have not approached him on the subject.

"Brunswick County has historically elected black candidates and female candidates," said Clegg.

The county is not among the estimated 40 in North Carolina that have been designated as Voting Rights Act counties, where special districts or procedures are in place to help give blacks a political voice.

According to U.S. Census figures, Brunswick County's black population grew by only 11 percent between 1980 and 1990, from 8,287 to 9,211 persons. A black district would skip across the county to pick up pockets of the black population.

To redistrict, the county will follow House Bill 685, which was ratified in July 1981. That bill also changed the number of districts from six to five and contains language that does not apply to the county today, said Clegg.

That's why Clegg had hoped a new local bill, one he submitted on behalf of the commissioners, would replace the 1981 version, to "clean up" the language, he said.

Clegg's bill passed the House, but when the General Assembly adjourned last month it was still pending before the Senate local government committee.

The bill calls for commissioners to redefine the boundaries of electoral districts by Dec. 1, 1991, and every 10 years thereafter "so that the population of each district is nearly equal as practicable," it states.

It would establish the same districts for the Board of Education. Board members who no longer

reside in his or her district as a result of the new lines would be allowed to serve the remainder of their term, it states.

The Census data the planning department will work with in redrawing the lines are census block tracts that were also used by the state in redrawing House and Senate districts.

The population in each district will increase from around 7,200 each in 1981 to around 10,200 each in 1991.

Brief descriptions of current districts are as follows:

■ District 1—Waccamaw and Shallotte townships, minus Shallotte and Shallotte Point;

■ District 2—Shallotte Point, Shallotte, Holden Beach area and Supply;

■ District 3—Smithville Township, including Sunset Harbor up to Lockwood Folly River on N.C. 211;

■ District 4—Town Creek Township, plus south and west to N.C. 211, easterly to part of N.C. 87 and U.S. 74-76 to the Columbus County line;

■ District 5—Northwest Township, Leland and Woodburn area to Olde Towne and south to Goodman Road.