

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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We'll Lose Our Voice If Voters Are Not Careful

Brunswick and Columbus counties may be neighbors, but they share very little in common.

A redistricting plan approved by the N.C. General Assembly has Brunswick joining Columbus County for a two-member House district. Precincts from Cape Fear I and II in neighboring New Hanover County have also joined the family.

It sounds fair and simple enough, but there is an underlying concern that all residents should at least be more aware of.

If Brunswick County voters are not careful, they may lose their local voice in Raleigh. Columbus County residents must feel the same way.

Here's why. Voters will go to the polls to elect two representatives from District 14. It is highly possible for both winners to emerge not only from a single political party, but from a single county as well.

It will probably take such an election to raise people's awareness of why two-member House districts are such a problem, but by that time it'll be too late to scream.

Currently, District 14 Rep. E. David Redwine of Ocean Isle Beach is elected to represent all of Brunswick and small parts of New Hanover and Pender counties. Voters in Columbus County have elected Rep. Leo Mercer as their voice in Raleigh.

The kinds of issues that concern residents in Brunswick County, coastal and beach population growth, don't make a hill of beans in Columbus County. The kinds of farming and rural issues dominating the Columbus County scene are not the same hot topics here along the coast.

Voters would have to elect a couple of Jekyll and Hydes to give equal treatment to all of the issues in the entire district. Geographically, as opposed to other areas of the state, these two counties may be brothers, but they are far from twins. There's not even a resemblance.

It may look great on paper, but in reality it's not good for the people.

In the Senate redistricting plan, the 18th District changes very little with Brunswick, Columbus and Bladen counties still included in territory represented by Sen. R.C. Soles Jr. of Tabor City.

Redwine said the redistricting plans are subject to possible challenges and could be revised in the future.

Residents shouldn't wait until after the next election to challenge these plans.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Times Are Changing

To the editor: "Things ain't what they used to be" an old saying that's certainly true of Brunswick County law enforcement.

Having just had a birthday caused me to realize, from the '50s until a few years ago, the sheriff and what little department existed, was a joke all over the state and an embarrassment to respectable people of Brunswick County.

I'm also aware the sheriff's power must have first been okayed by the county commissioners, who were a joke too. They were certainly not all bad men, but mostly playing follow-the-leader of their predecessors.

It spoke well for our county a few weeks ago when our sheriff, John Carr Davis, was host to county law enforcement from all counties of North Carolina for a yearly conference.

Recently I was awakened by an unwelcome guest, literally almost knocking my back door off the

hinges. It was time for a change. Advice I valued said, "Get a gun." I had always been anti-gun, but change was needed.

I needed to know what kind, where from and how to. So I placed a call to our sheriff for professional advice. He recommended what kind and where to make my purchase. Then came the last step—I explained I knew absolutely nothing about using a gun.

Mr. Davis didn't see a problem there. He would send a very competent man out to my house to teach me how to handle, load and shoot.

About five minutes after returning home with my gun, Detective Holden called, saying he would be right out. He looked and conducted himself as a gentleman and a professional.

Thanks to him this red-head has something on the inside of the door that she's not afraid to use. Things ain't what they used to be no more.

Harriet H. Norris
Supply

(Letters To The Editor Continue On Following Page)

Calabash Needs To Fish Or Cut Bait

Calabash commissioners have a decision to make.

They have to make up their minds once and for all.

Do they want to keep taxes down and continue operating without a police force? Or do they want to hire someone to enforce the gobs of ordinances they have adopted in recent months and the ones yet to come?

The building inspector and code enforcement officer, Ed Schaack, has been handed more ordinances in the last few months than he can shake a stick at.

As fast as the Calabash area is growing, Schaack has probably been so busy inspecting buildings that he hasn't had time to read the ordinances, not to mention enforce the blooming things.

Don't get me wrong. I certainly believe that local governments need to have rules in place to make sure the community develops in an orderly fashion.

I'm a big believer in zoning and other regulations designed to improve a town's appearance. And

Doug Rutter



Calabash has done more toward that goal in the last two years than any other town in the South Brunswick Islands.

But there's such a thing as overkill. In my humble opinion, enacting 19 new zoning ordinances at one sitting is overkill.

That's just what the board of commissioners did back in March. The rules cover everything from refuse containers and signs to noise and junk vehicles.

Town commissioners would have passed 22 ordinances, but too many people complained about three of them. So the rules on landscaping, off-street parking and subdivisions were temporarily put on hold.

Don't worry. They'll be coming up again soon, along with several other rules on sidewalk sales, yard sales, peddling, etc.

In case you missed it, the town board's latest move was the adoption of an ordinance lowering the speed limit on town streets from 35 mph to 30 mph.

That's great if that's what the town board wants. But even the town board members admit they have nobody to enforce this one. I just can't picture Ed Schaack hiding in the bushes and waiting for speeders.

My question is this: Why have an ordinance on the books if the town doesn't intend or have the means to enforce it? That makes all of the other ordinances meaningless.

I'm not advocating starting a police force tomorrow to enforce the speed limit and other ordinances. But it never hurts to stick some money away for a rainy day.

Over the last two years, the town board has cut the tax rate from 24 cents to 10.5 cents per \$100. That might seem great for the taxpayers,

but it's hard for me to believe the tax rate won't go back up in the future.

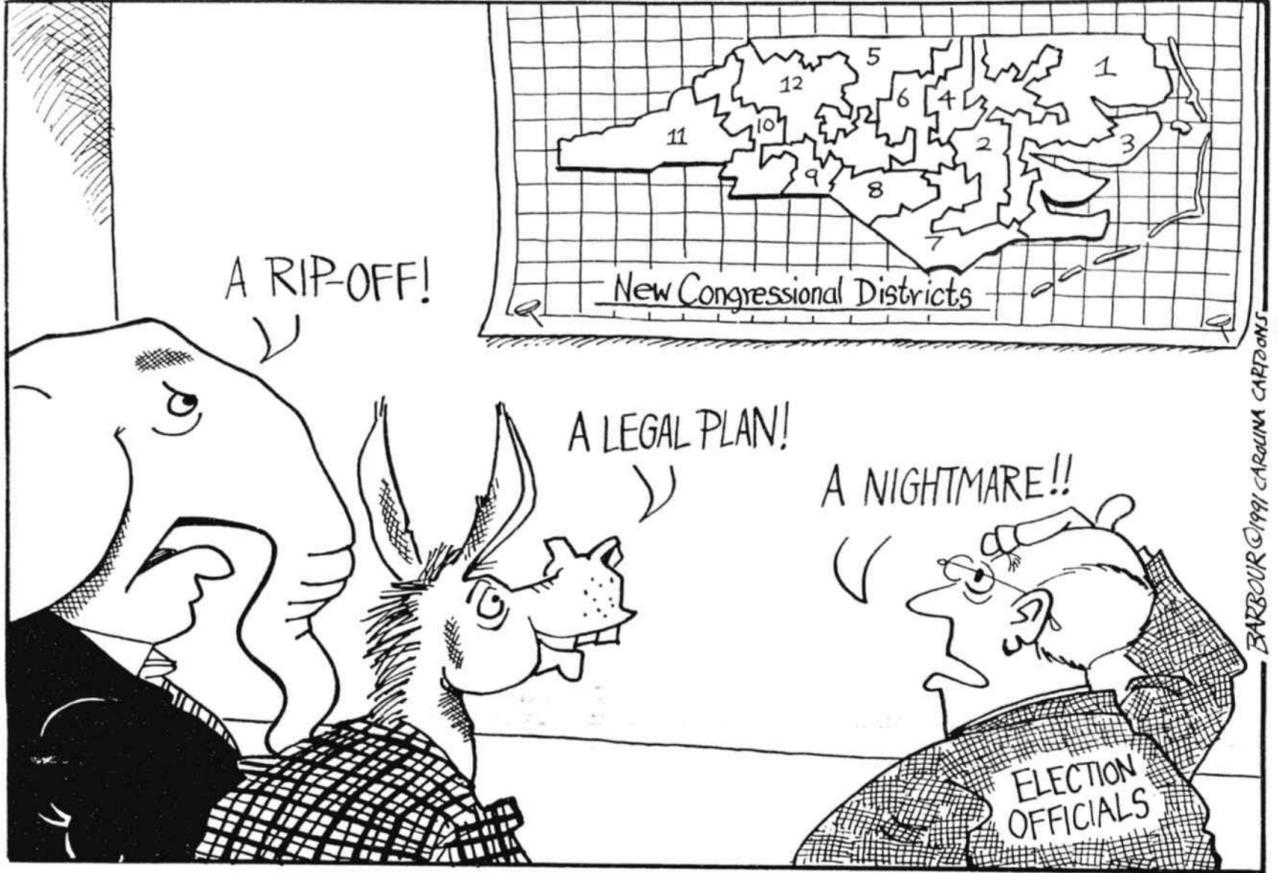
Let's just play a numbers game for a minute. If the town board hadn't cut the tax rate at all over the last two years, taxpayers would have thrown another \$200,000 in the kitty, more or less.

That's a nice piece of change to set aside for a police department. Or at least a full-time code enforcement officer and secretary to take some of the load off the building inspector.

Who knows? There might have even been some money left over to expand the town hall, which is barely big enough for the mayor and seven board members.

Before they adopt any more rules and regulations, Calabash commissioners need to decide if they actually want to enforce the ordinances or just put them in a book to gather dust.

If you ask me, it's high time that the elected officials in the seafood capital of the world either fish or cut bait.



Compassion Guided Animals Back To Safety

There is a happy ending to a Brunswick County story that drew statewide attention in late April.

When news spread about the seizure of more than 300 animals from a pet mill in Belville, the Brunswick County Animal Control Shelter in Supply was bombarded with telephone calls and letters from animal lovers all across the state.

Animal control workers confiscated 14 Pekingese dogs, four cats, five mice and 288 birds from the Town and Country Motel and charged the owner with multiple counts of cruelty to animals.

Albert Sidney Boney, 48, stood accused of keeping his animals in unsanitary conditions and of not providing them with proper veterinary care. The dogs were found in small, wire cages with overflowing buckets of feces beneath them. Some could barely walk because their hind legs were crippled and long wads of untrimmed hair trailed beneath them.

Residents responded with shock and compassion, finding it difficult to believe it could actually happen here, in peaceful Brunswick County. Boney pleaded guilty to 16

Terry Pope



counts of misdemeanor cruelty to animals and was ordered to pay \$4,042 in veterinarian bills, fined \$500 and given a one-year suspended sentence.

District Court Judge D. Jack Hooks Jr. ordered that Boney not own any animals for a year.

Three months after that story broke, all of the animals that survived the ordeal have been placed into caring homes and are on their way to full recovery.

Rita Hatcher, public health educator for the Brunswick County Health Department, said some residents of both North and South Carolina have followed the plight of the 300-plus animals since April.

In a news release last week, the health department publicly ac-

knowledged and thanked "all the many concerned and compassionate citizens for all their meaningful support, time donations and numerous helpful efforts."

It was the largest animal seizure in the county's history. The shelter was not large enough and did not have the personnel available to care for the numbers of animals that had to be nursed back to proper health. Stores in the county donated food and volunteers donated their time.

Just after the seizure in April, a volunteer, Sammy Ganey, greeted me on the sidewalk at the animal shelter and warned me about the condition of the Pekingese dogs I was about to see.

"When you see them, it'll bring tears to your eyes," he said, "no matter how strong a man you are."

He was right. I could barely take photographs of the animals.

Animal Control Supervisor Zelma Babson told me in May that the dogs were boarded out to individuals who had the time to spend with them, to work with them one on one to help rehabilitate their legs and to get them adjusted to normal life.

Confinement in the dog pound wouldn't do the job. Ms. Babson took one of the dogs that was in the poorest condition and spent her free time, after work, to personally care for the animal.

She was fired from her job last month and is now appealing that action.

The story took another unusual twist in late May when someone broke into the animal shelter and stole an estimated 125 of the most expensive birds seized.

Taken were a number of cockatiels, canaries and finches, along with their cages. The thieves cut through a bar and lock that held a steel gate closed and then broke into the shelter. Let's hope that those birds, too, have found happy homes and were not returned to another horrible environment.

I promised you a happy ending, and there is one to this story.

"The animals were given wonderful care and a lot of love and attention," said Ms. Hatcher. "Since then, all the animals have been adopted and placed in good homes. It took a lot of hard work and a lot of time..."

BCC Visiting Artists Left Brunswick Better

The nine Visiting Artists hosted by Brunswick Community College since its founding have left Brunswick County the better for having lived and worked here.

For now, though, there will be no more. Over the past two years or so the state has changed the way it gives BCC money. And this year, the packet that comes labeled "community services" was \$100,000 lighter than in the past, leaving BCC with some tough choices. There will be no Visiting Artist for the 1991-92 term.

The Visiting Artists program began as a joint venture of the N.C. Dept. of Community Colleges and the N.C. Arts Council. Any community college willing to provide an artist with office space, supervision and nominal support would receive a grant to help provide a stipend for a 10-month residency.

A Visiting Artist isn't a free college teacher, but rather an ambassador for the arts. Visiting Artists lecture about and demonstrate their chosen field of art and perform free throughout the community. In our case, they "played" all of Brunswick

County, sorely lacking suitable locations for public performances, its communities distanced by telephone systems, geography and more.

In turn the artist spends a similar share of their time in personal development.

Susan Usher



Each of the nine BCC artists contributed to Brunswick County in his or her own way, leaving their mark on the county's cultural resources and opening our eyes to new ways of considering the arts.

Paving the way in 1980 was Jan Davidson, country musician and

singer—a man who made music a lot of Brunswick County residents could relate to and an excellent choice as the first Visiting Artist. He helped spark the fire that created the Brunswick County Arts Council. Davidson was invited back for a second stint.

Then the late Jesse Clemmons, who coordinated the Visiting Artists Program, branched out boldly. Disregarding his own personal tastes, Clemmons saw the value in exposing county residents to a wide array of artists and forms of art. We experienced them all: Bill Hearn, classical violinist; Robert Williams, saxophonist and recording artist thanks to a grant from the county arts council; Barney Bush, Native American poet; Bruce Piephoff, writer and folk singer.

Pamela Reid, a very talented black dancer and dramatist, left her stamp on the county as the founder

of the Black Arts Festival. She came closer than any previous artists to reaching the widespread popularity attained by Jan Davidson. Pamela also was asked to remain a second year.

Renee Vincent created memorable one-act characters, with the most personal her portrayal of Beryl Lancaster.

Nnenna Freelon of Durham swept through the county like a breeze, leaving audiences quietly stunned and appreciative each time she sang. Nnenna's in residence now with the N.C. Symphony for *An Appalachian Summer* in Boone, but we haven't forgotten her.

Most recently, Emily Weinstein introduced her fresh, multi-dimensional approach to art, tied to her passion for all members of the animal kingdom. Reminders of her stint include a rotating art exhibition in the ALS building lobby and an unusual interactive mural at BCC.

In part because of these visitors in our midst, the "cultural arts" are welcome here. We have a little theater group, a county band, a dance troupe, one established and one fledgling artists' association and a county arts council. Our children are learning to sing, dance, draw and write. Through the example of the visiting artists, they know that these too are honorable professions.

We will miss their vision, their fervor, their enthusiasm for their calling. Each and every one enriched their audiences, leaving us something to think about, broadening our view of the world and our understanding of the word "art."

The loss of the Visiting Artists program leaves a niche that will be difficult, if not impossible, to fill.

Still, I think they achieved their goal over the 11 years of the program: to create a broader, more appreciative audience for the arts in Brunswick County.