

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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PAGE 4-A, THURSDAY, JANUARY 9, 1992

Decision To Study Bypass Intersection Welcome News

There's no doubt about it. Announcement that the North Carolina Department of Transportation plans a design study of the U.S. 17 Shallotte bypass and N.C. 130 West intersection is very good news.

It means the state has softened its position and is willing now to at least discuss the possibility of an overpass at this grade-level crossing, the site of a three-vehicle, double-fatality accident last year.

The news comes as a welcome surprise, on the heels of oft-repeated, adamant statements from Day 1—from the time the project was on go until mid-December—from DOT officials that there would be no overpass. First, because it would significantly delay construction of the bypass. Later, because it would simply cost too much and would delay the four-laning of U.S. 17 and other dangerous two-lane highways statewide.

The state knows an overpass would most likely make the intersection safer, just as the lights, rumble strips and such have already helped. In a recent letter to a concerned Shallotte resident, Secretary of Transportation Tommy Harrelson said it would be good to have bridge and ramp designs at all such grade-level crossings. But, he continued in a placating tone, the money is better spent four-laning roads like U.S. 17 and making them safer overall.

However, the study agreed upon just last month will investigate the need, impact and benefits of an overpass and the land that would be needed to build it. DOT's division engineering is estimating a cost of at least \$2 million.

It will be up the State Board of Transportation to decide 1) if an overpass should be built and 2) where the money to do it would come from.

What prompted transportation leaders to take a second look? Who knows. It might have had something to do with the upcoming dedication of an area welcome center that will open this month alongside the bypass. The center was built by the state, but from a different kitty than the one used to build overpasses.

It might have been the Brunswick County Board of Education's tally of the number of buses and students that ride through the intersection daily.

It might have been a non-partisan pressing for action from Republican and Democratic leaders alike.

It might have had more to do with it being an election year.

Then again, it may be that state transportation officials simply listened to local residents and realized how sincere and how great their concern is about this overpass. As DOT has been reminded repeatedly, local residents thought an overpass should have been included in original plans for the project. From their point of view, the state was negligent in not providing it.

Whatever the reason for this change of heart, it's good to know someone in Raleigh is listening if we only scream loudly enough.

The state's willingness to reconsider is very good news for anyone who travels through this intersection.

Commissioners Leaving, But What Does It Mean?

There will be at least two new faces on the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners next year.

After serving just one term in office, both Kelly Holden of District 1 and Gene Pinkerton of District 3 have announced they will not run for re-election.

The door has been left wide open for potential candidates, but most residents probably don't know whether to laugh or to cry.

Democrats who were so red in the face when the all-Republican board took office must be stunned. They won't have Kelly and Gene to kick around anymore.

One tactic Democrats used last spring was to push for two-year terms for commissioners as a chance to better oust the devils from their seats. It was a desperate attempt to slap Republicans in the face, like changing the rules in the middle of a softball game.

However, there is a saying that warns, "Don't wish for something unless you are absolutely sure that you want it, because it just might come true."

Residents followed the Democratic lead in November and voted overwhelmingly in favor of two-year terms. Did they know what they were voting for?

Holden predicted the vote would set county government back at least 20 years, bring instability to the Board of Commissioners and open up the "good old boy" system of politics, where candidates are uncomfortably controlled by special interest groups.

One month after his apocalyptic statement, Holden steps from the 1992 race.

Both Holden and Pinkerton are self-employed businessmen. They have approached county government with a businessman's eye. Both candidates possess numerous traits that are often admired in county leaders. For better or for worse, their presence on the board has been felt.

They both defeated Democratic incumbents to win their seats in 1988. Holden did so in dramatic fashion, receiving an overwhelming majority of votes. He was chosen chairman of the board in 1991 and again for 1992.

Now, he appears to have his sights set on a higher goal, maybe even the state House seat for the 14th District. Pinkerton says he will leave politics to devote more time to his growing import business.

But what does it all mean? The people who surprisingly elected an all-Republican board, and who later voted for two-year terms, hold the answer.

Brunswick County residents haven't been consistent lately in naming what they want, but they are getting what they asked for.

For better, or for worse.

'92 Could Be A Very Good Year For Us

I don't know about you, but I'm feeling pretty optimistic about 1992.

Call me an optimist with blinders, but that's just the way I see it. Maybe it's rubbed off from all the positive people I get to be around these days—people who are making things happen and in a good way. I'm looking forward to 1992; in fact, I'm excited about it.

Certainly, 1992 will be rougher for some than others. After all, the local unemployment rate is running about 12 percent.

But that is 1) in the dead of winter in an area that unfortunately has a large percentage of seasonal jobs; and 2) better than it was last May.

And we have people working, and working hard, to make life better for those trapped at or near the bottom of the economic scale. People trying to make more affordable housing available, to bring jobs to the area, to provide more affordable health care. Individuals who know they may not have much control over world affairs, but that they can make life better here at home, right now, for someone.

In the course of a week's work, at the *Beacon* encounter a broad cross-section of county residents—

Susan Usher



young, old, retired, working, from a good mix of backgrounds. Most of the ones I've been talking to feel good about the year ahead. Maybe that's partly because 1992 is off to a better start than 1991.

Remember? We all started off 1991 worrying about the war, and that's not good for our health or the nation's. In fact, during the first quarter of the year we were so busy—worrying—and watching CNN—that our pace of activity and spending made a turtle's look swift.

But that's not what we're seeing right now. Momentum has been building over the last half of '91 and now it is picking up speed even more.

Certainly 1991 taught a few basic lessons. Look at the empty storefronts. It's been reported in the na-

tional press that the United States has too many stores. Based on the local view, that would be easy to believe.

The businesses that are left, or that will be left when the shakedown is completed, are those that have learned to do what they do well. They deliver quality goods and services, promptly, reliably and at a reasonable price. Businesses that are tuned in to the needs of busy customer.

After all, most businesses are dealing these days with mail-order competition that's open 24 hours a day, offers customer hotlines for answering questions and solving problems, same- or next-day shipments, a wide array of stock and sophisticated inventory management. You've got to do it better to stay around long.

With growth still a constant here, businesses in our area have the potential of doing well under these conditions—if they take to heart the service with a smile theme being pushed by the South Brunswick Islands Chamber of Commerce these days.

Interest rate are down; that means we should gradually see more activi-

ty in the housing market and in business activity in general.

Gas prices are down, even though gas taxes are up. But look around, the price of gas looks the best it has in a long time. If it's the same elsewhere, that should bode well for travel-related businesses.

Certainly there are some question marks, such as the overall impact of the opening of a new post office at Sunset Beach and the opening of Wal-Mart in Shallotte.

We'll also be looking to see the impact of the new Southeastern Welcome Center on the local economy, where a new permanent home for the N.C. Oyster Festival might be located, and where the South Brunswick Islands Committee of 100 will begin an industrial park to help attract tourism-compatible, year-round jobs to the area.

Overall, the indicators for our area look pretty good to me, in part because we have people out there—individually and in organized efforts—who are working to make things happen, not waiting for lightning to strike.

Yes, I am optimistic about 1992. It has the potential of being a very good year. The rest is up to us.



EDITORIAL CARTOON IDEA SUBMITTED BY PENNY WILLIAMS

Diversity Should Be Impressive, Right?

We all must start someplace.

At previous jobs, country music stars have been discovered while washing dishes for a living. Aspiring actors and actresses often wait on tables where the producers and directors gather for lunch, thinking that maybe one day they will get the lucky break they need, that someone will notice them and hand them a leading role.

Holding a diverse number of jobs can fill up the resume. The person who applies for a move up the ladder often questions how many of those previous jobs should they mention, or which ones can actually hurt their chances.

It depends on what the employer is looking for, I guess.

To me, a willingness to work different kinds of jobs should earn points, for it means that person is readily adaptable to situations.

Looking back, I guess the jobs I've taken over the years have few things in common. There's no pattern involved. They've been different, but I think that has been good for me. I wasn't looking to be discovered by Hollywood or Wall Street, just to earn some money.

I've been a school bus driver,

Terry Pope



mowed grass, worked half a day at construction, baked pizzas, delivered car parts, sold party supplies, delivered and set up tents and chairs, taught high school and wrote news stories.

Driving a school bus while a senior in high school helped me save a little money for college and also allowed me to buy my first 35mm camera, the largest purchase I had ever made up to that point in my life. I was nervous paying hundreds of dollars for that Minolta.

I had a laid-back bus route that tracked through the Northwest and Maco communities, so the high school students were mostly kind. They let me know when I got out of line.

I mowed grass as a teen-ager, too. But then, didn't everybody? It

doesn't seem that way any more.

Before I left for Chapel Hill, my best friend talked me into taking a job at a construction site in Wilmington, just for the summer. The previous week I had been playing basketball and came down wrong on my arm. Doctors said I had sprained my wrist. It felt like it was broken, but the X-rays were negative.

The job was called a "shut-down" and paid about \$5 an hour. They gave you a hard hat and wished you luck. Our job was to go in behind a crew that had worked above on an elevated cement plant and had cut loose sheets of tin, just letting them fall down to ground level as a mangled pile of debris.

The tin was piled everywhere and coated with a dust that covered us from head to toe. We had to breathe the dust in and watch for rusty edges. Sheets would come tumbling down on our heads.

After just a couple of hours on the job, my wrist hurt real badly. I quit.

I was a better pizza maker. For two summers I crafted the pizza pies and made salad. It took me years before I could order pizza at a restaurant again, for I grew sick of them. Several summers I also traveled

around Wilmington, not for pleasure, but to deliver car parts for an automotive wholesaler. The job required an ability to fight traffic, to endure grease and grime, to act like you knew the difference between a coter pin and a carburetor and to endure the mechanics' joke of the day.

Other jobs had me in the retail business, selling everything from Barbie birthday party favors to Halloween costumes. The same company would send me out to help install tents at places like the county fairgrounds to elaborate backyard wedding sites from Greenville to Myrtle Beach.

Teaching high school was a two-year learning experience that I have explained in a previous column, so I won't recount those times again. I've been in and out of journalism now a couple of times.

A look inside this issue can answer anyone's question about what this job is like. Stories range from beaver trapping to board meetings.

Hollywood or Wall Street are not calling, but that's OK by me. There's plenty to keep me busy here in Brunswick County.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Move Fast If You Want To Avoid Paying Income Taxes

To the editor:

It's the most wonderful magazine in the world, and I ain't talking about the *New Yorker*. That credit now goes to the *Forbes' Fortune*.

This wondrous publication has now enlightened all Americans on how to avoid paying income tax. It's fairly simple and easy, if you don't move too slow, as I did.

All you have to do is rent a hotel room, go quail hunting, then go to a bar for a couple of beers. You don't even have to shoot any quail or buy pizza with your beer. Of course all of this has to take place in Texas and you have to declare Texas as your home state when filing income taxes.

At least that's the way President Bush did it. He sure is smart, ain't he?

With *Only Little People Pay Taxes*, sticking in my craw, I decided to take advantage of this new-found information.

I called the nearest travel agent to arrange for a plane ticket (round trip, naturally) to anywhere in Texas, with a one-night stay in any motel. The agent assured me that she would call me right back with confirmations.

Seven hours and 42 minutes later the agent called, apologized for taking so long and informed me that all flights were taken.

Not that it mattered, because every hotel, motel, boarding house and junked car would be booked solid until Dec. 31.

Now I know the real reason for Snowbirds going south every year—and it ain't cold weather.

I suspect and predict that with this new-found knowledge, a mass exodus from all other states to Texas. All other states, suffering from a lack of revenue, will have hefty budget deficits, cut social spending and declare bankruptcy.

North Carolina will probably fire Jimmy Green

and eliminate his position of "Benedict-special advisor to the Governor-Arnold."

But some good will come of this. With Texas being the only state with any money, it will also attract all the illegal aliens.

After establishing new borders around Texas, we could give it back to Mexico and the problem of Green Cards and illegal immigration would be solved.

But knowing Texans, they'll never bite on this. They'll pass laws restricting this privilege to the President only. That way, they know he will visit at least once a year, and not just go by at 50,000 feet at warp nine, on his way to Rio.

The travel agent? She took my flight and the last vacancy at the Sleazy X Motel, somewhere in Texas.

James A. Moore
 Shallotte (More letters on Page 5-A)