

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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PAGE 4-A, THURSDAY, JANUARY 30, 1992

Trash Contract Is Whale Of A Deal

Some of the rumors and complaints circulating about Brunswick County's decision to contract out its trash collection and recycling operations to a private business are ridiculous and should be put to rest.

Change is always difficult, but is often for the better. That certainly appears to be the case here, though a handful of disgruntled people are suggesting otherwise.

At least one of the accusations circulating is potentially defamatory in nature, accusing the company that got the contract of unsavory associations. Asked to provide evidence of such a relationship, the accusing parties haven't produced any.

Other rumors are simply silly, obviously based on second-hand information and supposition.

Contrary to rumor, the county engineer, who is in charge of solid waste disposal, doesn't work for the company that got the contract, never has and doesn't foresee doing so. In his previous job with Wake County, his responsibilities did include dealing with the company and negotiating contracts.

Contrary to rumor, the county will continue operating the landfill.

Contrary to rumor, dumping from outside the county won't be allowed.

Contrary to rumor, the number of green boxes was going to be reduced this coming year whether collection was handled by the county or an outside company.

Over the next six to 12 months, starting in the more heavily populated areas from U.S. 17 to the beaches, you can expect the number to drop from roughly 65 to about 14.

True, there won't be a green box around every corner and trash disposal may be a little less convenient. But not much, or unreasonably so. A trash disposal site—either a green box or collection/recycling station—will be located within approximately five miles of every household. For most people, hauling trash will be more convenient than going to the grocery store.

True, having fewer sites may encourage slightly more illegal dumping along the sides of roadways and in the woods. But the county is prepared to deal with that. It has a litter officer, Martha Hardwick, whose job is handling precisely that sort of problem.

Also, in addition to the green boxes, 10 recycling/collection stations are planned, including upgrades to existing transfer stations and collection sites. These sites will be closed at night.

Under the new arrangement the county will have better control over what is dumped where, a necessity given the strict state laws dealing with waste.

Rumor has it the county will end up spending a lot more for trash collection/recycling than it has in the past.

Consider this: In 1991-1992 the county budgeted \$878,000 for trash collection, plus nearly \$1 million more for landfill operation.

For trash collection AND recycling, the new company is charging \$561,000 annually, guaranteed until July 1993, then tied to the Consumer Price Index for the balance of the five-year contract. After that, the contract is up for renegotiation.

Others have been concerned about the 12 to 15 county employees who will lose their jobs. All will be offered a job with Waste Industries, provided they meet conditions that appear quite reasonable: passing the company's insurance requirements and its drug screening test.

County government is supposed to deliver services.

Brunswick County residents have complained for years that they haven't been getting their money's worth in waste management. Complaints about unsightly, overflowing green box sites pour in steadily.

County employees were asked a while back to do better; pass any green box site and you can see the results.

No doubt about it; it was time to try something new, something bold.

Waste Industries says it can do more and do it better than the county at a lower cost, and still make a profit.

Sounds like a whale of a deal for Brunswick County taxpayers.

County's Assembly Hall Just Doesn't Work

By day, it serves as a cafeteria. By night, it turns into an assembly hall for public meetings, election returns and various county functions.

The place where people gather for public hearings at the Brunswick County Government Center irritated yet another crowd of around 200 last week.

Shallotte Point residents had gathered there to learn how the county plans to charge them for installing water lines to their homes. County officials repeated, repeated and repeated what they had said, but people still left confused because they couldn't hear.

Some in the audience shouted for others to be quiet. Part of the problem was that many refused to sit still and to be quiet so everyone could hear. On the other hand, they may have grown restless because they couldn't hear anyway and eventually gave up.

"Can't you get order?" one shouted at Al Morrison, chairman of the Brunswick County Utility Operations Board. Morrison is not a shouter. He has loads of patience and a warm, reassuring voice that gathers a lot of respect.

Terry Pope



One man wanted to know if anyone was recording the hearing and if a transcript would be available to the public.

"I can't hear a damn thing that's being said," he added. Others just cupped a hand around one ear and leaned forward with a pained expression on their face. The voices they were trying to hear were growing hoarse from shouting. Public Utilities Director Jerry Webb strained his throat beyond the call of duty.

If you look at the ceiling inside the assembly building, you see a series of large indentations, like upside down kiddie swimming pools molded into the roof. In the center of these are fluorescent lights hidden behind plastic grates.

Around these are recessed light bulbs. Three sides to the building are made of 90 percent glass. There is a hallway and large freezer space up front where the voices from the audience are directed. Two groups can actually meet in the hall when a folding divider wall is pulled in place.

Was this place designed to house public hearings? If so, some engineer or architect should be hanged. Voices inside this building bounce around like ping-pong balls and never quite find it to the ear canal. The acoustics are terrible.

To help, the county invested in a wireless Ophra Winfrey-style microphone system that could be passed around from hand to hand to the officials up front. Only it doesn't work either.

The speaker can be in the middle of a sentence and the unit grows silent or else gives off a loud thump that rattles the eardrum and causes an already irritable crowd to grit their teeth. So when the room got heated last week with the Shallotte Point crowd, the microphone became useless, too.

Because of the budget crunch, the county cannot even afford to build

an unfinished warehouse to store items at the complex. Valuable office space at the government center is being used as closet or storage space. It's not likely that an assembly hall is at the top of anyone's list of building needs for the next century.

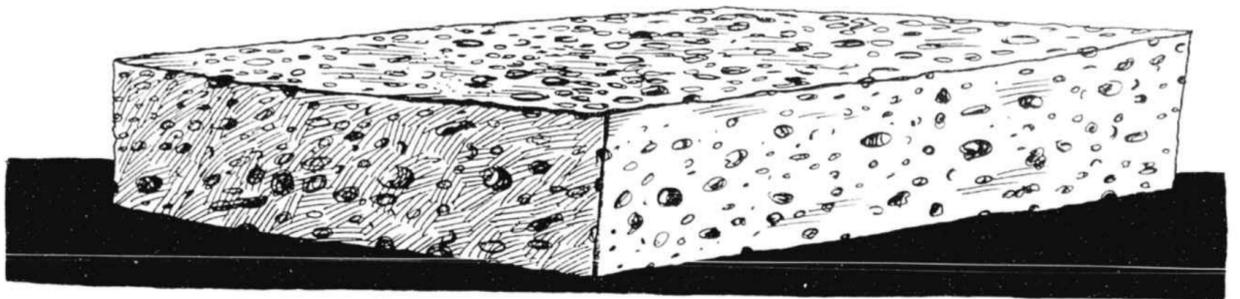
But one is desperately needed. About 100 residents attended the Utility Operation Board's regular meeting last week, just before the public hearing, and attempted to crowd into the conference room in the planning building. It will hold about 15 people. They were moved to the assembly building. The Brunswick County Commissioners chambers will hold less than 30 people.

Where there is a crowd at the government center, there's no other place to go.

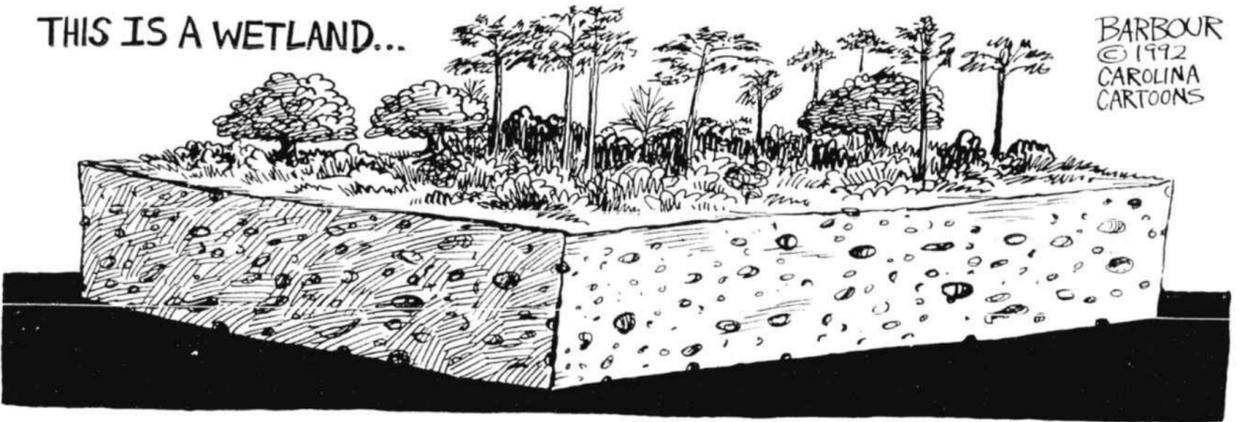
Maybe there is a way to economically renovate the assembly building, to eliminate the swimming pools on the ceiling and to enclose the glass walls so people can hear.

It's a shame that people who make the effort to drive to Bolivia to get answers and to participate in county government leave the center angry because they cannot hear.

THIS IS A SPONGE. WHETHER IT'S WET OR DRY, IT'S STILL A SPONGE.



THIS IS A WETLAND...



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Why Do We Have To Beg Anyone For Anything?

To the editor:

President Bush has recently returned from a trip abroad, including Japan, for the purpose of presumably boosting international trade agreements. High level begging is more like the truth.

Why do we have to beg anyone for anything, much less Japan? I cannot understand why Japan's auto builders would be dumb enough to think that the U. S. auto workers are building any type of equipment inferior to them.

In my opinion we are being sold out by big business and our elected officials, whom we are supposed to put our trust in. As our President has said, "Read my lips." As I read Mr. Bush's lips, I do not like the message.

The best way to stop being the laughingstock of the world is for the American people to buy American-made autos, etc., and let the Japanese buy their own.

We do not need to import autos and other products from anyone else

nor do we need to export products. I personally feel that products made in the U.S.A. are the best on earth.

We won the war over Japan many years ago and then gave them their country back, which we should not have done.

I am positive that American technology does not have to take a back seat to anyone, especially Japan.

Japan has recently insulted the American people and we need to let them know just how we feel and that we love America and have more confidence in our ability than any other country on the planet earth.

R. E. Hinson
Rt. 1, Winnabow

League Goal Is Building

To the editor:

It is the goal of the Animal Welfare League that one day we can

have a facility to care for unwanted animals. The fact that over 1,000 animals have to be destroyed at the pound every year is ridiculous.

We know who is the blame for this situation (the pet owners), but it seems they could care less. They allow their animals to have litter after litter of little ones only to carry them to the pound to be destroyed.

The Animal Welfare League has a spay and neuter program to help defray the cost for those who feel they can't afford it, but every time one is spayed or neutered, another animal has five to ten born. How can we win?

There are around 40,000 homes in this county. If each family would donate \$1 to the Animal Welfare League we could soon have a building to save some of these animals. Perhaps we could even get on the county budget and have laws to protect animals.

I do not approve of high costs to pet owners who really care and have

their pets vaccinated. It is the unconcerned owners who carry these animals to the pound. They should have to pay dearly for every animal they carry to the pound. Maybe then they would have them spayed or neutered.

Mating season is right around the corner. Animals do not understand birth control, so people have to have the common sense to know that their animals are going to mate and have little ones.

I urge people to have their pets spayed or neutered to help control the pet population. Please help the Animal Welfare League with your donations so that we may soon have a haven for animals, and to help the spay and neuter program.

Donations may be sent to: Animals Welfare League, P. O. Box 1965, Shallotte, N.C. 28459. Land for a building would be appreciated.

Alma Tolson
Shallotte

Welcome Center Money Wasted

To the editor:

Enclosed is a copy of a letter to the editor that my son wrote after reading an article in the *Wilmington Star News* citing construction and design flaws in the new Welcome Center on Hwy. 17 bypass.

Sarah Robinson
(Caleb's Mom)

Dear editor:

I am writing about the Welcome Center at Hwy. 17 and 130 in Brunswick County. I do not like it. The money was wasted. County money shouldn't be spent like that. The birds are getting killed and the glass lets heat in.

At the intersection they should put an overpass. The overpass should be built like the one at Leland where Hwys. 17, 74 and 76 meet.

Caleb Robinson (Age 8)
Supply

(Letters Continue On Following Page)

'Rooting Around' Is Habit-Forming

Several years back, when setting out in search of my family's "roots," who knew how much fun—and how much work—lay ahead?

Not me. It seemed a simple enough task. Interview older relatives, look up a few records, jot down a few headstone inscriptions and tie up everything, and everyone, in a neat little package.

It didn't work quite that way, starting with the lack of a birth certificate for my mother and death certificate for my paternal grandfather. And these were the generations that were supposed to be "easy" to document.

Looking around the spare room, clearly Don and I don't share this space anymore. It belongs to the Usher, Thames, King, Holden, Clemmons, Simmons, Gause and Potter clans.

On bookshelves and disks, in

boxes, files and three-ring notebooks, are stored charts, books, letters, deeds, certificates, minutes, church registers, old newspaper notices, military records, Usher Family Newsletters, photographs, computer printouts, letters and envelopes awaiting stamps, stacks of unanswered mail and "to do" lists for every surname...

All this stuff and still the search continues. You never quite get done.

Make the mistake of asking a family student, "What have you been up to lately?" and you're likely to regret it, unless you've also become fond of overgrown ceneries, heavy, dust-bound books that bring on sneeze attacks and faded, illegible handwriting and microfilm copies that strain the eyeballs.

Doesn't sound like much fun, huh?

Wrong.

Susan Usher



Tracking down family information gives you the chance to play Miss Marple and Bob Woodward with little risk. Since your best sources are already dead, they're not likely to clam up, run away, gun you down or retort, "No comment!"

No, they're there, waiting to be discovered. Make a mistake, miss a clue and have to backtrack, they're still there.

The real fun isn't in dates or ceremonies. It's finding out that a grand-

mother graduated from college in 1892 and chose to teach at an orphanage for years before marrying. That her grandfather was both a highly-respected Baptist preacher and local Democratic party leader (some things don't change). And that a great-great-grandmother, a lifelong Methodist, converted to Catholicism at age 70.

The biggest and best surprise is the people who are interested in what you're doing and actually want to help. People like Gwen Causey and Susie Carson, "user-friendly" walking storehouses. And Dot Schmidt, good for a fast lead to a grave that might have taken months to find otherwise. (It was the right Nathaniel Potter, Dot!) And Vernie Pate, in Cumberland County, who escorted three of us around to Thames cemeteries and as a bonus threw in a tour of Cape Fear Baptist

Church.

And yes, the "other" Susan Usher. Her first letter from Cayce, S.C., sent chills down my spine, especially when it included a newspaper clipping of me as a high school senior. Twenty years later her search ends and a friendship begins.

If you haven't figured it out yet, this hobby requires not only persistence, but patience and inquisitiveness as well.

Every answer evokes a new question. Every day brings a new lesson in history, geography, sociology, political science, religion, even economics.

Every tidbit of information unearthed leads to another. Before you know it, you're hooked.

Maybe the Surgeon General ought to come up with a new label: Beware—"Rooting around" can be addictive.