



PHOTO BY JOHNNY CRAIG

NEW BOARD MEMBERS for 1992 are, from left, front row, T. J. Thornton, treasurer; Keith Sawyer; Roscoe Griffin, vice president; and Kelly Hewett; back row, Hobson Bryant; Curtis Todd, president; Walter Bridges; Doug Todd; and John Snover, secretary.

Tri-Beach VFD Elects New Board

Assistant chief Curtis Todd was reelected president of the board of directors of Tri-Beach Volunteer Fire Department last week at its annual meeting.

Other members elected to the board are Roscoe Griffin, vice-president; John Snover, secretary; T. J. Thornton, treasurer; Kelly Hewett, Keith Sawyer, Hobson Bryant, Walter Bridges and chief Doug Todd.

Receiving department awards were Curtis Todd (officer of the year), Tommy Harrison (fireman of the year) and Hewett (rookie of the year).

Tri-Beach responded to some 65 alarms in the greater Holden Beach area in 1991, including structure fires (15), woods (20), emergency medical service (5), vehicle (3), trash (5), as well as 17 other "good-intent" calls.

The department averaged 15 firemen responding to each call with 102.45 hours on fire scenes throughout

the year. In addition, department members received 2,226 hours of training.

Five members received hazardous materials awareness level certification last year—Jonathan McLeod, Timmy Phelps, Sawyer, Curtis Todd and Roland Varnam.

Chief Todd also received his Fire Fighter III certification from the N.C. Department of Insurance.

Membership reached its highest level in department history last year with 10 new members joining between Sept., 1990-Sept., 1991.

Tri-Beach also purchased a new 1,250-gallon-per-minute pumper in 1991 which was a welcome addition to its number of response vehicles.

Also recognized for assistance with contribution jars were a number of Holden Beach area businesses.

Mrs. Bush Tells Kids To Read On

It looks like Barbara Bush won't be coming to Bolivia any time soon.

In an effort to invite local and national personalities and media professionals to read to her Chapter One students, Thommi Arnold of Bolivia Elementary sent separate letters to President George Bush and the First Lady, Barbara Bush.

Within two weeks, Ms. Arnold received a reply from Mrs. Bush thanking the teacher for the invitation, but politely turning it down.

"Reading has always been one of the great joys of my life, and I am delighted to learn of programs that encourage it," the First Lady wrote to Ms. Arnold in her Jan. 29 letter.

She sent her best wishes to the students and urged them to continue reading. "It will bring them lasting enjoyment," she wrote.

Unfortunately, the president himself has yet to reply, perhaps due to a heavy campaign schedule.



STAFF PHOTO BY DORE C. GURGANUS

POWELL ASSOCIATES ENGINEER Jim Billups explains the layout of his proposed sewer system for Calabash at a recent commissioner's meeting. He will be on hand Feb. 20 to talk to residents of unsewered areas about the system.

Calabash Will Hear Public Opinions On Sewer Service

Calabash commissioners have set up a series of public hearings to learn what residents think about the possibility of sewer service in the future.

The hearings will be consecutively, neighborhood by neighborhood, at the Calabash Volunteer Fire Department the evening of Thursday, Feb. 20.

The gathering is for residents of non-sewered areas only, said Commissioner Jon Sanborn. He announced the schedule after the rest of the commissioners decided on the best evening for the forum.

At the sessions engineers Jim Billups and Joe Tombro will explain the basics of the proposed sewer system and the individual costs involved. They represent Powell As-

sociates of North Myrtle Beach, S.C., the town's consulting engineering firm for the sewer project.

"We welcome any questions from the public about the impact of this system on the community," said Billups at a recent commissioners' meeting.

The hearing schedule is as follows:

- 6 p.m.—Carolina Shores (Acreage Estates only)
- 6:30 p.m.—Carolina Shores North
- 7 p.m.—Calabash Acres and Calabash Acres East
- 7:30 p.m.—Bay Point, Carlyle Acres, Hidden Valley
- 8 p.m.—Ocean Forest
- 8:15 p.m.—Carolina Cove, Hunter's Trace

To Many, GIS Mapping System Remains A \$2.5 Million Mystery

BY TERRY POPE

Some people describe Brunswick County's Geographical Information System (GIS) as though it's a caged monster with an enormous appetite.

"It wants information and functions best when it has a steady diet," said Brunswick County Manager David Clegg.

Others feared that an airplane hired to take pictures for aerial maps was flying over their homes last fall with a "torpedo" strapped to its belly. The "torpedo" was actually a camera.

But when completed next year, GIS will link county departments with a single source of maps and data. Volumes of work gathered from the five-year project will fill an office wing at the government complex in Bolivia.

But is the system worth \$2.5 million? "The answer is yes, if used in the proper ways," said Clegg. "If it sits there unused, it's not worth it."

The package includes thousands of topographical and soil maps covering every parcel of land in Brunswick County. The maps can be layered to produce three-dimensional designs on computer screens.

"It may seem like a costly thing now, but over time the benefits will outweigh the costs," said Steve Randone, former Planning Department employee who was hired last month as GIS Department manager. "It'll be almost like a one-stop shop."

The goal is to link data from all county departments into one computer system to save time and money for residents, developers and county employees. It will allow departments to make quicker decisions on permits or lot evaluations and not have to wade through map cabinets, searching.

It is the same system that emergency units in larger cities, such as Charlotte, use when responding to calls. Monitors installed in the vehicles direct the way to the emergency location, like a scene from the 21st century.

When the idea was introduced to the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners in 1988, some were skeptical and felt it was a bit too extravagant for a mostly rural community.

Although Brunswick County bought the complete operational package, it would cost additional millions to install the system in local emergency vehicles. That isn't likely to happen in Brunswick County. Instead, the maps and data will be used in other ways at the government center, to help:

- Determine lot elevations for septic tank permits and to identify flood zones for the health department;
- Conduct inventories of families on assistance programs for social services;
- Identify areas of need for low-cost public housing;
- Pinpoint areas where services are needed for parks;
- Redraw residency district lines based on U.S. Census data;
- Classify land for zoning purposes; and
- Identify parcels and building improvements for tax records.

"Just go around the (government) complex," said Clegg. "Everybody will use it in some way."

L. Robert Kimball and Associates of Pennsylvania was hired in June 1988 to begin work on the project. When information began pouring in last year, the county had no one in charge of GIS. Randone dedicated half of his workdays to organizing the volumes of maps and charts that began stacking up in various county departments.

"It was a monster," said Randone. "I started creating a system for it and getting to know what Kimball was doing."

Kimball and Associates hired an airplane with a device that shocked some residents last fall. Several called the government complex in Bolivia to find out why a plane was flying around the county with a torpedo strapped to its belly.

Actually, inside the "torpedo" was a camera that took thousands of aerial photographs for GIS maps. The mysterious plane was sighted only on clear days—when there was no fog, smoke or clouds. Flights occurred after the leaves had fallen.

"The days you fly are few and far between," ex-



STAFF PHOTO BY TERRY POPE

STEVE RANDONE, newly-appointed manager of Brunswick County's GIS Department, has worked on the complicated mapping system for about a year.

plained Clegg, who answered some calls about the mysterious "spy plane."

Even those close to the project have difficulty putting into words what a GIS really is. Like an auto mechanic's tool collection, it is never complete. It is always evolving and in need of updated information.

"You develop a GIS system," said Clegg. "It has multiple components. It evolves to meet your needs. To say that you have a GIS system is a misnomer."

The system is now being fed house numbers. By mid-April, every home in Brunswick County will have an assigned house number and street name to eliminate rural postal routes, all planned to benefit the county's enhanced 911 program that begins in April. The 911 system will share some GIS data.

By late summer, Kimball and Associates plans to begin delivering its full volume of data by townships, starting with Shallotte Township, until all five are complete in 1993. A user station will allow residents free use of the computer program once it is installed.

"It's going to take a while to get everyone connected," said Randone. "It takes a phase-in period. There will be little bugs that need to be worked out."

Approximately 60 of North Carolina's 100 counties have purchased GIS systems. A steering committee, composed of department representatives and appointees from the real estate and surveying fields, will help develop policy for Brunswick County's GIS Department, said Randone.

The committee must decide whether GIS information should be free to the public and how much information should be available.

"It'll be more or less a swapping of ideas," said Randone, "to find out what each department wants out of the system."

Meetings Slated

The Brunswick County Republican Party will hold meetings in all 22 county precincts Tuesday, Feb. 25, at 7:30 p.m.

Finances for the forthcoming campaign will play an important role on the agenda, said Millie Morrow, county GOP vice chairman.

GOP Chairman James Payne asked voters interested in the Republican "cause" to attend, saying the party has put together a ticket of candidates "representing the fundamentally conservative beliefs that mainstream Brunswick County voters hold dear."

For more information on the meetings interested persons can contact either Ms. Morrow, 27-8-5824, or Bill Dunn, 845-2163.

Postal Move Opposed

The Brunswick County Retired School Personnel opposes plans to distribute rural mail routes from the South Brunswick postal station at Seaside instead of the Shallotte Post Office.

The group voted at its February monthly meeting to take a position against the proposed move of most postal operations to the new Sunset Beach office.

"We feel that the change of distribution of mail for those people located on rural routes will cause tremendous inconvenience," said President Gelene Russ.

The retired educators' group also recommends that a new post office with adequate space for growth and parking be built in Shallotte because it is the area's center of trade, finance and culture.

Tax Help Offered

The Internal Revenue Service is offering free assistance to taxpayers with questions regarding federal income tax returns.

Brunswick County residents can visit the IRS office in Wilmington in Suite 200 of the CCB Building, 3904 Oleander Drive, a news release indicated. No appointment is necessary and assistance is provided on a first-come, first-served basis between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

For those unable to visit in person, help is also available by telephone, 1-800-829-1040, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

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