

Holden Beach Board OKs Police Drug Test Policy

BY DOUG RUTTER

Police officers who want to work at Holden Beach already have to prove they're drug-free before being hired, but the town board adopted a policy Monday to cover the mandatory testing.

Without discussion, commissioners formally approved a policy that the police department has been following as a matter of procedure since state legislators made drug testing a requirement for officers about two years ago.

The policy requires testing for all applicants and officers seeking lateral transfers. It also allows testing if there's a "reasonable suspicion" that an officer has used drugs.

"It's very detailed and sounds great," Commissioner David Sandifer said of the nine-page document at Monday night's meeting.

The policy's aim is to maintain a drug-free work environment for officers and ensure the integrity of the department and protection of the residents.

"The public has a right to expect that those who are sworn to protect them are at all times both physically and mentally prepared to assume these duties," the policy states.

Under the policy, officers are prohibited from illegally possessing any controlled substance and can be tested for cannabis, opiates, cocaine, PCP and amphetamines.

Officers aren't allowed to ingest controlled substances unless prescribed by a licensed medical practitioner, or take any prescribed or over-the-counter drugs in amounts beyond the recommended dosage.

Applicants and officers seeking lateral transfers will not be considered for employment or transfer if they refuse to take a drug test or if the test indicates drug use prohibited by the policy.

Other officers may be required to submit to a drug test as a condition of their continued employment if there is "reasonable suspicion" of drug use.

Testing could be required if the chief or a high-ranking officer observes an officer with the physical symptoms of being under the influence of a drug.

Other bases of "reasonable suspicion" may include a pattern or abnormal behavior, arrest or conviction for a drug-related offense, information from credible sources or evidence that an officer has tampered with a drug test.

The policy sets forth a 19-step process for collecting a urine sample for analysis and the covers drug testing methodology.

If the first test indicates the use of drugs, the lab will automatically perform a second "confirmation" test. The lab will only report a test result as positive if both tests show the presence of an illegal drug.

To determine whether a drug test is considered positive, Holden Beach uses testing thresholds approved by the N.C. Criminal Justice Education and Training Standards Commission.

Town Manager Gary Parker said he plans to write a drug testing policy that would apply to all town departments in the near future. A similar proposal given to a previous town board in 1990 was rejected.

More Sidewalks Coming To Holden Beach Boulevards

BY DOUG RUTTER

Holden Beach officials are so impressed with their new sidewalk that they plan to extend it farther east along Ocean Boulevard.

Commissioners voted unanimously Monday to continue the concrete walkway from Neptune Drive toward the bridge.

After spending nearly \$50,000 on a sidewalk from Neptune to Greensboro Street in November, the town still has \$32,000 in the budget.

Commissioners want Town Manager Gary Parker to use the money to continue the sidewalk as far east as possible on the north side of the boulevard.

Town officials think the money will take the sidewalk at least as far as Roger Street, and probably farther.

The specifications will be different for this section of walkway, which will be four inches of reinforced concrete instead of six inches.

Commissioners said the area between Neptune and Roger is more developed than the other section, and there will be fewer construction trucks running over and damaging the sidewalk.

Town officials hope to have the additional work completed before the start of tourist season.

Police Can Stay

Fears that the police force would have to move out of its house on Davis Street or make major renovations have been laid to rest.

Parker said the N.C. Department of Insurance will let the town continue using the old house for police headquarters if it makes some improvements.

New wiring and insulation and better restroom facilities will be needed, but Parker said the town won't have to elevate the bottom floor or raise the ceiling as town officials were told earlier.

The state normally requires that buildings be brought up to state code when there is a change of use.

But Parker said that won't be the case if the cost of the improvements doesn't total more than half of the home's \$40,000 value.

"This is not special consideration," Commissioner David Sandifer said. "The town's not being treated different than anyone else in the town."

Sandifer pointed out last month that using the house as a police headquarters is safer than using it as a home. The town wouldn't be required to make any changes if it were to sell the house for use as a residence.

Complaint Dismissed

A legal battle between the town and an island resident over a security light is apparently over, at least for the time being.

Town Attorney Kenneth Campbell said a complaint the town filed last July seeking the removal of an outside light on Brunswick Avenue has been voluntarily dismissed.

The complaint was filed when George Bradshaw refused to comply with a town ordinance and remove a light from a utility pole outside his residence.

Campbell said attorneys from both sides agreed to voluntarily dismiss the town's complaint and the counter-claim filed by the defendants.

The attorney announced the dismissal Monday night following a 45-minute executive session called to discuss a legal matter.

Other Business

In other business Monday, commissioners:

■ Received bid proposals from Chambers and Waste Industries for garbage collection. The bids include options to set up a central recycling station or start a curbside program. Commissioners are expected to choose a hauler at their March 18 meeting. The town's contract with Chambers expires March 31.

■ Asked Parker to write a letter to the N.C. Department of Transportation pushing for early completion of the four-laning of U.S. 17 through Brunswick County. The DOT had asked the town for comments on the proposed Transportation Improvement Plan.

■ Heard from Commissioner Jim Fournier about a new coalition of

town governments in the county being organized through the local office of the N.C. Cooperative Extension Service. Mayor Wally Ausley appointed Fournier to serve as the town's representative on the committee.

■ Asked Parker to draft a proposed ordinance that would require owners of oceanfront property to remove concrete, pilings, septic tanks, walkways, decks, sandbags and bulkheads when they relocate their beachfront houses.

■ Passed a resolution honoring the late James D. Griffin Sr., a former mayor pro tem of Holden Beach who served three terms on the town board. The resolution will be presented to Griffin's family at a covered dish reception Friday, March 6, at 4 p.m. in town hall.

■ Voted to donate \$125 to the N.C. League of Municipalities to help pay for local government text books for ninth graders.

■ Asked Parker to find out if the town requires police officers to take certain training courses, or if participation is voluntary. Holden Beach now pays officers \$5 an hour while taking classes such as drug awareness and radar certification. If the courses are mandatory, Parker said the town will have to pay officers their normal hourly rate.

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Demos Set Precinct Meetings

Brunswick County Democrats will elect delegates to the April 4 county convention at their annual precinct meetings today (Thursday) at 8 p.m. at the regular polling places.

"We want all Democrats to attend these meetings, whether they're party activists or just want to get involved with the party," said county party chairman Crawford M. Hart.

Hart said the precinct meeting is the first step in the state party's national delegate selection process.

"The precinct level is also where all policy making of the party begins," he added. "The more that people get involved in precinct meetings, the better the party can represent the views of all Democrats."

Besides electing delegates, local Democrats will have a chance to pass resolutions on party policy at the precinct meetings.

Hart said make-up meetings have been scheduled for next Thursday,

March 12, at 8 p.m. For more information, call Hart between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. at the county party headquarters, 754-8880.

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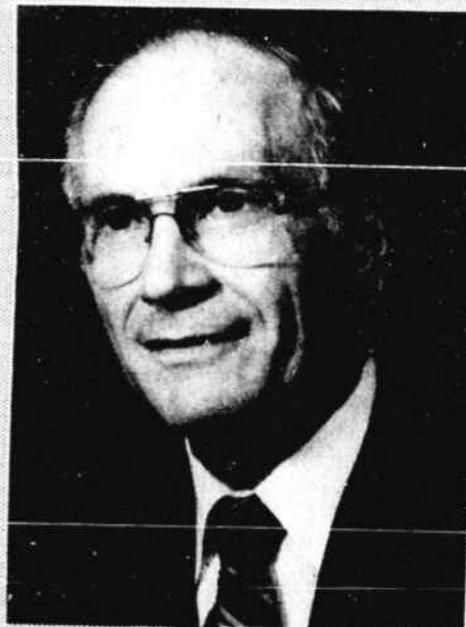
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An Open Letter To My Friends In Brunswick County...



Dear Brunswick County Friends:

After giving more than thirty years of public service to the people of North Carolina—as a Legislator, as a Judge, and as Attorney General—I am now a candidate for Governor. I want to give to North Carolina the kind of nonsense leadership we need to put our state back on track.

The citizens of Brunswick County have been good friends to me during my two terms as Attorney General. As Governor, I intend to maintain that friendship and see that Brunswick County does not get short-changed by state government. It has been the case in the past that the closer a county is to Raleigh, the more benefits come that county's way. I don't think that's the right way for government to work. I want to make state government work for all citizens, from the mountains to the piedmont to the coast.

I also want to be the Governor for the working men and women of North Carolina, instead of answering to the high rollers and buyers and sellers of influence who only look after their own selfish interests. As Governor, I will see that all citizens have a voice in decisions affecting their lives, and that fairness and justice be a fundamental goal of government actions.

I believe in the people of North Carolina. I will be a Governor who encourages the people, and trusts the people. I am running for Governor to restore the people's belief and confidence in their government, and that is why I am seeking the help of my friends in Brunswick County, and all across North Carolina. Together, we will win.

With all best wishes and highest regards, I am

Sincerely,

Lacy Thornburg
Lacy Thornburg

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