



Overcrowded?

Glenda Browning was among Leland area parents asking county officials Monday to speed up building of a new elementary school. School-related stories are on Pages 2A, 7A.

Hurls Two-Hitter

Scott Gore hurled a two-hitter Friday as the Trojans beat South Robeson 5-0. For the details, see the sports section, Pages 6B-11B.



She's A Champ!

Brunswick County's new spelling champ, 13-year-old Heather Heavener of Sunset Beach, will compete in the national spelling bee next month. The story's on Page 5B.



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STAFF PHOTO BY TERRY POPE

SHALLOTTE'S Roney Cheers (left) speaks with Ray Walton of Southport following the Brunswick County Democratic Convention Saturday. Walton was the keynote speaker.

County Democrats Rally Behind Walton's Plea For Party Unity

BY TERRY POPE

Southport attorney Ray Walton remembers a better day for Brunswick County Democrats.

Votes in the Smithville Township precincts, it seemed, were always the last ones counted on election day. Nervous politicians waited for hours on the edge of their seats.

"We used to say that if you crossed the Lockwood Folly River not more than 400 votes behind, you were safe," said Walton.

But in recent years Democratic unity has been threatened by a Republican Party surge, Walton told the estimated 100 people who gathered for the annual Brunswick County Democratic Convention in Supply on Saturday.

The result, he said, is a nation lacking in affordable health care for a third of its citizens, a growing crime and drug epidemic and a lack of leadership at all levels.

"We must call to account those who are responsible for our problems," Walton said, "and we've got some problems. People are fed up with crooked politicians and crooked politics, and they're looking for the Democratic Party for answers."

Democratic candidates mingled with precinct leaders and other party members but were not allowed to address the convention crowd. Due to sickness in his family, Party Chairman Crawford M. Hart of Boiling Spring Lakes was out of town, so Grace Peoples, vice chairman, led the rally.

County Republicans held their annual convention March 21.

Walton, a former District Court judge, said he has listened to candidates for national office preach conservatism and make a mockery out of being a liberal Democrat for the past 10 years.

"I'm not ashamed of being a Democrat," he added. "I'm not ashamed of being a liberal Democrat."

He asked county Democrats to

make two promises this election year, to work for and to vote for the best person running in the May 5 primary. Being a liberal Democrat doesn't mean giving up traditional values in our schools and homes, he added.

"Americans need leadership," said Walton. "We need leadership in this county. We have the answers to the problems facing this county, this state, this nation."

Directing his comments to the candidates on hand, he added, "When you get in there, we expect you to make and to keep a clean slate so we can re-elect you in two years." Democrats also voted on seven precinct resolutions, adopting four and rejecting three from the party platform. Delegates:

■ Adopted a resolution calling for mandatory school attendance until age 18 or graduation from high school starting with the 1992-93 school year, proposed by Boiling

Spring Lakes Precinct;

■ Adopted a resolution calling for an affordable, universal health care plan for all Americans, proposed by Shallotte Precinct;

■ Rejected a resolution asking U.S. Congress to stop paying bonuses worth \$4.5 million a year in Pentagon funds to executives of American auto manufacturers, proposed by Shallotte Precinct.

■ Adopted a resolution asking the N.C. Department of Transportation to use highway funds to build an overpass at N.C. 130 and the U.S. 17 bypass of Shallotte, proposed by Shallotte Precinct.

■ Rejected a resolution asking that the law be changed to tax paper companies for land at a rate comparable to taxes on other private property, proposed by Oak Island II Precinct;

■ Adopted a resolution to allow unaffiliated voters the right to vote in

(See DEMOCRATS, Page 2-A)

911 Delayed Two Weeks

BY TERRY POPE

Start-up of Brunswick County's 911 emergency communications program has been delayed until the week of April 27.

Factory delivery of consoles, part of the 911 radio equipment, was late by about two weeks causing this delay, said Doug Ledgett, director of emergency services.

The equipment has now arrived and is being installed.

The county had originally planned to begin the enhanced 911 program in January, but building design setbacks forced a delay until April 15. The system should be ready to begin during the last week in April, Ledgett said on Monday.

"Most of the building is basically complete," said Ledgett. "They are still doing some wiring. We're very, very close."

New addresses were mailed last week to residents in Leland and Bolivia postal zones. Part of the 911 program eliminates rural routes and requires residents to use house numbers and new street names to help emergency responders locate homes.

Residents in the Supply and Southport postal zones will be receiving their new addresses over the next two weeks, said Ledgett.

"There have been a lot more details that we've had to work out that wasn't anticipated," said Ledgett.

He plans to interview applicants this week for 911 telecommunicators. They must be trained on the equipment before April 27, he said.

Council Advocates Private Purchase Of Bird Island; Owner Open To Offer

BY SUSAN USHER

Sunset Beach Town Council is supporting acquisition of Bird Island by conservation groups and the island's owner Monday night didn't rule out that possibility.

Meanwhile, Bird Island won't be zoned until Sunset Beach officials take another look at their options.

Reflecting the "consensus of the community," Sunset Beach Town Council Monday night adopted a resolution on a motion by Mayor Pro tem Ed Gore supporting efforts by environmental groups or other non-profit corporations to acquire and conserve Bird Island in its natural state.

"I think we would all like the island to remain as it is," said Councilman Bud Scramton. "It is a beautiful little island."

Monday night Mrs. Price did not rule out a different future for all or a portion of the island as Scramton and audience members discussed efforts by several agencies and organizations to raise money and try to acquire the island.

"Let someone come up with a proposal and I will entertain an offer," she said.

After approximately 30 minutes of discussion among audience members, Mrs. Price and council members, the council referred the zoning of the island back to the planning board for further consideration and a new recommendation.

"I am not a developer; I am a widow and a grandmother. I would like to fulfill my husband's dream of building a home on Bird Island," island owner Janie Page Price of Greensboro and Sunset Beach told the council and about 35 people attending a public hearing prior to the council meeting.

While her plans for home building on the island aren't complete, Mrs. Price said she envisions a "cluster" type development with her home and perhaps those of a handful of other family members, with trails, not a grid-type arrangement with rows of houses and paved streets.

Describing herself and her late husband as environmentalists before it was popular to be one, she said she does "not want anyone to do anything there (on Bird Island) that would be detrimental" and has no plans to develop the island.

She said a 15-lot plat submitted with her CAMA permit application was left from an earlier fight to block stabilizing of Little River Inlet and the taking of a por-

tion of Bird Island as a dredge spoil area. "We wanted to show it had value and was not just a sandpit." The plat shows 15 one-acre lots for single-family homes.

At that time, she said, the Prices received no support for their efforts from state or non-profit agencies or from the local community.

"Everybody wanted fishing boats to be able to come in and out of Little River Inlet at high speed whether it was low tide or high tide," she said.

Bill Ducker, whose home overlooks Bird Island, urged the council to delay the zoning until an appropriate classification is created. He suggested it be zoned a conservation area and cited concerns about potentially dense development on the island. He wanted Mrs. Price to sign an agreement of some kind pledging the island would never be developed; she refused, saying it would be impossible for her or anyone else to guarantee what might happen in the future.

"As nebulous as it is now, it doesn't matter if its four acres or one acre," said Mayor Pro tem Ed Gore. "It wouldn't allow the type of cluster development she's interested in."

Minnie Hunt, a former Sunset Beach council member, agreed that the category wouldn't allow Mrs. Price to carry out her plans for the island.

However, Mrs. Hunt urged the council to act with caution, since it would be difficult if not impossible to rezone the island later in a more restrictive fashion. "Don't do it an acre; do it four. Give her what she asked for. If you give her an acre, you can't back out of it."

The Sunset Beach Planning Board had recommended the council zone the island for agricultural and forestry use, the lowest-density zoning available under the existing zoning ordinance. That classification would allow construction of single-family homes only, on lots of at least one acre. Traditionally property is put in that classification temporarily so it will be zoned while the owner decides how the land is to be used.

Instead, the planning board may look at alternatives tied to the one house per four acres of land density reflected in the plat submitted with the CAMA application.

"I don't think four acres would be unreasonable for Bird Island," town attorney Michael Isenberg noted. "It is a unique situation."

Isenberg recommended that the town not zone the island. (See BIRD ISLAND, Page 2-A)

State Proposes Special Protection For Streams

Waccamaw River, Orton Pond and Orton Creek could receive special water quality protection under a proposal being considered by the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission.

The commission's staff proposes designating the waters as "critical habitats" for threatened or endangered aquatic species, which could lead to extra protection by the N.C. Environmental Management Commission (EMC).

Randy Wilson, director of the state's non-game and endangered species section, said the local waters could be among the first in the state to be tagged as "critical habitats" by the wildlife commission.

The wildlife commission will conduct a public hearing on the proposal Wednesday, April 22, in the hearing room on the ground floor of the Archdale Building in Raleigh.

Waccamaw River, which flows

along Brunswick County's western border, is a prime habitat for several threatened species and two types of endangered mussels—the Waccamaw fatmucket and Waccamaw spike.

Wilson said the river provides habitat for the alligator, Carolina pygmy sunfish and Waccamaw darter, all of which are threatened species.

The Waccamaw River is also home to five other species for which wildlife experts have special concern. "It's a highly important watershed in the number of species it provides habitat for," Wilson said.

Orton Pond and Orton Creek, located between Boiling Spring Lakes and Southport off N.C. 133, provide habitat for an endangered aquatic snail known as the "magnificent ram's horn," Wilson said.

Federal officials have labeled two areas in North Carolina as critical.

The state is working on its first round of designations, which could include portions of 34 rivers or watersheds.

"Most of them have rare mussels or fish that serve as indicators of the overall health of their environments," Wilson said.

If the wildlife commission approves the "critical habitat" designations, Wilson said the EMC could then consider them for "high quality water" status.

The Environmental Management Commission regulates water quality in the state and can restrict the discharge of effluent and use of those waters to maintain their high quality.

The commission is also considering changes in its regulations that would more sharply define the critical habitat needed by certain species of threatened or endangered aquatic wildlife.

Former Shallotte Postmaster Says Moving Plans Can Still Be Changed

BY DOUG RUTTER

Former Shallotte Postmaster Homer Andrews told town officials Tuesday that it's not too late to fight plans to move most of the postal operations from the downtown office to the new South Brunswick station next month.

"You can turn it around," he said at an informal meeting Tuesday night. "What you're up against is one individual, and that man has no more pull than either one of you."

Andrews, who served as postmaster from 1974 to 1988, was referring to the present postmaster, Frank Bringoli. He plans to move most of the mail-handling operations and employees from the Main Street office to the new branch in May.

Town officials fear the move will hurt local merchants. Shallotte Aldermen Roney Cheers, David Gause and Morris Hall discussed the plans with Andrews Tuesday af-

ter their meeting was canceled due to lack of a quorum.

Mayor Sarah Tripp was out sick, Alderman Wilton Harrelson was with his hospitalized wife in Chapel Hill and Alderman Paul Wayne Reeves was recovering from recent surgery, according to Gause.

Andrews said it was the local postmaster who made the decision to move his office and other operations to the new branch on N.C. 904 at Seaside.

The move wasn't mandated by the postal service, Andrews said, and can therefore be reversed if the townspeople pull together.

"The people are the ones who control it," he said. "If they get on the politicians hard enough, the politicians will get on the post office."

Andrews, a Shallotte native who worked 30 years for the postal service, said it won't be good for the town, its businesses or people if the postmaster moves 12 miles from the community he serves.

"What you're up against is one individual, and that man has no more pull than either one of you."

—Homer Andrews

Former Shallotte Postmaster

"When you move the postmaster to that office that will be the main branch," he said. "This will be nothing but a classified branch."

Andrews said the original plans were to keep the Shallotte branch as the main office and make the South Brunswick branch a classified station, mainly for rural route carriers.

The plans didn't change until the middle

of 1990, Andrews said, when he heard from a friend in the postal service that the main branch would be moved to the Seaside area.

"It sort of stunned me," he said. "Why would you want to move an office out of Shallotte that's been here so long?"

Andrews said he's concerned about the identity of Shallotte, and the town's name being dropped from the South Brunswick branch. Sunset Beach Town Council voted Monday to annex the post office property on N.C. 904.

Several postal service officials have said town businesses won't suffer because of the move. They only change, they say, will be less traffic at the post office.

But Andrews said he thinks the move will affect business because fewer people will come to town to use the post office. "If I was a merchant I'd be raising hell at every meeting," he said.

Also Tuesday, Andrews defended Jerry Jones, a county commissioner who was

mayor of Shallotte when the new postal station was being planned.

Danny Moles, director of field operations with the postal service in Fayetteville, indicated at the town board's March 17 meeting that Jones knew of the postal service's plans all along.

However, Andrews said that wasn't the case. He said the former mayor only asked the postal service to relocate to a new facility in Shallotte to relieve traffic and parking problems at the existing office.

"Jerry Jones did not instigate the movement of the Shallotte Post Office out of Shallotte," Andrews said emphatically. "The man from the postal service is misleading the town."

Cheers said he is convinced that Moles lied to the town board about the former mayor's knowledge of the plans after reading some of the correspondence between Jones and postal service officials.