

# Petition 'Demands' Improvement Of County Schools

BY MARJORIE MEGIVERN

A petition presented last week to the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners by Warren "Bud" Knapp of Calabash makes four demands for action by the county school board.

Asserting that Brunswick County's school system is "currently rated among the poorest of the 100 North Carolina counties," the petition, seeking signatures from county parents and taxpayers, requests that the board do the following:

- Recognize its continuous failure to properly educate the children of the county;

- Hire a new superintendent with a proven record of educational performance;

- Set up a pilot test program for grades one and two to determine if a first grade teacher, freed from state-generated paperwork, could produce improved reading and writing skills in students by second grade; and

- Employ a consulting service to discover why so much of the school budget is spent on non-educational items.

Knapp denied he was the instigator of the petition. "I'm carrying the 'message from Garcia,'" he said

jokingly, identifying as 'Garcia' a number of county residents who are concerned about the school system.

Speaking to the demand for better superintendent hiring practices, he said, "The last three superintendents had their contracts bought out, so that tells you we had three bad superintendents in a row. They shouldn't rush out now and buy a superintendent, but take time to check into his credentials carefully."

Board of Education Chairman Donna Baxter was upset by the contents of the petition.

"So much of it is simply untrue," she said, "and other parts are due to the fact that we have state mandates. The petition says nearly half our budget is administrative costs, and that is ridiculous. How could it be, with so many teacher salaries to pay?"

"If these people want to get involved in the schools, why don't they come to board meetings and tell us their concerns or come to school board meetings? I just wish they'd get their facts straight, because this can only hurt

our school system."

Different sentiments were expressed by a board member to whom Knapp referred a reporter for more information about the petition.

"I accept this as one of those things people in the community should do, let the schools know how they feel," said Robert Slockett, a school board member seeking election to the board of commissioners. "I find little wrong with it, although I don't like the word 'demand' that's in it. As for administrative costs that are mentioned, I don't think they're half the budget, but they are large."

Knapp said a new private school set to open in Shallotte this fall will constitute a threat to public education.

"All our best students will be drained off," he said, "so we (must) do something about our schools right away."

The private school in question was lauded by Gary Pope of Ocean Isle Beach, whose son, John, 6, is already

signed up. The Cray School, which will open in Village Pines in September, is headed, Pope said, by Foy Cray, currently a first grade teacher at Union Primary School.

"They've had an open house and are all set up to begin with classes for kindergarten through eighth grade," Pope said. "They're signing up students now and will have a maximum of 15 students in each of four groups: kindergarten, first and second, third and fourth, and fifth through eighth grades."

Tuition will cost \$250 a month, with \$100 registration.

"I'd rather not have to pay twice for my children's education," he said. "I already pay taxes for public education, but I wouldn't send them to our public schools."

Mrs. Cray, who has taught for 14 years, said she has enrolled 22 students to date.

"I see this as a little alternative school," she said. "There's nothing wrong with public schools that couldn't be fixed. The most important problem that nobody seriously addresses is the large classes. Teachers could all do a better job if class sizes were smaller."

The faculty to date also includes Torrie Williamson, a former county teacher of the year.

## Town Land Use Proposals Get Nod From Coastal Board

The North Carolina Coastal Resources Commission Friday gave routine approval to Ocean Isle Beach's land use plan update and to a land use plan amendment sought by Sunset Beach.

Sunset Beach Town Administrator Linda Fluegel had anticipated opposition to the town's proposed amendment, which reflects the council's pursuit of a central sewer system.

However, none emerged at the CRC meeting last Thursday and Friday, she said. "It was fantastic!"

Haskell Rhett, a field representative with the N.C. Office of Coastal Management, did point out to members of a CRC committee Thursday that a recent survey indicated division over the issue in the community.

However, the committee gave its nod of approval after Ms. Fluegel pointed out that an earlier referen-

dum had failed by only one vote and that the council had voted unanimously for the amendment and to pursue a sewer system.

It was also clear sailing for approval of the Ocean Isle Beach land use plan, reported Mayor Betty Williamson.

The town was represented at the meeting by its planning consultant, Roger Briggs.

She said the town is proud of land use plan update approved by the CRC last week.

"We don't anticipate any dramatic changes at Ocean Isle Beach over the next 10 years," she said.

The only major change reflected in the plan, she said, is inclusion of the extraterritorial area established by the town in 1990. This is an area extending as much as one mile beyond the town's limits in which the town exercises zoning controls.

## Marine Accused Of Murder In Shooting Of Girlfriend

A 24-year-old Marine from Camp Lejeune was being held without bond in Brunswick County Jail Tuesday after he allegedly shot his girlfriend to death at her mobile home outside Leland early Sunday morning, according to police.

Alfonza Lee Staley was charged with first degree murder in the death of Stephanie Bradley, 30, who was found at her home at Lot 37 in the Old Mill Road Mobile Home Park, said Det. Capt. Phil Perry of the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department.

Responding to a 911 call, deputies arrived at the mobile home shortly after midnight and found Ms. Bradley lying on the floor with a

gunshot wound to the neck, Perry said. She was taken by Leland Rescue Squad to New Hanover Regional Medical Center, where she was pronounced dead on arrival.

"From all indications it was a boyfriend-girlfriend domestic dispute," said Perry. "Apparently he caught her with someone else."

Staley was also charged with assault inflicting serious injury in a warrant signed by Richard Ballard of Wilmington.

Attorney Steve Yount was appointed to represent Staley at a first appearance in Brunswick County District Court Monday. A probable cause hearing is scheduled June 11.

## Beach House Needs Changes

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money that making the changes to the house.

"No matter what we do now we've been had," said Monroe. "We don't have the \$100,000 or more it would take to fight this in court."

More than physical changes in the house, the Monroes say they are upset that the state wants to require them to check the water meter every month and send a reading to the health department.

If the house is ever sold, the new owners would have to do the same thing. "It ties us up completely. It hits me right here that my government can come in here and make us do this," Mrs. Monroe said, pointing

to her heart.

The couple also said the health department wants the right to check the house at any time to make sure it isn't furnished to sleep more than eight people.

The Monroes said Holden Beach's building inspector, Dwight Carroll, could have saved them a lot of money and aggravation if he told them there were going to be problems before the house was constructed.

However, Holden Beach doesn't allow its inspector to interpret house plans. Rooms that look like bedrooms but are labeled as offices or dens must be considered offices or dens for building permit purposes.

## PLEADS NO CONTEST TO CHARGES

# Trucker Had Lengthy Driving Record

BY DOUG RUTTER

The Onslow County trucker charged following a fatal wreck on U.S. 17 Shallotte bypass in November had a long history of driving violations before his sentencing last week on two counts of death by vehicle.

Charles Maurice Lassiter, 37, of Maysville, pleaded no contest to the misdemeanor death by motor vehicle charges last Tuesday in Brunswick County District Court.

Consolidating the two charges, Judge Jack Hooks sentenced Lassiter to two years probation, fined him \$500 and ordered him to surrender his license and perform 60 hours of community service.

Two other charges, stop light violation and improper equipment, were voluntarily dismissed earlier by the district attorney's office. If Lassiter had pleaded guilty to those two charges, the court could not have tried him on the other, more serious charges, said Assistant District Attorney Lee Bollinger.

The charges were related to a fiery wreck last fall where the bypass crosses N.C. 130. Steve Allen Smith, 39, of Ash and Misty Dawn Carmichael, 16, of Shallotte were killed as a result of injuries sustained in the accident.

Prior to last week's court appearance, Lassiter had been convicted of 31 driving-related charges and had had his license suspended and reinstated six times since 1973, according to court records.

Among the convictions are 13 for speeding, including one last July for driving 92 mph in a

65 mph zone in West Virginia. He also has been convicted twice of exceeding safe speed and once of driving too fast for conditions.

Lassiter has been found guilty of illegal passing on three occasions and driving on the wrong side of the road twice. He's also been convicted of running a red light and running a stop sign in the past.

The trucker's license was suspended indefinitely Feb. 2 for failing to comply with a citation issued in South Carolina. His license had previously been suspended in 1973, 1976, 1977, 1979, 1981 and 1987.

On Nov. 1, 1991, Lassiter was driving a loaded log truck south on the U.S. 17 bypass. The truck allegedly ran a red light and struck two vehicles driven by Smith and Miss Carmichael that were crossing the bypass on N.C. 130.

Bollinger said he did not request prison time as part of Lassiter's sentence on the death by vehicle charges.

"No one involved in the case was really looking for any jail time," he said, noting that he spoke with the lawyers representing both families.

Bollinger said hundreds of people go through the courts every year for running red lights and never get jail time. The only difference in this case, he said, is that there were two fatalities.

"The offense itself is a non-intent offense. Nobody was intentionally killed," Bollinger said. "It was just tragic that two people were killed."

## Redwine Has Productive First Week In Raleigh

BY MARJORIE MEGIVERN

State Rep. David Redwine had a tired edge to his voice Monday afternoon as he reflected on his first week back in the General Assembly routine.



REDWINE

Having just begun the year's short summer session, he could point to considerable activity on his part, introducing nearly a dozen local and statewide bills.

Three were marine-related statewide bills, one allowing the mechanical harvesting of shellfish in privately-held waters only. "This doesn't apply to Brunswick County," he emphasized, "because we don't have waters of that kind."

One appropriations bill introduced would allot \$186,000 for a seafood laboratory program at North Carolina State University, to provide extension education and research for the North Carolina seafood industry. Another would appropriate \$231,889 to the budget of the University of North Carolina for a shellfish enhancement program.

"This three-year project would seed coastal North Carolina with oysters, bay scallops and clams," he said, "then research would be conducted to determine how they reproduce and grow and how disease-resistant they are. This should increase

the supply of fish, so our fishermen will profit from it."

Among local bills is one that would remove the sunset provision from the prohibition against building ABC stores within seven miles of a municipality where such a store already exists.

"This means the prohibition will remain in effect," Redwine said.

A second local bill requests sea turtle sanctuary status for Holden Beach, Sunset Beach, Long Beach and Surf City, while others would allow Yaupon Beach to levy a 3 percent occupancy tax, Caswell Beach to assess for placing utilities underground and Yaupon Beach to limit the height of structures within the town.

He also introduced a resolution to honor Benjamin Smith at the 200th anniversary of the City of Southport.

Another local bill allows Brunswick County an exemption from the Public Records Act for its new geographical information system.

Redwine's two other statewide bills eliminate the sales tax on food sold in school cafeterias and establish a beaver damage control advisory board.

The legislator said the chief topic of conversation among his colleagues last week was the state budget, with some optimism evident. "We're in better shape this year, considering the \$1.4 billion shortfall we had last year," he said. "We're one of only five states in the country without a real budget crisis."

What to do about salaries for state employees and teachers is the chief puzzle, Redwine said. Gov. James Martin has asked for a 4 percent raise for teachers, who, on the other hand, are asking for 6 percent. State employees marched on the General Assembly Sunday night, demanding a 4 percent increase, protesting one budget version granting them only 2 percent.

"We've also discussed a flat \$500 or \$600 increase for state employees," Redwine said, "along with a percentage increase that would diminish as you go up the salary scale. As for teachers, we passed a three-year salary schedule three years ago and have implemented the first two phase-ins. The third wasn't implemented because of the shortfall and I don't know yet if we can fully implement it."

There has been a lot of conversation about the proposed lottery, too, Redwine reported.

"We're looking at it more favorably than we did last summer," he said, "and it's been estimated North Carolina could expect a revenue of about \$200 million from a lottery."

"The trouble is, everybody is talking bond issues. The university system wants \$300 million in bonds, the community colleges \$250 mil-

lion and the public schools \$600 million. Even a lottery wouldn't take care of everyone's demands."

He pointed out that bonds should not be issued unless 10 percent of the amount issued is already on hand. "We don't have the necessary 10 percent of bonds needed," he said.

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## Permit Pending For Island Bridge

(Continued From Page 1-A)

Bacon Island is zoned R-1, which allows single- and two-family development. Holden Beach's land use plan doesn't restrict building on marsh islands as long as local, state and federal regulations are followed.

Carroll said a minor permit would allow construction of the bridge, but

not development of Bacon Island. A major development permit from the N.C. Division of Coastal Management would be required for that.

Bacon Island derived its colorful name from its former use. Roberts said his grandfather, R.P. Robinson, used to raise hogs on the property.

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