

Aging Director, Criticized For Budget Shortfalls, Is Suspended

BY ERIC CARLSON

One week after Brunswick County Commissioners demanded that something be done about budget shortfalls in his department, Older Adults / Department of Aging (DOA) Director Ronnie Robinson was suspended from his position Monday.

When asked Tuesday if there had been any recent personnel actions in the Department of Aging, County Personnel Officer Stacie Grissett said the most recent action taken was Robinson's "suspension from employment" Monday. She said she was not able to provide any further information.

Department of Aging Secretary Violet Pearson said Tuesday that Robinson was not in his office and would not be back until next Monday.

Called at his home and asked about the suspension, Robinson said, "I don't have any knowledge of it. I have no further comment."

County Manager David Clegg said Tuesday that under the terms of the county personnel policy, the suspension was a confidential matter about which he was not allowed to comment.

Under state law a county employee's personnel file can be examined only by the employee himself or his agent, a supervisor or authorized agents of the state or federal government.

The personnel policy describes three types of suspension. Clegg would not say which type of action applied to Robinson.

"Immediate disciplinary suspension" removes an employee from his post without notice "for causes related to personal conduct." The employee is told by the department head "to leave county property at once and remain away until further notice."

Under "disciplinary suspension," an employee is temporarily relieved of all duties and receives no pay.

An employee may be placed on "nondisciplinary suspension" during the course of an investigation on a criminal charge or during a civil action. The employee would receive full back pay if reinstated by the board of commissioners.

The policy further states that "all dismissals shall be preceded by an automatic three-day suspension without pay pending completion of an investigation by the appointing authority." If the action is deemed appropriate, the dismissal becomes effective at the end of the three-day suspension.

Clegg would not say if Robinson's suspension was a precursor to dismissal.

At its final budget workshop June 8, Clegg told the Board of Commissioners that the DOA "was without funds and will require an infusion" of \$20,000 to meet its payroll.

Clegg said Robinson had failed to make necessary ad-

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A 'Reel' Fine Day

Brunswick County's own "Reel Chase" crew, which includes Beacon columnist Jamie Milliken, won the 13th Annual Got-'em-on King Classic at Carolina Beach last weekend with a 42.6-pounder which shattered the tournament record. The crew and their wives are pictured with the winning king. They are, from left, Jamie and Missy Milliken, Ava Pearl and Chip Maree, and Kyle White. Captain Jamie's first-hand account of the catch is on Page 11-C.

Holden Beach Panel Drafts Septic Tank Rules

BY DOUG RUTTER

A Holden Beach committee trying to control the abuse of septic systems has come up with a set of rules to stop overuse and false advertising.

It may soon be illegal to accommodate more people in a house than its septic system can serve or to advertise that a home can sleep more than regulations allow.

The draft ordinance is aimed at people who have been abusing state health regulations for years at Holden Beach.

People with septic tank permits for three-bedroom houses have been using rooms called dens or offices as extra bedrooms to get more money out of their investment.

Meanwhile, residents and vacationers have been jamming more people into houses than the septic tanks are designed to serve, which is two per bedroom.

The result has been overuse of septic tank systems, which can lead to their failure, with health and environmental problems resulting.

Commissioner Sid Swarts, who is chairman of the wastewater management committee, said county and state health officials approve of the proposal.

Copies of the draft ordinance have been given to local real estate brokers for their comments.

"This is just a draft ordinance," Swarts emphasized at last week's town meeting. "It's not our final recommendation."

He said the committee hopes to have a final recommendation to the board of commissioners in August so

the rules can take effect in September.

The proposed ordinance would allow the town building inspector to inspect homes if there is evidence or probable cause that rules are being violated.

If the inspector finds three or more violations within a year, he would refer the matter to the Brunswick County Health Department for enforcement.

Half-joking, Swarts said last week the rules won't prohibit people from inviting their mother or children to the beach or allow the inspector to make random bed checks.

"Hopefully, this will keep people from putting 20 people in a three-bedroom house," Swarts said.

In addition to the wastewater management committee, town officials formed another committee earlier this month to gather information on sewer systems.

Mayor Wally Ausley has appointed Jim Griffin, Jack Potter, Helen White, Jim Lowell and Harold Steorts to the committee.

Each member, he said, brings something special to the group. White, for example, is a strong environmentalist, while Potter has a technical background working with sewer plants.

Ausley said the committee will be asked to get facts together on various types of sewer systems, determine the cost to homeowners, investigate loan and grant opportunities and study possible locations for a plant.

"We're going to have septic tanks for a long time," Ausley said. "If we decide tomorrow we need a sewer system, it would still be a long time."

Dems Elect New Officers, Hear Angry V-P Resign, Urging Grassroots Return

BY SUSAN USHER

When Brunswick County Democratic Party leaders met last week, they elected not only a new chairman, but a new first vice-chairman as well.

Chairman Crawford M. Hart quit his post last month. Thursday night, for unrelated reasons, First Vice Chairman Grace Peoples resigned, but not before challenging the local party to return to its grassroots membership.

Executive committee members elected W.A. (Bill) Stanley of Brick Landing as chairman and Ouida Hewitt as vice chairman, both by acclamation. Both will serve until officers are elected at the next convention, in April 1993.

A former Brunswick County commissioner, school board member and Brunswick Community College trustee, Stanley served as party chairman once before, in 1987-88, when Republicans George Bush was elected president and Jim Martin was elected governor.

"I hope we can do better this time," he said, looking to the November election. "We've got to get this party moving."

Stanley said he plans to work full time to that end.

Gearing up for the general elections and completing the headquarters building are among his immediate goals. He plans to meet with candidates and begin planning the fall campaign, "mostly to get them singing out of the same songbook," he said.

Under the party's rules of procedure, Peoples could have stepped automatically into the chairmanship, but she chose not to do that. Instead, in a move she said wasn't decided until she stood before the group of 28 party leaders, Peoples announced, "I am stepping down for reasons I'd rather not discuss."

"I feel I can do better service by working in my own area, starting with my own precinct," she continued, announcing plans to seek chairmanship of Secession II precinct in the spring.

She challenged precinct chairman to organize their local communities, to get more people involved in party decision-making.

"That's why we are not getting any farther than we are. We need to get back to our grassroots," she continued. "I'm tired of backroom politics. I think these things should be done in the open. We need to represent all of the people, not just a few."

"If I seem upset, yes, I am. I don't think we are doing our people justice."

Other speakers urged the party and its leaders to get back on track as well.

Tom Simmons, of Boiling Spring Lakes precinct,

"I'm tired of backroom politics.... We need to represent all of the people, not just a few."

—Grace Peoples

urged party leaders to serve as role models, supporting the party's entire slate of candidates publicly, regardless of how their own votes might be cast.

"You shouldn't be serving on the executive committee if you can't do that," he said.

Eight of 21 precincts—Ash, Bolivia, Shingletree, Town Creek, Hood's Creek, Southport II, Woodburn and Belville—were not represented at Thursday's meeting.

"We've got a job to do," said William Thorsen of Southport, who was a candidate in the primary for the District 3 commissioner's seat nomination.

He cited lack of participation in Thursday's meeting and a lack of participation in the primaries.

"We can't win an election if we leave them sitting home," he cautioned, going on to encourage the party to bring Ross Perot supporters into the Democratic camp. "George Bush has no program, no platform. We do. Even our little Brunswick County platform is better. We have to give them a reason to vote."

In other action Thursday, the party adopted its first campaign platform, took up money to buy Hart a plaque in appreciation for his hard work on behalf of the party, particularly on the Democratic headquarters building, and announced plans for a Sept. 18 "roast" of Rep. David Redwine, D-Brunswick, as a benefit for the building fund. Susan Rabon reported briefly on the Democratic National Convention, telling the group, "We've got a winner this time from the top to the bottom."

Among other general measures, the platform supports reforms in wetlands legislation to protect the interests of farmers and others, on the one hand, and protection of the environment on the other.

Reflecting concerns expressed when county employees were let go in the transfer of the trash collection to private enterprise, the platform backs taking into consideration longevity when county employees must be let go.

ERICKSEN WITHDRAWING

GOP To Name New Candidate

BY SUSAN USHER

Brunswick County Republicans will be choose a new candidate within the next week for the District 1 seat on the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners.

Raymond Erickson, 60, of Ocean Isle Beach will withdraw, the second Republican candidate to make that decision in recent weeks. District 1 Commissioner Kelly Holden recently announced his plans to pull out of

the race for the 14th District House seat.

The reason for Erickson's decision isn't known. He did not return a reporter's call last week, and his letter of resignation was not available.

Shirley Babson, secretary of the Brunswick County Republican Party, said Erickson submitted his letter of resignation to Chairman James Payne, who was out of town Friday on U.S. Marine Corps

Reserves duty, but had not yet notified the Brunswick County Board of Elections.

She said the party has until early August to name a substitute to go on the Nov. 5 ballot.

"We'll be meeting sometime between now and the deadline to make that decision," she said.

Joseph Brust, also of Ocean Isle Beach, confirmed that he is interested in running.

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Carolina Shores Water Woes: A Perennial Problem Returns

BY LYNN CARLSON

When Ted and Laura Paliwoda started looking seriously at retiring from New Jersey to Carolina Shores, the first thing they did, with encouragement from their real estate broker, was to taste the local water.

"We thought it was great," they agreed. They were familiar with the old Myrtle Beach water system, which at that time produced water so salty and unpleasant-tasting that the Paliwodas crossed the South Carolina resort off their list of prospective retirement havens.

Four years later, they find themselves among some 600 Carolina Shores households with water they say isn't fit to drink—and might be harmful to their health—during the driest and hottest weather.

It not only tastes salty, it leaves salt caked on plant-watering cans, ruins the looks of expensive cookware and leaves freshly washed hair feeling "slimy," says Laura

Paliwoda, who buys eight or nine gallons of bottled water from the supermarket each week for the two to drink and cook with. She's embarrassed when she has to warn houseguests not to drink from the tap.

"When you take a shower, the water feels slick," her husband says. And when they run their washer, a sulfur-like stench fills the house. "If you knew what kind of housekeeper my wife is, you'd know that under any ordinary circumstances, our house would never smell bad," he added.

Jack Brady, president of the Carolina Shores Property Owners' Association, says it's a perennial problem that escalates with each dry spell and with the community's growth each summer season. He says he's spent so much time researching the problem that he's become something of a lay expert on water quality.

"In the winter, or in any season where there's no long-term heat, there's no prob-

"In the winter... there's no problem. But when there's hot weather and heavy usage, the water gets salty."

—Jack Brady, president
Carolina Shores Property
Owners Association

lem," Brady explained. "But when there's hot weather and heavy usage, the water gets salty."

Carolina Shores' water is supplied by private Carolina Blythe Utility Co. of Florence, S.C. In a recent letter to the property owners' association, Blythe president Billy F. Burnett explains the situation this way:

"Water we supply to our Calabash area customers is pumped from two underground aquifers. The upper aquifer is approximately 100 feet below the ground surface, and the lower aquifer is approximately 300 feet below the ground surface. The water from the upper aquifer is of a better quality than the lower aquifer but yields a smaller and limited quantity. The lower aquifer has a much higher yield but is much higher in sodium."

"Water is pumped from the lower aquifer only on the days that the upper aquifer cannot keep the elevated tank full. On most days the shallow aquifer is adequate to keep the tank full. However, during dry periods when large numbers of customers are irrigating their lawns, it is necessary to pump

from the lower aquifer."

Is there enough sodium in the water to pose a health risk to Carolina Shores residents, most of whom are retirement age? Maybe, but there's not much hope of attacking the problem from a public health position, according to Brady.

He is surprised and perplexed that his research has uncovered no state or federal regulations about sodium levels in the water. "There are standards for lead, barium, anything you can think of, but not salt," Brady said. "Experts say only that high-sodium water can be harmful to people with high blood pressure, and that they should check with their doctors," he adds. Ted Paliwoda says he knows older people on salt-restricted diets who are afraid to drink the water at all, even in the off-season when it doesn't taste salty.

(See WATER, Page 2-A)