

# Rescue Of ALS Program To Include Improvements In Records, Retraining

BY SUSAN USHER

If a two-pronged effort pays off as hoped, Brunswick County's advanced life support (ALS) program could return to full service by the end of October, three months after operation was suspended.

Before local emergency personnel will be allowed to resume providing advanced services, two things must happen: the local program must be recertified by the state, and local emergency service providers must be recertified as Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)-I's.

The pace at which the program will return to operation hinges in part on whether the N.C. Board of Med-

ical Examiners approves recertification plans for the local program when it meets Sept. 16.

State, regional and local emergency services officials outlined those plans at a meeting with county rescue and emergency service providers last Thursday night. The proposal calls for more extensive documentation of program policies, procedures and guidelines, better record-keeping, and some retraining of all emergency personnel.

Officials with the state office are working with local program personnel to restart ALS services as quickly as possible; even so, the process is expected to take at least several months, possibly longer.

"They're doing everything they can to bring us back on line," said Doug Ledgett, county supervisor of emergency medical services.

He later added, "It's been a learning experience. We should have a stronger program as a result."

Until the ALS program is recertified, rescue workers are back to using basic life skills when responding to emergency calls. They are not allowed to use defibrillators, devices used to shock trauma victims, or to start intravenous medications.

The advanced program was suspended Aug. 4 after state auditors discovered that program training records were insufficient to document whether rescue workers

had received the training they needed to use advanced life-saving techniques in the field.

Since then the county has fired its training coordinator and is seeking to hire another.

Technical specialists from the N.C. Office of Emergency Medical Services will meet with local program officials Sunday to clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in the ALS program and to help develop the documentation needed of how the system will actually function day to day. Program leaders, providers in the field and students enrolled in classes will know what is expected of them.

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STAFF PHOTO BY MARJORIE MEGIVERN

**DR. RALPH JOHNSTON, following Friday's action by the Brunswick County Board of Education to hire him as superintendent of schools, speaks to administrators and staff members, as School Board Chairperson Donna Baxter listens.**

## Johnston Gets Nod As Superintendent

BY MARJORIE MEGIVERN

The meeting room at Brunswick County Board of Education was packed to capacity with well-dressed, coiffed and perfumed school administrators and central staff.

It was 5:30 p.m. Friday, time for the big announcement so long awaited, as to who would succeed P.R. Hankins as superintendent of the county school system when he retires in October.

After many weeks of screening applications, selecting 13 semi-finalists and finally interviewing four of these, Dr. Ralph Johnston, superintendent of Kannapolis City schools, was the choice.

Johnston's contract details were confirmed in a 20-minute executive session, while the expectant crowd munched cookies and sipped punch, waiting for the other shoe to fall. Rumor had already pegged this man as the winner, but an official vote had not been taken.

School Board Chairperson Donna Baxter called for the vote in public session, and Johnston was unanimously named to the position, then introduced to his roomful of col-

leagues and employees. He spoke briefly from prepared notes, the meeting adjourned, and everyone lined up to shake hands with the new boss.

Why this choice? What stood out about Ralph Johnston, some school board members were asked. Baxter said he exuded a kind of strength and ability. "I was impressed with his experience in other systems," she said, "and he just seemed to be generally an okay person."

Board Member Doug Baxley got more specific. "He has real organizational skills, and from his answers to questions it's apparent he has a philosophy of education," he said. "It's very helpful that he has experience in the media, too. And I like it that family means a great deal to him."

Johnston's family orientation made a hit, too, with Board Member Polly Russ, who had beamed throughout his remarks. "I think he will provide a good role model for family values," she said. "Also, he believes strongly in community involvement; he'll be active in civic organizations."

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## ZONING ORDINANCE UNDER REVIEW

# Boards Nix 5-Acre Lot Minimum

BY ERIC CARLSON

A proposal to require a 5-acre minimum lot size for homes in rural areas of Brunswick County was quickly rejected Monday as county commissioners and planning board members began modifying a draft zoning ordinance.

At the latest in a series of joint zoning workshops, County Planner John Harvey also presented a proposal to create a special district that would protect the water quality of Lockwood Folly River.

In the "agriculture" zones that make up most of Brunswick County, Harvey's proposed zoning ordinance would have required that anyone desiring to build a home or set up a trailer have a minimum of five acres of land with a lot width of at least 250 feet.

As drafted, the ordinance defines land in the agriculture zone as being "primarily intended to accommodate uses of a rural agrarian nature," including (but not limited to) farm residences and farm tenant housing. It would permit such principal uses as farms, single-family homes, churches, public utilities, golf courses, airstrips and campgrounds.

Copies of the proposed zoning ordinance are available for public inspection at the Brunswick County Planning Department. The next joint workshop on the plan will be 4 p.m. Monday, Aug. 24, in the Public Assembly Building of the Brunswick County Government Center at Bolivia.

During Monday's discussion, the members

modified the ordinance to require only one acre of land for each dwelling unit and a minimum lot width of 200 feet.

In an interview Tuesday, Harvey said he was disappointed that the 5-acre lot requirement was rejected. He said the proposal was intended to prevent uncontrolled high-density development of farmland in an effort to maintain the present character of Brunswick County's rural areas.

"This is totally counter to what we ought to be doing," Harvey said.

Brunswick Commissioners Chairman Kelly Holden had expressed concern that the 5-acre lot requirement would prevent a farmer from deeding a small plot of land to a family member to build a home. Other commissioners and planning board members agreed that the requirement was too restrictive.

The members also discussed ways of preventing a major hog-processing operation from locating in the agricultural zone without also restricting such low-impact, farm-related activities as crab shedding and fish farming. Harvey was asked to draft suitable language allowing "agricultural industry" for consideration at the next workshop.

The proposed requirement of a 20-acre minimum lot size for cemeteries also was modified. Holden pointed out that there were numerous family cemeteries throughout the county situated on less than one acre of land. The members agreed to exempt private cemeteries and apply the minimum only to commercial burial sites.

Several additional uses were added to those proposed for the agriculture zone including bed-and-breakfast homes, hunting clubs, commercial docks and boat houses and retail sales of items grown on the premises.

New planning board member Marion R. Warren of Asht, who was sworn into office at the workshop, questioned the need to include "private clubs" as a permitted principal use in the agricultural zones.

"There are only two kinds of private clubs in Asht," Warren said. "Shot houses and hunting clubs."

Warren also opposed Harvey's suggestion that "mud bogs" be permitted only on adopted thoroughfares as defined by the thoroughfare plan.

"You ever been to a mud bog, John?" Warren asked. "It's an event where people go to watch vehicles run up and down through the mud."

"The only place you can have one is where you have enough land to ruin and enough area to allow people to watch them ruin the land," Warren said. "You've got to stick them out in the middle of nowhere. It wouldn't be economically feasible to put a mud bog on a major thoroughfare."

Harvey called himself a "city man trying to deal with subjects I don't know about." He admitted that he had never been to a mud bog.

At the next joint workshop, members will consider the "residential strip" zone located along most major roads throughout rural areas of the county. The designation is intended for "low-density" uses.

(See BOARDS, Page 2-A)

## Sheriff, Board Clash Over Night Hours

BY ERIC CARLSON

A member of the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners Monday threatened to take back money allocated to Sheriff John Davis for the hiring of two new deputies if he refused to staff his department's front office 24 hours a day.

Davis yesterday said that unless the commissioners want to hire additional personnel for the job, he would not rescind his decision to keep on-duty deputies patrolling at night instead of "sitting around the office answering the telephone."

In an Aug. 4 letter to Commissioners Chairman Kelly Holden, Davis said that after attempting to comply with the board's request for full-time staffing of the office, he had determined that doing so "is not cost effective or good law enforcement procedure."

At its final budget workshop June 8, Davis agreed "under protest" to the board's request for round-the-clock staffing after Holden insisted that the sheriff's department ought to be a "safe haven" where victims of violence could run for protection.

Davis told the commissioners that to comply

with the board's request he would have to reduce from four to three the number of deputies patrolling the county. He said the situation would leave deputies without backup in an emergency.

"It's against my better judgement, but it will be 24 hours a day if that's the way you want it," he told the board.

Davis "has not held up to his word," Holden said at Monday night's commissioner's meeting. "At the time he wanted us to approve his budget. Now he's changed his mind."

"It doesn't seem fair to me," Commissioner Gene Pinkerton said Monday. "The sheriff made a commitment and then didn't keep it."

Noting that "the number of battered women in this county would shock you," Pinkerton said the sheriff's office had to remain open as a place to flee for victims of domestic violence. He recommended that the board consider passing a budget amendment to defund two positions previously approved for the sheriff's department.

"I'd say take the sheriff back too, but he's an elected official," Pinkerton said.

Davis said Tuesday that the two new deputy

positions had been filled and that he would make other adjustments to his budget rather than lay off personnel.

"They are elected to run the county and set my budget," Davis said. "I am elected to protect the people of Brunswick County with what they give me. If they reduce my budget I will continue to do the best I can with what I've got."

Davis said that although the doors to the sheriff's department are locked at 5 p.m., a magistrate remains on duty inside and can let people in at his discretion. He said the arrangement was the only way he could adequately maintain road patrols while still providing a secure place for the magistrate.

Commissioner Frankie Rabon suggested at Monday's meeting that County Manager David Clegg look into modifying the sheriff's office with bullet-proof glass to protect the magistrate while leaving the front door unlocked. Davis said he would support such an action.

In other business the board:

(See SHERIFF'S, Page 2-A)

# Weekend Storms Create Problems For Farmers, Vacationers

BY SUSAN USHER

If people seemed to be squinting as well as smiling a lot Tuesday, it probably was because they hadn't seen sunshine in days.

Stormy weather dumped from 5 inches to 11 inches of rain across the county from last Wednesday through Tuesday morning, wreaking havoc with vacationers' plans, contributing to a rash of minor highway accidents and causing new worries for some local farmers.

The rainfall pattern was almost a "reversal" of the heavy rains experienced in June, when rains were heaviest in the southwestern corner of the county, said Milton Coleman, county extension chairman.

While weather watcher Jackson Canady recorded 6.75 inches at Shallotte Point, Coleman said as much as 11.1 inches of rain had fallen between Snowfield and Maco in northern Brunswick County.

"It's been tough," said Coleman. "All we can hope is that we'll have a good fall garden season."

"There's been as much variation out there as I've ever seen," he continued. "There are some folks with as good a crops as I've ever seen and some other people who have just struck out."

Some tobacco crops have already been declared a disaster by crop insurance adjusters, but for others, said Coleman, the unusual early rains provided a chance to experiment with management practices such as sucker control.

Typically Brunswick County gets heavy rains this time of year, normally a time when most crops are mature or have been harvested. This year, though, some farmers planted soybeans late, after June 15, gambling on a late frost.

"I'd like to see it go into November," said Coleman. "A week can make a big difference."

The most imminent danger is from heavy winds

blowing over crops and trees standing in saturated ground. The wetness is also making fruits and vegetables more susceptible to splitting disease and insects.

Some of the damage farmers may experience following this most recent rain may relate back to damage received earlier. The June rains destroyed tobacco plant root systems, causing them to build new systems during the hot, dry portion of the season when they usually rely on deep roots to sustain growth.

"It took a lot out of them," said Coleman.

Adding nitrogen after the rain and putting the tobacco into a growth mode may have made the situation worse.

Farmers still harvesting tobacco are seeing tissue deterioration where leaves connect to the plant stem, with heavy rains enough to knock leaves off the plant to the ground where they were then subjected to sun scald Tuesday.

The rains are also affecting soybeans fields where weed control herbicides have been diluted by the rains and weeds are shooting through the canopy. Coleman

said growers may have limited options for additional weed control either because they can't get equipment into sodden fields or can't afford to spend any more on management, given the price forecasts for their crop.

Farmers weren't the only people caught out in the weather.

On the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway near Holden Beach, a family of vacationers sought refuge Saturday afternoon when a fierce afternoon storm caught them on the water in a small, uncovered boat.

Frank and Gail Williamson of Lumberton and their three children left Holden Beach Marina for Shallotte Point in a 16-foot open boat to check the finals of the Poor Boy Shark Tournament.

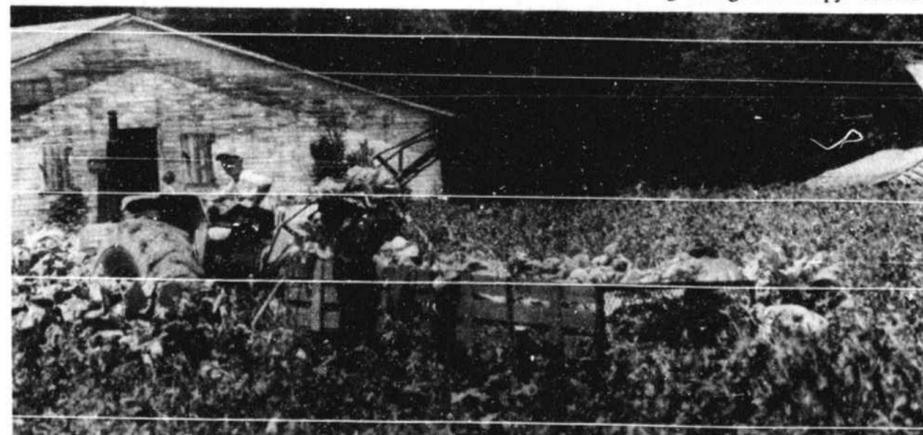
However, between 4 p.m. and 4:30 p.m., a fierce afternoon thunderstorm moved to shore from the south, from over the water, with hard-hitting rains, high winds, thunder and lightning.

"It was so bad they knew they had to do something," said Carolyn Sweatt. "They tied up at the closest dock, which was ours, and were hovering on our patio below the house waiting for the storm to pass."

"They were just drenched," she said. The Sweatts chatted with their unexpected guests and when the storm let up, her husband, Edward, took Mrs. Williamson and her two youngest children to the marina, while Williamson and his oldest boy went back by boat.

"Boaters are always glad to help other people," said Mrs. Sweatt. "You never know when you're going to need help."

Ruby Oakley, spokesman for the N.C. Highway Patrol's Wilmington office, said the weather was a factor in approximately 70 accidents troopers responded to this past week, mostly fender-benders with minor damage or personal injury.



STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

**BEFORE HEAVY RAINS set in, workers were cropping tobacco in this field near Regan at a steady pace. Agriculture officials aren't certain what effect the heavy rains (6.75 inches in five days at Shallotte Point) will have on this year's leaf harvest, already expected to fall short of the 1991 harvest.**