

# School Board Reconsidering Graduation Decision

BY SUSAN USHER

South Brunswick High School senior Dexter Tilton left the Monday night meeting of the Brunswick County Board of Education in high spirits, confident the board had been receptive to his plea to allow graduations to continue on individual school campuses.

"It sounds like they're backing us," he said, "and that makes me feel dam good."

Speaking on behalf of seniors at South Brunswick High at Boiling Spring Lakes, Tilton said the class feels it is "totally unfair" to be forced to hold graduation off-campus and that a majority of their peers at West and North are of like minds.

"Because they take great pride in their schools they want to graduate from their schools," he said. "They feel they should have that right if they want too."

When adopting the 1992-93 school schedule, the board scheduled graduations for South Brunswick, West Brunswick and North Brunswick high schools for the same day, June 12, and at the same place, the Odell Williamson Auditorium at Brunswick Community College. The idea was to stagger the ceremonies at 10 a.m., 2 p.m. and 6 p.m., so that all county students graduate the same day.

There had been general discussion for several years that county high school commencement exercises would be moved to the auditorium once it was completed. At present the grand opening event is set for May 1993.

Monday night, school board chairman Donna Baxter said she and the superintendent and high school principals had met on the subject and that a recommendation was forthcoming regarding graduation.

"We wanted to talk with each principal about the recommendation before we bring it to the board," she said.

West Brunswick High School Principal Ed Lemon said the group "didn't have any biases one way or the other."

At West Brunswick a majority of students favor holding commencement on campus, he said, and the administration has no problems with that.

School board members said their intent was never to

detract from the students' graduations.

Board member Yvonne Bright said the original idea was "just for having a first-class graduation and having it inside." While West Brunswick's commencement hasn't been relocated because of rain, North Brunswick has had to move its ceremony into the gym on several occasions.

"If you move it into your gym all of your friends and relatives cannot come," said Polly Russ, another board member.

Having to limit the number of persons invited to attend graduation has been another objection students have raised to moving the ceremony off-campus.

"We've talked about having a dignified ceremony," Russ continued. "That doesn't mean we don't think your graduation is dignified, but it is a different kind of atmosphere."

"It was never just a decision you can't have graduation at your school, but to allow for an all-weather location."

West Brunswick High seniors last year voted "overwhelmingly" to hold graduation at the football stadium, rather than in the school courtyard.

"We liked it," said Lemon, describing the event as "a Carolina-style graduation."

If the school board decides to allow students a choice of locations, as he expects, Lemon said he anticipates seniors at West will again choose Rourk Stadium.

Whatever decision the board makes, Lemon anticipates it will address the illegal practice of having some seniors graduate before the last day of classes, either scheduling all commencements the same date, or on or after the last day of classes.

In previous years the schools have taken turns being the first to hold commencement on three consecutive nights, with the schedule starting before the last day of school. That rotation also meant some seniors taking courses with lower classmen had to take state end-of-the-year tests early.

### New Meeting Date

With little discussion, the board voted, on first reading, to change its regular meeting date from the first

Monday of each month to the second Monday.

Member Yvonne Bright said she had the item placed on the agenda because she felt the board should be able to attend meetings of the county commissioners and other boards to represent the school system's interests.

"As long as our meetings are on first Mondays it prevents that," she said.

After a second reading and vote in January, the change will become effective in February.

### Boiler Cracks, Lights Go Out

Monday was a busy day for the school system's maintenance department, Assistant Superintendent Bill Turner reported.

At Union Elementary School in Shallotte a boiler section cracked, leaving 12 classrooms in the older section of the school without heat. Crew members were repairing the problem Monday evening, with heat restored Tuesday.

At Waccamaw Elementary School, maintenance workers had to replace a 400 amp breaker that kicked out, leaving one-half of the school without power and cutting off the water supply. The problem was fixed Monday.

### Other Business

In other business, the board: Scheduled its next meeting Wednesday, Jan. 13, at 6:30 p.m. at West Brunswick High School, citing a con-

flict with Jan. 11. The superintendent and board chairman plan to attend a leadership conference that day.

Met in closed session for slightly more than an hour to discuss personnel and legal matters, taking only routine personnel actions afterward.

Set a board retreat for Saturday, Jan. 16, with the time and place to be announced. The central office staff will develop mini-workshops for board members.

Appointed Polly Russ and William Fairley to the grievance committee, with Yvonne Bright and Thurman Gause as their respective alternates, while the superintendent appointed Southport Primary School teacher Yvonne Adams, with South Brunswick Middle School teacher Ronnie Benton as her alternate.

Heard from Turner that the Transportation Information System (TIMS) computerized database was 80 percent complete. As required by the state, staff members are going back and locating and mapping residences of students who are enrolled in school but do not ride the bus.

Heard from Turner that he is recommending the school system remove its underground fuel storage tanks and install above-ground tanks as a cheaper alternative than driving monitoring wells and testing the underground tanks monthly.

Adopted a "Re-invest in America" resolution that will be sent to county commissioners and the area's legislative delegation.



STAFF PHOTO BY LYNN CARLSON

### Classy Girl, Classic Car

Crystal Williams, Miss Brunswick County 1992, keeps cozy in an elegant fur jacket while riding in a classic automobile in the Shallotte Christmas Parade.



## Merry Christmas from the staff of

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## Calls Keep Firefighters Busy

Firefighters in northeastern Brunswick County had a busy week, responding to fires that caused no injuries but damaged one house and destroyed a trailer and a log cabin in the Leland area.

A Thursday morning (Dec. 10) fire in Leland is believed to have smoldered for several hours before breaking through the roof of a log cabin, Brunswick County Emergency Services Director Cecil Logan said Tuesday.

"The house was completely gutted," Logan said. "The inside logs were charred nearly an inch deep."

The blaze was thought to have been started by faulty wiring in a switch box, Logan said. The rental house had been vacant for about a week. Electric power was still connected, he said.

Logan estimated the damage at about \$50,000.

Smoldering ashes left on a front porch were blamed for a fire that

caused about \$2,000 damage to a home on Forest Hills Drive in Leland Sunday afternoon.

Leland fire fighters were able to extinguish the fire, which was reported by 10-year-old Karen Simmons. She called 911 while others fled the home, according to Leland Police Department Chief Charles Cliff.

A three-year-old boy playing with a cigarette lighter was blamed for a fire that destroyed a trailer at the Oscar Long Mobile Home Park off Mount Misery Road, Leland, Monday morning.

Logan said the child apparently dropped the lighter, which started the blaze. The mother had fallen asleep on the couch and awoke to find the room filled with smoke. She quickly got her three children out of

the trailer, which was fully involved in flame when fire fighters arrived.

The mobile home and contents were a total loss, Logan said.

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