



STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC CARLSON

Brunswick's New County Commission

Members of the newly constituted Brunswick County Board of Commissioners pause at their Monday meeting for a group portrait. The commissioners are (seated from left) Donald Shaw, District 5; Vice Chairman Tom Rabon Sr., District 4; Chairman Don Warren, District 1; Wayland Vereen, District 3; and Jerry Jones, District 2. Standing behind them are County Manager/Attorney David Clegg and Clerk to the Board Kelly Barefoot.

HUNTING DOGS EXEMPT

Board Puts Teeth Into Law Controlling Unleashed Dogs

BY ERIC CARLSON

Beginning April 1, dogs will no longer be allowed off the property of their owners without being physically restrained by a leash under a new law adopted by the Brunswick County Commissioners Monday night.

The board voted 4-1, with Commissioner Wayland Vereen dissenting, to enact a county-wide leash law.

The ordinance passed a first reading by the same margin at the Nov. 16 meeting of the previous board of commissioners, with former member Frankie Rabon voting against it. His District 4 successor, Tom Rabon Sr., voted for the law Monday.

Under the ordinance it "shall be unlawful for any owner of a dog to permit the said dog to run at large or to be off the premises of its owner and not under the physical restraint of a competent person."

A dog will be considered "at large" if it is found to be "roaming, running or self-hunting off of the property of its owner and not under the owner's immediate control."

If a dog is seen running at large by a county animal control officer, it can be impounded. If an officer receives a complaint that a dog is running at large he or she may issue a citation to the owner. Anyone convicted of violating the law can be fined a maximum of \$250.

Hunting dogs will not be considered roaming "at large" or in violation of the law as long as they are hunting for game for which the owner holds a valid hunting license and are doing so in the proper hunting season.

Brunswick animal control officers Tuesday praised the board's action, saying the law will "loosen the handcuffs" preventing them from picking up stray dogs. Under existing regulations, an officer may pick up a stray dog only if someone agrees to file a complaint against its owner.

"Most people just want us to get the dog off their property. They don't want to sign a complaint against their neighbor," Animal Control Clerk Dec Lee said Tuesday. "If the dog leaves their property, we have to get permission from another landowner to go after it."

Under the new law, animal con-

rol officers in pursuit of a stray will be able to cross property lines without getting permission. Then the county can file the complaint against the owner.

Dee said her department averages six to seven requests for stray dog removal "on a slow day." She said 15 people had called to report strays by 1 p.m. Tuesday.

Health department officials, who also pushed for the ordinance, said it will diminish the likelihood that dogs will come in contact with rabid wild animals and spread rabies to humans. So far there has been only one case of rabies recorded in Brunswick County. But scarcely a week goes by in neighboring Horry County, S.C., without another rabid animal being reported, Lee said.

"With all the remote swamp land we have on the border, I expect we have animals with rabies in Brunswick County, too," she said.

But some feel the leash law is unnecessary and too restrictive. Following Monday's meeting, Vereen

called the ordinance "just another system to harass people." He said the county has a law governing vicious dogs and does not need a leash law.

Following his vote against the law last month, Frankie Rabon said the sections exempting hunting dogs would be difficult to administer.

"I just don't see where we've got that much of a problem in the rural parts of the county," Rabon said. "The towns have the power to enact their own leash laws. I don't think we need one in the county."

At an Oct. 20 public hearing on the proposed ordinance, only one person spoke against it, while several others strongly urged its adoption. Some related tales of being chased by packs of stray dogs and fears of dogs attacking their children.

In an informal show of hands, 20 people at the hearing voted for the law and four voted against it.

The new leash law will go into effect April 1.

Three Injured In One-Vehicle Accidents In County Last Week

Three persons were injured last week in one-vehicle accidents on Brunswick County roadways, according to the N.C. Highway Patrol's Wilmington office.

On Sunday, Dec. 20, two 17-year-olds were seriously hurt in a one-car accident on Long Road (S.R. 1324), about 9.8 miles west of Shallotte.

Injured were Adam Clayton Abbott of Ocean Isle, and his passenger, William Hickman of Shallotte. However, the highway patrol report does not indicate either was transported by ambulance.

Abbott was driving a 1988 Isuzu truck west on Long Road at approximately 2:30 p.m., according to the report filed by Trooper B.L. Wilkes, when the truck ran through a stop sign at the T intersection, struck a ditch bank and continued into a field before stopping.

Wilkes charged Abbott with driving while impaired, driving while his license was revoked and failure to stop for a stop sign.

Damages to the truck were estimated at \$1,000.

Eighteen-year-old Johnny Dale Smith Jr. of Route 1, Ash, was seriously injured Saturday Dec. 19, at about 1:30 p.m. in a one-car accident that happened 8.7 miles west of

Shallotte on Etheridge Road (S.R. 1308).

Driving a 1990 Plymouth, Smith was traveling north on Etheridge Road when his vehicle ran off the left side of the road, struck a drain culvert and rolled over, stopping on the left side of the roadway.

Investigating Officer Trooper B.L. Wilkes charged Smith with exceeding a safe speed. Damages to the vehicle were estimated at \$5,000.

Smith was transported to The Brunswick Hospital with serious, incapacitating injuries. He was treated and released.

Neither Dennis Mark Hewett, 19, of Long Beach, nor the 20-year-old passenger in his 1984 Isuzu were injured in another one-vehicle accident that happened Friday, Dec. 18, at 2:15 a.m. nine-tenths of a mile north of Southport on N.C. 211.

According to the report filed by Trooper C.E. Ward, Hewett was traveling east on N.C. 211 when he turned around at the gate to the ferry landing, crossed to the right side of the road, came back to the left and overturned in the roadway. He was charged with reckless driving.

The vehicle received approximately \$1,800 in injuries.

Three persons were injured in a two-vehicle accident that happened Dec. 17 at 7:25 p.m. on Cedar Hill Road (S.R. 1430) in Navassa.

Joe Bell, 76, of Route 1, Leland, was driving a 1980 Ford east on Cedar Hill Road when a west-bound 1992 Chevrolet operated by George Kesselmann skidded across the center line in a curve and collided with Hill's car, reported Trooper M.C. Brinkley. The Ford remained in the highway after the collision while Kesselmann's vehicle traveled down an embankment.

Bell complained of injury, while a passenger in his car, Inez Bell, 72, received serious, non-incapacitating injuries.

Tracy Alteam, 31, of Route 2, Leland, one of two passengers in Kesselmann's car also received serious, non-incapacitating injuries.

The injured were transported to New Hanover Regional Medical Center in Wilmington.

Brinkley charged Kesselmann, 27, of Carolina Beach, with driving while impaired and driving left of center.

Damages were estimated at \$2,500 to Bell's vehicle and \$3,000 to Kesselmann's car.

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