



A Friend Of Elvis

This boy's mishap is the stuff of dreams—his video is 'America's Funniest.' 11-A



Helping Kids Say No

A local sheriff's lieutenant is state's DARE Officer Of The Year. Page 8-A



Unveiling The Plans

An architect shows plans for new and improved libraries countywide. Page 6-A

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

Thirty-First Year, Number 16

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Shalotte, North Carolina, Thursday, March 4

50¢ Per Copy

36 Pages, 3 Sections, 4 Inserts

Commissioners May Exempt Rural Land From Zoning Ordinance

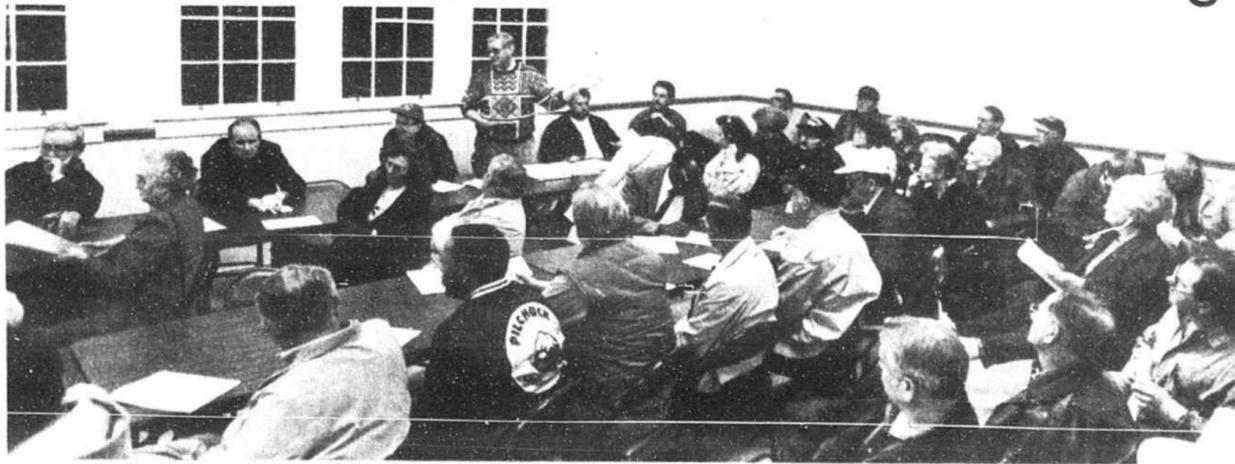
BY ERIC CARLSON

Rural land owners say there is no need for zoning in the largely undeveloped agricultural sections of Brunswick County. They want the board of commissioners to exempt areas north of U.S. 17 from the zoning ordinance scheduled to take effect July 1.

About 60 Waccamaw area residents got some encouragement for that idea last week when District 4 Commissioner Tom Rabon said he "might consider recommending changes" in the law.

Rabon joined Commissioners Chairman Don Warren, Planning Board Member Marion Warren of Ash and other officials at the Waccamaw community building last Thursday for the third of six workshops scheduled to explain the impact of zoning in rural areas.

Warren said Friday that he also might support the idea of leaving the county's southwestern agricultural areas exempt from the zoning ordinance. He said he may ask the commissioners to support a plan to "phase in" zoning in rural areas until development pressures make such regulation necessary.



BOBBY LONG of Grissetown comments about the county-wide zoning ordinance that takes effect July 1. About 60 residents of Brunswick County agricultural areas met with county officials to discuss how the law would affect them.

Commissioner Wayland Vereen, a long-time opponent of county-wide zoning, said Monday he would welcome any effort to ease the law's restrictions on rural landowners.

"People who live out in the country should be in charge of their own destiny," Vereen said. Don Warren said most of those who attended previous zoning work-

shops near Supply and Southport were "overwhelmingly in favor" of the new law. But he said he was not surprised to find that farmers and other rural

landowners are opposed to zoning in undeveloped areas, despite assurances that "bona fide farms" would be exempt from most of the law's restrictions.

"You can fix their dinner the best you can. But they just weren't ready to eat it," Don Warren said.

No one in the packed community building remained seated Thursday night when someone asked opponents of rural zoning to stand. After the meeting, lines formed to sign copies of a petition asking the board of commissioners "to discontinue the effort to zone any real estate which lies north of U.S. 17."

"What you're telling us is that we in our community are so ignorant that we don't know how to take care of ourselves," Bobby Long of Grissetown said during the meeting. "There's not a farmer on one of these boards and they're creating another layer of bureaucracy to tell us how we ought to use our land," said another man.

"How is this going to help me in Makatoka?" asked C.C. Russ.

"This thing is more complicated than the constitution. I think you ought to throw this whole mess in the trash can and start over!" said Robert Gore.

"I'm not against zoning, but I'm against the way you're doing it in (See FARMERS, Page 2-A)

11 JOBS DEEMED 'ESSENTIAL'

Clegg OKs Hiring In Health, DSS

BY ERIC CARLSON

Six weeks after the Brunswick County Commissioners ordered him not to hire any "non-essential" personnel, County Manager David Clegg said Monday he has decided that 11 vacant positions must be filled to maintain county services.

The Department of Social Services will begin advertising for applicants this week to hire four human resources aides for the CHORE in-home services program and two social workers for child protective services.

The Health Department hired a community health assistant Friday and has been authorized to hire a public health nurse, an animal control officer, an environmental health specialist and a social worker for pre-natal care.

At the county board's regular meeting Monday, Clegg said he understood that the commissioners "felt intense pressure" from the public over their requested scrutiny of county hiring. He said he appreciated the commissioners' patience and their "willingness to allow me the opportunity to make the inquiries necessary to make these decisions."

Clegg said he met with Health Director Michael Rhodes and DSS Director Jamie Orrock last week to discuss their personnel vacancies. He said the two department heads "provided extensive documentation" that led him to decide that at

least some of the positions needed to be filled.

Rhodes and Orrock said Tuesday that they were pleased at Clegg's decision. But both said they have other vacant positions that are just as vital for providing services.

The health director said he needs another public health nurse and a soil scientist to aid in septic tank inspections. Orrock had requested authorization to fill eight other social services positions.

"I got six out of 14, and I'm very grateful to have them. But I hope this will begin a process in which we will fill all these positions," Orrock said.

He said it will take "at least a month" to interview and hire the new social services personnel.

Hiring the new CHORE workers will allow the department to bring the number of in-home care hours nearly back to the level it previously provided, Orrock said. But it will not provide enough manpower allow DSS to take on any new cases.

Orrock said he was concerned about the timing of the commissioners' new hiring policies. He said he will have to request additional positions in the coming budget to handle the ever-increasing demand for services.

Rhodes said the authorization allowing him to hire another animal control officer came just in the nick of time. He was preparing to recommend to the board of health that it delay enforcement of

the county-wide leash law that becomes effective April 1.

The hiring delay also has caused the department to lose a long-sought qualified applicant for the position of soil scientist, which he has not been authorized to fill. Rhodes said he has been trying to fill the position since the commissioners authorized it last July.

"It's ironic that just as I found someone with 20 years experience who was eager to come here, I was told I couldn't hire anyone," Rhodes said.

The soil scientist would work with environmental health inspectors to determine whether a proposed septic tank site has the proper soil characteristics to handle the system. Brunswick County has more septic systems than any other county in the state and a wide range of soil types, Rhodes said.

"If any environmental health program needs a soil scientist, it's us," he said.

Clegg said Monday his review of county position vacancies "is ongoing" and more hiring may be authorized.

In the Jan. 19 directive, the commissioners had asked Clegg to notify them whenever he authorized an "essential" hire. The board made no comment about the new positions at Monday's meeting.

Williamson Gets Post On State DOT Board

Odell Williamson of Ocean Isle Beach will be sworn in Friday to a seat on the N.C. Department of Transportation board.

Gov. Jim Hunt this week appointed Williamson to represent New Hanover, Brunswick, Duplin, Onslow, Pender and Sampson counties after Williamson, a longtime Hunt supporter, expressed an interest in the post.

Williamson, a former six-term member of the N.C. House of Representatives and the original developer of Ocean Isle Beach, currently serves as Ocean Isle's streets and utilities commissioner. Hunt, during his second term as governor, appointed Williamson to the state's economic development board.

"I feel like I could do him a good job," Williamson said last week prior to the appointment, adding that he sees "protecting the state's investment" through highway repairs as a priority for the DOT board.

Williamson, who bought almost all of Ocean Isle in 1953, was listed as Brunswick County's sixth highest taxpayer in 1991, with properties in his name valued at nearly \$28 million. Williamson and his wife Virginia each contributed \$8,000 to Hunt's 1992 campaign, the maximum legal donation.



WILLIAMSON

Sunset Plan Board Proposes Tough Zoning For Bird Island

BY LYNN CARLSON

The Sunset Beach Planning Board has proposed a "conservation reserve residential" zoning district for Bird Island which, if adopted, would be significantly more restrictive than the zoning regulations being sought by the island's owner and prospective developer.

The town council, planning board and town attorney will discuss both proposals at a work session tentatively scheduled for Thursday, March 18, at 10 a.m.

The 148-acre island off Sunset Beach straddles the state line and is North Carolina's only undeveloped barrier island west of the Cape Fear River. Janie Pace Price of Greensboro has proposed to develop 85 acres of her land into 15 four-acre homesites accessible by a 5,400-foot system of bridging and causeway she plans to construct across Mad Inlet.

Price's attorney, H. Glenn Dunn, in a letter to Sunset Beach Town Attorney Michael Isenberg has proposed a zoning ordinance for Bird Island which calls for a minimum lot size of 7,500; the planning board proposal would set the minimum lot size at one acre.

"We realize that this is likely to be controversial, but believe there is no reason to require larger lots on Bird Island than are required on the oceanfront at Sunset Beach," Dunn's letter said, asserting that small minimum lot sizes "will allow the flexibility necessary to develop the island in a manner sensitive to environmental restrictions."

Acknowledging that "wetlands meander through Bird Island," Dunn said, "It would be difficult to subdivide into larger lots and be sure that each would include adequate non-wetlands area to accommodate a

house and septic tank."

Both the planning board's and Price's proposals would allow as permitted uses single-family homes, swimming pools, private piers and docks and underwater utility crossings.

However, Price's agents are also seeking as "special uses permissible on appeal to the Board of Adjustment" such facilities as marinas, hotels and restaurants. The special use designation means plans for such facilities would require a public hearing and approval by the planning board, acting as a zoning board of adjustment, prior to implementation.

The planning board's proposal would place all commercial development of Bird Island out of reach, since the only special uses it would permit are public parks and recreation areas.

(See BIRD, Page 2-A)

Local Leaders Focus On Education As Key Area For Future Cooperation

BY SUSAN USHER

The big E's—education, the economy and the environment—dominated discussion Friday afternoon at a forum that brought together about 30 Brunswick County municipal, educational and county government leaders to discuss barriers to county-wide cooperation and to identify areas of common ground where such cooperation is most likely.

The five-hour session was hosted and sponsored by the University of North Carolina at Wilmington as part of its regional community development effort. Much of Friday's discussion focused on education and additional ways the university could work in partnership with Brunswick County Schools specifically and school systems across its 16-county service area in general to increase overall student academic performance and retention.

During public meetings on Brunswick County's latest CAMA land use plan, education improvement was the second greatest need (behind zoning) cited.

"Our schools are not terrible, but there is always a lot of room for improvement," said Councilwoman Cheri Cheek of Sunset Beach, a sentiment with which others concurred.

"What people don't print is that in Brunswick County for a long, long time being mediocre has been okay," added Gloria Talley of the Brunswick County Schools. "But no



MAYORS Mason Barber of Sunset Beach and Betty Williamson of Ocean Isle Beach chat during a break in the program.

more is that the case and we have a lot of catching up to do. And we still have some people here who want to continue operating on that level."

Ken Messer, mayor of Belville, suggested the schools need to strengthen both early education and

high school education, as well as developing a long-range plan for curriculum improvement.

Boosting Education

Specific ideas for partnership with UNC-W included helping principals develop leadership skills and

developing the Total Quality Management approach in the system to expanding existing cooperative efforts. These include teacher education, student scholar development and the new A+ Arts program. Community-based planning was proposed as a way to address a concern of Brunswick County Board of Education member Bill Fairley of Southport: How to provide continuity that will survive frequent turnover in board membership and administrators.

UNC-W is eager for the Cape Fear Educational Partnership Network (EPN) to expand into Brunswick County and to link with a pilot state of the arts telecommunications "electronic highway" that will be developed between the university and Research Triangle Park.

EPN provides interactive full-motion video educational programming. UNC-W believes expansion of this technology across the region will address multiple needs, promoting rapid advancement of economic development and boosting rural educational opportunities and access to specialized medical care.

"We have the people in place in Raleigh and the opportunity over the next few years to vault over other regions," said Jane Patterson Smith, senior policy advisor for Gov. James B. Hunt and formerly director of UNC-W's Southeastern Network for Economic Development.

(See FORUM, Page 2-A)

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