

Postal Service Officials Promise Improvements At Shallotte Office

BY DOUG RUTTER

Postal service officials last week promised a group of disgruntled patrons they will continue working to improve service at Shallotte Post Office as well as the facility itself.

"You will have some action," said Leroy Evans Jr., a postal official from Charlotte. "We're not going to leave you out in the cold. We're not here to give you lip service. We are going to do something."

Customers who attended a meeting last Thursday said they want the postal service to add parking spaces, improve traffic flow around the building and upgrade or build a new facility in Shallotte.

Local patrons also demanded better service. They want their mail in post office boxes earlier in the day, shorter lines at the windows and a better working relationship with the postmaster.

"We just don't want to be treated like a red-headed stepchild. That's what it amounts to," Shallotte Alderman Roney Cheers said.

Cheers presented to the four postal ser-

vice officials a petition signed by about 400 patrons asking for improvements at the Main Street office or construction of a new facility.

"I understand your frustration perfectly well," said Nearis T. Harvey, post office operations manager for the Mid-Carolinas District. "We're trying to do everything to give you service."

Shallotte officials have been angry with the postal service since last spring, when a branch of the main office opened at Seaside. Most mail-handling operations were moved to the new facility, about 10 miles from Shallotte.

Some Shallotte business owners and residents say service at the downtown post office has deteriorated since the move. Town officials are angry that the changes were made without their input.

"We have the worst post office on the whole seaboard," Mayor Sarah Tripp said last week. "It looks like we were discriminated against to be perfectly honest with you."

Harvey, who first met with town officials

"We're not here to give you lip service. We are going to do something."

—Leroy Evans
U.S. Postal Service

in July, said the postal service can't change what has already happened. He said it can make changes to improve the situation in Shallotte.

"Some things are already done. I wish we could undo it but we can't," he said. "We're trying to move forward from here on out."

Townpeople said last week the leased post office building isn't big enough for the amount of traffic it handles, and there are always traffic and parking problems.

"Day before yesterday I could not even get in the parking lot, and the insurance office lot next door was full," said Carson

Durham, a Shallotte businessman and chairman of the town planning board.

Holden Beach businesswoman Virginia Craig said she uses Shallotte's post office instead of the new facility at Supply because she can take care of other business while she's in town.

She complained about lack of parking and long lines at the service windows. "Shallotte is the largest business area from Myrtle Beach to Wilmington but we have the smallest facility."

Evans, the postal district's administrative support manager, said the issues discussed last week would not be placed on the "back burner" once the meeting ended.

"We're not here to pull the wool over anybody's eyes or anything," he said. "We're here to hear what your concerns are, and we will act on it. There's no doubt about it."

Postal officials said they could increase the size of the lobby, cut long lines at the service windows and add a new zip code to get mail in the post office boxes quicker. A traffic light might help reduce congestion.

"We're going to look at the building and

try to see realistically what we can do with the building," Evans said. "We will not just look at it but do something with the building."

Evans said the postal service does not have the money now to build a new facility in Shallotte, but does have funds to make improvements to the existing office.

He said Shallotte's growth and parking problems at the office will be taken into account when the postal service maps out its five-year plan for new facilities.

At one point in the meeting, Cheers and Shallotte Postmaster Frank Bringoli got involved in a heated exchange over Bringoli's job performance and communication with the public.

"If he had done his job, you all wouldn't be sitting back there telling us you don't know about our problems," Cheers told the other postal officials.

In his defense, Bringoli said customers are getting better service now than ever before. He also said he has responded to telephone calls in a timely manner, despite charges to the contrary.

Storm Dumped Month's Worth Of Rain In One Day

That noisy thunderstorm that rocked the South Brunswick Islands early Sunday morning did more than rob area residents of sleep. It dumped nearly 5 inches of rain.

Meteorologist Jackson Canady said the storm dropped 4.85 inches of rain at his Shallotte Point residence between 3 a.m. and 5 a.m. Sunday. He measured a total of 6.27 inches of rain Sunday.

"That was about a month's rainfall in one day," Canady said. "We got our quota for the month the hard way."

Canady said Tuesday he expects the Shallotte area to receive at least three-quarters of an inch of rain over the next few days.

Temperatures should be near normal, ranging from the high 60s at night to the mid-80s during the day, Canady said.

For the period Aug. 31 through Sept. 6, Canady recorded a daily average temperature of 83 degrees, which was about 6 degrees above normal. The daily average high was 92 degrees and the average nightly low was 75 degrees. The maximum high during the period was 96 degrees on Aug. 31, and the minimum low was 69 degrees on Sept. 6.

Redwine To Ask Legislature For \$1 Million Toward Purchase

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home per "net buildable acre" of high ground. If that plan is approved, an estimated 30 homes could be built on Bird Island. The proposal will be the subject of a joint public hearing by the town council and planning board on Monday, Sept. 13. (See related story.)

In recent months, Price's agents have floated several trial balloons before the Sunset Beach Planning Board to see what level of development might be tolerated. Price's January 1992 Corps permit application says she needs a bridge and causeway to reach 15 four-acre homes for her family wants to build on Bird Island. However, since May, Price's engineer has submitted plans including a restaurant, marina and inn, multi-family "quadrplexes," and oceanfront lots as small as 50 by 150 feet.

Soles and Rep. Dewey Hill, D-Columbus, said they will support Redwine's request for \$1 million toward the island purchase. BIPS President Bill Ducker said he'd like to see the General Assembly put its appropriation in the form of a matching grant.

Soles, who served in the state legislature during the failed attempt at preserving Bald Head Island as well

"(The Prices) are an outstanding North Carolina family which has done very good things for this state."

—Sen. R.C. Soles

as the successful drive to buy Masonboro Island, warned against getting into a "swearing contest" with the Prices.

"They are an outstanding North Carolina family which has done very good things for this state. They are very prominent," Soles said.

An Army Corps of Engineers spokesman at the meeting said Price could be ordered to provide a complete environmental impact statement or a less detailed environmental assessment for the bridge plans.

Cliff Winefordner of the Corps' regulatory branch said the Corps has not put Price's application "on hold," as has been widely believed.

"We don't have the luxury of doing that. It is proceeding, though slowly, waiting for more specifics from the developer," Winefordner said there is no deadline for action by either Price or the Corps.

Walker Golder of the National Audubon Society said Bird Island "is extremely important for the birds of North Carolina and this country. They depend on an undisturbed habitat, few of which are left on the entire Atlantic coast."

If land access is provided to Bird Island, he warned, "predators like feral cats and raccoons can wipe out the colonial waterbirds."

Wilmington Attorney Camilla Herlevich, executive director of the N.C. Coastal Land Trust, commended Sunset Beach officials for "walking a tightrope to be mindful of the rights of the property owner while trying to protect Bird Island."

She said the town's planning board "has done an incredible job asking questions, studying codes from other communities, and trying to balance competing interests."

Bob Jamieson of the N.C. Office of Coastal Management told the BIPS leaders, "Preserving undeveloped coastal lands takes several things, and you've done them all in one year. You have a focused leader in Bill Ducker, you have legislative leadership and you have received invaluable technical guidance from the N.C. Coastal Federation and Coastal Land Trust."

Ducker commended volunteers who have become involved in the preservation effort and emphasized that he is an advocate of individual property rights and want to work with the Price family toward a fair-market-value purchase.

BIPS currently has about 1,500 supporters and has raised about \$35,000.

Merchants Laud Holiday, Season

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could only take so much of the beach."

The dealt with it by going shopping.

"I've got no complaints. It was a good summer, better than recent years and up substantially over last year," said Callahan, whose operation is in its 16th season.

"It didn't seem to me that there were that many more people; they just seemed to be spending more."



A MOVING VAN is loaded with groceries last week after Food Folks closed its store in Shallotte. Employees said they received no warning. STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

Landlord Negotiating With Other Grocers After Food Folks Closing

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stores in Whiteville and Wilmington.

In a published report last week, Andrews was quoted as saying the store was closed because it had been losing money ever since Food Folks took over more than 1½ years ago.

Food Folks purchased 33 Hill's grocery stores from Hillco Foods Inc. in December 1991. Hill, who was president of Hillco, said Andrews has closed four of the stores, including the one in Shallotte.

Andrews was quoted in last Friday's *Wilmington Morning Star* as saying the decision to close the store was made last Tuesday night.

However, Farrell said shipments stopped coming to the store on Aug. 24, eight days before the store closed.

"I understand the corporate decision," said Farrell, who worked 38 hours per week as a stock clerk. "They should have told people. They knew a week ago when they stopped sending us shipments."

"A lot of us lost our jobs and it's really a very sad situation," Farrell added. "One girl was in my arms

crying. She has two little babies and she's going to have to go on welfare."

Star Floyd, another Food Folks part-timer who is suddenly unemployed, said, "I just bought a mobile home, and this has put everybody in a terrible, terrible bind."

Farrell and Floyd said they understand the decision to close the store, but said company officials should have given employees a warning so they could start looking for other jobs.

"All of us understand it being a corporate decision because the store wasn't making any money," Floyd said. "But we are concerned about not having a chance to go out and look for other employment."

Floyd said Food Folks has a reputation of closing stores without giving employees adequate notice. The recent closing in Castle Hayne was handled the same way, she said.

In Leland, Floyd said the Food Folks was closed at night. When employees showed up for work the next morning, they found pink slips on the door.

Floyd said employees are expected to give employers at least two

weeks notice when they leave a job, but Food Folks didn't show their workers the same courtesy.

Floyd had worked in the deli section for approximately six weeks and said Food Folks management had promised her a full-time position after taking a cake-decorating class.

Floyd signed up for a class through Brunswick Community College, but said she won't need the training now.

"It's put everybody who worked there in a really bad situation," she said. "They did not even tell the managers that the store was being closed."

Farrell, who worked at Food Folks all summer, said the timing of the closing was particularly bad because there are fewer jobs available after tourist season.

"He (Donald Andrews Sr.) comes on TV saying he cares about your family, but he didn't care about our families," Farrell said.

Floyd said she isn't eligible for unemployment benefits.

"I have no idea what I'll do now. Try to find employment if I can. I was looking forward to full-time employment and this has shot me out of the saddle so to speak. I'm just going to have to do the best I can."

Manager's Restructuring Plan Would Place Logan Under 911 System Head

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dollar saved during the 12 month period immediately following implementation of its recommendations. The county would have kept the remainder of the savings.

Yelton asked the board to approve the concept of conducting such studies and said he "would expect to present another such proposal strictly relating to analyzing our telephone system and expenses at the next meeting."

Again, Shaw objected to Yelton's plan, saying that the responsibility for such decisions ought to remain with department heads.

"I don't thing anybody knows more than (Utilities Director) Jerry Webb about water treatment chemicals," Shaw said. "Our own people know how to make those decisions. I think we can handle it ourselves."

Jones agreed, saying it was the responsibility of department heads to make wise purchasing decisions. He joined Vereen and Shaw in voting down Yelton's proposal.

In other business the board:

- Adopted resolutions praising county volunteer fire and rescue personnel, emergency service workers, other county employees and several local businesses for their efforts in helping fight the recent forest fire along N.C. 211 last month.
- Heard a request from Robert

Gore of Shingletree Acres for the county to ask the state to take over maintenance of Old Georgetown Road S.W. and Jenrette Road S.W. Warren said he would ask county staff to research the road's history and begin the process of petitioning to have the roads taken into state system.

- Voted unanimously to approve Vereen's nomination of Sue Franks to the Brunswick County Planning Board.
- Set a public hearing for Oct. 4 at 6 p.m. on several proposed amendments to the county zoning ordinance. The board also adopted several proposed amendments to the law Tuesday after holding a public hearing.
- Gave final approval to the county's new Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA) land use plan update.
- Endorsed a proclamation designating September as Brunswick County Literacy Month and Sept. 8 as International Literacy Day at the request of the Brunswick County Literacy Council.

Lightning Injures Sunset Officer

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her against the back wall of the office.

She was discovered, semi-conscious, only three to four minutes later by Sgt. Lisa Massey, returning from taking another drunken driver to jail. "Lisa picked her up and put her in a patrol car and called Officer John Goodwin at Ocean Isle Beach for assistance. She drove Anna to Ocean Isle, shaking her all the way to keep her awake."

Dosio was taken by the Shallotte Medical Rescue unit to The Brunswick Hospital, where she was treated and later released.

"I checked on her several times Sunday, and she said her shoulders were sore and she had a headache like you wouldn't believe," Buell said. Earlier this week, Dosio was taking four previously-scheduled days off, but was expected to return to duty after a trip out of town.

"She's a lucky lady," Buell said, adding that if Massey had not appeared shortly after the accident, "there's no telling what would have happened."

The lightning strike knocked out the department's base radio as well as communications to the adjacent town hall. Phone service was restored about 2 p.m. Sunday, and Buell was waiting Tuesday morning for Motorola service representatives to assess the radio damage. The typewriter Dosio was using is next to the radio unit in the small police headquarters.

"I could find no sign that the building itself was struck, but the wiring from the wall to the phones was all burned," said the chief. "It blew up the surge protectors the equipment was plugged into," but the town's computer data appear to be intact.

Buell said he is just thankful the only damage was to equipment. "When they called me and told me what happened, I just said, 'Oh, my God...'" Most people just don't walk away from that."

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