Cut A Rug...

The Dick Goodwin Big Band headlines this year's Charity Ball benefiting the pursuit of personal excellence. Page **8-B**.

Mr. Do-It-All

West Brunswick's Eric Johnson leads the Trojans to victory over Hoggard. Sports, **Section D**.

According To Plan

Protecting the Lockwood Folly River is a chief concern in Varnamtown's first land use plan. Page **3-A**.

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THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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Sunset's Gore Says Secession Proposal Is By 'Fearmongers'

BY LYNN CARLSON

Sunset Beach Town Council members reacted strongly Monday to a citizens' group's assertion that the island portion of the town is being inadequately served and should secede.

GORE

"Our integrity is being challenged by those who would truly destroy our town," said Mayor Pro Tem Ed Gore, who suggested council consider assembling a "suitable legal team" to fight any secession attempt led by the Sunset Beach Taxpayers Association.

In an address to his fellow council members and an audience at Monday's Sunset Beach Town Council meeting, Gore called SBTA's recently drafted Proposal for Independent Government "self-serving and opinionated misinformation put forth by fearmongers."

Gore's father was the town's original developer and Gore is a principal in Sea Trail Plantation, the town's largest mainland development. He has been a council member since the town's charter in 1963, serving as mayor pro tem for most of those years.

"The protection given by my father to the island and mainland cast the mold that made us what we are today," he said. My father never had two towns in mind. Every council from the original has unselfishly served and budgeted for the needs of the entire town. The lion's share of the budget over the years has been to the island. It has never been shortchanged."

Gore cited sidewalks and walkways for dune protection as examples of island amenities not provided on the mainland. "Yet the mainland doesn't complain that the beach gets a disproportionate share of the revenue."

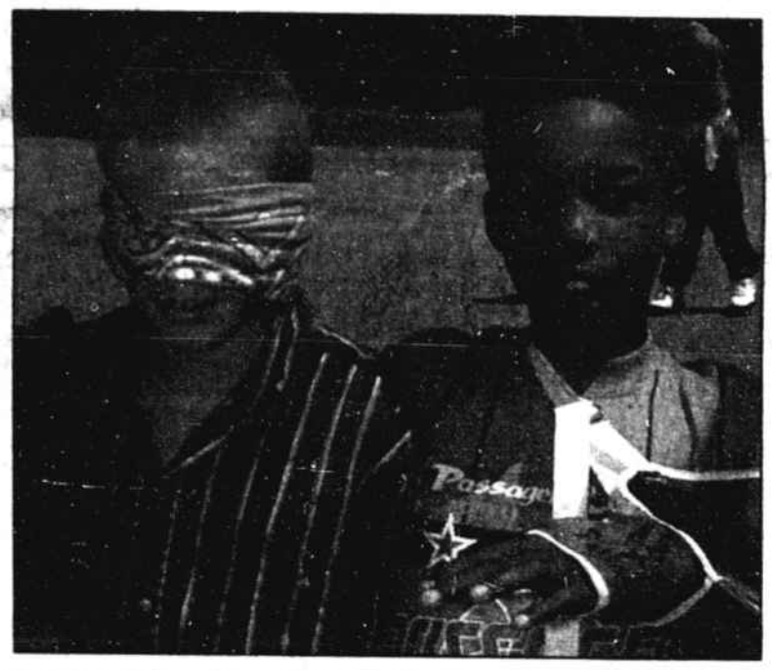
Gore said, "The future of our town, the island included, is certain

(See SUNSET, Page 2-A)

STAFF PHOTOS BY ERIC CARLSON

Celebrating Differences

Fifth graders at Bolivia Elementary School learn about living with physical disabilities during an exercise called "Celebrating Differences" last week. Students donned blindfolds to experience blindness and ear plugs to sample hearing impairments. They wore slings and bandages to simulate immobile limbs. Then the three classes headed out onto the playground to try coping with their handicaps. Shown above are (from left) teacher Samesa Goodson, Priscilla Randolph, Robert Jamerson, teacher Amy Taylor and Travis Hewett. Below, Amanda Willetts hangs out on the parallel bars without the use of her left arm while Jeffery Wilkins tries to get around sightless with help from a disabled Sean Bryant.



Judge Ups School Budget; Parents Discuss Lawsuit

BY SUSAN USHER

While a budget dispute with the Brunswick County Commissioners is under appeal, the Brunswick County Schools will have to make fewer budget cuts than first anticipated as a result of a judge's decision Monday.

On other fronts, school board members are wondering what effect the Nov. 8 election might have on the controversy, and a group of concerned parents is contemplating legal action against county commissioners for failing to fund county students' educational needs.

Meeting with attorneys for the two boards, Judge Jack Thompson determined Monday that the schools should receive $9.4 million in operating funds from the county while the case is being appealed. County and school officials asked for the meeting with Thompson to clarify a state law that requires local funding to continue at the same level as the previous year while a funding dispute is being resolved in the courts. County commissioners had expected to allocate the schools $8.7 million, but through their attorney, Mike Ramos, agreed Monday to provide the additional $700,000.

This will allow continuation of existing programs, compensating for the $600,000 fund balance the school board used to balance its budget last year, and providing $100,000 for the Extended Day school program, an evening high school program which had been funded with Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) money that is no longer available.

The impact of the decision on the school budget wasn't certain Tuesday. In late afternoon, Finance Director Rudi Fallon said she was still "trying to balance the budget."

The school board sued the county for more money after commissioners chose to allocate $9.2 million for education, approximately $4.8 million less than the schools had requested, then rejected an out-of-court settlement offer that fell substantially short of the requested sum.

Thompson presided at the trial this summer in which a jury determined county commissioners should award the schools the full $14 million the board of education had sought. After the judge refused to set aside or reduce the verdict or to grant a new trial, county commissioners voted unanimously to appeal the verdict to the N.C. Court of Appeals. They said they thought the 10-cent tax increase needed to cover the judgement would be a burden on county taxpayers.

Board of Education member Bill Fairley said Monday that by appealing the verdict, commissioners "are effectively undermining the verdict the jury rendered".

"Even if the appeal is settled by spring we have lost the benefit for this year of the money the jury ordered us to have," he said. "For this academic year the commissioners have done exactly what they wanted to do—funded us at about 50 percent of our needs."

Glen Peterson, attorney for the school board, said Judge Thompson is checking with the N.C. Court of Appeals in an effort to obtain a "speedy" hearing before the appeals court, or to bypass the appeals court and take the case directly to the N.C. Supreme Court, since commissioners have indicated they intend to continue their appeal through the courts.

But "fast" for the appeals court is at least 15 months, Fairley said, based on his own experience as a trial lawyer. "And if they expressed it, it would still take eight or nine months."

Peterson said Monday that a change of membership on the school board or board of county commissioners could definitely affect the appeal, determining whether it is "settled, moved along or dropped."

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Shallotte Aldermen Eyeing Street Peddling Rules

BY DOUG RUTTER

The days of people setting up roadside tables and tents to sell clothes, crafts and furniture in downtown Shallotte may be coming to an end.

Shallotte Aldermen are considering a ban on most types of street peddling in the town and its extraterritorial area, which extends one mile outside the city limits.

Town board members discussed the proposed ordinance at their Sept. 6 meeting and could pass the new regulations as early as next Tuesday.

Alderman Carson Durham said the purpose of the rules is to keep peddlers from coming to Shallotte for one or two days and taking business away from taxpaying merchants.

"I think we owe them (merchants) to protect them any way we can," Durham said at last week's meeting. "What we're trying to do is get the transient business off the street."

Brunswick County fishermen selling their local catch and farmers selling their produce would be exempt from the regulations. They could sell from their own property, or from private property with the owner's permission.

Sales by civic, charitable, political and religious organizations also would be allowed. In all cases, peddlers would be required to get a free permit from the town each year.

Other than sales by fishermen, farmers and non-profit groups, the ordinance would prohibit the selling of "any tangible property" along the streets and other public places.

The rules also would outlaw peddling on private property—with or without the landowner's permission—from any wagon, truck, pushcart, concession stand or tent.

The proposed ordinance also would prohibit the conducting of business and the placement of commercial signs in the right of way of state roads. All signs and equipment used by peddlers would have to be removed at the end of each business day.

Alderman David Gause said last week he doesn't think the rules should apply in the extraterritorial area (ETJ), which includes almost all of the property within a mile of town.

"I don't go along with all this being in the ETJ. No me. There's just too much of it, and we're going too fast," Gause said.

Mayor Sarah Tripp agreed. "The ETJ covers a lot of territory and enforcing it is going to be expensive for us," she said.

But Durham said enforcing the rules inside the town and leaving the ETJ alone would "defeat the purpose of what we're trying to do."

"If we don't, the furniture tent that was here the other day could sit outside the city limits," Durham said.

Police Chief Rodney Gause said his department has the authority to enforce town ordinances in the ETJ. However, he said officers do not routinely patrol outside the town.

Under the proposal, anyone who violates the ordinance would be subject to a civil fine of $50, which is the maximum penalty allowable by law. Each day the violation continued would constitute a separate offense.

'NOT AS BAD AS SUPPLY'

College Gets 30 Days To Devise Plan For Failed Septic System

BY ERIC CARLSON

Less than a month after health officials threatened to shut down Supply Elementary School because of a failed septic system, Brunswick Community College will be given 30 days to come up with a plan to fix a failed system there.

Like at Supply School, sewage effluent was found seeping to the surface of a septic nitrification field at Brunswick Community College during a health department inspection in March, Environmental Health Specialist Bruce Withrow said Tuesday.

However, the problem at BCC isn't nearly as bad as the one at Supply, although it may require a similar solution, Withrow said.

"It's not a situation like at the elementary school, where sewage was flowing into the playground and around the building," said Withrow. "The drain field at the college is at the edge of the woods, not in the center of campus. It's surrounded by trees and no one is likely to go near it.

"The effluent isn't ponding on the surface. It bubbles up when the pumps come on, then soaks back in a short time later," Withrow said. "It isn't flowing toward the building. I haven't detected any odor on campus. Unless you were to walk on the drain field when the pump comes on, I don't think you'd be aware of the problem."

Withrow was asked to inspect the drain field after the school maintenance supervisor and waste treatment operator Curtis Workman discovered problems with the five-year-old system last spring, said Benjamin DeBlois, BCC's vice president for administrative services.

"He started noticing periodic failures. They came and went and didn't seem that severe," DeBlois said. "We sat down and talked about it and decided to contact the health department to have Bruce look at it."

DeBloise said the school followed Withrow's maintenance recommendations, which improved the situation. But not enough. So the school followed Withrow's advice to have an engineer inspect the system and recommend a solution. That study has not been completed, DeBlois said.

Both Steve Berkowitz, head of engineering for the N.C. Division of Health Services on-site sewage section, and Dwayne Graham, a soil scientist for the agency, have inspected the Brunswick Community College sewage treatment system, Withrow said. They are now awaiting the engineer's designs for upgrading or replacing the failed drain field.

Next Monday, Withrow said he will send BCC a formal violation notice giving the school 30 days to submit those plans for state approval. Meanwhile, the county health department will monitor the septic system to determine whether an interim treatment plan should be put in place.

Supply Elementary School has been allowed to remain open for 90 days using a temporary "pump-and-haul" technique until permanent repairs on its failed septic system are under way. Trucks visit the school regularly to pump out its 16,000-gallon septic tanks and transport the effluent to a treatment plant.

The same temporary measures could be required at the college if the septic problem gets any worse, Withrow said.

"I'm not going to ask them to close school or go to pump-and-haul as long as there's not sewage ponding on the surface for long periods," Withrow said. "If it starts to pond or flow off site, I will."

Asked what might have caused the BCC system to fail, Withrow said the disruption of surface soil during landscaping may have contributed to the problem. Or Brunswick Community College may have simply outgrown the 8,150-gallon-per-day system built in 1988 to serve its administrative and classroom buildings.

DeBlois said enrollment at the school has increased from between 650 and 750 students in 1988 to as high as 950 now. Another 25 to 30 employees also have been added during that period, he said.

Withrow said there is a good chance the failed BCC septic system can't be fixed. If not, the school would be forced to build a new drain field on property it has set aside for that purpose. Secondary septic field sites are required by the health department for all such systems.

Neither Withrow or DeBlois could estimate how much a new septic field might cost the college. Those figures will not be available until engineering study is complete.

"We don't know the magnitude of the problem, so we don't know the magnitude of the solution," DeBlois said.