



Black Gold

Some of us could look at this Pitt County field and see nothing but dirt. To the farmer, however, it's almost as good as gold when it begins to sprout tobacco, soybeans or any of Eastern North Carolina's agricultural bounty.

Staff photo by Steve Murray

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Panel Moves To Junk Expressway

By ROB CHRISTENSEN
Staff Writer

A Raleigh City Council committee Tuesday recommended the junking of plans for the controversial North-South Expressway, which would go through several established central city neighborhoods.

"It has hung over the heads of these people like Damocles' sword since 1967," said East Raleigh Councilman Thomas

G. Bashford in moving that the superhighway plan be killed. The unanimous Public Works Committee recommendation must now go before the full City Council for action June 3.

But before the plan can be officially removed, it must first be reviewed by an area transportation committee and the state and federal highway departments.

The expressway was designed to serve as the major access into a revitalized center city sometime in the future.

Despite strong backing of traffic engineers, the proposed expressway has been the subject of bitter opposition from residents of the Oakwood and Mordecai neighborhoods.

City traffic engineer James D. Blackburn defended the continued presence of the expressway in future city road plans, saying it would be "premature" to remove it.

"No one has ever defined, even in general terms, an alternative to the North-South Expressway," Blackburn told the committee.

But committee members argued that the price of better downtown access through the expressway was too high if it meant the destruction of neighborhoods.

"I'm not questioning the need" for the expressway, council member Miriam P. Block told Blackburn. "We have found that the injury this particular plan does to the neighborhood is worse than the traffic problem," she said.

Bashford campaigned last fall on a platform opposing the road. Bashford's church, the Fuller Mission Baptist Church at 800 Bloodworth St., would be one of the buildings removed if the expressway were built.

Bashford asked that the portion of the freeway north of the proposed Southern Beltline be scrapped. The portion to the south, Bashford said, could be built but under a different name.

"Let's get the North-South (name) out of it before we get some old ladies put to bed with high blood pressure," Bashford said.

Committee Chairman Oliver Williams also asked the city administration to study over the summer possible alternatives to other road projects which would "disrupt neighborhoods."

He said alternatives should be found widening of such roads as Dixie Trail, Clark Avenue, Yarkin Drive and Lake Boone Trail.

No Formal Action

The Public Works Committee took no formal action on the plan at its Tuesday meeting but recommended that it be reviewed by area residents before it is sent to the full City Council for final disposition.

Williams described the committee's Oberlin Road plan as a compromise which "reduces" the project suggested by city traffic engineers.

Williams said the proposed Oberlin-Pullen project has several innovative features, including a bicycle path the entire length and a bus stop shelter to be built at the Oberlin Road and Hillsborough Street intersection.

\$900,000 Estimate

The project is estimated to cost about \$900,000.

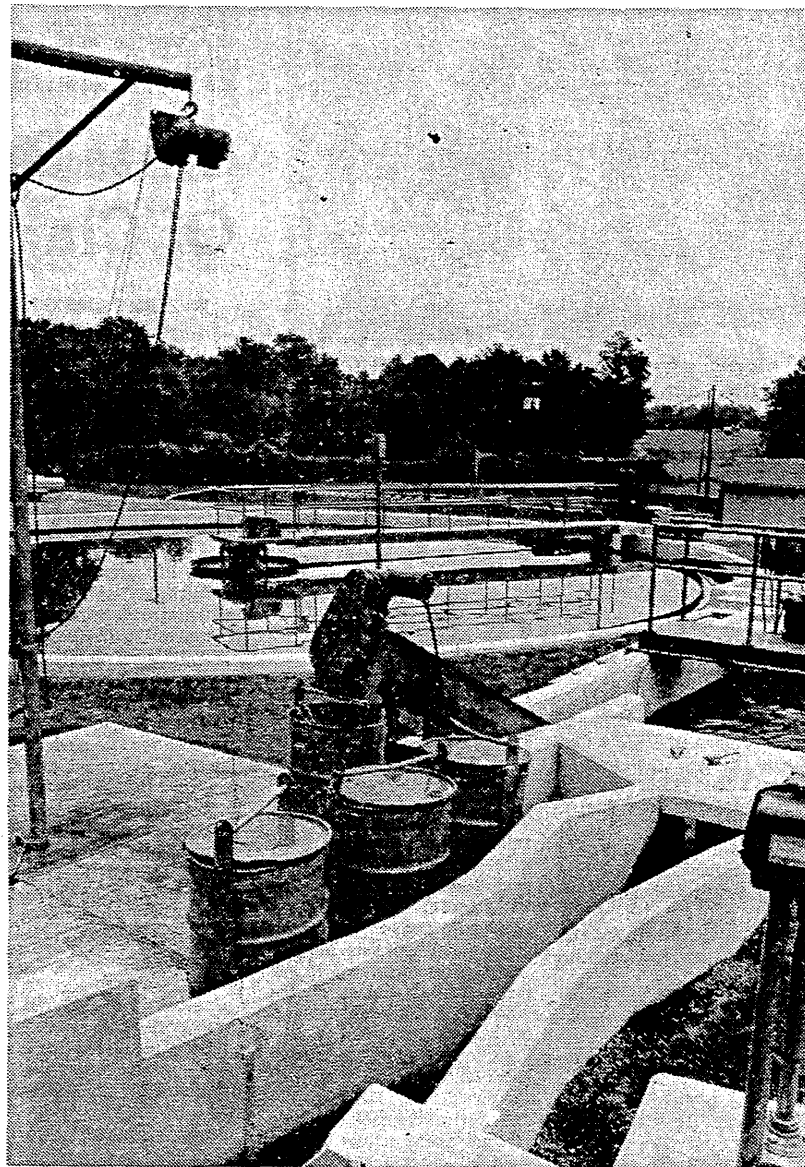
Oberlin Road is the major north-south access route for West Raleigh between Clark Avenue and Western Boulevard.

The Clark to Hillsborough section of the project would include a five-lane road southward from Clark Avenue on a new alignment joining Fendell Avenue. The project would connect Oberlin Road to Hillsborough Street opposite the Pullen Road intersection.

Currently there is a jog where the two roads intersect at Hillsborough causing traffic tieups.

That section, under the proposed plan, would have a bicycle trail on one side of the road and a sidewalk on the other.

Instead of the five-lane road proposed by city traffic engineers for the Hillsborough Street to Western Boulevard section, there would be a four-lane road, with a grassy median.



Staff photo by Rick Nichols

SEWER PROBLEMS — The Chapel Hill Board of Aldermen authorized an emergency appropriation this week of \$155,400 to upgrade treatment facilities at the town's overloaded Mason Farm treatment plant shown here. State officials have clamped a moratorium on sewer line extensions in the community until the treatment efficiency is improved. According to local officials, the plant's capabilities should be substantially increased by the end of June.

Buckhead's Lifeblood Slips Away

BOLTON — Come Friday, the former Waccamaw Indian School in the Buckhead community near this Columbus County town will be just another abandoned building.

It's not that school is out for the summer. The last class was held at Waccamaw Indian School in 1969. But since March 1970 the old school building had been headquarters for Audio Devices Corp.

And the corporation has set Friday as the date for moving to another facility in Winchester, Va.

During the school's existence as an educational facility for Indian children, it became a

community center and a source of local pride as well as a collection of classrooms. There was some resentment when Audio Devices bought the property, knocked out walls and brought in machinery.

The resentment largely withered as paychecks issued by Audio Devices began to make down payments on houses and mobile homes, buy groceries and clear up long-standing debts.

Now the corporation's 212 employees and others in the area are wondering what the future holds.

The shutdown will "hurt pretty bad," according to Mrs.

Katie Patrick, whose husband Joe is a porter at Audio Devices. "Some (who've) got jobs now won't be able to get another one," she said.

"Now the plant is leaving, the people here are crying vice versa," said Earnest Jacobs, a community leader. Jacobs, manager of George Transfer and Rigging Co. Inc., has worked closely with Audio Devices since it opened, to the point of permanently leasing one of his trucks to the plant.

Jacobs' family operates the only store in the community. Since Audio Devices arrived in Columbus County, he said, the store cashes more paychecks

and receives fewer food stamps.

Some of the company's employees have already quit to look for new jobs. Most, however, have stayed on, apparently agreeing with an employee who said, "It's better to get a paycheck till then (Friday) than take a chance on none at all."

Nick Krassowski, Audio Devices plant supervisor, offered employees new jobs at the Winchester site if they want to move.

He said in a telephone interview Tuesday that "just a few (are) considering it." None has made a firm commitment to go, Krassowski said.

the company an additional \$83.3 million annually.

Deputy Atty. Gen. I. Beverly Lake Jr., who filed the motion, said the commission should dismiss one of the two requests — the one before the commission.

The commission made no ruling. But chairman Marvin R. Wooten volunteered after the meeting his personal opinion that the five-member panel will not vote to toss out the case currently being heard.

Lake's motion, which was described by commission observers as "bold," says, in effect, that the commission is in danger of being bypassed if utility companies follow Duke's lead and "pancake" one rate request on top of another.

Under state law, the utilities commission must hold a hearing within six months or the company can place its rates

into effect automatically as long as it agrees to pay back — with 6 per cent interest — any increase eventually not approved by the commission. If the commission does not each a decision in nine months, the rates can go into effect permanently.

Companies, Lake said, could pile up rate cases so high and put the commission so far behind in hearing them that they could assure their rate increases by paralyzing the commission.

Such a practice places "an impossible burden and undue pressure on the commission, the commission staff and the attorney general and the public he represents," Lake said.

"That might not be Duke's intent, but it's the effect," he said in an interview. "They

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State Opposes Duke Power Rate Request

By STEVE BERG
Staff Writer

Charging that Duke Power Co. is trying to paralyze the North Carolina Utilities Commission by stacking one rate case on top of another, the state attorney general's office Tuesday asked the commission to throw out either one of the other of Duke's pending cases.

The action came as the commission opened its first day of hearings in the largest utility rate case ever to be heard in North Carolina. Duke is seeking to increase its rates by 16.8 per cent. The firm expects a \$60.4 million annual increase in revenues if the request is approved.

But even before the commission could get started with the current hearing, Duke asked last Friday for another 16.6 per cent increase that would bring

Ford Denies Reports Of Rift with Nixon

CHARLOTTE (AP) — Vice President Gerald R. Ford said Tuesday there is no strain in the relationship between him and President Nixon.

"The President and I have had, do have and I expect (to continue) to have an excellent personal relationship," said Ford, in town to participate in the Kemper Open golf tournament. "At the Cabinet meeting this morning, the President was very friendly and complimentary in several instances."

Ford said he had not noticed any change in the President's attitude toward him and referred to remarks made by

Nixon when he nominated Ford last fall to be vice president to replace the deposed Spiro Agnew.

"The President and I have had a personal, social and political relationship," said Ford.

"I see no change whatsoever despite what some have speculated," he said, referring to Nixon's remarks when nominating him.

"I admire him. I think he has done a good job, in our foreign relations and otherwise."

There have been reports that the 25-year-old relationship between Nixon and Ford has be-

gun to unravel because of the vice president's persistence, and the White House refusal to turn over additional tapes and other materials to the House Judiciary Committee.

Ford also declined to comment on a report in Newsweek magazine which quoted Nixon as telling former New York Gov. Nelson Rockefeller at the White House: "Can you see Gerald Ford sitting in this chair?"

Aboard the plane on his way to Charlotte he said: "There is nothing in it."

Later, he said: "I think any comment ought to come from the White House. Under the circumstances, I don't think I ought to make any observations."

Ford, a 16-handicap golfer, played the back nine at Charlotte's Raintree Country Club with Reps. Thomas P. O'Neill, D-Mass., House majority leader, and Samuel Young, R-Ill., and Jim Kemper Jr., president of the Kemper insurance Co., sponsor of this week's pro golf tournament.

Ford will play in Wednesday's Kemper pro-amateur tournament with North Carolina Gov. James E. Holshouser Jr., the Rev. Billy Graham and pro golfer Tom Weiskopf before traveling to Birmingham, Ala., for the annual meeting of the Salvation Army.

Beg Your Pardon

Due to a printing error, a map in Tuesday's News and Observer erroneously indicated the predominant religious denomination in two North Carolina counties. The map should have indicated that in Washington County no one denomination has more than 25 per cent of the county's total membership in churches, while in Beaufort County, the Christian Church and Church of Christ each have 25 per cent of the churchgoers.

Dedication Set Today

Mayor Clarence Lightner will speak at the dedication of Optimist City Park in Northcliff at 6:30 p.m. today.

Three garden clubs will be participating in the public dedication: Northcliff Home and Garden Club, Northcliff Improvers and the Four Seasons.

Gas Came Cheap at Bearskin Grocery

SALEMBURG — The sign beside N. C. 242 just below Piney Green said that if I would turn left on the side road there I would come to the Bearskin Grocery. That sounded worthwhile, so I did it.

But when I got there the store was closed and locked, the inside cupboards bare. I think it has been closed for some months, too. A discarded gasoline price sign said the "Super" grade was 35.9 cents a gallon. Some of you may remember hearing your mommies and daddies talk about the days when gas was that cheap.

Salemburg was only four miles away, so I went on over there to ask about "Bearskin."

In M. O. Hill's store ("groceries and seafood"), Floyd Lockerman said: "That's Bearskin Swamp right there. It's a big swamp and it runs a right good way." So the community is known as Bearskin.

Lockerman said he doesn't live in Salemburg: "I stay a mile and a half out here in the country. Can't afford to stay here in Salemburg. Have to pay the town tax."

Doris Hill, daughter-in-law of the store owner, said: "You may have heard Floyd sing. He's a singer."

"I'm a messer," Lockerman said. He is also a member of "The Glad Tidings," a Zoar Pentecostal Free Will Baptist



Jack Aulis

Church quartet. "We sing around right smart places," he said. "I been singing about 35 years. I'm older than you thought I was, ain't I?"

Mrs. M. O. Hill and Doris and Lockerman were looking forward to the dedication of their remodeled and expanded church. The dedication was held the Sunday after I met them.

The church's membership is 132 but "we'll probably feed about 500," Doris Hill said. "That's what we're looking for." She told her mother-in-law: "Ruby Faircloth said all her family's coming."

"That'll be a crowd," Mrs. Hill said. "There's about 40 of them, ain't there?"

Salemburg's population, they told me, is about 900. "But it's going to be more," Mrs. Hill said. The new state police academy is going to be located there this year, on the campus of Southwood College, a two-year college that closed awhile back.

Nobody in the store knew for certain when the school was established but it was originally a school for girls and had high school grades. A woman customer, who asked not to be identified, said: "It's been a long time ago. My oldest sister, she went there some and she's in her 70s."

"Back then we just had a one-room (public) school place and seventh grade was about all they taught."

But, getting back to business: How come the store over at Bearskin closed? I asked.

"They say he went busted," Floyd Lockerman said. "He had a good business but they say he credited too much."

Mrs. M. O. Hill, who has helped her husband run their store for 22 years, nodded her head. "If you credit, you'll HAVE the business," she said.