

# Mayor's Memo

By Ken Jones

## Pressure from the Outside

This past June a citizen group called the "Strategic Planning Steering Group" was appointed by your Board of Commissioners and directed to develop a strategic plan for our town. You will be hearing a lot about this group in the near future. During this exercise we used a S.W.O.T. analysis (Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats) to determine where we should focus for planning purposes. Among the more interesting portions of the analysis were external opportunities and threats to our community; in other words, from outside our town's borders.

Some of the external threats were Cherry Point leaving (BRAC—Base Realignment and Closure), insurance increases, loss of tourism and environmental regulations, to name only a few. These are just some of the challenges we are facing from outside our community. You may already know about most of these, but to be specific: we are in jeopardy of having our beaches and waters designated as a critical habitat for the loggerhead turtle, having sand dredged from the channel for the Morehead City Port going on Shackleford Banks, dealing with skyrocketing homeowner and flood insurance premiums and having a wind turbine farm go in at Mill Pond in Carteret County. These four challenges are straight from our S.W.O.T. analysis.

I'm not sure if Pine Knoll Shores and our very way of life has ever been put to task so heavily at once, but as the old saying goes, "When it rains, it pours!" Since I have very limited space, I will say a few words about each of these.

The critical habitat designation for the loggerhead sea turtle will be announced this July by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This will limit access and activities on our beach—in other words, affect tourism in our area. This could also limit our

ability to renourish our beaches. Government regulations may change our entire economy.

You have seen signs next to our roads that say, "KeepShackWild.com." The federal government has opted to request that 43% of the dredged materials from the channel for the Morehead City Port go on the beaches of Shackleford Banks. This would also put heavy equipment on Shackleford Banks and allow only 57% of the sand to go onto the beach at Fort Macon. Sand on our beaches flows from east to west. This would prove to be an impossible battle against nature and makes no sense. We are also requesting that we, as a county, be allowed to pump or haul the sand that does go on Fort Macon to points west of Fort Macon. This would ultimately save us money because one of *the* most expensive parts of renourishment is mobilization of the equipment to do it, and the cost here would be paid by the federal government.

The homeowners and flood insurance issue is unfolding as I write this. It appears the flood insurance lines will be redrawn. This is yet another example of federal government intervention to make up for money that the insurance pool paid out for Tropical Storm Sandy and for Hurricane Katrina that exceeded premiums collected—and in some cases they paid for claims where no premium had been paid.

The wind turbines at Mill Pond, near Newport, are receiving plenty of attention. Other than the reliability and inefficiencies at this time, I don't have anything against alternative energy. I am of the opinion that we probably have not developed the alternative energy that will ultimately replace fossil fuels. The problem here is the potential loss of MCAS Cherry Point and Seymour Johnson AFB. Airspace encroachment is a huge problem in North Carolina. Since this was on top of our Strategic Planning Steering Committee's list of external threats, we are opposing the development of this project.

On your behalf, we are staying abreast of all of these actions and changes. We are spending time on these issues because we know they are important to you, your home and our community. It is my hope that you will personally get involved in these outside challenges to our community.

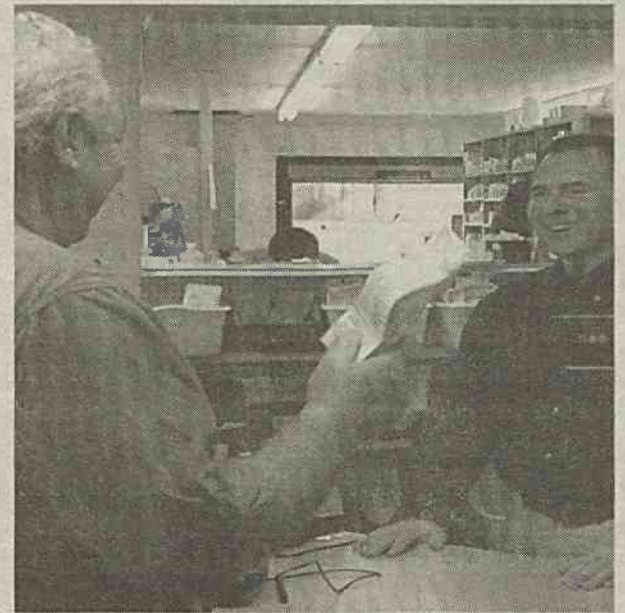
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