

WHICH WAY FOR SOUTHERN PINES?

Public Meeting Discloses Balanced Thinking On Industry-Resort Planning

The question, can Southern Pines be both a resort area and the scene of some industrial development, has been asked often in the past few months.

So often, in fact, that many people heretofore not particularly concerned with the town's future have become understandably worried.

Is the resort atmosphere, certainly the town's past and considered by many as its real future, about to be sacrificed in the face of a constant clamor from those who want industry? Are those same people who want industry justified in thinking that the resort business is a way of the past and should be shunted aside?

A "meeting of minds" was held last Friday and, when it was over, there was probably not a person among the more than 50 present who thought leaders in the community had gone off on a "wild hair." Actually, the word was buzzed along, there seemed to have been a great deal of hard thinking concerning the town's future development and those in charge of various projects had made real progress.

The meeting was held at the library and sponsored by the Town Council. At the outset Mayor Gilmore announced its purpose in simple words: where is Southern Pines going and, as-

suming it is indeed going somewhere, is it in the right direction?

He asked, also, if industrial development and a continuance of the resort business could be accomplished successfully.

Representatives from various business, tourist, civic and professional groups were present. The tone of their brief presentations on progress and plans indicated that much was being done and a great deal planned for the future.

Here is a brief rundown on the reports made by those present: John Ostrom, chairman of the Moore County Industrial Development Committee: "For the first time today, we show you tangible evidence of one thing we have done, a booklet outlining in detail the many advantages that industry seeking to locate a new plant or expand an old one would find in Moore County. We have placed great emphasis on the fact that part of Moore County is presently dedicated primarily to the resort business. The thinking of our committee has been, and will continue to be, that industry and a resort atmosphere can complement each other. We have no intentions of ever trying deliberately to destroy any of the resort flavor of this section and, further, I don't think that any good

industry would have such intentions."

John Ponzer, industrial development engineer for Carolina Power and Light Company: "No industry wants to come here and destroy what made Southern Pines the beautiful town it is. The fact of the matter is, I think, to a great extent, they would come here because of that atmosphere."

Norris Hodgkins, Jr., member of the industrial committee: "The committee feels that location of the proper type industry in this section would give Southern Pines a well-balanced economy and a stabilized income. To date, however, we have shown many prospective industries our existing facilities with no definite results, though we believe that all were favorably impressed with what the area has to offer."

Norris Hodgkins, Sr., president of the Citizens Bank and Trust Company: "Location of industry here needn't interfere with the long established resort business. But we must constantly bear in mind the truism that our children are growing up and we need something here to keep them home after they graduate from school. Actually locating an industry is a long, drawn out affair, however, and I feel we must not be discouraged. We just have to keep at it."

Harry Smythe, member of the industrial development committee and manager of the Sanford division of Saco-Lowell Company, manufacturers of textile machinery: "We all know, I think, that whatever is good for Moore County is good for Southern Pines. In Asheville, they have a rule that no industry is allowed too close to the city limits. We think such a rule would be understood in Southern Pines and know of no one who would think of violating it. We do not want undesirable industry to locate here."

Earl Hubbard, president of the Chamber of Commerce: "We have a program of trying to attract travelling salesmen, manufacturer's representatives and that sort of person to Southern Pines, keeping in mind, however that the retired person is also most welcome. The Chamber feels that in order to keep our young people here, we must have industry. There is little in a resort town to attract young professional people."

James Baird, president of the Junior Chamber of Commerce: "Our group feels that by attracting people here by sponsoring various projects such as the Golf Carousel, we are making a contribution to the future development of the town. Our primary purpose is to make Southern Pines a better place in which to live and to that end our club pledges to do anything in its capabilities of helping those interested either from a resort standpoint, or from one of new industry."

Mrs. Claude Reams, president of the Southern Pines Garden Club: "The club will, of course, go along with anything to help Southern Pines grow in an orderly way while maintaining our most priceless asset, beauty."

George Pottle, manager of the Hollywood Hotel and chairman of the town's advertising committee: "We spent \$4,500 for advertising and promoting the town this year and, to date, the money seemed very well spent. We have had inquiries in response to our advertising from almost every state east of the Mississippi and from several foreign countries. The resort business looks to be in fairly good shape." Pottle said, incidentally, that 552 inquiries had been received and that the present advertising campaign was about over.

Mayor Voit Gilmore: "So far as the resort phase of our lives is concerned, I feel it is of the utmost importance to extend the season, perhaps from September through May. The one thing that comes to my mind is the development of some type of festival in which every part of community life could take an active part."

Mrs. Ernest Ives, past president of the Moore County Historical Association: "You ask yourself: Why did I come here? My answer would be schools, climate and the beauty. The ordinary working man gets as much enjoyment living here as the retired millionaire and we must keep that constantly in mind.

I, and many others, I feel sure, would be very definitely opposed to industry if it became the cen-

tral aim of the town. "The Historical Association would be delighted to take an active role in the promotion and sponsorship of a festival that would help the entire county."

Jerry Healy, member of the Recreation Advisory Committee: "If the town has any shortcomings, it is the lack of adequate facilities for recreation, particularly for young people. More facilities would help both the resort interests and the future location of an industry. More important, it would answer a need for our own children."

Thomas Darst: "I would like to propose now an idea that was suggested by my wife, the establishment of a program that would require the combined efforts of everyone in Southern Pines. Greensboro is the 'dogwood city,' Wilmington is noted for its azaleas. Would Southern Pines be interested in planting enough bulbs to become known as the 'bulb town'? If we did, it would very definitely help in that period when winter blooms are gone and spring ones have not developed."

A. C. Dawson, superintendent of schools and president of the Rotary Club: "I believe the town could very definitely work on the possibilities of getting more small conferences here. We presently are host for a yearly conference of educators and have been propositioned for the annual Class 'A' basketball tournament."

Jimmy Hobbs, president of the Kiwanis Club: "The garden tour that was recently held has created more good will for the town than anything I know of. I travel a lot and hear many kind things about Southern Pines and the Sandhills. We should be more active in promoting 'golf weekends' for people in the nearby areas."

Mrs. James Boyd, editor of The Pilot: "We feel the entire county should be well-balanced with industry, agriculture and tourists. When we consider the industrial picture, we should keep in mind that farmers could very well fill out their income by taking jobs in new plants. A technical school located here would be of tremendous importance in luring new industry and would give our young people a place to be trained for that industry. Don't ignore the possibilities of trying to get a college or research centers to locate here, both of which would bring in the highest type people. As for the festival, perhaps in the spring we could bring in many of the things we already have, such as the annual contest for the Piquet Cup, the North Carolina Symphony concert, the garden and home tour, and perhaps a golf tournament and a folk or historical pageant."

W. Lamont Brown, town attorney: "The impending location of natural gas facilities here will, I believe, act as a stimulant to industrial location. It could very well be the very thing we have been looking for and need."

Harry Pethick, mayor pro-tem, said that everyone who comes to Southern Pines acts as an ambassador for the town when he leaves. And Sam Richardson, Council member, recalled the days when Southern Pines was the scene of a "Dogwood Festival," later known as the

"Spring Blossom Festival." John Ruggles reported that Lakeview is rebuilding and remodeling and would be an addition to the town's resort facilities. And then, just one hour after it started, the meeting was over. Mayor Gilmore summed up:

"We have had a terrible economic letdown in the past year but we obviously aren't licked. The thinking of people here seems to be well balanced."

And many people there suggested that such meetings, a report to each other, as it were, should be held more often. They probably will be.


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