

Commissioners Endorse Supply Location For Nursing Home

BY SUSAN USHER
Brunswick County Commissioners Monday night endorsed a location "adjacent to or within one mile of the Brunswick Hospital" for a proposed nursing home.

Their unanimous vote came at the request of a citizens' group representing the Brunswick County Hospital Authority, which is encouraging the application of Beverly Enterprises for a certificate of need to build on a tract adjoining the hospital.

Robert Sellers, chairman of the Authority, and Rev. Ned Eaddy of Brunswick Christian Center spoke for the group.

Eaddy said the commissioners' endorsement would allow the Authority to go to a meeting of the Cardinal Health Agency Inc. Wednesday with

"totally unified support" for a centrally located medical facility at Supply.

He and Sellers said locating the nursing home at Supply would further the intent behind the decision eight years ago to locate the county hospital at Supply.

Two weeks ago, commissioners had refused to make any endorsement related to the competition among six firms for the right to build a 100-bed nursing home in the county. The county presently has a rest home in Supply and a combination rest home and intermediate care facility at Southport. This would be the first facility certified to offer skilled nursing care.

A Cardinal review committee endorsed Beverly Enterprises, the only

firm that plans to build in the Supply area, 4-2, last Wednesday, overriding a staff recommendation favoring Autumn Corp., which plans to build in Shallotte.

The debate was to renew at a meeting of the full Cardinal board of directors in Lumberton Wednesday night. Cardinal's recommendation will go to the N.C. Division of Facility Services, which has the final say.

Beverly spokesman Barbara Wright said the firm began seeking support for its project in Brunswick County seven months ago, adding that was evidence of the company's commitment to the project. Beverly has letters of endorsement from numerous church leaders, six municipalities, six fire departments and five rescue squads and more.

Beverly's strategy in preparing for Wednesday's meeting consisted primarily of continuing its past efforts to "get the word out" about the project, she added, incorporating citizens' concerns into the campaign as they are identified.

Autumn Corp. spokesman Sally Brown met last Thursday afternoon with Shallotte Mayor Beamon Hewett, Aldermen Jerry Jones and Bobby Ray Russ, town employees and R.D. (Deedy) White III, owner of the tract where Autumn proposes to locate, to chart a renewed effort on behalf of the Autumn project and a Shallotte location.

They divided responsibilities among themselves for contacting citizens, agencies and organizations both in Southport and the

southwestern end of the county and in preparing materials for presentation to the Cardinal board.

All began circulating a petition that supports Shallotte "as the most appropriate area for the development of a nursing home," citing its status as the hub of the county's secondary population area which has a high number of elderly residents, and proximity to physicians, pharmacies and rescue squads.

The petition also endorses Autumn Corp. as having the proposal that offers "quality care in a cost effective manner."

Further, it says Autumn uses local contractors, suppliers and staff, would encourage patients and their families to "utilize the hospital of their choice, wherever the hospital

may be located," and it notes Autumn's top-ranking by the Cardinal staff.

Craig Smith, a Cardinal Health Agency health systems analyst, said the staff will add to its earlier findings results of the project evaluation committee's review and the 4-2 vote in favor of Beverly.

"If they have questions we answer them. There may be more of that questioning Wednesday at the board meeting. If they ask, we can explain what we did."

Since the committee hearing, Smith has met on request both with Autumn Corp. representatives and with Charles Sons, Brunswick Hospital administrator and a member of the Cardinal board.

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Icicles Form From Surf

Icey waves at Holden Beach formed icicles Tuesday morning on the remains of this bulkhead that once protected an east end pavilion from the surf. The seawater temperature dipped down to around 32 degrees early this week as temperatures also dipped down into the single digits.

Brunswick County Copes With Cold Snap

BY SUSAN USHER

An Arctic air mass brought frigid temperatures to Brunswick County Sunday, but only a mere hint of snow in the form of a few afternoon flurries.

Instead of a winter wonderland, residents woke up in a deep freeze Monday similar to the Christmas freeze of 1983, generating a record demand for electricity from Brunswick Electric Membership Corp.

They struggled with vehicles that wouldn't crank, frozen or burst water pipes, no electricity and in some cases, heating problems as temperatures fell to a low below zero Monday morning and hovered around 5 degrees through much of Sunday night.

Brunswick County Schools opened one hour late Monday and Tuesday, and 37 of the system's 140 buses would not start Monday morning, causing some students to arrive even later. The school board canceled a Monday night meeting and, because of heating problems, Brunswick Toastmasters canceled a Wednesday morning meeting at Ship's Chandler Restaurant in Southport.

"Who hasn't had problems?" was the reaction of one realty company owner contacted Tuesday about the condition of beach homes.

"I think if you say everybody's had problems you'd be safe," said Terry Barbee, owner of Island Realty at Ocean Isle Beach.

He said pipes started thawing out Tuesday afternoon, mostly in floors, under houses, with little damage inside.

"The plumber's at my house right now," he added.

He said he that while temperatures were lower than during the cold snap a year ago, he thought residents were better prepared this time around.

Still, he said, "there's not enough plumbers to go around."

True enough, the Beacon reached not one plumber by telephone Tuesday.

And Monday, several area

businesses saw an increase in business because of the weather.

R.E. Bellamy & Sons was selling replacement water pump heads, said Jo Ann Simmons. "So far we're not into fittings. The pipes haven't thawed out so people can check them."

Area tow services said business was generally up, though not as much as some expected.

Johnny Hair at Hair's Garage near Holden Beach, had not received a call Monday at 10 a.m. "I've been expecting them, but we haven't had any calls this morning."

But both Larry Hewett at Hewett's Garage near Civetown and Dennis Fulwood at Fulwood's Auto Service and Towing at Grissetown were busy. Hewett had towed in seven or eight vehicles and Fulwood two, with two more waiting. Many of the vehicles having problems were deisel, they said.

Municipalities weren't immune from problems of their own.

Fulwood said a garbage truck owned by the Town of Sunset Beach had frozen up and would have to have a new fuel pump. Shallotte fared better, Town Clerk Cynthia Long indicated, with no problems of its own. But lots of residents called to report their water pipes had frozen, she added.

Batteries, thermostats antifreeze and radiator checks were also moving well Monday, a further check with dealers such as Dykes Hewett's Shady Park Exxon and Mack Gray's Philip 66 stations in Shallotte and Bruce Quaintance's Ocean Isle Beach Shell station at Ocean Isle Beach.

Hardest hit, perhaps were the home heating fuel distributors.

At Collier-Gwyn in Shallotte, the person who answered the telephone suggested calling back Tuesday.

"We're too busy now," he said.

Oleta Lindsey at Shallotte Ice & Fuel said that company had received so many delivery orders it would take three days to fill them all.

"We've got more orders than we have help or trucks. It will take at

least three days with everybody working."

People were coming to the office to buy white kerosene for Kerosun-type heaters, but there was a high demand for home heating oil as well.

At R.D. White Oil Co., Kyle White said he had "A lot of people calling in wanting fuel today."

"We're going to try our best to fill them. I feel like we'll at least be able to get the ones that are out."

Low Of Century?

Shallotte Point meteorologist Jackson Canady said he recorded a low of -1 degree on Jan. 21, the minimum low for the period Jan. 15-21.

"That's a very rare thing to put on the record books here," he said, venturing that since a 5-degree reading in Wilmington broke records there a minus reading here is "probably as cold as we've had this century." But there are no local records to either confirm or refute that, he noted.

The outlook for the coming period called for more cold, with temperatures well below normal and near-normal precipitation.

Temperatures should average in the mid-20s at night reaching into the mid-40s during the day, with one-half inch precipitation.

For the period Jan. 15-21, Canady said the maximum high was 59 degrees, recorded on the 19th.

The average high for the period was 49 degrees, and the average nightly low, 25 degrees, for a daily average temperature of 37 degrees, about nine degrees below normal. The area received slightly under a half-inch of precipitation, .46 inch.

Sunset Bridge Struck Again

BY SUSAN USHER

A military landing craft struck the Sunset Beach Bridge early Sunday morning, hitting a portion of the same section heavily damaged one weekend earlier by a southbound tugboat and barge.

Because the extent of the damage was not immediately evident, the bridge remained in operation until midmorning. It was then temporarily closed to both land and waterway traffic while repairs were made, said Robert Cox, bridge maintenance supervisor for New Hanover and Brunswick counties.

Cox said it was the only instance he knew of in which a bridge was struck twice within such a short period of time. "It was a freak kind of thing to happen," he said.

The southbound LCU struck the bridge about 3:25 a.m., said Bridgetender J.D. "Danny" Hewett, bouncing off a cluster of pilings on the mainland side of the approach, then striking the beach side. "It didn't do any damage you could actually see," said Hewett. The bridge closed without any problem.

Cox said the impact knocked one subcap off the pilings and pushed one within several inches of coming off. A subcap is a section 12 feet wide, 12 feet long and six feet high that rests on top of the cluster pilings and supports the apron of the bridge. If the second subcap had come off, Cox said, the roadway would have collapsed for the second time this month.

"We're lucky vibrations from vessels coming onto the bridge didn't shake it loose. We're lucky not to have had a serious accident," he continued.

The extent of damage could not be seen except when the bridge was opened to water traffic, Cox said. After the LCU passed through, it was not opened again until after daylight and after another bridgetender, Lewis Stanley, had reported for duty.

Cox was called about 9 a.m., he said. The bridge was closed around 10 a.m. and Cox rounded up a crew to

make the repairs that took approximately three hours. The bridge reopened to traffic between 1:30 p.m. and 2 p.m.

He estimated the cost of repairs at about \$1,000 and no more than \$1,500.

Hewett said one reason repairs were completed so quickly is that the bridge maintenance barge had remained at the Sunset Beach bridge, along with a crane. The barge had a pile of debris on it collected after the previous accident.

On Jan. 12, a tugboat-barge combination headed for Jacksonville, Fla., knocked out three 17-foot sections of the bridge approach on the island side and damaged a fourth, cutting off vehicular access to and from the island until 6:10 p.m. last Wednesday. It also tore away the protective fender system or "whalers" on the beach side.

The tugboat *Angelo M* and barge were boarded near Georgetown, S.C., but allowed to continue on its journey.

The LCU had not resumed passage from the Georgetown area as of Monday morning.

A U.S. Coast Guard spokesman at Georgetown said the hull of the landing craft that struck the bridge Sunday had been punctured, but that it was not known if the damage stemmed from contact with the bridge.

"Apparently it also later ran aground," said Petty Officer First Class George Evans, which could have caused the damage. Meanwhile, the Coast Guard had provided pumps and other equipment to help control the flooding and keep the vessel afloat until divers could make repairs, he added, and was helping to assess the damage. The station had come to the craft's aid at the request of the Oak Island Coast Guard Station.

Both accidents are under investigation by the U.S. Coast Guard Wilmington District Marine Safety Office, under the charge of Lt. James Carter.

Carter said the owner/operator of the tugboat *Angelo M* had filled out his

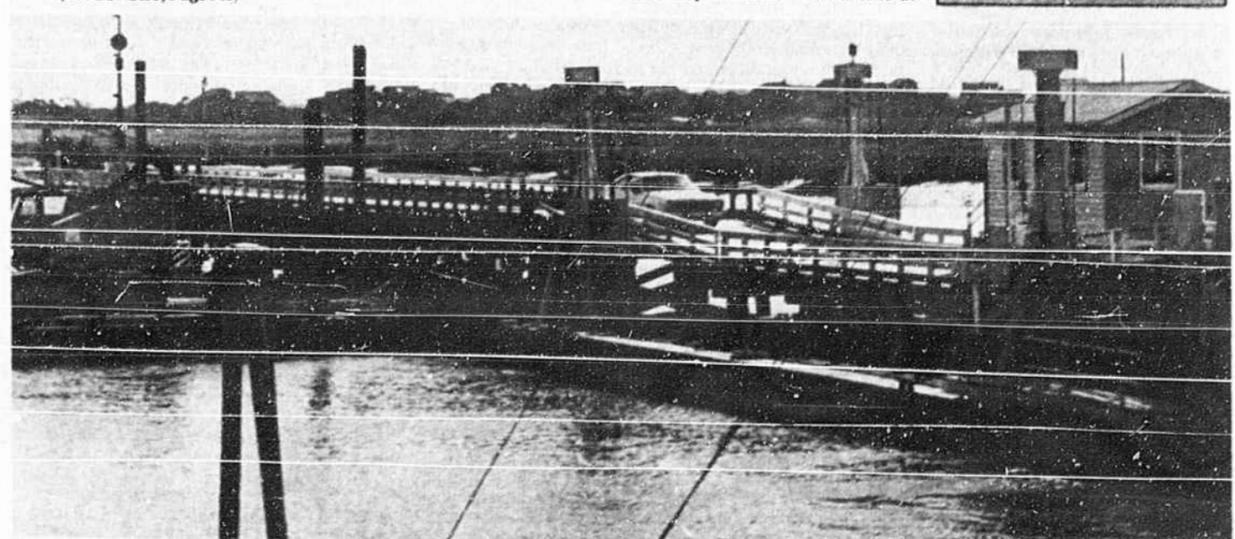
accident report in Jacksonville, Fla., last week and mailed it by way of his attorney.

"I'll see that and the log," said Carter, "and I suspect I will probably need more information from the operator."

He has talked with witnesses to the accident and also hopes to talk to the operator, Jim Kelley, on his return trip up the coast. Kelley continued from Jacksonville to New Orleans, La., to pick up a new load bound for New York.

Meanwhile, traffic is limited to 10 mph crossing the Sunset Beach Bridge. Cox said the Brunswick County bridge maintenance crew would probably begin setting pilings for the new fender system Wednesday, weather permitting. Rails needed to be painted and the actual fenders and permanent fender lights installed.

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TRAFFIC ONCE AGAIN flowed across the Sunset Beach bridge last week after N.C. Department of Transportation officials completed repairs by 6:15 p.m. Wednesday. However, traffic was again interrupted Sunday

afternoon for several hours after the bridge was struck for a second time by an U.S. Army landing craft carrier, similar to the makeshift ferry used by DOT officials last week to transport traffic to and from the island.