

Limited Sewer System Capacity May Slow Growth

BY SUSAN USHER
Shallotte plans to look more closely at future annexation requests because demand may outstrip the capacity of the town's sewer system sooner than projected earlier this year.

Earlier concerns about the capacity of the system to handle rapid growth, Mayor Beamon Hewett advised aldermen last Wednesday night, "all of a sudden have become fears."

Last month in discussions with Finley Boney, engineer for the system, the town concluded that its most immediate worry was the capacity of the collection system in certain parts of town. Last week, the treatment plant itself was suddenly of equal concern.

The N. C. Department of Natural Resources and Community Development has advised the town it plans to allow no further extensions to the system beyond those presently proposed or permitted as of mid-March.

Connections along existing lines will be allowed only until the flow of waste to the Forest Drive treatment plant reaches 120,000 gallons per day.

That is the design capacity for the plant, completed in summer 1983 and originally expected by the state to serve the town for 15 to 20 years based on its prior growth history.

"He asked us to back off on annexations until we take a look at where we are—not to stop, but just to take a look. Right now I don't think the state will approve any more extensions of our mains," explained Mayor Beamon Hewett. "It doesn't mean we can't make connections to the lines. The state just won't approve anything that has to go to them."

But officials hope the state will revise its position based upon recent calculations that indicate flow into the plant is lower than the state estimates.

However, regardless of which figures are used, the town must immediately begin arranging for the financial resources it needs to expand and improve the sewer system, Hewett indicated.

According to Steve Long of the Wilmington Regional Office of the N.C. Department of Natural Resources and Community Development, the plant presently treats up to 85,000 gallons of influent per day. Development proposed in recently annexed areas of town is expected to increase the influent to or beyond the system's capacity, to about 123,000 gallons of influent per day.

"The State Department of Natural Resources and Community Development cannot approve plans for exten-

sions which would increase the flow to the plant beyond the permitted capacity of the plant," wrote Long, specifically noting that the rule applies even for future connections and future flow as in this situation.

Influent to the Shallotte must be estimated currently, because the town meters the flow from the plant but not into it.

306 vs. 275
State estimates of how much the system is presently handling are based on 300 gallons usage per connection per day.

"But we're not pumping that much," said the mayor. "We're pumping about 70,000 gallons per day. We're asking them to revise this. That will give us some relief."

Town officials have calculated ac-

tual water usage as closer to 275 gallons per day. Their figures are based the flow of effluent from the plant between July 1, 1984, and Jan. 1, 1985, and actual water usage from a different time period, Oct. 19, 1984, through March 19, 1985.

By the state's formula, completion of development in Phases I, II and III of Brierwood Estates, Shallotte Manor Apartments, a rest home and restaurant in town would add another 48,300 gallons per day demand on the system. By the town's calculations, completion would add only 36,200 gallons per day.

Added to the present estimated influent rate, 122,054 gallons per day would flow into the plant for treatment, the town advised Long in a

March 22 letter. The plant would discharge through its land application spray system about 112,232 gallons of effluent per day.

Some Relief

Long said that a second tie-in to the town system required as part of the Brierwood Phase III development will allow another 25 to 35 connections on the Pender Street line, another 25 to 35 connections on the Marshall Street-River Road line and another 35 to 50 connections on the River Road-Mintz Street line.

Mayor Hewett predicted that would allow Buddy Milliken to develop a cluster of condominiums in the Village Point Road area as proposed.

Other Business
In other business, aldermen:

•Adopted a resolution supporting a countywide artificial reef program as explained by Bill English of Shallotte Point. English said backers of the reef program only wanted verbal support at this time, but would be back "to ask for dollars later—we hope." Local fishing clubs want to establish six new reefs and rebuild two existing reefs using funds from a variety of sources.

•Adopted, on first reading, a flood insurance ordinance recommended by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. A second reading will be held before the ordinance goes into effect. Building Inspector Albert Hughes will issue any required permits, while the board will hear appeals and requests for variances. The ordinance is required for town

residents to continue qualifying for federal flood insurance.

•Amended, on first reading, a fire department ordinance that provides for probationary membership. A second reading will be held.

•Voted to pay county taxes and exempt town taxes on the Sunnyside property at Shallotte Municipal Park. Mayor Beamon Hewett had reported a favorable response from landowner Leonard Rourk about a lease arrangement with the town.

•Voted to send a letter supporting H.R. 1181 and thanking Congressman Charlie Rose. If adopted the bill would extend the general revenue sharing program another five years. This budget year, the town of Shallotte received approximately \$15,000 from the program, the equivalent, said Hewett, of "two or three cents on the tax rate."

•Heard that the Shallotte Volunteer Fire Department held two meetings and responded to nine calls in March, including four woods fires and one vehicle, one dumpster, one training and one house fire, as well as a call to the site of a permitted fire. Losses were estimated between \$20,000 and \$30,000. Two inspections were conducted. At one site, one previously identified problem had been corrected and another had not.

•Town attorney Mason Anderson confirmed that the fire chief does have statutory authority to issue citations when hazards noted during inspections are not corrected.

Boney Proposes Higher Fees, Off-Peak Pumping

Finley Boney, engineer for the Shallotte wastewater treatment system, has submitted five suggestions to the town board of aldermen for coping with increased demands on the town's 120,000 gallons-per-day sewer disposal system.

The system currently treats between 76,000 and 85,000 gallons per day. Existing or proposed projects, when fully developed, will push that total beyond the system's present capacity, according to the N.C.

Department of Natural Resources and Community Development.

Less than two years after it began paying off \$300,000 in sanitary sewer bonds sold to construct the system, the town is already looking for ways to raise money to improve and expand the system.

"We have to get it in this next year's budget so when the time comes five or 10 years from now we'll have the money," Mayor Beamon Hewett told the town board last Wednesday night.

"I've always tried to operate this town on a shoestring. I've found all of a sudden that was a mistake, that maybe we should have been putting 10 percent away for what we're going to need," Mayor Beamon Hewett advised aldermen in an apologetic tone. "That's what we're going to have to do now."

Boney suggests the board: Buy an influent meter within the next six months to provide an accurate count of the flow into the treat-

ment plant.

•Implement an ordinance, as discussed earlier, requiring holding tank capacity and off-peak time pumping for customers using in excess of 5,000 gallons of water per day.

•Review water and sewer rates with the intent to develop a capital reserve fund, also for future improvements.

•Consider adopting an acreage fee policy for developing property connected to the town water and sewer systems.

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