

County Board Looks At Revaluation Plans

BY SUSAN USHER

A board of private citizens rather than county commissioners will most likely hear revaluation appeals next spring.

At a work session on revaluation Tuesday night, commissioners said they will probably follow Tax Administrator Boyd Williamson's recommendation to establish an independent Board of Equalization and Review.

"It will hardly be possible for you as commissioners to keep up with everything else going on," he said in making the proposal.

Finding qualified people to serve may not be easy, just as the board's task won't be easy, those present agreed.

"We don't want a lot of political pressure on the board of commissioners," Chairman Chris Chappell also warned, referring to an organized effort by taxpayers that pressured a former board of commissioners into rejecting a "horizontal adjustment" in property valuations in January 1982. He and Vice Chairman James Poole later said they thought an independent board would be more qualified.

Three Notices

Property owners will get three notices on revaluation, the first a request to check data on features such as numbers of rooms or baths and the second, in September, a brochure on revaluation.

County officials needn't expect to hear much public comment until October, Williamson said, when notices of assessed valuations go out and

telephones begin to ring.

"Of 70,000 parcels of property, an average of 7,000 or 10 percent of these properties will be brought in because of problems.

"I would like to tell you it will be pleasant," he continued.

Brent Weisner, revaluation project manager for W.E. Ferris Co., said local residents are more inquisitive than in most counties, possibly because they've been through revaluation before.

He wants E&R board members to join his staff during its final property review to become familiar with the revaluation process.

In recent years commissioners have served as the Board of Equalization and Review. The current board will do so on May 1, a new experience for four of five members.

Coming seven years after the last revaluation, that meeting should last only about an hour and will probably cover only three or four appeals, predicted Williamson. Next year the board can expect to meet for several months, hearing possibly several thousand appeals.

1978 Values

Tax assessments on local real property are presently based on values arrived at during the 1978 revaluation.

The state requires counties to bring assessed property figures in line with market values every eight years. These new values are basically determined by checking prices brought when properties of similar size, quality, style and located in similar neighborhoods were sold.

This kind of specific information is being stored on computer tape as part of the 1986 revaluation.

Uniformity of values for like properties is the goal of the revaluation effort, Williamson noted.

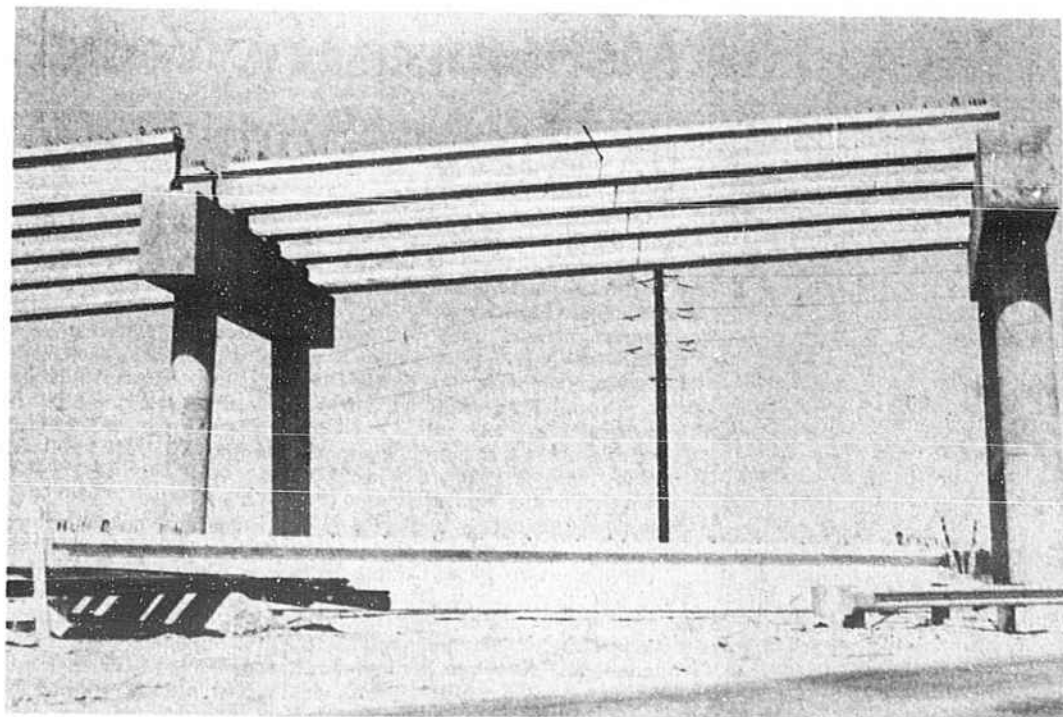
Midway between the required revaluations, counties have the option of making "horizontal" adjustments such as the one rejected locally in 1982.

That study was done by W.P. Ferris & Co. of Charlotte, the same firm that conducted the 1978 revaluation and has a \$399,000 contract for the 1986 project. Work on the 1986 revaluation, which will have a total price tag of about \$500,000, actually began in 1984.

Thus far, deed transactions from 1983 and 1984 have been transferred to computer and 1985 data is being recorded. Existing tax information has been stored in a new computer system included in the Ferris contract. Field workers have completed property reviews at Sunset Beach and are 90 percent complete at Ocean Isle Beach. They're in the process of visiting property at Holden Beach and Long Beach. Weisner said his staff plans to complete work in the resort areas before the summer season begins.

The E&R board is the second step in a sometimes lengthy appeals process that begins once notices of property valuations are mailed in October.

Revaluation project staff members first meet informally with taxpayers who have complaints in an attempt to correct any problems found.



STAFF PHOTO BY TERRY POPE

Such Concrete Decisions

What does one do with a bridge span that's one foot too long? Crews constructing the new highrise bridge at Holden Beach were surprised last week after raising the span and finding that it would not fit it place on the concrete pillars above. The N.C. Department of Transportation was willing to give the span to the town, and to move the misfit to its permanent location for \$100

to \$150. Town commissioners wanted the span to lie along the east end of the beach to help combat erosion, but Coastal Area Management officials stopped the move, saying it was against regulations. Mayor Kenner Amos said. Instead, DOT workers will now break the span up into smaller pieces and dispose of it, somewhere off the island. Amos said.

Holden Planning Board Approves Zoning Changes

BY TERRY POPE

Land that was intended to be zoned commercial five years ago on Holden Beach will finally be changed, provided town commissioners follow the recommendations of the planning and zoning board.

Planning and zoning board members voted Tuesday evening to unify all zoning classifications between Rothschild Street, where the town hall is located, to Cole Street, across the Holden Beach Road, to commercial. All lots lying in the area between the Intracoastal Waterway and the ocean will fall under the new commercial zoning regulations if ap-

proved by the town council.

The town must hold a public hearing before adopting the zoning changes. According to Town Manager Bob Buck, the town's land use plan showed the entire area affected by the change listed as commercial property in 1980.

The area comprises most of the town's real estate offices and is being used mostly for commercial use. No residents spoke at Tuesday's meeting on the zoning changes.

Town council members reviewed a similar rezoning request once before, but sent the proposal back to the planning and zoning board to con-

sider all lots between the two streets for commercial use as stated in the 1980 land use plan.

Another rezoning request came before the board Tuesday evening to change two lots west of Rothschild Street from residential (R-1) to commercial. A letter was read by Chairman Alan Holden from the applicants, but no action was taken.

Hazel L. and Jimmie T. Monroe are requesting that two lots in the R.H. Holden Subdivision near 137 Ocean Blvd. West be changed to commercial.

"The new bridge is creating substantial change in the area," the Monroes' letter to the board stated. "The traffic pattern will be changed that will make the land more suitable for commercial purposes."

The lots are located just down from Rothschild Street, where the town hall is located, but outside the area that was changed to commercial Tuesday evening.

The Monroes stated that by changing the area to commercial, a "very unique village could develop that would benefit all property owners of Holden Beach. In this way, spot zoning could be eliminated."

In other business Tuesday, the board agreed to meet Monday, April 22, at 7 p.m. at the town hall to discuss the 1985 land use plan. Policy changes recommended by the Satilla Planning Corp. of Atlanta, Ga., the company developing the town's land use plan, have been presented to the board.

Satilla planners have recommended that the board consider whether to include statements concerning the town's stance on 1) future marinas on the island and how they would affect traffic conditions; 2) a floating home ordinance and 3) a drainage plan for storm runoff waters, especially for the canal lots.

The land use plan must be adopted by the town by June 1, Buck said.

Supply Man Charged Following Accident

A Supply man was charged with failing to see a safe movement Saturday after his truck and utility trailer struck another vehicle near Holden Beach.

John Johnson, 64, of Supply, was charged by State Trooper B.C. Jones after his 1974 Ford pickup truck pulling a utility trailer loaded with fertilizer and tractor parts struck a 1977 Mercury driven by William Randall Clemmons, 19, of Shallotte.

According to Jones' report, Clemmons was passing the Johnson truck when Johnson attempted to make a left turn into a private driveway on RPR 1120 about one mile east of Holden Beach.

The tractor equipment and fertilizer obstructed the view of tail lights on the rear of the utility trailer, Jones reported. The trailer also did not have reflectors on its bumper, he stated.

Johnson's truck struck the Clemmons vehicle on the right passenger side, causing about \$3,000 in damage. Johnson's truck received around \$1,500 in damage, Jones reported.

No injuries were reported in the 10 a.m. accident.

A Supply driver was also charged Saturday evening after striking a parked car and leaving the scene of the accident near Belville, Jones reported.

Colston Miles Woodard, 32, of Supply, was charged with reckless operation, driving while his license was revoked and driving without insurance following the 3:30 p.m. accident.

According to Jones' report, Woodard was driving on State Road 1400 about ten miles west of Belville when he turned around in the roadway and struck a parked car on the shoulder of the road.

Office Bryant of Supply was parked on the shoulder of the road working on his 1977 Dodge when Woodard approached, Jones reported. After striking the front of the Bryant car, Woodard got out of his vehicle and talked with Bryant before leaving the scene.

Jones charged Woodard about an hour later. There were no injuries in the accident that caused an estimated \$25 in damage to the Woodard vehicle and about \$500 damage to the Bryant car.

Taxes Released On Leased Lot

Brunswick County commissioners quietly approved a \$1,578 tax release Monday night for a Yaupon Beach man who leased property to a church.

Commissioner Grace Beasley voted against the move.

There was no discussion of James Poole's motion or the ensuing vote.

Two weeks ago, I.D. Jones told commissioners he leased a lot next to his restaurant in Long Beach to Ocean View United Methodist Church in 1971 for the site for the Agape Inn, a youth mission to combat drug abuse. The church paid him \$1 a year, which Jones gave back, until the lease was ended in 1983.

When Jones tried to use the lot as collateral for a loan recently, he learned that seven years of back taxes and interest were due from the period of the lease.

"Anybody can see this was a foul up," he said.

In 1977 and 1981, the only years for which Jones apparently received a tax bill for the lot, he obtained releases or exemptions from the county because it was church property, he told commissioners at a recent meeting.

But County Manager Billy Carter

said the exemptions should never have been allowed, adding, "It's a 'Catch 22' situation."

The Brunswick County Tax Office said Jones owed the money because he, rather than the church, held title to the property. The lot would have been tax-exempt if it were either wholly owned by the church or if the

church had not paid Jones the \$1 per year to use the land.

"We're dealing with a technicality," Tax Administrator Boyd Williamson had told the board.

But none of that mattered Monday night. The board decided neither Jones nor the church should have to pay the taxes.

Cocaine Arrest Made

A Wilmington man has been arrested and charged with possessing and selling cocaine at a Leland mobile home park, according to the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department.

Donald Joseph Morrison, 46, of 1421 Masonboro Loop Road, Wilmington, was arrested and charged by Det. Dick Burgess last Thursday with two counts of possession with intent to

sell cocaine and two counts of selling and delivering cocaine.

Morrison was arrested at Clark's Mobile Home Park in Leland. According to Burgess, he allegedly sold one-eighths ounce and one-fourths ounce of cocaine to undercover officers.

Morrison is being held in the Brunswick County Jail under \$30,000 bond.

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