

# Tax Schedules Do Not Provide Value Of Individual Parcels

BY TERRY POPE

A schedule of county property values approved by the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners Tuesday night does not provide county residents with true values of their property.

Instead, county residents must wait until November before learning what the true value of their reassessed property may be under the 1986 tax revaluation.

The model list of land and home values approved by the board Tuesday will, however, give reevaluators a guide to prepare for November's countywide mailing of reassessed property values. But the base prices listed in the schedule must be adjusted for each individual parcel or home.

Brent Weisner, revaluation project director, said the schedule will be on file for 30 days for public inspection at the Brunswick County Tax Office, but warned that residents cannot learn what their individual parcels may be worth by reading the schedules.

"We have already had a few phone calls like that," Weisner told the commissioners Tuesday night. "We will not have final value on anyone's property until the final sales ratio study is complete. We will not give out anyone's value over the phone."

Weisner said residents will be notified of their reassessed property values through the November mailings only, which are due sometime near the first of the month.

The schedule of property values approved by the board Tuesday divides the county into 15 districts and provides market values of land based on a two-year study of land sales and the county real estate market. By using the schedules, a person can "get an idea what the value of land is in an area," Weisner said, but cannot learn what individual parcels are worth.

For example, property values for rural areas, particularly the sections north of U.S. 17 and N.C. 211, range anywhere from \$1,100 an acre for high land to as low as \$100 per acre for swampland with no access, Weisner said.

The values of homes are also adjusted based on additions and improvements beyond base rates. Base rates

are determined by points, whereas for a certain structure 100 points might be considered average for a three-bedroom home while any additions (such as fireplaces, added garage, etc.) would increase the point value.

## Building Program

Commissioners tabled a discussion Tuesday on whether the county should enter into a contract with the towns of Belville and Bolivia to provide building inspections as needed.

County Planning Director John Harvey said the towns have verbally requested a contract agreement due to their "unique circumstances in being so small and having so little building activity."

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## Off To A Great Start

Jeremy Cox began kindergarten with a generous goodbye kiss for his mom, Vicki Cox, before turning his attention Tuesday morning to crayons and lunch. He's

one of 42 kindergartners enrolled at Waccamaw Elementary School this year. More back-to-school coverage is inside this issue.

# Sunset Beach Will Seek Immediate Action To Replace Or Improve Span

BY SUSAN USHER

Sunset Beach will seek the 'replacement or improvement' of the pontoon bridge that serves its island community.

Town council members voted unanimously last Thursday night in favor of a resolution for the state to work as "expeditiously as possible" toward that goal. Council members Ed Gore, Donald Safran, George Foster—and with a sigh, Kathy Hill—voted in favor of the measure. Mary Katherine Griffith did not vote, which is counted as a "yes" under the board's procedural rules, making the count unanimous.

The resolution reads in part, "That in the interest of providing safe and dependable access across the Intracoastal Waterway at Sunset Beach for the residents, the many visitors, and the emergency vehicles, it is clear than an improved method of crossing to and from the island is needed."

Commenting after the meeting, Mayor Pro Tem Ed Gore told The Beacon, "They're (DOT officials) not going to improve that type of bridge." Gore has been a continuing supporter of the proposed high-rise in both his town role and as chairman of the county planning board.

Saturday morning, a motion calling for "improvement" of the existing bridge received a "virtually unanimous" vote of support by the more than 140 members attending a

meeting of the Sunset Beach Taxpayers Association.

The motion was offered as an alternative to an earlier call to vote for or against a proposed high-rise bridge. Several speakers said they did not want the high-rise, but that something needed to be done about the existing bridge.

"Do we have to vote this way (yes or no)?" asked one property owner. "I'm not against the high rise if that's the only solution in the long run. I'd like to see some logical solution other than the high rise."

Before the alternate motion was proposed by Al Wells, several members called for a third voting category, "undecided."

The town's governing board had divided in its support of a similar bridge resolution introduced in 1982, reflecting a division of opinion apparent among property owners and residents.

Opponents of the bridge, including spokesmen for the Sunset Beach Taxpayers' Association, have argued that condominiums and higher-density development would be a natural outcome if access to the six-mile island is improved.

"Overkill?"

Saturday, members forwarded new arguments against the high-rise.

"Let's take it out of Brunswick County and Sunset Beach," suggested Joe Majette of Charlotte as a way of bringing pressure to bear on the state to drop its proposal for a high-rise.

"It doesn't make sense from a financial standpoint," he argued, for taxpayers from across the country, not just North Carolina, to pay for a bridge to serve traffic to and from the small island. "We're all going to pay for it."

Ann Hammond, also of Charlotte, said that the proposed span constitutes "overkill."

She was concerned that concurrent plans would not be made by the state to handle the added congestion increased traffic to and from the island would create in the outlying area, such as Georgetown Road. Unpaved, the old post road runs parallel to N.C. 179 from Ocean Isle Beach to Calabash and could, she said, relieve much of the traffic now contained on N.C. 904 and N.C. 179.

Other residents questioned how parking and a projected increase in

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## Property Owners Take No Stance On Holden Beach West Closing

BY TERRY POPE

Members of the Holden Beach Property Owners Association will take no official stance on the closing of the west end of the beach by local developers to property owners only.

The HBPOA Board of Directors voted Saturday to delete a discussion of the west end barricade from its official agenda. However, after the meeting was adjourned, the more than 130 members present that crowded the town hall stayed for a discussion on the west end barricade with Jim Griffin Jr., principal part-

ner with Holden Beach Enterprises Inc., owners of the west end tract.

Last month, the company closed the west end to property owners and their guests only. The road leading to the Shallotte Inlet is private where the pavement of Ocean Boulevard West ends, town officials have acknowledged.

"The situation on the west end has not been discussed by the board," said Jim Fournier, vice-chairman of the HBPOA.

"I'm going to take it on myself to say that this association has no desire to function as a plat-

form to discuss that situation as such."

When rumors began to spread Saturday morning that mainland residents were planning to attend the HBPOA meeting to protest the closing of the west end, those entering the town hall had to register by name and address, and a sign was placed at the door stating, "HBPOA Members Only."

Last week, 29 persons, including four island residents, were charged with trespassing after they protested the closing of the west end by driving

past the barricade. Many of those organizing the protest were mainland residents.

Fournier said the HBPOA Board of Directors was "not prepared to take a stand on it" and had not been "asked to address the problem and take any action on it."

In response to the questions raised by the audience, Griffin told the HBPOA members that the company will turn the road over to the Holden Beach West Property Owners when it is paved and that it will be up to the property owners on the west end if they want to open it back up to the public.

"Once we get it signed up to them, it'll be their decision. I look forward to that day," Griffin said. "We can't make that decision for them."

He added that even if the road was opened again to the public and made part of Ocean Boulevard West, there would still be no parking on the west end because of the town's new ordinance against parking on the shoulder of Ocean Boulevard. The no parking ordinance will take effect within weeks.

"We made the decision back in the early 1960s that it was going to be a private subdivision down there," Griffin said. "The road was built by the Holden Beach Realty Corporation. The Saturday afternoon before we put the gate up, there were over 200 cars down there. They have destroyed the dunes. It hurts the good as well as the bad. The numbers just got overwhelming."

Mayor Kenner Amos, who chaired the discussion on the west end situa-

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## August Was So Hot . . .

If invited to a "bull shooting" session, James Carson Hopkins' favorite yarn might begin, "In August 1985, it was so hot they billed us \$8,726 for just cooling our mobile home."

And he wouldn't be telling a tall tale.

When their August 28 bill arrived from Brunswick Electric Membership Corp., James and Helen Hopkins of Hurricane Haven subdivision knew it couldn't be right. A typical summer bill for cooling their 14-foot by 70-foot mobile home runs between \$90 and \$114 each month, Hopkins said.

After opening the bill, without saying a word, he slipped it across the dining room table to Helen. She had agreed earlier to pay the August bill from her checking account. One look at the total—\$8,726.85 including \$196.90 in tax alone—and she changed her mind.

The bill indicated the Hopkinesses had consumed 90,473 kilowatt hours of electricity—far above their usual 1,300 to 1,400—at an average cost of \$217.67 over a 30-day service period.

While their meter had been read accurately, the couple learned Tuesday in a visit to the BEMC office in

Shallotte, the astronomical figures resulted from an error made when data was entered into the computer for billing.

"It's a rare thing, very seldom does it happen," Bobbie Dillard, manager of office services, said of the billing error. "We bill more than 30,000 accounts. There might be one every two months or something."

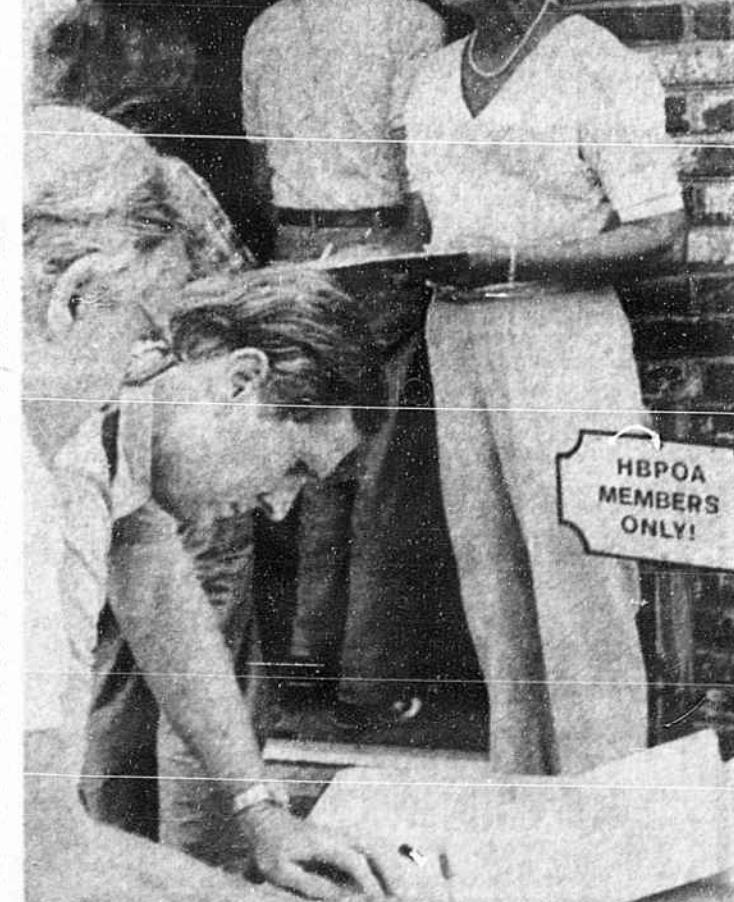
Before mailing them, staff members routinely check bills for possible errors, she added. "I hate this one went out."

A corrected bill—more in keeping with the twosome's typical summer charges—is on its way.

"We're always happy to correct them (errors) any time," said Judy Gore, personnel specialist.

Meanwhile Hopkins was smiling and making the most of an unusual piece of mail. BEMC agreed to let him retain the original bill as a keepsake, proof of what had occurred.

"You hear tell of mistakes like that being made, but they never happen to you—you read about them," said Hopkins, displaying the bill. "I thought that somebody might appreciate this if they thought their electric bill was high."



NORMA SWARTS met members of the Holden Beach Property Owners Association with sign-up sheets at the door of the town hall Saturday morning. Rumors spread that mainland residents were planning to protest the closing of the west end of the beach at the meeting, but only property owners were allowed inside.