

Commissioners Support Study, Funding Of School Safety Needs

BY SUSAN USHER

A proposal by Rep. David Redwine to improve traffic safety conditions at all 11 county schools through a government partnership was hailed by Commissioner Grace Beasley as "what we're looking for" Monday night.

"We want a long-term solution, not a stop-gap thing," she said, echoing Chairman Chris Chappell's, "That's a great idea."

Also, Monday night, commissioners unanimously re-elected Chappell as chairman on a motion by Commissioner Herman Love. They elected Beasley vice-chairman on a 3-2 vote. Commissioner Frankie Rabon nominated Beasley, then Commissioner Love nominated current Vice Chairman James Poole.

After Beasley and Poole voted for themselves, Chappell broke the tie in Beasley's favor.

He thanked the board for its "vote of confidence" in him and praised the other four board members, each in office one year, as serving as effectively as "old soldiers with many a year's experience."

Chappell, speaking for the outgoing

vice chairman who sat beside him, said Poole wanted the job back, but had said he would back whomever was elected.

In turn, Beasley told the board, "We're going to be a full board even though we have a 3-2 vote. Turning to Poole, she added, "I will sit in the chair and try to keep it warm for you."

Traffic Safety

Commissioners unanimously supported Redwine's idea for the commissioners, board of education and state to make any needed improvements together. They agreed to use county funds to pay half the cost of implementing over a one-year period or longer, if necessary, whatever recommendations come out of a forthcoming study by the State Department of Transportation. A DOT official has agreed with Redwine that the county has a need and "may need special attention," he said.

Half the local funds would be channeled through the school system budget under Redwine's proposal. "I can't speak for the board," said Brunswick County Board of Educa-

tion Vice Chairman Doug Baxley, "but I'm of the opinion it will support this concept."

The recent death of a 10-year-old Leland Middle School student when she was struck by an auto while crossing Old Fayetteville Road after school has focused public attention on school safety, said Redwine. He is the parent of two county school children and a member of the House Children and Youth Committee.

Redwine said Highway Administrator George Wells agreed for DOT to make the study, which will address the need for such items as crosswalks, school patrols, speed zones and caution lights.

Having a funding partnership between state and local government, he said, should improve the chances for state approval of the project.

Retains Helm Mavretic Bill

Rep. David Redwine, a member of the legislature's Property Tax Study Commission, briefly discussed Rep. Joe Mavretic's proposal to eliminate the state property tax, the largest single source of revenue for most counties.

If the bill were approved as

drafted, 92 counties would gain money. One of the eight that wouldn't, Brunswick County would lose about \$2.26 million, a figure derived before reevaluation. Redwine said the counties that stand to lose revenues are fast-growing with demanding needs to be met. While he expects the House to support the plan, Redwine said it may face some opposition in the Senate. If approved by both branches, the proposed constitutional amendment would be placed on the ballot for voters' consideration.

"It's a touchy situation," he said, noting that most of the comment he's received favors eliminating the tax. Voters complain it is unfair, unclear and riddled with exemptions.

Redwine said the committee is examining the fairness of the system, the length of the reevaluation cycle and other options for local revenues.

"We want to look at balancing the tax structure," he said.

Other Business

In other business, commissioners:

•Met behind closed doors to discuss litigation and independent contract. They were also to meet in executive session at 8 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 4,

to discuss a grievance involving an animal control officer and her supervisor.

•Observed the swearing-in of Leland Sanitary Board members Leo Nowak, Boyd Williamson, Ava Thomas, Patsy Elliott and George Mintz by Brunswick County Register of Deeds Robert Robinson. The board will meet Wednesday, Dec. 11, at 7:30 p.m. at North Brunswick High School. Chairman Nowak said the new board will need to work closely with commissioners this year as the district develops its water distribution system.

•On a 3-2 vote, decided that persons with separate claims to "ancient" subsurface oil, gas or mineral rights must record those claims and list them for tax purposes by January 1988. Otherwise, title to the mineral rights will merge with title to the surface. Inability to trace subsurface rights has been known to cloud title and to prevent the obtaining of title insurance, County Attorney David Clegg said.

Commissioners Frankie Rabon and Chris Chappell voted against the requirement.

•Heard from SENCLand Director Colene Stanley that the antipoverty agency operates job community service, child development, job training and weatherization programs in Brunswick County. Last year 301 families or individuals received block grant services and one family received emergency assistance; one house was weatherized in October; Head Start centers are open in Longwood, Cedar Grove and Northwest communities; and a \$109,974 job training program will serve 83 people during the fiscal year.

•Tabled a request to observe Jan. 20 as a holiday honoring the late Martin Luther King Jr. until Winston Brown, president of the Southport-Brunswick County Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People can check on the possibility of a statewide holiday. Brown had made the request for a county holiday two weeks ago.

•Reappointed on unanimous votes County Manager William Carter, County Attorney David Clegg and Clerk to the Board Regina White. "Maybe it will encourage you to work a little harder knowing we're fully behind you," commented Chappell.

Holden Beach Board Asked To Take Stand On CAMA

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reported that during November, 19 repair and bulkhead permits and 10 new house construction permits were issued. Presently 42 houses and one condo unit are under construction on the beach.

Other Comments

Alan Holden asked the board to take a stand on proposed changes in CAMA regulations presented in recent hearings of the Coastal Resources Commission. "Many other boards (in coastal communities) have already written letters to CRC relating to these changes. I'd like to see this board

take a position, rather than turn our heads," he said. Tandy and Williamson expressed the feeling that CAMA should wait until after the first of the year to pass new regulations, rather than at the Dec. 12 meeting of the CRC, to allow the legislature input into the matter.

At the suggestion of Commissioner Stanley, the board asked Town Administrator Bob Buck to look into procuring plaques bearing names of former commissioners and mayors. The recognition would serve to show appreciation for their years of service to the town.



TOWN ADMINISTRATOR Bob Buck (left) administers the oath of office to Mayor John Tandy and new commission members Gay Atkins and William Williamson.

Hunt Named Finance Officer

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pro-tem again after being nominated by Safrit.

Hunt was named finance officer, a post previously held by Safrit, who had indicated he wanted to give up the duty.

Council voted to loosen the purse strings and give a Christmas bonus of \$150 to each fulltime town employee. The bonus was recommended by Town Manager Wallace Martin, who said the cost to the town will be \$1,200. "Where will the money come from, you ask?" Martin remarked.

Someone in the audience piped up with "from parking tickets written on the beach!"

Martin chuckled with the audience and explained that the money would come from fees charged for issuance of CAMA permits. The budget had projected 30 would be issued when applications were received for 178. The town makes money on CAMA permits since it charges more than the administrative and advertising expenses.

In other business, the council:

•Heard a proposal from Bob Davis of Brunswick Electric which would replace street lighting in the town with more energy-efficient sodium lamps and add six more lights for \$5 less per month;

•Vetoed a suggestion from Mayor Gordon to require persons who wish to address the council at meetings to notify him by letter of the subject on

which they wish to speak, and decided to continue allowing impromptu public comment at the conclusion of meetings;

•Postponed until the January meeting for more study either adoption of new flood insurance regulations or amending present ones;

•Voted to spend \$2,200 for two drainage projects on the beach and agreed that the problem needs to be addressed as a whole instead of individual cases;

•Discussed but took no action on capital expenditure plans including sidewalks, parking and dune stabilization—other than assuring Councilwoman Hunt that CAMA would be contacted to make sure proper procedures are being used in dune stabilization which she questioned;

•Heard the November police report from Town Manager Martin which listed three breaking and entering cases, one larceny, four arrests, 48 town citations and three state citations issued, two disturbances and two firecracker reports investigated, five messages delivered and two breaking and entering cases cleared up in which some stolen items were recovered.

•Received the annual audit report for the year ended June 30, which included mostly favorable comments on the town's handling of its financial matters.

Ocean Isle Builders Object

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as well as lesser density, Mayor Bullington said. Parking will be a concern after Jan. 1, when new state building code regulations are expected to limit the amount of space available for parking under most houses.

The proposed amendments would apply not only to new homes, but to existing houses that sustain structural losses equivalent to 50 percent or more of their value. They would have to be repaired or replaced under the new rules.

Building Inspector T.D. Roberson said only one "small to average" house has been built on the island in the past year. He also pointed that limits on the numbers of bedrooms are not enforceable, since owners will add features such as sleeper sofas to common living areas.

Numbers Juggled

Hearing participants juggled numbers with Mayor Bullington in an attempt to come up with an "acceptable" figure for maximum square footage.

They experimented with percentages that ranged from 35 percent, slightly below the typical construction at the beach now, to 40 percent,

larger than the sizes now permissible.

At 36 percent coverage, for instance, the maximum house allowable on a 50-foot by 100-foot third row house would be 1,800 square feet, including decks and porches.

"The reality is," said Tom Pope, "the cost of land dictates the necessity of building larger homes."

Sloane said the typical beach home constructed in recent years includes 500 feet or more of decking and 1,800 to 2,500 square feet of living space.

Commissioner Debbie Fox agreed a problem exists, but requested, "Don't put us back to what we were building 10 years ago. We need a good balance."

She said restricting home sizes as proposed would discourage families from relocating to Ocean Isle Beach, not because of density but because of lack of space.

"And we need permanent families here," she added.

Citing a personal example, she said, "I can't live in just 1,700 square feet of space with two children."

Sloane and Pope disagreed with Bullington on the question of density, saying they like the construction that has predominated in recent years on the beach.

Mayor Bullington said increased density would also increase urban runoff into streets, if not canals, and would pose a fire hazard.

"We have a problem. Go home and get out your calculators and thinking caps" to come up with recommendations for the planning board's meeting on Monday, advised the mayor.

B-r-r-r! It's Almost Winter

A change in the weather has made it colder, much colder, across the South Brunswick Islands as the area plunged suddenly into winter Monday.

Temperatures that had ranged up to 17 degrees above normal took a sharp dip Monday night to the mid-30s. Area residents began checking antifreeze, winter coats and wool suits.

"We've had a definite change in the weather pattern," said Shalotte Point meteorologist Jackson Canady. "It looks as if for the foreseeable future we're in for much more normal winter weather."

Over the next few days he said temperatures will fall below normal, ranging from the mid-30s at night into the mid-50s during the day.

Precipitation will increase to near normal, about three quarters of an inch of rain.

During the period of Nov. 26 through Dec. 2, Canady recorded only a quarter-inch of rainfall in his

backyard gauge.

He recorded a maximum high of 80 degrees on Nov. 29 and a minimum low of 51 degrees on Dec. 1.

An average daily high of 74 degrees and an average daily low of 62 degrees combined for a daily average temperature of 68 degrees, about 17 degrees above normal, said Canady.

Middle School Observed Week

South Brunswick Middle School celebrated American Education Week last week (Nov. 18-22) with a variety of activities.

During the week, students' work was exhibited, school board members and local officials toured the school, parents visited for lunch and students held a fashion show.

Students capped the week by wearing the school colors of blue and white for "spirit day" on Friday.

More Seek

Local Employment

A slight increase in the unemployment rate for October is being attributed statewide to fluctuations in seasonal employment.

In Brunswick County, the number of people hunting work rose from 6.5 percent in September to 7.1 percent in October, according to the N.C. Employment Security Commission, though a few more persons actually reported having jobs.

In September, 1,290 county residents were seeking jobs while 18,640 were working. In October, 1,420 were looking for jobs while 18,650 were working.

The group categorized as seeking work includes those who are waiting to be recalled from a layoff and those waiting to report to a new job within 30 days.



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