

# BRUNSWICK BEACON

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## Squads See Need For Non-Emergency Service

BY SUSAN USHER

Faced with a shortage of volunteers and an increasing demand for their services, a majority of Brunswick County's rescue squads are embarking on efforts to establish a private non-emergency medical transportation service.

However, at a public hearing at the Brunswick County Government Center Monday night, members of several units questioned how the business would operate in relation to the squads. "It looks like we will still continue having to make most of the 'non-emergency' calls," noted Shallotte Rescue Squad member Dean Means after hearing the service proposal.

Gil Bass of Holden Beach and Dennis Pickard of Supply are seeking a county franchise or permit to operate Brunswick Medical Transportation, which would provide non-emergency medical transportation 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They're asking for a non-exclusive franchise, which would allow other services to also provide service in the county.

Monday night they answered basic questions required in considering their franchise application and answered questions from commissioners and the audience.

Commissioners have 30 days in which to complete their investigation and to decide whether to award a franchise. Once granted, it could be taken away in the event of a violation or at the end of a required annual review if the business is not in compliance with statutes.

Rescue squads endorsing the service include Leland, Calabash,

Southport and Town Creek. Waccamaw, said Emergency Management Coordinator Cecil Logan, would go with the majority. At a recent chiefs' meeting, seven of 10 units supported the squad, according to one speaker. Most lined that support on the transport service not affecting county funding for rescue squads, a concern noted by Shallotte's Alex Means Monday night.

Commissioner Jim Poole, with other board members nodding agreement, assured an 80-person audience of mostly rescue volunteers that their funding would not be in jeopardy. All commissioners were present except Chairman Chris Chappell.

Logan also supports the concept of a non-emergency ambulance service, he said. "Anything that will relieve the daytime pressure on the rescue squads good for them. It's something the county has needed for a long time."

"If they can do it, good for them." He said past efforts to establish a private service in the county have failed.

At least two squads, Town Creek and Leblond, have curtailed their non-emergency transports because of the lack of available manpower to provide both types of transport.

"We decided the only way we could survive is to do it [curtail routine transports]," said Town Creek's chief, Ernest Giaman, saying that had been departmental policy for the past two years.

He said the squads routinely refer such calls to a private ambulance service operating out of New Hanover County, Trans Med.

"We're understaffed like everybody else," he continued. "It's taken a big burden off our people." County Attorney David Clegg said Monday he thought that Trans Med, operated by Comprehensive Home Health Care, also needs to apply for a franchise since it is doing business in the county.

Initially, according to Pickard, the transport service would operate with only one ambulance out of a temporary location on Seashore Road near Holden Beach.

Pickard said most transports would be made by appointment. Brunswick Medical Transportation expects to move patients from medical facility to medical facility, nursing home to nursing home, and nursing home to hospital. He said the service doesn't intend to transport bedridden patients from their homes to the doctor's office unless the doctor has signed a statement saying that is the only safe way the patient can be moved.

Brunswick Medical Transport also plans to transport only patients who can pay for the service, he said, either with cash or insurance such as private-pay, Medicare or Medicaid. The typical local call would cost \$30.

"If they don't have insurance and their family doesn't, it's society's problem," said Pickard. "I would say that's where the rescue squads would provide it [non-emergency transport]. Somebody's going to have to take the call."

After the meeting, Pickard said he hoped once the business begins showing a profit that it could absorb the (See RESCUE SQUADS, Page 2-A)



DENNIS PICKARD (foreground) answers questions at a Monday night hearing on the medical transport service he and Gil Bass want franchised by the county.

## Sunset Beach Ordinance To Regulate Moving Of Homes

BY TERRY POPE

Sunset Beach property owners would have a chance to comment on the moving of buildings and homes into their neighborhoods if a proposed ordinance before the town council is adopted.

A public hearing on the ordinance was held Monday night with most of the discussion involving members of the town council and the planning board. Both boards agreed that the plan needed to "go back to the drawing board" to work out problems before it is again considered by the town council.

Planning Board Chairman Richard Goode said the ordinance was modeled after one adopted last year by the town of Holden Beach. He said the planning board has been working on

the ordinance for nearly a year.

"The movement of buildings doesn't happen often, but it should be done with the regards to those around it," Goode told the council. "They should be aware of it and should have an opportunity to voice their opinions prior to the issuance of a permit."

According to the proposed ordinance, the purpose in regulating the moving of homes is "to prevent the relocation of buildings such that the quality or character of the neighborhood in which a building might be moved is adversely affected."

However, both boards agreed Monday that the town board of adjustments would not be bound to follow the public's wishes in issuing

individual permits. Town Attorney Mike Isenberg said the ordinance needed to state the purpose in holding a public hearing, but that the board of adjustments could issue permits to move buildings "even if everyone at the meeting was against it."

"From a purely legal standpoint, it doesn't matter what anyone says," said Councilman Ed Gore. He added that because a home might be of an "architectural style that someone might not prefer, has no bearing at all" in issuing a permit.

Goode then added that although the ordinance would require buildings to conform to certain standards it would be "highly unlikely that there would be any legal reason to deny it." Gore said the ordinance would (See SUNSET BEACH, Page 2-A)

## Students Face New Code Of Conduct At School This Year

BY MARJORIE MEGIVERN

Brunswick County students returning to school next week will have to make a transition from a relatively carefree summer atmosphere to a stricter environment on the campus and in school buses.

A new code of conduct was recently approved by the board of education that adds three categories of action to be regulated and changes the penalties for many other offenses.

Superintendent Gene Yarborough said, "The new code generally toughens the restrictions, but also adds a provision for the process for students."

Stiffer penalties are assigned in the

following cases:

•In drug possession, offenders will be reported to the police on the first offense.

•In arson, the police will be contacted and there will be possible expulsion.

•In assault on another student, in-school suspension will be added to the previous parental conference as a first offense penalty.

•In truancy, the possibility of detention is added to in-school suspension for second and third offenses, and long-term suspension (up to the balance of the school year) will be the penalty for the fourth offense.

•In physical contact offenses,

possible suspension is the penalty instead of in-school suspension.

•In the use or possession of tobacco, the first offense will be punished by in-school suspension, the second by short-term suspension (up to ten days).

Some penalties appear to be lighter than in the past.

•For the use of vulgar, profane or obscene language, in-school suspension replaces detention.

•For a first weapons offense, long-term suspension replaces expulsion; •For property damage, the words "police may be contacted" replace "police will be contacted."

•For assault on school staff members, long-term suspension replaces expulsion.

The process will give students the right to notification to parents, a hearing, representation by counsel, examination of evidence, confrontation of witnesses, a record of proceedings, a decision based on evidence.

Two categories of offenses were added to the code: violations against traffic regulations, and aiding and abetting in the possession, use or distribution of drugs.

For parking in unauthorized areas, students will be punished at "the principal's discretion" on the first of-

tense, go to in-school suspension for the second offense, and have their cars towed at their expense on the third offense.

Careless driving will mean a parental conference and/or loss of driving privileges.

Those found aiding and abetting in drug offenses will suffer short-term suspension.

Bus conduct is being regulated for the first time this year. The code stipulates that:

•School administrators will be asked to ride certain bus runs and report their findings to the director of transportation.

(See Related School Opening Stories, Page 2-A)

## Rescuers Looked Like Angels To Boating Accident Victims

BY SUSAN USHER

What started out as a lazy summer morning fishing trip for Jim Hardee's family turned into a near-disaster last Wednesday when their two boats overturned about a half-mile off Tubbs Inlet.

They were rescued minutes before a heavy thunderstorm struck, their boats left behind to wash ashore on the morning tide.

In two 14-foot boats, five family members set out from a friends' cottage at Ocean Isle Beach about 9:30 a.m. Jim, 45, his daughter Niki, 15, both of Huntington, N.C., and his father, Elbert, 68, of Chapel Hill, were in one boat. Another daughter, Samantha, and a cousin, Tabby Whitfield, 17, of Chapel Hill, were in the second boat.

In Tubbs Inlet, between Ocean Isle and Sunset Beaches, strong currents apparently pulled Jim's boat into ocean where it flipped over its cabin seats, out of view of the second boat.

"It got tough for us to get out and we were going to go back. We got where we could come around and a wave got under the boat and tipped it," said Niki. "The other boat was still in the area, but they couldn't see us any more. The waves were getting bad—five or six feet high."

When Whitfield realized the others were in trouble, he returned to Ocean Isle, dropping off a frantic Samantha to call for help.

Whitfield headed back to the inlet, but his boat swamped as he attempted to cross the breakers.

Onshore, Samantha went for help, as did others who by then had seen the boat in trouble. Contacted by Calabash Volunteer Rescue Squad, Brunswick County

Emergency Management Coordinator Cecil Logan pined Marine Fisheries Officer at the Sunset Beach Bridge and they began working their way to the distressed boats, followed in a second boat by two state marine biologists who had been testing for shrimp in the waterway.

"We could see them, but we couldn't figure out how to get to them because the inlet was so rough."

Meanwhile, the three Hardees and Whitfield were managing as best they could in the water.

"I was beginning to wear. I don't know how much longer I could have held on," Elbert Hardee recalled as he, Niki and Eddie warmed themselves inside Detective Lindsey Walton's patrol car along the curbside at Sunset Beach.

A Navy veteran, Elbert Hardee said he had learned what to do in the event of a boating accident about 45 years ago. "But this is the first time I've ever experienced anything like that. I think by the time they get me out there again it will be another 30 years."

He had waited on top of the boat for help to arrive, clinging to handholds his son and granddaughter had knotted in a rope. They waited in the water alongside the boat, clinging to a tow rope and trying to hold the boat higher out of the water.

After they'd been in the water an estimated half-hour to hour, help arrived, with Hewett and Logan picking up two victims and the biologists the other two.

"When their faces appeared out there above the ocean, they looked like angels," said a grateful Jim Hardee, gesturing toward their rescuers. "These are the most beautiful faces you've ever seen. You have some really beautiful people here."



JIM HARDEE, right, and three members of his family were rescued from Tubbs Inlet last Wednesday morning after their boats capsized. With him, from the left,

are Emergency Management Coordinator Cecil Logan, Marine Fisheries Enforcement Officer Dale Hewett and Detective Lindsey Walton.

STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER