

Written Comments Favor Countywide Zoning

BY SUSAN USHER

Although a Feb. 25 public hearing on zoning is still a week away, Brunswick County Commissioners are already hearing—in writing—from property owners for and against additional land use regulation.

Almost entirely supportive of zoning, the comments will be entered into the hearing record.

Pro or con, individuals and organizations can voice their opinions regarding zoning at the hearing, which will be held at 7 p.m. in the public assembly building at the Brunswick County Government Center at Bolivia. Meanwhile, Regina White, clerk to the board of commissioners, has accumulated a file of written comments, mostly from those who cannot attend next week's hearing.

District 3 Commissioner James Poole of Oak Island requested the public meeting, saying consideration of zoning was overdue, particularly for the congested Southport-Oak Island area.

Of the comments received thus far, only one person, a caller, was adamantly opposed to zoning. Tom Yagle of Sunset Harbor told the county, "I don't feel

like the county needs zoning. I feel like it will create a monster as in Wilmington."

A letter of a different bent came from a Cresson, Pa., resident, Juanita Schettig, who owns property at Yaupon Beach. "I am very glad you are planning on zoning to protect the lands and homes in the future from people who do anything without regard to anyone," she wrote. "It will give you some control on planning the future."

Most writers—from Dave Drummond of the Long Beach Civic Association to the Sunset Beach Planning Board—cited the county's rapid growth as a good reason for enacting zoning regulations now.

Sunset Beach Planning Board members Walter Huff, Schuyler Bramley, C.T. Coppage, Mary Scramton and Richard Good asked county commissioners to have a zoning proposal drawn up as promptly as possible.

In support of that request they wrote, "In our judgment, ample evidence is already visually available to prove that countywide zoning is essential for the orderly development of our rapidly growing county."

Zoning, they continued, would: provide for better

planning to deliver services; adequate land allocated for various types of use—such as agriculture, industry and recreation—and properly situated in relation to each other; stabilization and increase or preservation of property values; and greater attractiveness to "the kinds of business, industry and other developments that will be good for our county and its citizens in the long term."

Zone By District

One writer, Lela Ruth Hankins of Route 2, Bolivia, suggested an alternative to countywide zoning, that the citizens of each township be allowed to decide how their area should be zoned, "since it represents their investment and they have plans for its use." However, Peter and Anna Infante of Landing Three subdivision on N.C. 179 said zoning should be countywide and county-enforced. Specifically, they recommended removing junked vehicles, outhouses and garbage collection sites now located in populated areas, as well as enforcement of littering laws, control of outside burning and control of billboards along the highways.

Protect Schools

While the Brunswick County Board of Education

hasn't formally adopted a resolution supporting countywide zoning, a letter to the county from Chairman James Forstner suggests members of the board agree zoning would be appropriate. "As things are now established," he wrote, "we could end up with bars and other undesirable businesses in close proximity to a public school located in the county. All of us on the board feel such things would be entirely inappropriate."

Forstner also said increased control of building, traffic flow and land use along approaches to schools "would be a reasonable thing to hope for."

A number of boards and organizations have endorsed the concept of county zoning, with more expected.

These include, in addition to the Sunset Beach Planning Board, the Yaupon Beach Board of Commissioners, Brunswick County Planning Board, Southport-Oak Island Chamber of Commerce, Long Beach Civic Association and four organizations in Town Creek Township—the Town Creek Extension Homemakers, Town Creek Senior Citizens, Town Creek Community Watch and Oak View Community Watch.

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Murder Suspect Still At Large

BY SUSAN USHER

A Leland man charged in the Feb. 6 shooting death of 31-year-old Joe Reeves of Shallotte remains at large and officers are still trying to ascertain a motive.

"We think we have a motive, but we're not sure," Chief of Police Don Stovall said Monday morning. "That's all I can tell you."

Sought is Ronnie Lee Clemmons, 30, of Avon Trailer Park, who is charged with murder and assault with a deadly weapon in connection with the 3 a.m. incident that occurred in a house on Bellamy Drive in Shallotte.

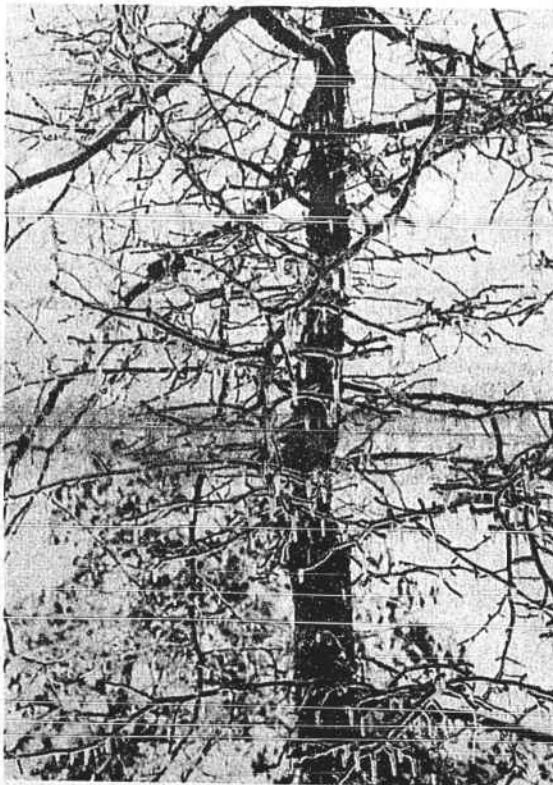
A handgun found in a car Clemmons abandoned later that morning on Dupont Road in Leland, as well as other evidence, were taken to the SBI lab in Raleigh Friday for testing. No results were available Monday.

Stovall said he expected the tests to confirm the gun's use as the murder weapon and to either support or refute certain statements made to investigators.

Meanwhile, the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department and the Shallotte Police Department are following up on all calls regarding reported sightings of Clemmons. Most come from within the county, but one caller placed Clemmons in Columbus County.

"We've had a lot of reported sightings," said Stovall, "but none of them are confirmed."

He said there's about a 50-50 chance that Clemmons is still in Brunswick County.



Decorated In Ice

This tree, located near the Brunswick County Government Center, was decorated with ice Monday as temperatures dipped into the mid-30s. The ice covering on vegetation in the area had a lace-like appearance.

STAFF PHOTO BY ETTA SMITH

Storm Brings Freezing Rain, Hassles To Area

BY SUSAN USHER

A winter storm with gale force winds and freezing rain brought problems Monday for local motorists, utility companies, emergency and law enforcement personnel.

Freezing rains during the morning left broken pine boughs heavy with ice strewn across lawns and occasional roadways and power lines. Between 15 percent and 20 percent of Brunswick Electric Membership Corporation's 29,000 Brunswick County members were temporarily without power.

With the forecast calling for more hazardous weather, county schools closed at noon as soon as all buses could be refueled, and county commissioners rescheduled their Monday night meeting until 6:30 p.m. Wednesday. The Brunswick County Government Center in Bolivia shut down at 4 p.m. Monday and reopened at 9:30 a.m. Tuesday, an hour later than usual. The schools, however, operated on regular schedule Tuesday.

As ice began to accumulate on trees and roadsides, both the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department at Bolivia and the school system administrative offices in Southport were flooded with calls Monday morning regarding the status of school closings.

While the situation was "monitored minute by minute," according to public information officer Jean Parker, schools opened on schedule Monday with the early closing announced shortly after 11:30 a.m.

Meanwhile, with the forecast calling for more of the same, Brunswick County Emergency Management Coordinator Cecil Logan advised all county rescue and fire departments to fuel their vehicles in the event of weather-related emergencies.

A call relayed across the county from Wilmington reporting that both

bridges would be closed to all but emergency traffic caused some delays and inconvenience for county residents, Logan said. In actuality the bridges were sanded throughout the day, with caution signs erected.

"But I'd rather have every person in Brunswick County inconvenienced than to have one person dead," said Logan.

The most serious electrical outages occurred in the lower end of the county, with the Calabash and Holden Beach areas reporting the greatest problems, according to Bobby Gore, in charge of operations for BEMC. He speculated it was possibly because of heavier growth along rights-of-way or possibly because of a heavier accumulation of ice.

Damage was lightest in the Oak Island service area.

Overall, he said, "we had quite a few outages, but not major ones. We didn't lose transmission."

He continued, "We can stand cold

weather, but not that freezing rain. That's the worst thing for us next to a hurricane."

The earliest outages were in the Carolina Shores-Hickman's Crossroads area, where trees fell across several power lines. Calabash Town Clerk Janet Thomas said, however, that there were "flickers," but no disruption of electrical service within the town itself. Outages were also experienced in the Holden Beach and Supply areas as well as Sunset Beach. Some Winnabow residents were also without power for up to two to two and one-half hours.

BEMC was hardest hit in Columbus County, however, and after restoring power to several individual locations Monday night, Brunswick County crews joined two contract crews from Sumter, S.C., in Columbus.

"We're operating with only a skeleton crew here," a spokesman in

(See WEATHER, Page 2-A)

Couple Arrested On Cocaine-Related Charges

BY ETTA SMITH

A Brick Landing area couple was arrested and charged with drug-related violations Tuesday, according to Det. Sgt. David Crocker, head of the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department Drug Squad.

Daniel Locke McNair, 21, of Midway Park Apartments on N.C. 179, was charged with felony possession

of cocaine, possession with the intent to sell and deliver cocaine and misdemeanor possession of drug paraphernalia, according to Crocker.

McNair's wife, Sherry, 24, was also arrested and charged with misdemeanor possession of drug paraphernalia, Crocker said.

McNair is out of jail on \$2,500 bond and his wife on \$500 bond, said

Crocker.

The drug squad's three officers and two uniformed officers seized a felony amount of cocaine, more than a gram, in the couple's home, as well as \$163.

The raid resulted from information received from a confidential source and several citizen complaints, he added.

Holden Beach Memo Urges Compliance With Flood Damage Prevention Rules

BY SUSAN USHER

A Feb. 12 memo to Holden Beach property owners from Mayor John Tandy stresses that violation of federal flood damage prevention rules could hurt not only individual property owners, but the entire community.

It also announces plans for stricter enforcement efforts by the town and urges better compliance by property owners.

The educational flood insurance memo was prompted by a Sept. 24 meeting among town commissioners and state and federal representatives of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the office that oversees the federal flood insurance program.

Commissioners Gay Atkins said the commissioners asked FEMA emergency management specialist Carol S. Campbell, and N.C. Division of Emergency Management Director Barry Williams to meet with them to clarify questions regarding the town's liability. Several towns have already been sued, by either property owners or FEMA.

While some North Carolina communities will be checked this year for compliance, Atkins said, "I gathered we are in excellent shape. We're trying to correct some minor problems."

She doesn't think violations on the beach are as abundant as alleged by some property owners. For instance, she said, the flood insurance program covered damage to some areas that adjoining property owners might have thought were in violation.

According to the memo, the most common and most serious violation of the regulations are improvements made on the ground level.

FEMA officials stressed in September that owners of a property found in violation could lose their coverage and that the town could be placed on probation for failure to enforce the regulations, with higher insurance premiums the result for property owners.

In the worst scenario, the town could also lose its eligibility for the program, which would have "an extremely adverse economic impact upon the entire community," according to the memo. Included would be loss of flood insurance availability and of any kind of federal aid to the town.

In September a committee composed of Commissioners Hal Stanley and William Williamson and Town Administrator Bob Buck was appointed to prepare a simple explanation of the program for homeowners. The memo, reviewed by FEMA and the commissioners, is the

result.

To Report Violations

The memo states that the building inspector is to identify buildings which have improvements made illegally. The owners will be requested to remove the improvements and FEMA notified of the violation.

"If the violation is not corrected within a reasonable time FEMA will be informed," the memo continues, "and that agency has indicated that it will take action to either cancel the insurance for that building or will retroactively charge a substantially higher premium to cover the improvements."

In January, Holden Beach Commissioners amended the town's flood damage prevention ordinance to allow the building inspector to enter buildings being constructed or rehabilitated if a violation is suspected.

Tandy's memo suggests individuals planning to build on the beach first discuss the regulations with town officials.

It also urges property owners with finished areas below the base flood elevation that were completed after Jan. 19, 1978, to either remove the improvements or to have their insurance agent inspect the premises and adjust their premiums as needed for the coverage to be

legal and adequate.

Base flood elevations on the beach range from 13 feet to 19 feet above mean high water.

Such finished areas added without a permit are illegal under the state building code as well as under flood regulations, the memo notes. While the property owner might be willing to risk the loss of flood insurance coverage if the violation were discovered, the town could still be held liable "for its failure to enforce the regulations and prevent or have the violation corrected."

According to the memo, some property owners believe if flood insurance isn't desired and no mortgage is involved that finished areas may be constructed at ground level.

However, it isn't allowed by either FEMA regulations or the state building code.

Homes built on Holden Beach before Jan. 19, 1978, when the town joined the insurance program, were "grandfathered" and may be covered by flood insurance regardless of whether they comply with flood prevention regulations. However, those built or substantially improved since then may not be insured against flood damage unless certified by the town building inspector as being in compliance with these regulations.