

# Ocean Isle Addresses Beach Erosion, Airport Expansion

BY DOUG RUTTER

Ocean Isle Commissioners Tuesday voted to accept limited state aid for improvements to the Ocean Isle Beach Airport and discussed the possible use of sandbag groins to reduce erosion on the east end of the beach.

Following a report from Commissioner DeCarol Williamson, council voted to accept only \$1,000 of a \$26,500 matching grant which had been approved in September by the N.C. Department of Transportation.

Williamson recommended council accept the \$1,000 grant for airport obstruction removal and save other airport funds in the town budget until next fiscal year when the town may be able to acquire state aid for aircraft apron expansion.

Mayor Betty Williamson said the state has tentatively approved a \$55,000 matching grant for the 1988-89 fiscal year for airport expansion.

Commissioner Williamson said, "Just because we don't accept the full grant this year doesn't mean we cannot reapply at a later date for these projects."

"As a pilot, I am all for airport expansion. But we just don't have the funds to match the entire grant if we want to put it toward next year's aid for expansion," he added.

### Sandbags Recommended

The town board also discussed the possibility of establishing a program for beach erosion protection at the island's east end.

Commissioner Williamson said he met with officials of the N.C. Office of Coastal Management who recommended a system of sandbag groins, which they said would control erosion at a relatively low cost.

He said the only potential problem with sandbag groins is that they create some sand loss at the base

of the groin which may affect some properties.

Commissioner Williamson raised the question of town liability if sand loss at the base of the groins was so much that it caused property damage.

"With the groins," he explained, "there is so much more gain than loss, but the loss could occur right in front of a house. It's a question of liability for the town."

Mayor Williamson said the commissioners should meet with town attorney Elva Jess and determine to what extent the town could be held liable.

Commissioner Williamson said the estimated cost of each groin is about \$1,500 and that Office of Coastal Management engineers recommended starting the groins at Shallotte Boulevard and working west as far as necessary.

Williamson added that past efforts at erosion control by the town have relied on funds which, to his knowledge, were no longer available.

Board members stressed that the town needs to work closely with the affected property owners on the project, but also said the project will benefit everybody and not just east-end property owners.

### Other Business

In other business Tuesday, council:

- Approved a resolution adopting the countywide major thoroughfare plan as established by the Brunswick County Planning Department Transportation Committee.

- Heard from Robert Runyans and Roy Spanauer of L.E. Wooten & Associates concerning the design of a new town hall. Mayor Williamson said the town hopes for construction to begin this winter with completion of the building by summer of 1988.

- Heard the monthly building inspector's report from Druid Roberson. He said 13 permits had been issued at a valuation of \$184,050 and \$2,590 in fees collected.

- Thanked those people involved with two recent beautification projects at Ocean Isle Beach, Beach Sweep on Sept. 19 and Plant-A-Round on Oct. 10.



STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

### Plant-A-Round Takes Root

The Ocean Isle Beach Property Owners Association held its first Plant-A-Round Saturday as part of a continuing effort at island beautification. In this photo, POA

President Bess Saunders (left) helps Ed Shivley ready a crepe myrtle for planting as Carolyn Wendrich prepares the soil.

## Council Decision Upsets Gurganus

BY DOUG RUTTER

Ocean Isle Beach Council Tuesday voted unanimously to pay \$1,000 in attorney fees to Mike Ramos for his recent court defense of former Police Chief Jerry Gurganus.

Approval of payment came as a result of a letter sent by Gurganus to Mayor Betty Williamson asking for restitution of all \$5,000 in attorney fees.

Following the vote, Gurganus said publicly, "I just want the record to show that I was charged \$5,000 in attorney fees and that I will now have to pay \$4,000 of this on my own behalf."

The vote followed a brief executive session after which Mayor Betty Williamson said, "The town board felt it wanted to pay \$1,000 of the attorney fees."

She added that Gurganus could have been represented by the town's attorney and the attorney appointed by the insurance company, but chose to seek separate counsel.

"It was entirely his decision to hire additional counsel. The town did not recommend that at all," she said.

Gurganus was cleared of all charges Sept. 16 when a federal civil jury found he was not negligent in a 1984 high-speed chase that resulted in a motorcycle crash in which a passenger was seriously injured.

A federal jury had originally declared a mistrial April 21 when it could not decide the issue of negligence.

Gurganus said he would have more to say about council's decision at a later date.

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