

Speakers Push For Pender, Not Brunswick Nursing Home

BY SUSAN USHER

Most of the more than 30 people who attended a hearing in Wilmington last week on location of an area nursing home urged state officials to approve a Pender County, rather than a Leland location.

Pender and Brunswick counties are grouped together in a health service area. State planners with the N.C. Department of Human Resources have allotted the area 68 additional nursing home beds. Last Thursday, the Department's Certificate of Need section heard from advocates for both locations in a public hearing at UNC-Wilmington.

The 68 beds for the two counties are in addition to 100 beds allocated in 1985 for Brunswick County. A certificate of need was awarded earlier this year to Autumn Care Corp., which is expected to begin construction of a 110-bed facility in Shallotte in the near future.

Two firms have applied for a certificate of need to construct the newly allocated beds, Brian Center Corp. and Brunswick House Nursing Center.

Brian Center proposes to build in Pender County a \$1.5 million, 88-bed, 28,000-square foot facility with 32 skilled care and 36 intermediate care beds, plus 20 rest home or personal care beds. It would employ between 80 and 90 people.

Brunswick House has proposed a \$1.2 million, 28,000-square foot, 88-bed facility. It would include 17 skilled care, 51 intermediate care and 20 rest home beds and would employ between 65 and 75 people.

Owners of Brunswick House are David and Debbie Sherrill of Leland, William and Rosemary Miller of Leland and C.A. and Frances Butler of Pender County. Miller would build the facility.

Brunswick House submitted two applications to the state—one for a Brunswick County facility, the other for a Pender County facility. If it is awarded the certificate of need, the state would choose between the two sites.

Most of the people speaking at Thursday's hearing supported a Pender County location.

However, David Sherrill of Brunswick House said, "The people in Pender County kept talking about the nursing home approved in

Brunswick County for 100 beds. They didn't seem to realize these beds are in addition to those 100.

"The state considers those 100 beds filled even though construction hasn't begun. After it's built, the new beds will still be needed."

Among those speaking on behalf of a Pender County location were representatives of the Pender County Department of Social Services, the Pender County Commissioners, Senior Citizens Services of Pender Inc., Rep. Edd Nye, Pender

Memorial Hospital and Four County Electric Membership Corp.

Sherrill said that regardless of which county gets the facility, or which firm builds it, he expects the nursing center to give Brunswick and Pender County residents higher priority for admission. "I think it should be," he said, "because that's who the beds were allotted for."

Both firms presented their proposals well, he said, and a lot of people were there "for a public hearing."

"There was great representation of people from Pender County there," he added, "and not very many people from Brunswick County."

Speaking on behalf of both Brunswick House and a Leland location were Dr. Walter Futch, a medical practitioner, and Ray Boone of United Carolina Bank's Leland branch office.

According to Sherrill, the Certificate of Needs Section can take as long as it wants to make its determination and has indicated it would

continue to accept letters of support or recommendation up until the day a decision is made. However, he added, "I have a feeling what they've got is pretty much what they're going to make their decision on."

The agency hasn't given any indication to the applicants when a decision will be announced, he said, adding, "It would be great if they decided before the end of the year."

Once a decision is made, either company has a right to appeal the decision.

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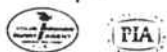


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