

Calabash Pushes For Solution To Golf Course Stormwater Woes

BY DOUG RUTTER

Calabash Commissioners are throwing their influence behind a plan aimed at solving some of the stormwater drainage problems in Carolina Shores.

Town officials voted at their meeting last Wednesday to send a letter to Carolina Shores Golf & Country Club urging the management to take action to correct stormwater runoff problems on the course.

Rainfall often runs off the golf course and into the yards of Carolina Shores residents, whose community is now part of the Town of Calabash.

Commissioner Ed Schaack of Carolina Shores asked that the board send the letter. He said the golf course manager, Rick Moran, had promised the Carolina Shores Property Owners Association (CSPOA) that work on digging drainage ditches to control runoff would begin after Thanksgiving.

But Schaack said work still had not started a month after the holiday. "What I'm trying to do is get this solved before it becomes our problem," he said last week.

"Right now, the water comes off those greens and floods people's back yards."

—Robert Noe, manager
Carolina Shores POA

CSPOA Manager Robert Noe told commissioners he has been working with the golf course for two years to solve the stormwater runoff problem. After heavy downpours, he said some back yards have as much as four or five inches of standing water.

"Right now, the water comes off those greens and floods people's back yards," said Noe. "Legally, there's nothing we can do. All we're asking is that they be a

good neighbor."

Commissions Defined

Three groups involved in planning, finance and community services in Calabash were officially named "commissions" last week. But the specific roles of each have yet to be determined.

Town officials hope to define the duties of each commission and the all resident advisory board at the next meeting. Several residents have already agreed to serve on the panels, which were formed at the Dec. 12 town meeting.

In the meantime, both the planning and community services commissions have specific projects assigned. The community services commission will study a proposal to collect an impact fee for each new building in town. The planning commission will look at incorporating deed restrictions in Carolina Shores into the town's zoning ordinances.

At the last town meeting, Commissioner George Taubel, now a member of the community service commission, suggested that Calabash impose an impact fee for each new home or business constructed in town. The purpose of the \$500 fee is to cover the cost of damage to the streets caused by the use of heavy equipment.

Taubel, who lives in Carolina Shores, said his community has collected the fees for more than three years and has brought in about \$30,000 a year.

With the recent expansion of Calabash, Taubel said the town should receive about \$42,000 per year in Powell Bill funds for street maintenance and improvements. But he said the Carolina Shores POA spends more than \$42,000 per year on road maintenance in that community alone. Taubel said the town needs the impact fees as well as Powell Bill money.

Town Attorney Mike Ramos said Calabash would not be able to impose an "arbitrary" impact fee. Commissioners would have to justify any fees in relation to the actual cost of maintaining the roads.

Ramos said many municipalities collect impact fees for various capital improvement projects. Shallotte and Ocean Isle Beach, for instance, collect impact fees from sewer users. All money collected is put into special funds for sewer system improvements.

Commissioners decided to look into amending the

zoning ordinance after learning the town could not enforce deed restrictions in Carolina Shores.

Commissioner Schaack first made a motion for the town to adopt the deed restrictions in effect in Carolina Shores, hoping the action would give the restrictions more "clout." He then rescinded the motion after the town attorney advised that it is up to the POA and individual property owners to enforce deed restrictions.

However, Ramos said the concepts in the deeds can be incorporated into the town's zoning ordinances. He noted that the town's current ordinances are incomplete anyway, and that it would be a good time to update the code and include Carolina Shores.

Dispute Resolved

Disposing of a matter left over from the last town meeting, commissioners agreed last week that the developer of an office complex located in the town's extrajurisdictional area on N.C. 179 was charged correctly for recent electrical inspections.

Electrical Inspector Terry Willetts had charged Pete Strickland \$700 for inspections at the new Georgetown Center complex. At the last town meeting, Strickland argued that the fees were twice as high as what the county charges.

But the fees were the same as Willetts charges other builders. The town will send a letter to Strickland explaining that he was charged the proper sum.

However, a letter of reprimand will be added to the personnel file of Willetts regarding his involvement in the case. Commissioner Schaack said the basis of the reprimand is that Willetts behaved "uncooperatively" and did not "conduct himself as a representative of the town should."

Action followed a 15-minute executive session. Willetts was present for the closed session and left town hall immediately afterward.

Other Business

In other business last week, commissioners: —Voted to advertise that the town is seeking a new building inspector. Building Inspector Frank Adams' probationary certificate expires Feb. 2. He will not be able to work for the town after that point.

—Agreed to change the regular meeting time from 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. Meetings will still be held on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month. The new time takes effect at the next meeting scheduled for Jan. 9.

Winter Storm Taxed Water Users

BY DOUG RUTTER

Running water may have been more valuable than long underwear and snow tires during last weekend's winter storm that dumped a more than a foot of snow in Brunswick County and pushed temperatures to record low levels.

As temperatures dipped far below freezing during the record-breaking storm that started Dec. 22 and ended Christmas Eve, water pipes and pumps from one end of the county to the other froze or broke and left many area residents without water, some for several days.

For most people, water service was back to normal this week. But during and after the pre-Christmas storm, water service was a premium at the local beaches, where leaks were discovered at more than 150 homes.

Most water pipes in the county aren't built to withstand the abnormally cold temperatures that invaded the area last weekend. "We're just not set up to handle those single-digit temperatures," said Ocean Isle Beach developer and utilities director Odell Williamson.

The National Weather Service reported the Wilmington area experienced an all-time record low of zero degrees Christmas Day. Two days earlier, the area had experienced the lowest low temperature (15 degrees) and the lowest high temperature (20 degrees) ever recorded on that date.

Brunswick County Public Utilities Director Jerry Webb said the bitter cold caused at least seven small water line breaks in different areas of the county. "Considering what we've gone through, I think we've done OK," he said last Thursday as temperatures rose into the 50s and most of the snow melted.

During the storm, Webb said the county pumped about 12 million gallons per day through its Northwest Treatment Plant at Malmo. That's about twice the normal amount.

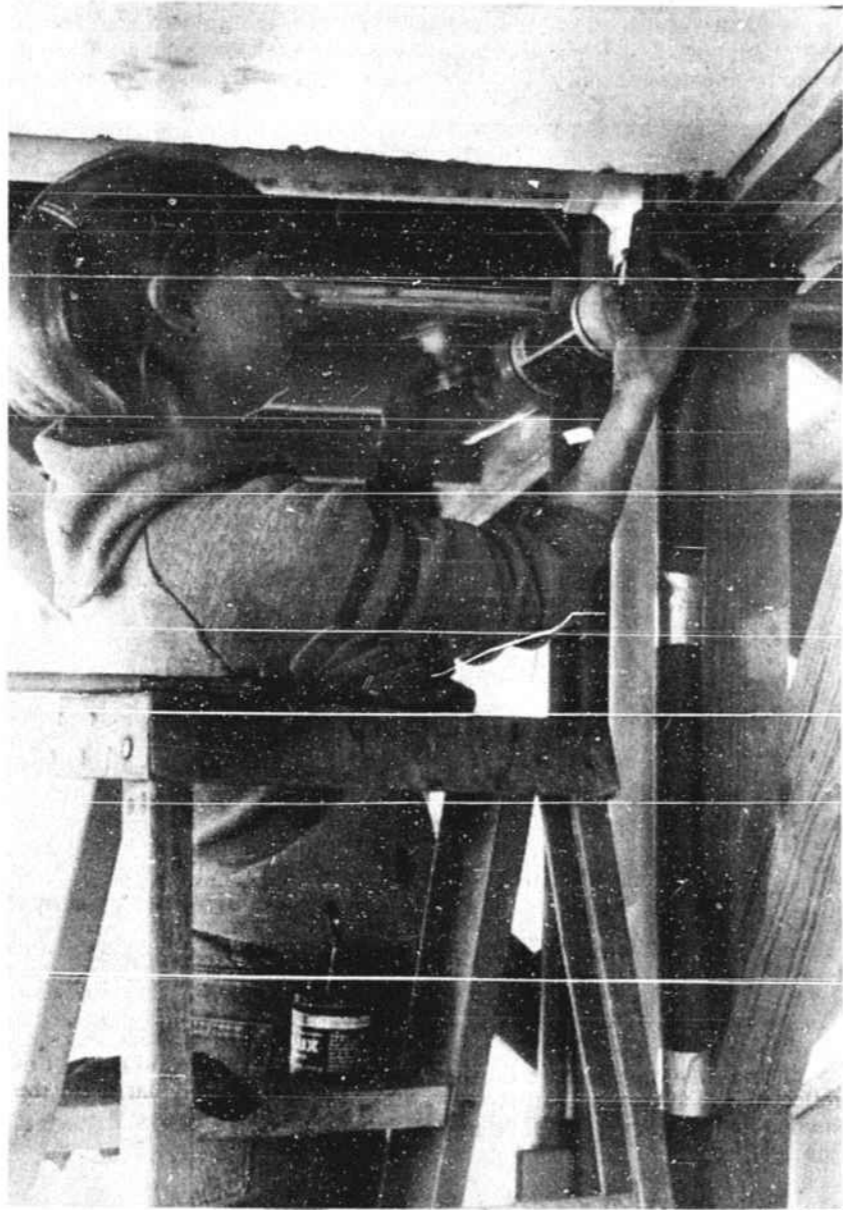
"Demand on the system required it," he said, noting that many water users probably left faucets running to help lower their chances of having frozen and broken pipes.

Webb said the only real problem occurred at Sunset Beach, where a leak was discovered on a line branching off from the water tank. Town Administrator Linda Fluegel said the leak did not cause a lot of water loss or a major drop in water pressure.

However, she said employees in the police and public works departments cut off water service to 87 homes in town where leaks were discovered. "We didn't have any major problems," said Mrs. Fluegel. "We probably won't until the water bills go out."

In an attempt to rebuild water pressure in the Sunset Beach area last Wednesday, firefighters let a minor dumpster fire in Sea Trails burn for about an hour before extinguishing it. Despite fluctuations in water pressure to some areas, local officials said fire fighting capabilities were not threatened.

Shallotte Town Clerk Mary Etta Hewett said there were water leaks



STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

ROSE FEIGENBUTZ of Dave's Plumbing replaces a broken water pipe at a Holden Beach residence last Wednesday. At least 40 homes on the island had water leaks as a result of last weekend's winter storm.

at about a half dozen homes in town but no major problems. The situation was much worse at local beaches where water lines are typically more exposed to the elements.

Holden Beach Town Manager Gus Ulrich was one of the island's full-time residents who had busted water pipes. He said town employees cut off water service to about 40 vacant homes last week because of leaks at those houses.

During and immediately following the storm, Ulrich said there was some reduction in water pressure due to a few "very significant" leaks.

However, he said the town continued to draw water from the county throughout the storm and the town's water storage tank did not get too low. "To my knowledge it was never drawn to a dangerous point."

At Ocean Isle Beach, the storage tank literally ran dry at one point and water service on the island was cut off for one night, said Williamson.

He said there were two "major" leaks that drained the water in the tank and forced the town to cut off service for about 15 hours starting last Monday night until the lines were repaired. One of the breaks occurred in the pipe that feeds the water tank and another was at the private west end of the island.

"We got along fairly good," said Williamson. "We were only without pressure one night."

The water tank running dry was actually a blessing in disguise, he said, because it helped clean out the bottom of the tank. If there had been a fire, he said the town probably would have had adequate water pressure because it was constantly building once the water service was turned off.

Town Clerk Alberta Tatum said the town also cut off water service to about 30 individual homes that had water line breaks.

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