

Ocean Isle Officials Talk Sewer Expansion With Engineers

BY DOUG RUTTER

Ocean Isle Beach officials met with representatives of six engineering firms Tuesday to discuss expansion of the town's sewer system and the chance of the town leading the way toward a regional sewer facility.

Town commissioners are planning to expand the sewer system so it serves the entire community. The east end of the island isn't served by the existing system.

While in the planning stages, officials want to consider alternative sewage treatment options and the possibility of helping establish a system that could serve areas outside the town limits.

Odell Williamson, the town's most prominent land developer who also acts as utilities commissioner, brought his concept of the regional facility to the board of commissioners last week.

Williamson said at Tuesday's workshop that the town could be the "lead agency" in putting together a sewer facility that could serve Ocean Isle and other areas where there will be a demand for sewer service in the near future. Those areas could include Sunset Beach, Sea Trail Plantation and Calabash.

Engineering firms represented at the workshop were Andrew and Kuske of Shallotte, Robert L. Bellamy and Associates of Myrtle Beach, S.C., Henry Von Oesen and Associates of Wilmington, Boney and Associates of Raleigh, Powell Associates of North Myrtle Beach, S.C., and Houston and Associates of Shallotte. Each firm met with the board for about 30 minutes.

In the near future, the town board wants a proposal from each firm on how much a feasibility study would cost. The study would address alternatives and cost estimates for expanding sewer service inside the town as well as beyond the town limits.

Williamson said the existing sewer plant can handle up to 750,000 gallons of wastewater per day, but the town only has enough acres of spray fields to handle 500,000 gallons per day.

The smallest expansion project that the town is likely to undertake would increase the amount of wastewater that can be applied to spray fields by 250,000 gallons per day.

But Williamson urged the engineers to consider wastewater treatment and disposal methods other than spray fields so that as much as 2 million gallons per day can be handled either at the existing plant or a new plant.

Williamson said the town should consider methods of wastewater treatment that might be less costly than the lagoons and spray fields which are now being used.

Treatment options could include using man-made or natural wetlands to treat and dispose of the wastewater and using treated wastewater to irrigate area golf courses.

Williamson said the Grand Strand Water and Sewer Authority, which serves the Myrtle Beach area, uses wetlands extensively in its wastewater treatment process.

Several of the engineers present pointed out that South Carolina tends to be more flexible than North Carolina in terms of wastewater treatment options, including wetlands use and golf course irrigation.

J.F. Boney of Boney and Associates said North Carolina officials look at wetlands as state waters. He said the town would need a discharge permit to use wetlands, similar to the permit that would be needed to discharge into a river.

But Lee Fleming, a consulting engineer with Powell Associates and former director of the state's water quality section, said the use of wetlands to treat wastewater is on the rise in North Carolina.

Without going into detail, Williamson said he has received information that the state may be looking to experiment with the use of wetlands in wastewater treatment.

"We did want to take a good strong look at the wetland deal," he said. "We thought we might sort of be the guinea pig."

Jay Houston of Houston and Associates also noted that there is a general movement in state government toward relaxing some of the regulatory hurdles that have caused headaches for municipalities in the past. As a result, he said the town has more options now than it did this time last year.

Charles Davis, president of Henry Von Oesen and Associates which designed the existing sewer system, also said the state is "mellowing," especially on the issue of using wetlands.

Houston said the town is presently spraying treated waste on land that could be used for some other purpose. Using man-made or natural wetlands to treat waste would be more productive.

He also said that treated wastewater is a valuable resource that can be recycled and used to irrigate golf courses.

Several engineers commended the town board for looking into a regional sewer facility. They all agreed that southwestern Brunswick County will need sewer service in the future.

Bill Bellamy of Robert L. Bellamy and Associates said he's seen the Myrtle Beach area develop from beach cottages to small motels to high-rise condominiums.

Bellamy said he expects a similar trend in Brunswick County. "It's not dreaming. It's just planning. Y'all will eventually grow up here."

Ocean Isle Beach officials haven't discussed how a regional facility might be funded. However, Williamson said Tuesday that holding out for federal grants would be "wishful thinking."

He said some counties and towns have used private capital for public buildings. The developer said he assumes private funds could be used for water and sewer systems as well.

Mayor Betty Williamson said this week's meeting was the first of what will likely be a series of workshops. She said the town needs to consider all of its options. "We've got a challenge that we need to meet."

Survey Said Base For Tackling Local Substance Abuse Problem

BY SUSAN USHER

A countywide study surveying attitudes on local drug abuse released by the Brunswick Challenge Committee held no surprises Tuesday for the group of about 20 people who attended a breakfast briefing.

It should, however, serve as the "jumping off point" for the committee's future work plan, which Chairman Jean Parker said the community itself must develop. To that end, she and other speakers challenged those present and the community at large to act on the survey's findings.

"We need to know where you are and what you are willing to do, right away," said Mrs. Parker, saying she will not continue to shoulder much of the group's work alone.

"The problems won't be solved by simply presenting the results of a survey and going home," said Marvin Sheldler, coordinator for the N.C. Challenge Program funded by the Governor's Council on Adolescent Substance Abuse.

While attention may be focused on war in the Persian Gulf, said Mark Galizio, a psychology professor at UNC-Wilmington who helped devise the survey, "another war, the war on drugs, is still with us, though perhaps we're not thinking about it enough."

Jeff Cumbie, substance abuse education coordinator with the Brunswick County Schools, said the schools cannot be expected to address the problem alone. "Our problem is the schools have the youths only six hours a day. The family and community have them the other 18 hours a day."

Most of the problems we see are related to families that have prob-

lems," he said. "I think we need to have a meeting of the minds here of the community and the schools. We need parent-based programs."

Substance abuse is a community-based problem that requires a community-based response, said Cumbie. He said survey responses indicate many local residents are willing to support such programs with their time and money if asked and that the committee's challenge is to develop these kinds of activities.

The school system has a drug education curriculum for all grades, but most-like Lions Quest and D.A.R.E., have programs put in place in the last year or so. Not enough time has elapsed to begin seeing the results, he said.

Sheldler expressed similar sentiments. He described the statewide Challenge Program as "citizens taking responsibility for their own communities, not relying on the sheriff to do it all, or social services or mental health or the schools."

"We're talking about community development, not just in the economic sense but in the broadest sense—developing the ability and resources of the community to address the problems presented."

He recommended taking existing structures and making them more responsive to community needs—crossing agency boundaries and finding new ways for various sectors of the community to work together for "a better quality of life."

Mrs. Parker said she thinks the answer is developing local groups to tackle the problem in their own communities.

The 18-question document was

"We need parent-based programs."

—Jeff Cumbie, Coordinator Brunswick County Schools

developed with the assistance of Mark Galizio, a psychology professor at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. It sought information on perceptions about the nature and extent of the county's substance abuse problem, evaluation of resources and the roles of various elements of the community such as school and family, and likely approaches for addressing the problem.

Earlier this year 686 surveys were distributed countywide by volunteers in a fashion designed to reflect county demographics, with 340 or 52 percent completed and returned. Of those responding, 78 percent were white and 20 percent black; 65 percent were females; 57 percent were between the ages of 21 and 44; and 46 percent were from western Brunswick County, 23 percent from southern Brunswick County and 31 percent from northern Brunswick County.

Of those responding, 99 percent said substance abuse is a problem locally.

They identified alcohol and cocaine equally (83 percent) as the most serious local drug problem, followed by crack cocaine (76 percent) and marijuana (81 percent). Nationwide, alcohol is also listed as the most serious drug problem.

Sheldler suggested the time may

have come to effect, starting at the local level, a change of attitude toward alcohol and other drugs like that now being seen in the U.S. regarding tobacco—approximately 25 years after the U.S. Attorney General first issued a warning that cigarettes could be bad for one's health.

Asked to rate existing services and agencies as to their impact on the local substance abuse problem, all but two—the court system and social services—received ratings of "very effective" or "effective" by at least 50 percent of the respondents. Alcoholics Anonymous received the highest approval, rated in one of those two categories by 75 percent of the respondents.

Social services was rated as "very effective" by 3 percent and "effective" by 23 percent, for a total effectiveness rating by 26 percent.

The court system came in with 32 percent.

It followed that the suggestion most frequently named as a "good strategy" to "win the war on drugs" were longer jail sentences for drug dealers (76 percent) and arresting more dealers (69 percent).

Also, most (66 percent) cited a need for more drug education and more funding for drug education programs. At the same time, however, only about half (55 percent) of

the respondents said that they needed more information on drug and substance abuse and how to recognize symptoms of usage.

Asked the greatest need in the county in terms of facilities or activities to help with substance abuse problems, a hefty 79 percent of the respondents marked more recreational activities as alternatives to drugs for youth.

Joe Rosselli of the Brunswick County Parks and Recreation Department said organized sports are a legitimate alternative to drugs, but that his efforts to shift the focus of the county's youth sports program from competition to "fun and fundamentals" has been "an uphill battle."

Demos' Building Effort Continues

The Brunswick County Democratic Party Building Committee will meet again Saturday, Feb. 23, at 10 a.m. at the party headquarters building on U.S. 17 at Supply.

Party Chairman Glen Peterson said that at the last meeting on Feb. 9, goals were set and committees established for fundraising, construction, landscaping and furnishings.

He urged all interested Democrats to participate in the meetings and the project.

Meetings will continue up to the time of the county convention, which will be held April 6 at the headquarters building.

"We're doing away with scoreboards and scoring," he said. "There's no pressure. We're putting the emphasis having fun and on skills development."

Saying he was impressed with Mrs. Parker's work on behalf of the committee, Rosselli urged, "We need to get together and work together to meet the Brunswick Challenge."

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Lewis Charged In Leland Area Business Break-Ins

BY TERRY POPE

Former Brunswick County building inspector Julius Drake "Buddy" Lewis has been charged with the break-ins of two Leland businesses following an investigation by the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department.

Lewis was charged last week with the breaking and entering and larceny of property from the True Value Hardware Store on Village Road and Lee's Little World Day Care Center on Old Fayetteville Road in Leland.

According to arrest warrants filed at the Brunswick County Clerk of Court's office, the break-ins occurred Saturday, Feb. 9. He was released from the Brunswick County Jail on \$4,000 unsecured bond on Feb. 11.

Lewis, 35, of Route 5, Leland, was indicted by a Brunswick County Grand Jury on Oct. 15, 1990 for the alleged embezzlement of money from the Brunswick County Building Inspection Department.

He was serving as interim head of that department when he resigned

last August amid an investigation by sheriff's detectives of an alleged conversion of money paid for a county building permit that was never officially issued.

According to the indictment, Lewis is accused of embezzling and converting to his own use a check belonging to the county that had been given to him as payment for a building permit from Faith Original Freewill Baptist Church in Leland on April 4, 1990. Lewis allegedly cashed the \$125 check in his own name after telling church officials that he would use a departmental stamp to fill in the name on the check.

County officials did not uncover the problem until the church requested a plumbing inspection and the staff discovered there was no building permit on record for the church project.

According to the arrest warrants filed last week by Det. Larry Joyner, Lewis is charged with allegedly breaking into the True Value Hardware store owned by Richard Trexler. Three Master Mechanic

vacuum cleaners valued at \$305.97 were taken, it states.

Lewis is also accused of breaking into Lee's Little World Day Care Center the same night, where a 12-inch television set, phonograph player and radio-cassette player, all valued at \$230, were taken.

Deputy Pete Moore filed a report last Saturday stating that he noticed a glass window at the True Value store had been broken when he was on routine patrols. A vacuum cleaner had been left on the sidewalk beside the building, Moore reported.

A 10-foot tow chain, possibly used to break the window, had also been left on the sidewalk, Moore reported.

Det. Joyner reported that around

10:20 a.m. Saturday a vehicle was found on Navassa road in the ditch with stolen property scattered all around it. When questioned, the owner of the truck said his vehicle had been stolen, Lt. Joyner reported.

Lt. Joyner said the truck had been connected to the break-in at True Value and that it was impounded by the sheriff's department pending an investigation.

Lewis had been scheduled to appear in Brunswick County Superior Court on the embezzlement charges, Friday, Feb. 8, the day before the alleged break-ins. However, his attorney, Tom Heller, was out of town so the case was rescheduled for a special session of Superior Court this week.

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