

## Board, Community To Hear Technical Center Proposal

**BY SUSAN USHER**  
Next Monday Brunswick County school officials and community business leaders will hear from DuPont officials, the Brunswick County Education Foundation and a recently formed regional Science Alliance on a proposal to develop a science, math and technology center.

The meeting will be held at noon Monday at The Ship's Chandler Restaurant in Southport. Among those speaking will be Jeff Priest of Aiken, S.C., where DuPont helped establish one such center.

However, the decision to go ahead with plans for the meeting didn't come easily.

After a hour of sometimes heated discussion at a special meeting Friday evening, the Brunswick County Board of Education left it to Superintendent of Schools P.R. Hankins to decide. Hankins chose to have the meeting, stressing its purpose will be "informational" only—not to launch the proposed technical center project as at least one board member had apparently hoped.

Should there be sufficient community interest in the project, Hankins said, then the school system would begin developing specific plans for the center and securing the help and financial support from DuPont and other interested parties. The center, as roughly proposed, would be used for staff development and for student education.

Board member Robert Stockett had been working on the proposal with Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum William Harrison and officers of the Brunswick County Education Foundation. Stockett and Harrison both said they thought the board had directed them last fall to work on the project.

"I really want to see this go and I want to see us do something about this," said Stockett, angered at the possibility the meeting might be delayed.

"Board members gave me the authority through their interest to proceed with this project," he insisted.

However, other members who were serving on the board last fall said all that had been specifically approved was a trip out-of-state last fall to discuss the possibility of such a project with DuPont officials.

Members agreed to hold the

meeting, then on a separate motion decided to delegate setting of the date and agenda to Hankins and his staff.

Ms. Baxter and board members Doug Baxley and Polly Russ expressed concern that the school system wasn't prepared for the meeting as proposed by Stockett.

"We don't know what we're asking for or what we're going to do," said Ms. Baxter. "We are all for this program but we want it to be coordinated with staff and not rushed into."

Board members have not been briefed on the project, results of an in-house needs survey of science teachers have not been compiled and no decision has been reached on how to fill the assistant superintendent for curriculum post from which Harrison recently resigned. Also, the leadership of the Education Foundation is in transition. President James Hardy, a reservist, is being called to temporary active duty, Stockett said.

Stockett had set up Monday's meeting with DuPont officials and members of the business community and drafted invitations on Board of Education letterhead before board Chairman Donna Baxter, if not other members, knew anything about the meeting, she said.

When she suggested Stockett was moving the project along too hastily and without the board's knowledge, he countered, "There are some things the board doesn't need to know and I think this is one of them."

Unlike smaller activities such as Junior Achievement, he was told, development of the proposed center would involve decisions regarding policies and curriculum—decisions that the board itself would have to make.

Stockett, an ex-officio member of the Foundation's board, accused Mrs. Baxter of being "autocratic" and of stalling the program for political reasons, which she denied. Stockett is one of two Republicans on the five-member board.

The other Republican member, Yvonne Bright, sat quietly through the hour-long meeting. Near its close, she told fellow members, "I think we've blown this whole thing out of the water. We've made a mountain out of a mole hill."

On a lengthy written motion by board member Doug Baxley, the board also affirmed that it had not delegated its decision-making authority concerning policies and programs to any single member or combination of board members.

After questions arose about the June 24 meeting, Stockett sought Friday's special board meeting in an effort "to secure commitment and authorization from the board to pursue plans to develop and construct a regional science/math/technology center with the Education Founda-

## Ocean Isle Beach Sets Land Use Plan Hearing

**BY DOUG RUTTER**  
Ocean Isle Beach leaders want to continue promoting tourism as the town's main economic base while preserving the island's image as a "quiet, relaxing, family beach community."

That's the gist of the town's land use plan update which comes up for public hearing next week. Town commissioners will hold the hearing Tuesday, June 25, starting at 9 a.m. in town hall.

Building Inspector Druid Roberson said the update is very similar to the 1986 land use plan, although the newer draft goes into more detail on items such as the hurricane evacuation and recovery plan.

Land use plans are documents that county and town officials develop and use to plan orderly growth for the next 10 years. Plans usually are updated every five years.

Roger Briggs, a planner with McKim &

Creed of Wilmington, helped develop the Ocean Isle Beach land use plan update, working closely with the town's planning board.

Roberson said most of the substantive changes in the updated plan relate to the extraterritorial area.

This area, also known as the ETA, is a mainland tract within a mile of the town limits where the town enforces zoning and subdivision regulations and the state building code.

Ocean Isle officials developed zoning restrictions for the area before taking over jurisdiction last May. The population of the area is estimated at 299.

The updated land use plan shows how the town has grown since 1986, both in terms of population and property value.

Since the last plan was completed, the permanent population of Ocean Isle Beach has increased 41 percent, from 372 residents to 523.

Over the same period, there has been a slight increase in the peak daytime population, from 23,189 to 24,371.

Accommodations tax, which is collected from tourists who rent cottages, condos and motel rooms, has nearly doubled since 1984. Town officials project collections of \$310,000 in the coming fiscal year.

The assessed value of the island has increased by about \$25 million since 1986, to \$290 million in 1990. Commissioners are estimating the property value at \$305 million for the 1991-92 budget.

The Ocean Isle Beach land use plan update, like most other plans, was partially-funded with a grant from the N.C. Division of Coastal Management.

Following adoption by the town commission, the plan will go to the N.C. Coastal Resources Commission for final certification.

## Varnamtown Keeps Taxes Low

Varnamtown officials adopted a new budget Monday that included no change in an already-low tax rate and money for the community's first street lights.

Aldermen approved a \$79,321 budget for the 1991-92 fiscal year following a public hearing at town hall, said Town Clerk Paul Vealey.

For the third year in a row, town officials have kept the tax rate at 4 1/2 cents per \$100 of property, one of the lowest rates in Brunswick County.

With a tax valuation around \$9 million, aldermen expect to collect \$3,645 in town taxes next year. The owner of a \$50,000 home will pay about \$22.50.

Other projected revenues include \$36,000 in sales and use tax, \$3,700 in utility franchise tax and \$1,800 in alcohol beverage tax. The town

plans to carry over \$34,096 that wasn't spent this fiscal year.

Some of the larger expenses in the new budget include \$11,406 to pay off the town hall property and \$3,117 for improvements to the building and grounds.

Town officials also have budgeted \$7,600 for street lights. They plan to mount single lights on about half of the utility poles in the community.

Also included in the budget are \$2,500 for street signs, \$2,300 for liability insurance and \$2,150 for office equipment and furniture. Donations include \$2,200 to the fire department and \$1,600 to the rescue squad.

Aldermen set aside more than \$28,500 in a reserve fund which could be used in case of an emergency.

In other business Monday, Vealey said the town board voted to pay Coastal Vinyl & Aluminum Inc. of Shallotte \$1,700 to put new siding on the town hall. Aldermen also continued to discuss street lights and house numbering.

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## Lawmen Probe Woman's Death

Brunswick County lawmen and the State Bureau of Investigation are still investigating the death of a Maco woman who died May 8 following a single gunshot to the head.

Authorities believe Rita Sarvis Gamble, 33, committed suicide, said Det. Kevin Holden of the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department.

The victim's husband, Russell Lee Gamble, reported her death to the sheriff's department May 8 around 2 a.m., according to a report filed by Deputy M.S. Mason.

The victim was found in her residence sitting upright in a chair with an AK-47 assault rifle between her legs and no shoe on her right foot, according to the report.

"I expect it to end up as a suicide, but it's still under investigation," Holden said Monday. "I don't expect any major developments."

Holden said authorities are wait-

ing for the results of a gunshot residue report, which won't be available for another week or two.

The husband of the victim was questioned the day after the woman was found dead. Holden said the husband is scheduled to take a polygraph test.

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announces the closing of his medical practice in Shallotte effective July 1, 1991.  
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