

Varnamtown Residents Resisting Town Plan To Improve Boat Ramp

BY DOUG RUTTER

A dozen Varnamtown residents turned out at Monday's town meeting to argue against a proposal to improve the community's public boat ramp on Lockwood Folly River.

Residents said the ramp already causes problems because people using it park their trucks and trailers in front of driveways and keep carriers from delivering mail. They say improving the ramp would make the problem worse.

But Alderman Ada McDonald said Monday night the only people opposed to rebuilding the crumbling boat ramp are the ones who live near it and keep their fishing boats in the water all the time.

Most Varnamtown residents want the ramp improved, she said. "There's a lot of people in this community who don't live right down there at the water who are begging for this ramp."

Mayor Judy Galloway said the town board is interested in building a new ramp because the existing ramp is in poor condition and people have been damaging their boats when they use it.

Aldermen haven't decided if they'll improve the ramp, but the town board accepted a proposed design from the planning board Monday night and received a lease offer from the owners of the ramp property.

McDonald said owners Junior Thompson and Blondell Robinson have agreed to lease their portion of the ramp property for 15 years. Nicky Varnam, who owns the rest of the property, has agreed to lease it for 25 years.

Planning board member Jim Minera, who designed the proposed new ramp, said it would be 77 feet long and 41 feet wide, stretching from the bulkhead at Varnam's business to a walkway on the other side of the ramp.

The ramp would be made of eight inches of steel-reinforced concrete and would be built so there is at least three feet of water at the bottom of the ramp at low tide. The cost estimate is \$21,780.

Aldermen said Monday night they plan to poll community residents to gauge public support for the project. The people at the town meeting were generally opposed to the idea.

"There's a lot of people in this community who don't live right down there at the water who are begging for this ramp."

—Ada McDonald

Alex Kuigre was among the residents who voiced concern about increased traffic once the ramp is improved. He said the number of people parking beside the road in front of his house would increase.

"The boat ramp's fine if they got a place to put the cars," Kuigre said. "We can't hardly get in and out the driveway. If you got a big parking area to park the cars that's

fine." Several residents told the town board that they had contacted the N.C. Department of Transportation to correct the parking problem along the street, but nothing was done.

Kuigre also asked if the town could afford the ramp without increasing the tax rate. He and others suggested the town board use the money to improve the town park so the children can use it.

Town board member Tonya Robbins said the few people opposed to the new ramp should think about the residents who need access to the river and can't afford to constantly repair their damaged boats.

Resident Terrence Galloway said the people who don't live near the ramp don't understand the parking problems it creates. "The majority doesn't live in the bottom of Varnamtown. You got to live down there to know what goes on."

"You're living down there by your choice," Alderman John David Dawson pointed out.

Former mayor Tracie Varnum said the community needs to "decide between the parking problem and a good ramp to serve

our people." But McDonald suggested the parking problem could be solved if the town board contacted the DOT. "There's more power coming from a mayor than just a citizen," she said.

Town officials also said landowners near the ramp have agreed to allow parking on their vacant property until they sell or develop it. There's no guarantee how long that parking would be available.

The town board had originally hoped it could get a state grant to help pay for the new ramp, but Mayor Galloway said Monday night she doesn't expect outside assistance. "They said it would be unlikely we could get funds because we don't own the property."

Aldermen tabled the boat ramp proposal Monday night and agreed to resume their discussion at the next regular meeting Monday, Feb. 15, at 7:30 p.m. in town hall.

In other business Monday, the board voted to change its insurance policy for general liability and public officials. Mayor Galloway said the town would save \$740 per year with the new policy.

Shalotte Eyeing Options For Yard Waste Disposal

BY DOUG RUTTER

With a new state rule prohibiting the mingling of yard waste and other types of trash, Shalotte officials are considering ways they can help homeowners get rid of unwanted branches, clippings and leaves.

The state regulation that took effect Jan. 1 bans the landfill disposal of yard debris that is mixed with other solid waste. A section of the Brunswick County landfill has been set aside just for yard waste.

While considering various options, including the creation of a central yard waste collection area, Shalotte officials plan to continue with the same policy they've used in the past.

Specifically, residents with yard debris can borrow the town's dump truck and haul their limbs and brush to the landfill. Maintenance Director Albert Hughes said the cost to residents is \$1 per mile, or about \$20 per load.

Hughes said townspeople haven't taken advantage of the service much in the past, but many homeowners have been mixing yard debris with other trash. That's no longer allowed.

Alderman Wilton Harrelson, an expert in the lawn and garden care field, said most homeowners could solve the problem by setting up mulching bins in their back yards.

Plans for the inexpensive bins, he said, are available at the Brunswick County Cooperative Extension Office in Bolivia. "I doubt many homes generate more yard debris than they could mulch and use in their yard."

Harrelson also suggested that people leave their grass clippings on the lawn after mowing. He said leaving the clippings behind helps the lawn and saves landfill space.

Town board member David Gause chaired Tuesday night's regular meeting in the absence of Mayor Sarah Tripp, who couldn't attend due to an illness in the family.

Hearings Slated
Town officials will conduct two public hearings next Tuesday—one on a proposal to expand the extrajurisdictional jurisdiction area (ETJ) and a second on the initial zoning of the ETJ.

The first hearing will start at 7:15 p.m., and the second starts at 7:30. Aldermen propose expanding the ETJ to include an area east of River Road and south of Copas Creek.

A map of the entire ETJ, with the proposed zoning districts, can be seen at the town hall weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Viewers Unhappy
Representatives of Atlantic Telephone Membership Corp. and Vision Cable will be invited to an

upcoming town meeting to discuss cable television service with town officials.

Alderman Morris Hall said Tuesday some residents are unhappy with certain aspects of Atlantic Telephone's cable service, including the limited number of channels it offers.

Hall said the town's franchise agreement with ATMC expires in May 1995. He said Vision Cable, which serves Holden and Ocean Isle beaches, presently offers more channels than Atlantic Telephone at a lower price.

Tabled Until Spring
Also Tuesday night, aldermen voted 3-1 to postpone a discussion about compensation for fire department members until the new budget is considered in the spring.

Alderman Paul Wayne Reeves raised the issue in relation to employee Christmas bonuses, which were \$100 last year. He voted against Roney Cheers' motion to table the issue until budget time.

Reeves said the volunteer firefighters deserve more than the town has been giving them in the past.

"I wouldn't work out in this cold weather for nothing and then not even get a pat on the back," he said. "I think we ought to do more in the future. It's not fair."

Cheers agreed the town should "iron out" the problem if there is one, but not until the new budget is presented in a few months. "I'm not in favor of treating anybody as a red-headed stepchild," he said.

Harrelson suggested the town put off discussing the issue until it starts considering the 1993-94 budget. "I think we should forget it until that time," he said.

Other Business

In other business Tuesday, aldermen:

■ Took no action after meeting for 30 minutes in executive session to discuss a police department matter.

■ Approved a mutual aid agreement allowing Shalotte and Ocean Isle Beach police departments to assist each other in the event of an emergency.

Three Are Arrested In Foiled Break-In Attempt

An informant's tip and a late-night stakeout by Brunswick County Sheriff's Department detectives resulted in the arrest of two men and a woman from Boiling Springs Lakes on felony charges Friday night.

John Edward Ward, 24, Edward Christopher Ward, 20, and Deborah Lynn Bowers, 22, have all been charged with felonious breaking and entering in the case.

Police are searching for a fourth unidentified suspect who participated in the break-in but was able to escape arrest, Det. Charlie Miller said Tuesday.

Miller said the four drove to an unoccupied farmhouse and storage building on Gilbert Road, off

Midway Road at about 11:30. The buildings were being used to store miscellaneous items from the Brunswick Pharmacy, Miller said. No drugs were being kept there, he said.

"What they didn't know is that we had received an anonymous tip that they were going to break in," Miller said.

Eight detectives waited in the nearby woods and watched three of the suspects go inside one of the buildings. The officers closed in and, after a short foot chase apprehended the two men. Bowers was arrested as she stood watch in a parked car, Miller said.

CRC MEETS IN ATLANTIC BEACH

Lakes LUP Update Before Coastal Panel

A land use plan update for Boiling Spring Lakes and a revised ethics policy will be on the agenda for consideration when the Coastal Resources Commission meets Jan. 28 and 29 in Atlantic Beach.

Sessions begin at 8:30 a.m. Thursday and Friday at the Sheraton Hotel.

Land use plans to guide future growth and development are required of 20 coastal counties and their municipalities, such as Boiling Spring Lakes. Once completed the plans are updated at five-year intervals.

The board is also to hear an update from the Coastal Resources Advisory Council land use planning committee Thursday.

An ethics policy subcommittee led by Dave Adams is to report Friday. Efforts to develop a new

ethics policy for the board began after its original policy, adopted in 1989, was termed inadequate by the State Board of Ethics. Later drafts swamped in commission debate.

Also on the agenda, Tom Hoban, a professor from North Carolina State University, will present research on public attitudes toward water quality and management of the Albemarle-Pamlico estuarine system, for which a comprehensive management plan has been proposed.

Staff will explain the coastal development permit process by tracking a project from receipt of the application to action by the division. Commissioners will also hear reports on program enhancement activities such as cumulative impacts, wetlands and coastal nonpoint source pollution control.

No public hearings are scheduled. Concurrent meetings from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Thursday of the Implementation and Standards and Planning and Special Issues committees. The committees will report Friday at 11 a.m.

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Senator R.C. Soles, Jr. will take the oath of office as Deputy President Pro Tempore of the North Carolina Senate.