

Holden Beach Postpones Approval Of Canal Bulkheading Regulation

BY DOUG RUTTER

Holden Beach officials want bulkhead maintenance standards added before they adopt a rule requiring that all canal lots have bulkheads before house construction begins.

Commissioners voted 4-1 Monday night to delay approval of the proposed ordinance until specific maintenance guidelines can be written into the regulation.

As proposed, the rule would prevent development on canal property before a bulkhead is erected. The town currently requires bulkheads only if the lot is less than 100 feet deep.

Commissioner Sid Swarts cast the only vote Monday against delaying action on the proposal. While agreeing maintenance specifications are needed, Swarts said they don't need to be part of the ordinance.

The proposal says no erosion would be permitted as a result of poorly-constructed or worn bulkheads. Any seawall allowing soil or sediment to travel around or through it would have to be repaired.

Under the proposal, it would be the building inspector's job to order repairs when needed. Property owners would be given 90 days to make the repairs.

If the estimated cost of repair exceeds 50 percent of the cost of a new bulkhead, a new bulkhead would be required within one year. The owner would have to take "all reasonable measures" to prevent erosion in the meantime.

People who have existing bulkheads that need to be replaced would be given two years from the time the ordinance is passed to rebuild them.

Numbers Mandated At Holden

People who own beachfront homes at Holden Beach have until April 15 to get their houses in order, so to speak.

Homeowners who don't have house numbers that are visible from the beach on their homes by April 15 will be fined.

Town commissioners decided to mandate the numbers Monday after Mayor Pro Tem Gil Bass reported that few oceanfront homes have numbers visible from the strand as required by town code.

For years, town officials have said house numbers are needed in case of an emergency so rescue personnel can be directed to the correct home. Numbers also are helpful for renters who aren't familiar with the surroundings.

Holden Beach code allows the town to fine people up to \$50 per day for violating the house number ordinance, which has been in effect for about two years.

People who violate the proposed rule would be subject to a fine of \$100 per day.

Although the bulkheading rule appears headed for approval, commissioners rejected a related proposal Monday that would have prohibited the dumping of fill dirt on canal lots before they are bulkheaded.

Several board members objected to the proposal because it would require people to build a costly bulkhead before they could add fill dirt, which is often needed for septic system approval.

The ordinance was defeated on a 3-2 vote, with Gay Atkins, David Sandifer and Gil Bass in the majority.

Officials also tabled a proposed amendment to the building code Monday that would require a town permit before any fill dirt could be placed on a lot.

Jim Fournier dissented in the 4-1 vote to postpone consideration of the amendment.

Other commissioners want to wait

until the town drafts a suitable definition for "ground level" as it relates to the town's 35-foot building height limit—an issue currently being studied by the planning board.

The intent of the proposed permit is so town officials will know when fill dirt has been added to a lot.

Other Business

In other business Monday, commissioners:

■ Took no action after meeting 20 minutes in executive session. Mayor Wally Ausley said the board discussed possible land acquisition.

■ Accepted the donation of two oceanfront lots at 262 and 264 Ocean Boulevard East. Owners were Louise and Robert Tilley and Robert Turnbull. The town plans to use the land for beach access for the handicapped.

■ Adopted a resolution authorizing Town Manager Gary Parker to sign necessary papers and represent the board of commissioners in connection with mosquito control.

'Lyra' Gone, But Coast Guard Investigation Has Just Begun

BY SUSAN USHER

The *Lyra* is gone, but the U.S. Coast Guard Marine Safety Office in Wilmington has just begun its investigation of how the cargo ship lost its tow last Tuesday morning.

After drifting south-southwest in the Atlantic Ocean off Cape Fear most of Tuesday, the ship was anchored safely early Wednesday and, after a series of delays, arrived in Charleston Sunday under tow.

The 603-foot rolling cargo vessel, owned by Lykes Lines of New Orleans, was being towed by steel cable "deadship"—with no crew, engines off and steering mechanism locked—in rough seas from Baltimore to New Orleans when it broke loose from its tugboat Tuesday morning. Strong northeast winds were pushing it toward the shoals off Bald Head Island or to open waters beyond.

At one point the Coast Guard was anticipating a collision course with the shoals, hard bottom extending about 20 miles offshore at depths ranging from 20 feet to 2 feet, which could have resulted in an oil spill. The *Lyra* had on board nearly 400,000 gallons of bunker and diesel oils, fuel for its own operation.

However, shifting winds Tuesday night put the ship on a course southwest of the shoals toward open water, which would offer fewer chances to stop the vessel.

Shortly after midnight crew members airlifted on board Tuesday afternoon dropped the two anchors manually, said Ensign Karl DeLooff of the U.S. Coast Guard Marine Safety Office in Wilmington. It was the only option remaining after an emergency generator that operates the anchor winches could not be started.

From its mooring in 96 feet (16 fathoms) of water approximately 18.5 statute miles east-northeast of Frying Pan Shoals Light Tower, the *Lyra* wasn't able to resume its journey south until 10:50 p.m. Friday, after the shipping line airlifted a second generator on board to power the auxiliary system so the anchors could be lifted. Crew members were able to raise one anchor, but cut the other loose because the chains were entangled, said DeLooff.

The *Lyra* left under tow by the 120-foot tug *Turecomo* Boys, and with a two-helicopter escort. It was to stop in Charleston for inspection and repairs before completing the trip to New Orleans.

While the *Lyra* is gone from local waters, the Marine Safety Office in Wilmington has charge of investigating why the vessel broke loose from its tugboat.

"Right now we're just looking. We don't know exactly what happened. We have some speculations, but we're not going to release anything until we have the facts."

—Lt. Dean Firing, Investigating Officer

Lt. Dean Firing, the investigating officer, said statements have been taken from the master and mates airlifted aboard the *Lyra* and that the tugboat owned by McAllister Towing has been examined. Within the next several weeks he expects to receive reports, photographs and videotape from the Marine Safety Office in Charleston, where Coast Guard personnel have examined the *Lyra*, and a report from McAllister Towing with additional information.

"Right now we're just looking. We don't know exactly what happened. We have some speculations, but we're not going to release anything until we have the facts."

The Coast Guard's response to the potential oil spill—which included positioning Atlantic Strike Team

members and equipment here, bringing in a helicopter and several vessels for stand-by—is being paid for out of an Oil Pollution Trust Fund established when the threat became apparent, indicated Lt. J.G. Bagg, marine environment response coordinator. "Eventually Lykes Lines will be paying the fund back," he said, as provided by the Oil Pollution Act of 1990.

The *Lyra* was bound for New Orleans, where it was to be sold to the U.S. Government to join the Ready Reserve Fleet. The merchant mariners provide commercial ships to carry military cargo.

VFD To Elect Directors

Supply Volunteer Fire Department Inc. will hold its annual meeting Friday, Feb. 12, at 7:30 p.m. at the fire station on N.C. 211.

Secretary-Treasurer Dean Chestnut said members will elect nine members to the board of directors and conduct any other business that comes up.

Mobile Office Coming

Congressman Charlie Rose's mobile office returns to the area Wednesday, Feb. 10, with a stop at the South Brunswick Postal Station at Sunset Beach from 9 a.m. until noon.

A representative of Rose's office will be available to talk with local residents about any problems or questions they have relating to federal agencies or legislation.

AT HOLDEN BEACH

Community Watch Helps Nab Thief

BY DOUG RUTTER

Holden Beach Community Watch is credited with assisting in the weekend arrest of a man suspected of stealing a sports car, motor home and thousands of dollars in electronics equipment.

Police Chief Robert Cook said Wilmington police arrested the man Saturday after he was spotted driving a stolen vehicle on the island. The 1993 Mazda Miata was taken last week from a Wilmington car dealership.

Cook said the suspect had been living in a stolen motor home at a Holden Beach campground since Thursday night. The stolen car, a red convertible, wasn't noticed until it was driven Saturday.

Two island residents notified police after seeing the man driving a vehicle fitting the description of one that had been stolen. The residents read about the theft in a newspaper.

"Community Watch put us on it," Cook said Tuesday morning. "Several times now we've gotten help from them."

Cook said the suspect had driven a 1991 Miata to University Mazda last week and told a salesman he wanted to trade up to a 1993 model. The man told the salesman he wanted to take the new car to Carolina Beach to show his girlfriend, but he never returned.

The chief said the suspect apparently used the same approach to steal a 37-foot Swinger motor home in Pennsylvania. After stealing a small Winnebago, the man reportedly took it to a dealership to trade up to the bigger one.

After the suspect was identified Saturday, Cook said police attempted to search the motor home but

were refused entry since they had no search warrant. Police watched the home while Wilmington police were called to the scene.

The chief said Wilmington police had probable cause to search the motor home because it was used to steal the sports car. The car was pulled behind the motor home to Holden Beach.

Inside the trailer police found televisions, video cassette recorders, computers and tape recorders. Authorities also found two checks for \$152,000 written from a Pennsylvania woman's account.

On Monday, police figured the value of the stolen property at \$400,500. The car was valued at \$21,000 and the motor home at \$70,000. "When we get through it's probably going to be half a million dollars," Cook said.

Cook said the suspect was initially jailed in Wilmington but later was relocated to the state prison in Raleigh after he attempted to hang himself.

The name of the suspect, charges and further details of the case weren't available Tuesday from Wilmington Police. Cook described the suspect as a man between the ages of 22 and 27.

In addition to the local charges, Cook said the man was wanted in Florida, Georgia and Pennsylvania. "He wouldn't give his name. He was cool. He wouldn't tell us anything."

Cook said Holden Beach isn't a good place to hide in the winter because there aren't many people on the island.

"This is the worst place to come," Cook said. "He was the only camper in the campground except for the ones that rent."

Development Network Receives \$100,000 Grant From Foundation

The Southeastern Network for Economic Development (SENEDE), which serves Brunswick and 15 other counties, has received a \$100,000 grant from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation.

The funds will be used as part of the program's operating budget for 1993 and 1994.

The network, created by the University of North Carolina at Wilmington's Division for Public Service and Extended Education, is working to improve and contribute to economic development in the 16-county region.

In 1992, SENED's projects included:

- identifying the role of the university in regional economic development;
- forming preliminary goals in the areas of economic growth, education, environment, leadership, cultural resources, technology and infrastructure;
- developing a business resource directory of small business assistance centers, economic development spe-

cialists, area chambers of commerce, county planning agencies and other state and local resources; and

■ studying the possibilities of a major aquarium facility in Wilmington.

In 1993, it plans to concentrate on problem-solving and economic development efforts, including "enhancing and expanding the telecommunications infrastructure within the region," according to a news release.

"SENEDE also plans to serve the regional governing bodies by acting

as a mediator, moderator and facilitator between the university and other agencies," it continues. "A goal that will also receive attention is supporting other development initiatives in the state and region."

The grant—\$50,000 a year for the next two years—is in addition to a previous grant of \$75,000 from the foundation. The Z. Smith Reynolds foundation makes grants to universities, health programs, teachers, economic programs and children's services.

Brunswick Unemployment Rate Still Among State's Highest

Brunswick County continues to have the fifth-highest unemployment rate of any county in North Carolina.

December 1992 figures released this week by the Employment Security Commission of North Carolina (ESC) shows Brunswick's rate as 14.8 percent, compared to 13 percent a year earlier. It is one of

seven counties with unemployment above 10 percent. The state seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for December was 5.5 percent.

Preliminary ESC estimates, with no seasonal adjustments, show Brunswick County having a labor force of 19,640 in December, with 16,730 employed and 2,910 unemployed.



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