

Shallotte Sewer Plant Needs Work; Engineer Suggests Major Expansion

BY DOUG RUTTER

Shallotte officials need to make immediate improvements to the sewer plant and start planning expansion of its dwindling capacity, according to system engineer Finley Boney.

Speaking to the town board Tuesday night, Boney said the town will lose the use of some spray irrigation fields as a result of two state inspections of the plant conducted in February and last fall.

"The state is concerned about several spots in our spray field area," the Raleigh engineer reported. "There are several spots that are low-lying and hold water after it rains."

Boney estimated that the "lost" spray fields could cost the town about 8,000 gallons of wastewater treatment capacity per day. That would leave Shallotte with 200,000 gallons per day.

The town presently uses about 140,000 gallons per day on average. Boney and Maintenance Director Albert Hughes said both of the "sur-

prise" inspections followed periods of extremely heavy rainfall.

Boney said the town will probably have to spend some of its \$78,000 capital reserve fund to make the improvements at the plant. While that work is being done, he recommended the board consider a major expansion of the capacity.

"We're going to be losing some of our spray site capacity," the engineer said. "I want the town board to be thinking about doing something more than a Band Aid."

Boney said state officials are suggesting the town acquire more land for spray fields. He recommended aldermen start planning so they can eventually increase the capacity to 500,000 gallons per day.

"I would like the board to consider a meaningful expansion of your wastewater treatment facilities," he said. "I think we've realized a comfortable growth rate over the last few years. I just think we owe it to ourselves to be in a position to continue this healthy growth."

Hughes pointed out that the plan-

ning board has looked at several projects in the last few years that could account for the rest of the existing capacity if they were developed.

Boney warned that the town would have to be selective about any land it purchases or leases for additional spray fields. The land must be suitable for such use. He also said land north and east of the plant would be better than property west and south because it is farther from town.

The engineer said the additional land wouldn't have to be contiguous to the plant or existing spray fields. Shallotte could pump treated wastewater as far as one mile from the plant to be applied to irrigation fields.

"If we could get the land at a reasonable rate it would be good to bite the bullet and buy the land," Mayor Sarah Tripp said. "It's not like it's something that we don't need."

The mayor said the town might have more "bargaining power" if it tries to buy a large amount of land

than it would if it went after smaller pieces of property.

Alderman Roney Cheers said he thinks the town should start planning the expansion as soon as possible. "I realize if we expect to grow we're going to have to expand our system."

However, Cheers said he is opposed to some of the current fees the town charges landowners and developers to raise money for sewer expansion. He said they discourage growth.

Shallotte's wastewater treatment plant opened in May 1983. The capacity was expanded from 130,000 gallons per day to 208,000 gallons per day about four years ago.

Other Business

In other business Tuesday, alder-

men: ■Heard a status report on extraterritorial zoning from Planning Board Chairman Carson Durham. The board has met twice since a Jan. 26 public hearing and is considering 33 zoning changes requested by property owners. Another public

hearing will be set following the board's next meeting March 9.

■Promoted police officer David Andrews from probationary to permanent status as recommended by

Chief Rodney Gause. The board also accepted Gause's recommendation to extend the probationary period of officer Michael Ferster for six months.

Authority To Repay County For '82 Water System Loan

The Lower Cape Fear Water and Sewer Authority will soon refund the \$5.6 million it borrowed from Brunswick County in 1982 to build its raw water facility.

The authority plans to issue approximately \$4.2 million in revenue bonds to raise the money to pay back the loan, said Brunswick County Manager David Clegg. The remainder of the money will be raised through user fees.

Clegg is also chairman of the 11-member authority representing the City of Wilmington and Brunswick, New Hanover, Columbus, Pender and Bladen counties.

As the authorities first customer,

Brunswick county provided the \$5.6 needed to build a pumping station in Bladen County and to run water lines to Brunswick's treatment plant near Northwest.

The authority's customer base has grown large enough to pay back the money it borrowed for the initial construction, Clegg said. The authority now provides water to Brunswick County, Wilmington and to several industrial customers in New Hanover County.

Clegg said the money would be used to restructure the debt the county owes on its own water system.

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