

New Subdivision Proposal To Be Studied In Work Session

BY LYNN CARLSON

Ocean Isle Beach commissioners, not fully satisfied with the proposed new subdivision ordinance drafted by a consultant, tabled the measure and scheduled a joint work session between themselves and the planning board.

In a public hearing Tuesday morning, the only comments on the proposed new ordinance came from the town's consultant, commissioners and planning board members.

DeCarol Williamson, planning board chairman and real estate developer, said his board has "many problems" with the draft ordinance and recommended work sessions between the town and planning boards and Town Attorney Elva Jess.

"It is beyond (the planning board's) ability to bring you recommendations on this. It would be better for us to get this right the first time than to have to change it later."

Williamson charged that the proposal's 14-day deadline for recording subdivision plats after final town approval would "hurt and hinder" carefully planned development.

"This would do away with long-term planning" and "penalize people who look into the future for five or 10 years," Williamson argued, since property taxes on

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—DeCarol Williamson, Planning Board Chairman

subdivided lots greatly exceed those on undeveloped tracts.

Williamson referred to his father, Odell Williamson, and said, "If Mr. Williamson has to record anything he does, the property taxes will go out of sight."

Odell Williamson currently is the highest-paying non-corporate taxpayer in Brunswick County and is sixth among all county taxpayers, having had a 1992 tax bill of \$188,900 on property valued at \$27.8 million.

Consultant Roger Briggs countered that developers can get preliminary approval on entire subdivisions and then seek final approval only for the lots they wish to sell right away. "You can seek final approval on just one lot," he said.

DeCarol Williamson said laws, regulations and elected officials are subject to change between preliminary and final approval. "What you dream today may take place 10 years from now, but you want to get preliminary approval. And when you make a commitment of time and money, you want to feel like you'll be allowed to finish what you started."

Commissioners Bill Benton and Debbie Fox said they agreed.

Planning Board Member Ken Proctor, who said he was speaking as a private citizen, also agreed, calling the proposal "a major hamper to large developers."

A work session was scheduled for Tuesday, April 20, at 8 a.m. in the town hall. At work sessions, elected and appointed of-

ficials may discuss issues but take no formal actions. Such sessions are open to the public, though public comments are not ordinarily allowed.

House-Moving Amendment

The commissioners passed without discussion an amendment to the zoning ordinance restricting the movement and relocation of houses on the beach. Property owners will be required to move houses within six months of the date of their permit to do so and specifies how and when structures may be moved.

The amendment sets permit fees and mandates that the exterior appearance of dwellings be made "equal or superior to the general nature and character of the neighborhood" into which they are moved.

DeCarol Williamson reported that the planning board found the new rules "perfectly acceptable and a good idea."

The only public comment came from Odell Williamson, who said, "You've been letting some mighty sorry houses move on this beach. We don't need them here...I hope you've got enough (in the ordinance) to take care of it."

In other business the board: ■announced that the town has been verified for Class 8 federal flood insurance rating,

entitling property owners in the flood hazard zone to receive a 10 percent discount off their federal flood insurance premiums.

■approved recommendations from Commissioner Debbie Fox for a monthly residential pick-up of yard debris by Chambers Inc. on the last Friday of each month and for the town to provide a compartmentalized recycling container for newspapers, aluminum cans and plastic beverage bottles;

■announced that the Ocean Isle Beach Property Owners Association will sponsor its annual "Trash Bash" on May 22, starting at 10 a.m. and meeting at the Museum of Coastal Carolina.

■learned from Building Inspector Drued Roberson that \$30,790 in Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA) permit fees were collected in the town through the end of March—"double what we had this time last year;"

■also heard from Roberson that Brunswick County has written President Bill Clinton to ask for an acceleration of the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) disaster area declaration following the March 13 storm. "The storm last Monday gave us even more damage to our dunes," Roberson added.

Parking Lot Becomes Issue In OIB Subdivision Approval

BY LYNN CARLSON

Principals in Ocean Isle Partnership hit a snag with the town board on Tuesday when they attempted to relocate a public parking lot they had previously dedicated to the town as a courtesy.

In seeking approval for the Summer Place subdivision, to be developed just west of town hall between the ocean and sound, the partners asked the town board to "undedicate" a public parking lot on West First Street between Shelby Street and Duneside Drive.

They say they will relocate public parking to two 25-foot-wide street-side strips about a half-block farther back from the ocean.

The board unanimously approved Summer Place, but required the partners to get permission from people who have bought property in the 31-lot Ross Subdivision before it will

consider releasing the parking lot to the developers to sell as a homesite.

In an hour-long debate, commissioners, the partners and planning board members debated whether the partners have been treated fairly in their three months of dealing with the town on the Ross, Crouse and Summer Place subdivisions.

Summer Place is between the oceanfront Ross subdivision and the soundfront Crouse subdivision, both of which were previously approved after lengthy study by the planning board and commissioners. The parking lot was planned in the Ross subdivision on suggestion of the town board, though the current subdivision ordinance does not require one.

"We were under severe time constraints to buy this property and develop it," partner Phil Holcomb told the board. "We had to develop the soundside differently than we had planned. We gave the town Fourth

Street, then we had to wait to see where it would go. We have cooperated with the town fully; we're simply asking to relocate a parking lot so that it will actually serve the public better than what we have."

Holcomb and his partners John Sutton and Stuart Cooke argued that the new parking lot plan will be safer for drivers and will accommodate more vehicles.

They were defended by Planning Board Member Ken Proctor who said, "They've been through this with us three times, and we keep changing the rules."

Town Attorney Elva Jess argued that it is not a simple matter to reverse dedication of property to be used by the public. "You didn't only dedicate this to the town, you dedicated it to the subdivision owners as well," she said.

Town Utilities Commissioner and

developer Odell Williams objected strongly to the partners' plans, saying, "Somebody could sue, if they bought property (in the Ross subdivision) depending on a parking lot, and you deed this property back."

"We're just asking to move it back 50 feet," Sutton said.

Williamson criticized the partners for developing the tract as three separate subdivisions and said the town has "leaned over backward" to work with the partners.

Commissioner Debbie Fox said, "I personally have no problem with them moving the parking lot or with approving Summer Place. But I don't feel the town could withdraw the parking lot without the permission of people who've been sold lots."

Proctor said that should be simple, since "the residents don't want a parking lot at all. I live in that area, and I don't want one. The residents

end up having to picking up the trash."

Commissioner Kendall Suh's suggestion for a public hearing died for lack of support. Suh said he favored keeping the parking where originally planned because of proximity to a dedicated beach access.

"I don't see that a public hearing is necessary," Fox said. "We're not taking something away, we're substituting something."

Shallotte Planning Board Finishing Up ETJ Zoning

BY DOUG RUTTER

If turnout and comments at a hearing last week are any indication, most Shallotte area residents are content with the town's plans to zone property beyond the city limits.

Shallotte Planning Board held its second public hearing Thursday on a proposal to zone the extraterritorial area, which includes most land within one mile of the town limits.

Compared to a lengthy and sometimes heated first hearing in January, turnout last week was light and the crowd generally in agreement with what the town has proposed.

"Your input in January, I feel and the planning board feels, made this better," Planning Board Chairman Carson Durham told a crowd of about 40 people at town hall.

After more than a year of work on the zoning map and regulations, the planning board was expected to finish its work this week before passing its final recommendations on to the board of aldermen.

Officials have been working on zoning since the ETJ was created in September 1991. The town will enforce the state building code and its zoning rules in the area to control the type of development that occurs near town.

Durham said the planning board

made about 30 changes to the proposed map following January's hearing. The board heard a few more requested changes last week that could affect individual lots.

Generally speaking, planners have suggested most of the ETJ be zoned residential, either RA-15 or RAM-15. Both districts are intended for residential and agricultural uses.

Some sections of the extraterritorial area have been proposed for the B-2 business district, which carries a minimum lot size requirement of 20,000 square feet.

At last week's hearing, landowners Bobby Long and Deedy White asked the planning board to reduce the minimum lot size in the commercial district.

Long said commercial lots inside the town can be as small as 10,000 square feet, and the minimum size in the county zoning ordinance is 15,000 square feet.

"I would ask that you reconsider and consider reducing that," Long said. "I know we're all concerned about the density, but I think it would be more equitable if it was less than 20,000."

White suggested the minimum lot size in the B-2 district be dropped to 15,000 square feet.

Also last week, Jason Simmons

asked that his property next to the Shallotte Moose Lodge be zoned commercial instead of residential. Simmons said he bought the land as commercial and plans to eventually locate his business there.

"I paid a lot more for the property than I ever could get out of it as residential," he said. "It would present an extreme hardship if it isn't zoned commercial."

The ETJ includes about 2,000 tracts of land and extends to the south end of the U.S. 17 bypass and north to Royal Oak and Red Bug roads. It also takes in land as far west as McMilly Road and east on N.C. 179 to Hale Swamp Road.

Durham said the planning board tried to use roads, streams or lot lines wherever possible as the ETJ boundaries. "We tried to follow some logical line," he said.

People who live or own property in the ETJ will not receive town services or pay town taxes, unless they are annexed into Shallotte. Town officials say there are no current plans to annex.

There were no public comments last week on another town proposal to delete a section of the town code that requires the owner of adjoining lots that don't meet minimum size standards to combine the lots.

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