

Board Still Debating Dune Repair

BY DOUG RUTTER

Holden Beach Commissioners haven't decided if the town will get involved in repairing oceanfront sand dunes—coming to no conclusions during a 2 1/2-hour meeting Tuesday.

However, most town board members seem to be having second thoughts about an earlier decision to leave all dune rebuilding in the hands of oceanfront property owners.

No decisions were made, but the consensus Tuesday morning was that commissioners should spend some or all of the \$44,000 they put in this year's budget for dune repairs.

"I think we all agree we have to spend some town money somewhere," Mayor Wally Ausley summarized at the close of the meeting. "The question is where do we spend it and how do we spend it."

Holden's dunes sustained serious erosion during a March 13 winter storm that caused an estimated \$8 million in damage on the island. The ocean washed over the dunes in several areas.

Commissioners want to help rebuild the berms, but they want to make sure they spend the taxpayers' money wisely. Town officials don't want to spend money on dune repairs that won't last.

They've repeatedly said they don't want to make the same mistake that was made following Hurricane Hugo, when the town poured \$350,000 into a dune that quickly washed away.

"If we're going to build a dune it's not going to be cosmetic," Commissioner David Sandifer said Tuesday. "It's not going to be something that's going to wash away with the next high tide."

Commissioners hope to meet soon with Spencer Rogers, a coastal engineer with the UNC Sea Grant program, to discuss short-term and long-term solutions to erosion.

"I think it'll be a good idea," said Commissioner Sid Swarts, who recommended Rogers as an expert on

beach erosion. "It'll give credibility to what we decide to do."

The Holden Beach Property Owners Association decided at its Easter weekend meeting to ask the town board to take responsibility for repairing or rebuilding the dunes.

The POA's vote came on the heels of a town board decision to let property owners decide if they want to rebuild their own dunes. POA members want uniformity is what is done, even if oceanfront owners have to foot the bill.

Commissioner Jim Fournier said Tuesday the erosion situation is not an emergency because the beach should rebuild itself this summer. "From now to November the sand is going to come back in."

Whatever the town board decides to do, Sandifer said he wants to ensure Holden Beach gets its money's worth. "We have dune renourishment money and I think a lot of it's going to have to be spent where we don't have a dune now."

While commissioners hammer out a plan of action, oceanfront homeowners are allowed to pay for dune repairs at their property.

Holden Beach received a state permit last week that allows oceanfront property owners to have truck loads of sand dumped on their lots to build or reinforce dunes.

Town Manager Gary Parker said the N.C. Division of Coastal Management permit requires that all sand placed on the lots is compatible with existing beach sand. Also, owners must notify adjacent property owners of their plans in advance.

The sand can only be placed on the street side of the escarpment. Before owners can place sand on the ocean side, the town will need the approval of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Parker said two local firms, O'Neil Caison and F&R Development, have the compatible sand needed to rebuild dunes. The cost is between \$7 and \$10 per cubic yard.



STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

Jolly In 'Jigsaws'

West Brunswick High School English and drama instructor Sherril Jolly (left foreground) portrays Sylvia, a domineering mother, in the Brunswick Little Theater production of "Jigsaws" last weekend. Its all-female cast also included (from left) Jane Carr as Sylvia's daughter Monica, Jean Hrdlicka as her sister Pat, Vicki Bridgers as her daughter Alex, and (not pictured) Stuart Callari as Emma, the family matriarch.

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