

Holden Board Considers Impact Fees For New Homes, Businesses

BY DOUG RUTTER

Holden Beach officials hope to move quickly on a proposal to establish building impact fees that would raise money for future development of sewer and stormwater runoff systems.

Under a fee structure proposed last week, the town would collect at least \$1,000 for each new house and \$2,000 for each new business. Building additions also would raise money for the special reserve fund.

Proposed fees are 50 cents per heated square foot for residences and \$1 per heated square foot for businesses. Minimum fees would be \$1,000 for homes and \$2,000 for commercial uses.

Owners of existing homes and businesses would not have to pay the impact fee. Town officials also plan to exempt buildings that are moved from one lot to another lot on the island.

Commissioner Jim Fournier, who is opposed to a sewer system at Holden Beach, is one of the board members who initiated the proposal.

"I just see the justice for the people who are creating the need to pay the bill," he said Monday. "I just felt all

these people hollering for sewers should put their money where their mouth is."

Commissioner David Sandifer, who worked with Fournier on the proposal, said town officials have been considering impact fees for about a year. "It's done in many other towns. There's plenty of precedent for it."

Sandifer said the fees should raise between \$100,000 and \$150,000 per year. "It won't pay for a sewer system, but if you figure we build between 80 and 100 houses per year that will give us a good down payment on one. We've got to start somewhere."

Mayor Wally Ausley said the fees are comparable with those in other North Carolina cities. "I think the thousand dollars puts us right in line with residences."

Town Attorney Ken Campbell has been instructed to draft a resolution regarding impact fees. The board will have to pass an ordinance before it can start collecting any money.

Commissioners are anxious to get the fees in place. "I feel like every day we wait we lose money," Sandifer said.

Added Fournier, "Tomorrow would be late."

Under the original proposal put forth by Fournier and Sandifer, the charge for residences would have been \$250 per bedroom.

Commissioner Sid Swarts suggested the town charge according to square footage. "You know what a heated square foot is. It's cut and dried. Look at the turmoil we've gone through over what is a bedroom."

Town Manager Gary Parker said last week an official at the N.C. Institute of Government told him the impact fee proposal could be challenged in court, based on existing case law.

The institute recommends the town board adopt a resolution documenting that it is planning for sewer and stormwater runoff systems. Applying for state or federal funds for those projects also were suggested.

Sandifer said no other communities have tried to do exactly what Holden Beach is proposing. "I for one don't mind being the leader of the pack as far as establishing new case law."

Fournier agreed. "This is worth doing and I'm not go-

ing to let some bureaucrat tell me it might be controversial."

Sandifer said the town needs better control over stormwater runoff to cut down on pollution of marshes and canals. "That needs to be part of what we're doing in the future."

Eventually, Sandifer said he would like the town to require a stormwater runoff plan with every building permit application. "I think it's necessary for people who are building to be very conscious of runoff."

Although he opposes a sewer system, Fournier said it's inevitable. "I don't care if we never have a sewer system on Holden Beach...but I'm realistic enough to realize we're going to have one. There's too many people going the other way."

When the ordinance setting the impact fees is adopted, Sandifer said he would like to have a 30-day grace period so builders who already have bids out won't lose money.

Town officials say homeowners will ultimately pay the impact fees. "Anybody who thinks the builder is going to pay this is sadly mistaken," Sandifer said.

Calabash Sign Workshop Draws Few Business Owners

BY ERIC CARLSON

Restaurateurs and merchants have complained about the Calabash sign ordinance since the town began enforcing it. Some have ignored the law and gone to court over it. Many have cited the sign conflict as evidence that downtown Calabash and residential areas should be split into two towns.

So members of the Calabash Planning and Zoning Board were surprised when only a handful of business people showed up Monday night at a special meeting called to hear suggestions on how the ordinance might be improved.

Chairman Al Smith said he was pleased that several of those who attended the meeting spoke in favor of the sign ordinance. He said that although the board is not planning any immediate revisions of the law, members to discuss the points raised at future planning board meetings.

Earl Benton and his daughter Linda Chappell, co-owners of a boutique and beauty shop off N.C. 179, complained that their business was being hurt by the law's prohibition of off-premises signs. They said their location is outside the normal traffic flow and insisted that directional signs on the main road are essential to their business.

"If you put a man out in the woods with no sign to get there, he won't get no business," Benton said. "Local people know where we are, but we couldn't stay in business without some of the tourists. If you

"I don't want to obstruct anybody's vision or hurt anyone in any manner. But I don't believe it's asking too much to let me stay in business."

—Earl Benton

make us take down our sign, you'll put us out of business."

Benton said the town had filed suit against him for failing to remove two small off-premises signs indicating the location of his shops.

"I don't want to degrade anything. I don't want to obstruct anybody's vision or hurt anyone in any manner," Benton said. "But I don't believe it's asking too much to let me stay in business."

Chappell said she had collected a list of signatures from customers who said they found the shops by following the signs. She said that at the time the shops were built, Calabash wasn't strictly enforcing its sign ordinance.

"We had no way to foresee that this would happen," she said. "If we

knew, we would never have built it."

Debra Mawji, co-owner of Mama Brava's Pizza, said town ought to allow restaurants in shopping plazas to have more advertising space than the small group signs currently allowed in the ordinance.

Smith cautioned Mawji, who is involved in a civil suit with the town, not to discuss "matters that might be the subject of litigation."

At that, Holden Beach lawyer Benedict Del Re rose to his feet and walked out of the meeting. He has filed a lawsuit against the town building inspector Edward Schaack over his enforcement of town ordinances.

"If you exclude everybody who's in litigation, you exclude everybody in town," Del Re said.

Retail business owners Victoria Jones and Clark Callahan both spoke in favor of the sign ordinance and its effect on the appearance of downtown Calabash.

"You can't please everybody all the time, but we have no complaint," Jones said. "Signs can get out of hand. If we want to establish a quality atmosphere, we need to create that ambiance. Otherwise it's going to look like Myrtle Beach."

Board member Forrest King suggested that few business owners showed up at the meeting because "a lot of these people work for a living." He said the town needs to consider permitting off-premises directional signs to direct visitors toward businesses located off the main road.



ROAD SIGNS of all kinds line the sides of N.C. 179 in Calabash, where strict enforcement of outdoor advertising regulations has sparked controversy in the town.

Tanker Driver's Condition Critical After Accident Near Town Creek

A driver whose tanker rig crashed north of Town Creek on U.S. 17 last Wednesday night, July 21, remained in critical condition Tuesday in New Hanover Regional Medical Center in Wilmington, said hospital spokeswoman Iris Baker.

Henry Benjamin Tilton, 63, North Charleston, S.C., was driving a truck-tractor with tank owned by Central Transport of High Point, according to the N.C. Highway Patrol office in Wilmington. Tilton was traveling north on U.S. 17 at 11:30 p.m. July 21 when the truck ran off the road on the left side into the median, struck a ditchbank and crossed the southbound lanes of U.S. 17, reported Trooper R.L. Murray. The truck then ran off the road on the left again and struck numerous trees. It traveled 4,600 feet from the median before coming to rest.

According to Murray's report, a Brunswick County sheriff's deputy traveling behind Tilton had observed the truck driver had a problem and activated his squad car's blue lights and siren.

No charges have been filed and the investigation is continuing. A Leland man received minor injuries in a one-vehicle accident that occurred Saturday, July 24, at 2:15 p.m. on N.C. 133 near Belville.

Driver David Allen Copeland Jr., 17, of Leland, was charged with driving left of center.

According to Trooper D.B. Harvell's report, Copeland's 1976 Dodge sedan ran off on the right side of the roadway. He lost control of the vehicle, crossed the center line, ran off the roadway on the left, struck and ditch bank and overturned. Damages to the vehicle were estimated at \$2,000.

One driver was transported to Doshier Memorial Hospital in Southport with serious injuries fol-

lowing a 9:30 a.m. two-vehicle accident at the intersection of Oak Crest Drive (S.R. 1218) and Second Street (S.R. 1222) in Sea Pines subdivision off Long Beach Road.

Juanita Smith Miller, 66, Southport, was injured, while the second driver, Shannon Lee Hensley, 21, of Southport, was not injured.

Miller was traveling east on Oak Crest Drive, driving a 1988 Ford car.

Hensley was traveling south on Second Street, driving a 1987 Nissan van, and failed to yield the right of way to Miller, according to the report filed by Trooper W.H. Thompson.

Hensley was charged with a yield violation and driving while his license was revoked.

Damages were estimated at \$1,800 to Miller's Ford and \$2,800 to Hensley's Nissan.

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Shelley Lancaster Wins Davis Scholarship At UNC-Wilmington

Shelley D. Lancaster, a junior at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, has been awarded the Champion McDowell Davis scholarship.

The scholarship, the largest of its kind for graduate students at UNCW, entitles Lancaster to an award equal to in-state tuition and fees plus a stipend that is determined by the student's academic excellence and merit.

Lancaster, the daughter of the Rev. and Mrs. Landis Lancaster of Shallotte, was chosen for the award for her academic achievement at UNC-W. She is active in the hospital auxiliary and Phi Eta Sigma Honor Society. She has received the Chancellor's Achievement Award. She has also made the dean's list every semester. She plans to enter the medical field.

The Champion McDowell Davis Scholarship is awarded annually to a UNC-W student with preference given to a graduate student from North Carolina. It is renewable if

academic requirements are maintained.

The scholarship is made possible through an endowment given by the Davis Foundation as a result of a bequest of Champion McDowell Davis. Davis, a former president of Atlantic Coast Line Railroad and a trustee for Wilmington College, played an important role in UNCW history when the institution was moved to its present location in 1961.

Carrier Visits NYC

Navy Lt. William D. Bunch, son of Barbara D. Bunch of Ocean Isle Beach, recently visited New York City aboard the aircraft carrier USS John F. Kennedy, homeported in Norfolk, Va., for "Fleet Week '93," an annual event comprising ships of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet and the Russian Navy.

Fleet Week offered the Kennedy crew an opportunity to showcase the 1,052-foot carrier and to compete in intra-ship athletic events, play golf

and attend a Yankees' baseball game.

Immen Award Winner

Shallotte Middle School student Melissa Immen has been recognized for academic achievement by the United States Achievement Academy.



IMMEN

As a National Honor Roll Award winner her photograph and biography will appear in the academy's yearbook.

Melissa is the daughter of Bill and Lynn Immen. She is the granddaughter of Donald and Helen Miller of Shallotte and Arthur and Lucille Immen of Supply.

Bunch joined the Navy in February 1990. He is a 1990 graduate of the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, with a J.D. degree.

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