

Chairman Tomlinson Helping Chart Change For Coastal Commission

BY SUSAN USHER

Though the hour was late, Eugene Tomlinson was eager to talk, brimming with ideas for the state's Coastal Resources Commission and concerns about the future of the coast.

That's only natural, since Gov. Jim Hunt appointed the Southport resident as chair of the commission last Wednesday. Interim chairman since January, Tomlinson has served on the CRC since 1977, almost from its start, filling the coastal engineering slot.

A civilian engineer with the U.S. Department of the Army for 29 years, Tomlinson is currently self-employed as a marine engineer with Environ-ECO. He is a former long-time mayor of Southport and a permanent resident since 1952, "long enough to be considered a native," he insisted.

And he has the pride to prove it. Tomlinson said he is "real encouraged and extremely proud" of the strides Brunswick County has made in the past 10 years, and is eager for fellow CRC members to meet here and see it for themselves—possibly as early as next March.

Tomlinson may consider himself a native, but he has a lot in common with newcomers. His own "lifelong love affair" with the coast began in 1938, when his father built the first oceanfront house on Long Beach after it was opened to development.

As a teen-ager who had only seen the "muddy waters of the Cape Fear River" at Fayetteville and made occasional trips to White Lake, his first visit to the ocean was a heady experience that hooked Gene Tomlinson for life.

That magnetic draw of the coast is one reason the CRC was formed approximately 20 years ago. Guided by the Coastal Area Management Act, the CRC adopts standards for development resource protection and land use planning in the 20-county coastal area. The 15 members of the commission are appointed by the governor to four-year terms and may serve multiple terms.

For the past 20 years, the CRC has been "engaged primarily in making rules," a role Tomlinson believes is in transition.

A Coastal Futures Committee, created by Gov. Jim Hunt and chaired by Richardson Preyer, is to take an in-depth look at how the

state has addressed coastal management issues in the past and offer recommendations for the future that will most likely influence the CRC's new course.

"Making rules is one thing, enforcing them is something else," said Tomlinson. "As we move into our third decade I think we need to spend more time cooperating with other agencies with similar concerns and working together to plan for management and conservation of our resources."

Tomlinson isn't waiting to be asked; instead he is taking the lead in initiating contact with other boards, with the full support of the CRC. He said Jonathan Howes, state secretary of Environmental Health and Natural Resources, and his assistant are "most interested" in greater cooperation among the regulatory boards within that department.

The CRC especially needs to work closely with the Environmental Management Commission, said Tomlinson. The EMC is the state policy board that regulates water quality standards. Roger Schecter, director of the Office of Coastal Management, which serves as staff to the CRC, is already making plans for Tomlinson and the new EMC chairman to meet "so we can talk about new directions."

Joint meetings of the two boards to discuss common issues are a distinct possibility.

Whether working with the EMC on water quality concerns or with the state Transportation Board on solutions for coastal roads threatened by erosion, Tomlinson is thinking positively. "I think we've got some real opportunities for coming up with management solutions that will allow for conservation, preservation and sensible development if we just use our heads about what we're doing."

Along with increased cooperation among state boards that deal with coastal issues, Tomlinson wants to see increased community involvement with the CRC and the local land use planning process.

He's already begun. With the full CRC's cooperation, as interim chairman he added a period of public comment to the CRC meeting agenda, and has been pleased with the results. Also, at every meeting the CRC seeks comments from its advisory committee, the CRAC.



AS EUGENE TOMLINSON of Southport takes the help, he sees the state's Coastal Resources Commission moving in new directions in its third decade.

sory committee, the CRAC.

It concerns Tomlinson that CAMA land use planning meetings traditionally draw only handfuls of local residents.

"I don't think the public understands how it works," he said, an edge of frustration creeping into his voice as he leans forward. And as long as more people don't get involved, the coastal land use planning process cannot work as it was intended.

"It is formulated at the local level," he said, "and once it is approved it is the local government's position to enforce. It's not something forced on a community by the state."

"Local citizens have got to get interested enough that when a public hearing is held, John Q. Public attends and voices his views."

Across the coastal area, Tomlinson has found that most often, those people who do show up and speak at hearings on coastal issues are not

coastal natives, but newcomers.

He speculates that part of the reason may be one that's pinpointed in the N.C. Coastal Federation publication, Troubled Waters. He has encouraged all CRC members to read what the authors have to say about public opinions of government-appointed bodies.

"It says people have little confidence in state agencies, that they feel decisions are being made in Raleigh or behind closed doors."

He doesn't want the public to feel that way about the CRC. Rather, he said, "I want them to feel that their ideas will be heard and considered, although we can't always do what everyone wants."

In the 20 coastal counties, working within CAMA guidelines, county and municipal governments are to establish and enforce policies to guide community development. The tool the governing board or planning board uses to determine what the

community is to become is the CAMA land use plan, which must be updated every five years. Ideally it reflects the ideas and concerns of local residents on issues such as protection of natural resources and management of growth.

Once the plan is adopted, it becomes a litmus test of sorts. CAMA state and local permits and federal permits and proposals for development are denied if they are not consistent with the land use plan.

One issue of growing concern to Tomlinson is that of "carrying capacity," the load something can handle, be it a road, a water system, a river edged with marinas, or a densely-developed beach community.

"I think some of our larger beaches have reached their carrying capacities," said Tomlinson. "What's the good of having 20 public access

areas if people can't get to them?" "Cumulative effect" is a related concern that the CRC is beginning to address, and an issue that Tomlinson realizes won't be popular in some quarters.

"It's a question of not just if something is permissible," he said, "but what is the end result of it going to be?"

One example: How many marinas can a single stretch of riverfront accommodate before it becomes impossible to locate safe harbor for them in a severe storm?

If the approach to managing coastal growth doesn't shift, Tomlinson fears, "We're going to destroy the very thing that attracts people here to vacation and to live."

"And since tourism is such an economic boon, we can't afford to destroy its basis."

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Woodard Is Chosen As Social Services Chairman

BY LYNN CARLSON

The Brunswick County Social Services Board elected a new chairman Monday and welcomed two new members.

The board chose Percy Woodard of Supply to replace Frankie Rabon as its chair for the new fiscal year and was introduced to new members Moses Stanley and Foster McKoy. Rabon was elected vice-chairman.

Stanley replaces James Marlow, whose term on the board expired. Stanley, who lives in Thomasboro, is an industrial hygienists' assistant at duPont and has been active in the United Way and local politics.

McKoy, a Northwest resident, replaces Eulis Willis, whose recent nomination for reappointment by Republican County Commissioner Jerry Jones failed when the commissioners voted 3-2 along party lines. McKoy is a shift supervisor at Federal Paper Board in Riegelwood and was instrumental in the recent incorporation of Northwest.

The new board members heard reports on all programs administered by the social services department.

Director Jamie Orrock said Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)—the program colloquially known as "welfare"—has 106 more cases than it did this time last year.

Some 957 families received AFDC benefits in July 1992; 1,063 did last month.

Orrock said foster care is the department's fastest-growing program, with children "coming into care more frequently and staying longer," a problem he attributed to the increasing severity of family problems.

"The family environment these children are being reared in more deficient," he reported, saying the average stay in foster care has in-

creased from six months to 14 months.

Sixteen Brunswick County children who had been removed from their homes were in foster care last July; 23 were last month. Another 28 children were in the care of family members after having been removed from their parents' homes.

The department's Child Protective Services was recently ranked in the "exemplary" program range with a score of 86.97 percent during its biennial review by the state Division

of Social Services.

Beginning this month, Brunswick County turned over the mailing of food stamps to a Raleigh office services company, a cost-cutting measure which allowed one staff position to be eliminated, Orrock reported.

The county is under contract to pay Office America \$13,122 per year to handle the food stamp mailing.

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