

TOWN HEARING ON ZONING RESTRICTIONS SET SEPT. 13

Bird Island Preservation Society To Celebrate First Anniversary

BY LYNN CARLSON

The Bird Island Preservation Society will celebrate its first anniversary Sept. 1 with a gathering to review its achievements and make future plans toward keeping the barrier island off Sunset Beach uninhabited except by wildlife.

Twelve days later, Sunset Beach's planning board and town council will conduct a public hearing on a zoning proposal to limit Bird Island's development to an estimated 30 single-family homes, plus a community center, if the owner succeeds with plans to develop the property.

The hearing is scheduled for Monday, Sept. 13, at 7 p.m. in the Sea Trail Expo Center. The town council chose that site because it will accommodate more participants than the small town hall.

The preservation group organized after citizens met last Sept. 1 with Rep. David Redwine, D-Brunswick, and state and local government officials to discuss development proposals and possible state acquisition of the island. It now has 1,500 members who have contributed \$35,000 to fund a campaign for preservation of the island, according to treasurer Sue Weddle.

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Bird Island provides "biological and recreational values of statewide significance" and recommended keeping the island in its natural state with public access by foot or boat. It also recommended the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission be appointed to manage the island.

The study said, "State acquisition would probably require public funding for purchase of the site, although a portion of the needed funds may be raised by the Bird Island Preservation Society. Potential sources of funding include state appropriations, federal grants, and grants from the Recreation and Natural Heritage Land Trust."

It concluded that "The present landowners recognize the natural beauty and ecological value of Bird Island. They have indicated that they would like to see the site preserved and are willing to consider selling

the property to the state."

However, no value has been established for the property, and owner Janie Pace Price of Greensboro has received no offer to purchase. Price has proceeded with permits to construct more than a mile of bridging and causeway to the island and has hired engineers to draw development plans which include an inn, marina, restaurant and single- and multi-family dwellings—some on lots as small as 7,500 square feet.

Her attorney has called the town's zoning proposal "overly restrictive" and says the owners "consider it unjustifiable that Bird Island should be subjected to much more severe restrictions than Sunset Beach itself."

The town boards on Sept. 13 will hear public comment on their proposal to restrict development in the conservation reserve zoning district, including Bird Island, to one single-family dwelling per acre of "total

net buildable area." A professional planner's study last August estimated the island has 32.9 acres of uplands which are outside existing city and state setback regulations.

Permitted uses would include single-family residences, spoil sites, fences, accessory buildings, swimming pools, bulkheads allowed under state law, private noncommercial piers and docks, coastal reserves and estuarine/wildlife sanctuaries, underwater utility crossings, bridges and causeways permitted by state and federal agencies.

Special uses, allowable only with the consent of the town's board of adjustments, would include a community center and recreational amenities, such as a swimming pool, tennis courts and a boat dock.

Meanwhile, the society continues to grow with members who hope it doesn't come to that.

For their anniversary celebration, members have been invited to meet with state officials and conservation group leaders for a tour of the public beaches of Bird Island. Participants will meet at the 40th Street walkover for a tour led by BIPS steering committee member Frank Nesmith.

Government officials scheduled to take the tour and meet earlier with steering committee members include Randy Wilson and Tom Henson of the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission; David Dell, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Preston Pate, assistant director, N.C. Division of

Coastal Management; Rudi Schiener and Ernie Jahnke, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; and Redwine.

Also attending will be Todd Miller, executive director of the N.C. Coastal Federation and Walker Golder of the National Audubon Society.



STAFF PHOTO BY LYNN CARLSON

Corporate Donation

Cathy Swain, program manager and director of Hope Harbor Home, accepts a \$1,000 donation from the Exxon Volunteer Involvement Fund from Ray Collins, an Exxon retiree and member of the domestic violence shelter's board of directors. The funds will be used to purchase new computer equipment for the facility. The shelter will be eligible to receive more grants from the Exxon fund in the future, Collins said.

Board Mulls Ways To Allow Non-Resident Library Use

BY ERIC CARLSON

As site preparation nears completion on two new branches at Leland and Yaupon Beach, the Brunswick County Library Board is looking for ways to let seasonal residents and visitors check out books.

Library Director Reecie Tate told the board of trustees Monday that she had heard "hundreds" of requests for library privileges from temporary residents who do not qualify under current loan policies, which were established before the system became a department of county government.

"What we're operating under now is a holdover from the old days and I'm not sure this board is behind it," Tate said. "I would like a policy from this board that I can give to the public."

Under current guidelines, library cards are issued only to year-round residents or property owners. To qualify for a card, the person must have a North Carolina driver's license bearing a Brunswick County address, a pay stub from a local employer or a deed or tax receipt proving ownership of property in Brunswick County.

Currently, other seasonal residents and visitors are only eligible for a three-month temporary card entitling them to check out paperback books.

"That leaves a lot of unhappy people," Tate said in an interview Tuesday. "There are many people who live here less than six months a year who do not own property and don't want to transfer their license but who want to use the library."

Tate said she frequently hears such requests from military personnel, from retirees who spend the winter months here and from workers on extended temporary assignment with local industries.

At the board's last meeting, Tate was asked to investigate

the possibility of using credit card vouchers as a way of securing borrowed books against theft. On Monday, she told the board that the charge slips could not be used because they are intended only for the purchase of goods and services and not as collateral for a loan.

Tate said she contacted library directors in other counties with significant seasonal population shifts to research their lending policies. She said Dare County libraries only loan books to residents, while Horry County, S.C., charges a user fee.

Among the measures discussed by the board was a temporary membership fee or a refundable deposit on each book that would be collected from non-resident library users. A deposit of \$25 was suggested.

Tate cautioned the board that collecting fees and deposits could pose accounting problems that

might require the hiring of additional library staff. "I believe that if hundreds have the need, then a \$25 fee will pay for somebody to handle it," said board member Gene Pinkerton. "We need to provide this service if there are that many that need it."

The board agreed to appoint a committee to study alternate methods of providing non-resident library access. Members Anne Hines, Edith Tillman and Marie Harrison were named to the committee.

In other business, Tillman reported that contractors "keep working with the dirt" in their site preparations for the new Leland branch library. Hines said workers at the Oak Island branch were nearly ready to pour concrete footings for the building.

The board agreed to schedule formal cornerstone ceremonies at the two building sites for Oct. 10 at 2 p.m. on Oak Island and 4 p.m. in Leland.

"There are many people who live here less than six months a year who do not own property and don't want to transfer their license but who want to use the library."

—Reecie Tate, Library Director

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