

Impact Fees, Penalty Clauses On Holden Beach Agenda Tuesday

BY DOUG RUTTER

New impact fees and old penalty clauses are among the issues Holden Beach Commissioners are expected to discuss when they meet next Tuesday at 7 p.m. in town hall.

Town officials held public hearings on both items at their meeting last Wednesday but took no action.

Board decisions could come as soon as Tuesday—a special meeting night for the town board necessitated by the Labor Day holiday.

Commissioners are considering charging owners of new homes and businesses hefty impact fees so the town will have enough money in the future to design and build sewer and stormwater runoff systems.

As proposed, minimum fees would be \$1,000 per residence and \$2,000 per busi-

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—Wally Ausley, Mayor

ness. Fees also would be charged for driveways, paved parking lots and building additions.

At last week's public hearing, island developer Mark Saunders said he thinks the proposal to charge \$1 per square foot for driveways is too high.

Building a concrete driveway costs about \$1 per square foot, he said, and a \$1 impact fee would double the cost. He said that's "unreasonable."

However, Holden Beach resident Crawford Hart said he likes the proposal of \$1 per square foot for paved areas.

Hart said he thinks stormwater runoff causes more pollution than septic systems, and the town should discourage people from paving.

Jim Lowell, a member of the town's sewer committee, said impact fees are a good way to raise money, but the town board needs to decide when it will stop collecting the fees.

"I would say when the system's paid for the impact fees go out," Commissioner David Sandifer replied.

During recent discussions of the fees,

commissioners have informally agreed they should have a grace period of 30 days before the rules take effect so builders can pass the added costs on to property owners.

Saunders, owner of Coastal Development Company, said last week he would like to see at least a six-month period between the time the fee structure is adopted and when it takes effect.

While immediate action on the impact fees is uncertain, commissioners next week are likely to approve several changes in the penalty clauses included in various town ordinances.

Town Attorney Ken Campbell has been working on the changes for several months in an effort to standardize the code.

"They're just pretty inconsistent, and it's hard to understand what they mean in some cases," he said.

Under Campbell's proposal, most civil fines would be set at \$25 and criminal penalties at \$50.

"Some of them have been increased and some have not," Mayor Wally Ausley said of the fines. "Some stay the same and some go up. Nothing is lowered."

Among the proposed changes, parking tickets would jump from \$10 to \$25 and building permit violations would cost \$200 instead of \$50.

Campbell had recommended the town increase its penalty for illegally crossing a dune from \$50 to \$100. However, no change is expected partly because of the number of signs the town has erected informing people of the amount of the fine.

Commissioners hope to have the proposed changes drafted in the form of an ordinance when they meet Tuesday.

LONG BEACH WANTS BAN

Holden Beach Commissioners Decide To Join Menhaden Battle

BY DOUG RUTTER

Holden Beach officials plan to join forces with neighboring Long Beach, which wants state legislation to keep menhaden boats from fishing close to shore.

Holden Beach Commissioners agreed last week to support their neighbors to the east in response to an incident one month ago when a menhaden boat was seen dumping a brown liquid that later washed up on the strand.

At Long Beach, Town Manager Tim Johnson said menhaden boats out of Beaufort have spilled fish twice in the past month. Following the most recent spill three weeks ago, 45,000 menhaden washed up on the beach.

"You couldn't take a step without hitting a fish," said Johnson, adding that the 45,000 menhaden formed a 5-foot-wide path that covered approximately two miles of the beach.

Long Beach officials buried the fish, and Johnson said he has billed the company allegedly responsible for the spill, Beaufort Fisheries.

Johnson said the company has claimed it wasn't responsible, and the owner has tried to blame local shrimpers. Johnson said there were too many menhaden

on the beach for a shrimp boat to be involved.

Long Beach officials will seek state legislation next year that would prohibit menhaden boats from operating within three miles of the beach.

The town manager said the two menhaden spills this summer aren't unusual. "This isn't something new," he said. "This has been going on for years."

Currently, the state has no rules limiting how close menhaden boats may come to the local beaches. "I've seen them hit the sand," Johnson said.

He said the town wants state legislation because menhaden boats have been "irresponsible with their spills." Long Beach plans to solicit support for a local bill from other local beach towns.

Holden Beach Commissioners plan to give their support after hearing reports about a menhaden boat that was spotted dumping an oily, brown liquid into the ocean while working off the beach last week in July.

Barbara Tomlinson, who said she was an eyewitness, said fish washed up on shore the first day she saw the boat operating off the 800 block of Ocean Boulevard West. The next day, she said the boat dumped brown liquid into the water.

"We sat there and watched it wash in. It was just an oily, brown liquid that stayed together," she said. "It was about the size of two football fields and smelled just awful."

Tomlinson said the slick wasn't visible the next day. "Whatever it was, was really nasty," said Tomlinson, a Virginia school teacher and Holden Beach homeowner.

"It didn't appear to have any remnants of fish. It was

just gunky, oily, brown stuff."

Johnson said the area needs to stop fish spills or risk injury to its leading industry—tourism.

He also said that if commercial boats are allowed to catch all of the menhaden, nothing will be left for sport-fishermen, who use the fish for bait.

Menhaden are caught commercially for oil and fish meal.

Eight Injured In Head-On Collision On Highway 17

Eight persons were injured last Saturday when one vehicle trying to pass another on U.S. 17 south of Shallotte struck a third vehicle head-on.

The two-vehicle accident occurred at 12:20 p.m. 4.1 miles north of Sunset Beach.

Charles Merrell Sikes III, 19, of Camp Lejeune, was southbound on U.S. 17 when he pulled into the left lane in his 1991 Chevrolet truck to pass and overtake another vehicle, reported Trooper T.W. Calder. The truck collided head-on with a recreational vehicle operated by John Wesley Phillips, 58, of Charlotte. Sikes and his three passengers—

Bruce Dodd, 19, David Lex, 19, and Matthew Saber, 20, all of Camp Lejeune, were taken to The Brunswick Hospital in Supply with serious but non-incapacitating injuries.

Phillips received minor injuries, as did his passengers, Robin Thomas, 50, Epyer Phillips, 61, and Carl Brewer, 47, all of Charlotte. They were also taken to The Brunswick Hospital.

Damage to Sikes' truck was estimated at \$8,000 and to Phillips' RV, \$4,000.

Sikes was charged with improper passing and exceeding a safe speed. A young bicyclist was injured Saturday in a 5:20 p.m. accident on

Palmer's Branch Road.

Stephen Skipper, 16, of Leland, was driving a 1989 Volkswagen north on Palmer's Branch Road when a child riding a bicycle in the same direction turned across the road in front of his car, reported Trooper B.C. Jones.

Thomas Brandon Jamerson, 7, of Winnabow, was transported to New Hanover Regional Medical Center, Wilmington, with serious, but non-incapacitating injuries.

No charges were filed. Damage to the car was estimated

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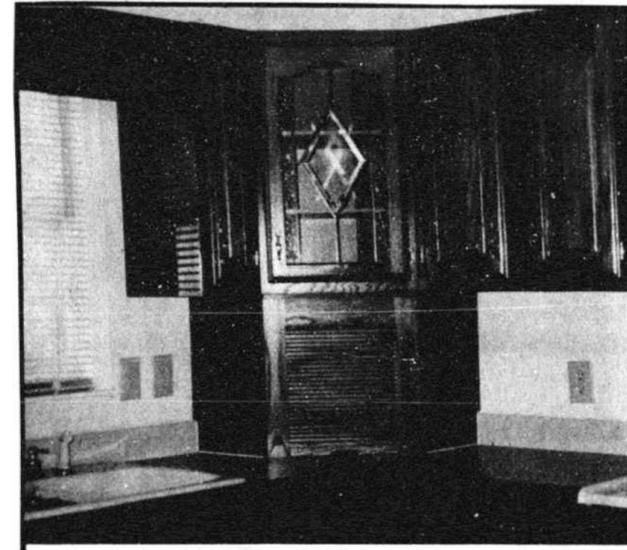
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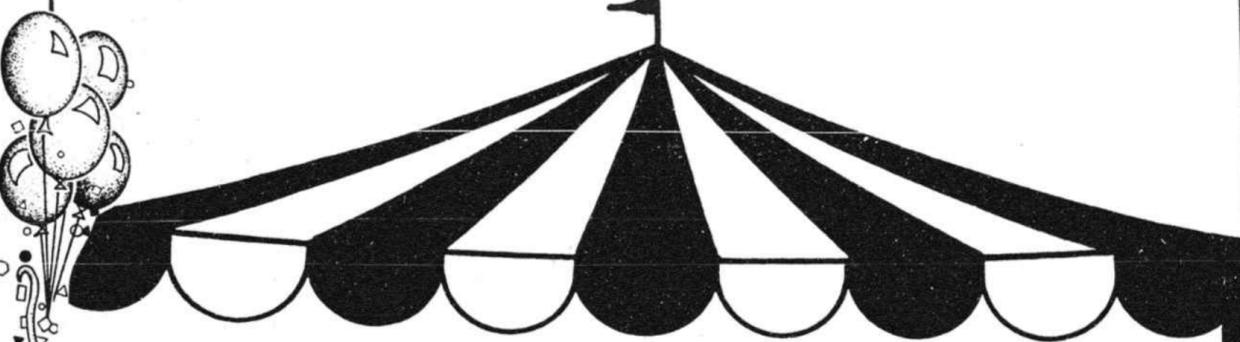


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