

OWNER'S AGENT SEEKS RECONSIDERATION

# Sunset Beach Council Unanimously Backs Bird Island Zoning

BY SUSAN USHER

Sunset Beach Town Council Monday night rejected a property owner's call for less restrictive zoning of Bird Island, saying the zoning plan offered by the town planning board is a fair compromise.

The new conservation reserve zoning district will effectively limit Bird Island's potential development to 30 to 35 single-family dwellings with a maximum six bedrooms per home, plus a possible community center; requires a minimum lot size of one-half acre of uplands; and caps density

at one home per acre. Bird Island has an estimated 33 to 34 buildable acres.

"I think the proposal is fair for all concerned," said Councilman Bud Scramton prior to the unanimous vote, his words echoed by Councilwoman Mary Katherine Griffin. "I still feel the planning board's recommendation is the one to follow."

Expressing disappointment in the decision, Rees Poag, son of Bird Island owner Janie P. Price of Greensboro and Sunset Beach, indicated in an interview that public access to Bird Island may be restricted in

the future.

He termed it "unfortunate that the island is being treated differently from the rest of Sunset Beach."

"I feel these are arbitrary limits on the rights of the property owner," he said. "Anything that we do with Bird Island will be an improvement over what's happening there now, with a thousand people tramping all over the island on a weekend and damaging it."

He said Price's proposal for developing the island would have had "zero impact" on

wetlands and would have provided environmental protections.

"I guess the first thing if we are going to protect it is that people will have to stay off it," he said.

He said a decision would be made on their next step very soon, and the town notified. "There will be a next step, but we're not sure what that is," said Poag.

Only the strand below the high water mark is public beach, but visitors have routinely used other areas on the island in past years.

Poag and his wife and consultant John P. Ryder of Century/von Oesen Associates conferred outside. Returning to the meeting, Ryder told council it was never their intent for zoning of Bird Island to become "caught up" in the zoning of the surrounding marshes.

"We would hope you would look at Bird Island differently and think very hard about the implications of this zoning on Bird Island," said Ryder. "We would ask that the town reconsider possible zoning relief in (See SUNSET, Page 2-A)

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## Party Time!

Roy Bain of Wilmington leaves no doubt who the winner was in last weekend's U.S. Open King Mackerel Tournament in Southport. Bain was part of the Goodtime fishing team that landed a 52.40-pound king. The winners received a trophy and \$43,320 in cash. For the story, see Page 12-C.

## MORE INOCULATIONS SCHEDULED

# Concern Over Rabies Brings Many Calls, No New Cases

BY ERIC CARLSON

In the wake of Brunswick County's first two confirmed cases of rabies, animal control workers are being swamped with calls to pick up stray animals, examine dead wildlife and answer questions about the deadly disease.

The county health department, hoping to keep a statewide rabies epidemic at bay, has scheduled another day of reduced-rate rabies inoculations. More than 1,000 residents had their pets vaccinated Sept. 25 in a program co-sponsored by local veterinarians.

There were no additional rabid animals found in the county last week, according to animal shelter attendant Cindy Stanley.

However, the head of a stray kitten was sent to the State Public Health laboratory in Raleigh for testing last week. It died under observation after being captured in Leland Wednesday afternoon (Sept. 29).

The animal reportedly scratched and bit two young girls who found the cat roaming their neighborhood, Stanley said. The parents alerted animal control after noticing that the kitten was acting very aggressively and having difficulty walking. Such behavior is typical of animals infected with rabies.

As the family waited anxiously to see if the children would have to un-

dergo expensive rabies treatments, the kitten died while under observation. Examination of its brain tissue revealed that the animal was not rabid, Stanley said. It may have suffered from a neurological disease.

Meanwhile, two children and two adults in the Ash area are undergoing treatment for rabies infection. The four handled a dead raccoon that was chased down and killed by one of the family's dogs, Stanley said.

The treatment was recommended after tests revealed that the dead raccoon was infected with rabies. The disease is always fatal if left untreated. Three dogs and a cat were destroyed because they had not been vaccinated when they came in contact with the raccoon, Stanley said.

Another dog in the Wet Ash area will remain under observation for several months after an encounter with a rabid raccoon on Sept. 18. The dog had been vaccinated and is expected to be unaffected by the incident.

Stanley said animal control is receiving about 30 calls a day from people concerned about rabies.

"Most are calling to have us pick up stray animals," Stanley said. "Others call to tell us that their neighbors' animals are not vaccinated."

State law requires all dog and cat owners to vaccinate their pets. Stanley said animal control officers will investigate reports of unvaccinated animals.

Stanley said her office is also getting a lot of calls about wild animals frequently seen in rural areas, especially squirrels, rabbits and possums. She said it is extremely rare for any of these animals to carry rabies. Raccoons and foxes are the wild animals the most likely to be infected.

Animal control officers were called Sept. 29 to investigate the discovery of three dead raccoons in the Caw Caw area of Longwood, near the intersection of N.C. 904 and Pea Landing Road. The animals were picked up, but they were too badly decomposed for laboratory analysis, she said.

Officials warn that the greatest risk to humans comes from unvaccinated pets, which can easily contract rabies from wild animals. Cats are the most likely to be infected because they are natural hunters that are frequently left outdoors.

"I can't stress enough that people should avoid any contact with unfamiliar animals," Stanley said. "And they should get their pets vaccinated immediately."

The health department has scheduled another round of rabies vaccinations for Saturday morning Oct. 30. Pet owners can get their dogs and cats inoculated for a reduced rate of \$5 per shot at Companion Animal Hospital in Shalotte, Seaside Animal Care in Calabash, Brunswick Animal Hospital in Supply, Southport Animal Clinic in Southport and at the Leland Veterinary Hospital.

# Showdown Set Monday On Strict Smoking Regs; Health Board Still Divided

BY LYNN CARLSON

The showdown is set for Monday on a proposal to severely restrict smoking in Brunswick County places of business, although a special meeting earlier this week revealed the county health board remains deeply divided on the issue.

A committee working on the proposal, led by local veterinarian and health board member Brad Kerr, has offered some compromises but failed to back down on requiring separate ventilation systems in all private businesses which would continue to allow smoking.

Three of six health board members at Monday's special meeting said they cannot support the compromise measure. Two said they do, and Chairman Maliston Stanley remained uncommitted but prepared to break a tie if necessary when the measure comes to the floor this coming Monday (Oct. 11) at 7 p.m. in the health department conference room. The health board has 11 members, including Stanley.

By a margin of nearly two-to-one, speakers at a Sept. 20 public hearing said they do not want government forcing business owners to prohibit smoking in their establishments. About 50 showed up at the forum to have their say about rules that would eventually prohibit smoking in all public buildings and workplaces, except in areas served by separate ventilation systems.

"We tried to respond to their concerns," Kerr said, "at the same time proceeding with the understanding that we could not alter the proposal to the point that it no longer protects the public health."

The revised plan Kerr's group submitted clarifies the difference between restaurants and lounges; lounges would be subject to less stringent regulation. It also would lengthen the effective dates of the regulations by six months.

The opposing members balked at a suggested provision that the health department be required to take action against establishments if 10 or more people complain in writing about violations of smoking rules.

"You don't get private citizens to enforce the law," argued member Patrick Newton. "That's how Hitler took

over Germany, but getting people to turn each other in."

Kerr argued that the point was to grant establishments some leeway. "We weren't trying to turn Brunswick County into the brown-shirt capital of North Carolina. We just felt that if there were ten complaints, that's a pretty good indication it's probably really a problem."

Both Newton and member Bruce Quaintance said they cannot support the measure as long as it would require separate ventilation systems to serve smoking and non-smoking areas. "I'm a contractor, and I know a little about the cost of ventilation systems and separate walls. This would be a big cost to older businesses that are not designed for it."

Jeffrey Mintz, a Supply dentist who helped revise the proposal, said "I am for it because of the public health ramifications. I see it every day in my business." Mintz said he hopes the health board can "vote in unison, yes or no. We've spent a lot of time on this."

Member Arthur Knox said, "I respect Dr. Kerr's efforts, but I've gotten a lot of calls and a couple of letters, all but two against it. I don't smoke, but I'm old-fashioned. I like to let a man decide what he wants to do. If I don't like (what a business) has, then I just won't go there."

Kerr countered the opponents' freedom of choice argument, saying new state legislation already will take away businesses' choice to be smoke-free unless county health boards enact their own rules before Oct. 15.

Chairman Stanley, pressed by Quaintance and Newton to reveal his position on the measure, said he would remain neutral while he moderated the discussion.

Stanley said, "I do not want this issue to split this board to the point where it is not functional." Dr. Kerr did not volunteer to draw up this proposal. We asked him to. He's done a good job and worked long hours."

He added, "Our job is to respectfully listen to both sides and make the best decision we can to benefit the citizens of Brunswick County. There are two sides to this—an economic one and a health one. This is no time to forget either one of them."

# Board Asked For Commitment To Regional Landfill In Columbus

BY ERIC CARLSON

County Commissioners Chairman Don Warren on Monday said he is interested in the idea of sending Brunswick County's garbage to a regional landfill in Columbus County. But he doesn't think the county should commit itself until a local committee comes up with a proposal for a disposal site of its own.

Thomas Hughes, president of American Refuse Systems, told the commissioners that the way to save money on garbage disposal is to think big, to "go where you can get the best deal" and "take advantage of the economy of scale to lower your disposal fee."

His Pinehurst-based company is working with Columbus County to develop a large regional landfill that would accept solid waste from other counties. Hughes said he is trying to get a feel for which counties might want to participate in order to help Columbus decide where to locate the landfill.

Brunswick County must find a new place to dispose of its garbage by Jan. 1, 1998. A new landfill will be much more expensive to build and operate due to strict new environmental regulations requiring that such facilities be lined with plastic to prevent contaminants from seeping into ground water.

A Brunswick County Landfill Committee has recommended four tracts of land in the Bolivia and Supply areas as potential sites for a new landfill. A team of state regulators is expected to visit the county

soon to make recommendations on their suitability for solid waste disposal.

Hughes told the commissioners it would be less expensive for Brunswick County to join in a regional landfill than to build its own. He estimated it would cost the county \$42 per ton to bury its waste here, while hauling it to another regional landfill in Sampson County would cost \$23 to \$27 per ton plus transportation expenses. He said a proposed regional incinerator would be even more expensive and probably won't be built.

"We want your garbage," Hughes told the board. He said that for the first two years, Columbus County would take Brunswick's waste for \$14 per ton. Once the regional landfill is completed, the fee would increase to \$23 per ton. The new facility will be more expensive due to the stricter environmental requirements, he said.

"We're not asking you to commit to locking in that amount," Hughes said. "We're asking you to get committed to the idea to help them get a regional landfill."

Hughes said the county would be wise to continue using its old landfill "for a couple years." But he advised that without some hint of support from Brunswick County, Columbus might choose to locate the regional facility on its northern borders, giving other counties an opportunity for lower hauling costs.

(See COUNTY, Page 2-A)

## Inside...

- Birthdays.....2B
- Business News.....10C
- Calendar.....8A
- Church News.....5B
- Classified.....1-9C
- Court Docket.....11C
- Crime Report.....13A
- Fishing.....12C-6A
- Golf.....10B
- Obituaries.....5B
- Opinion.....4-5A
- People In The News.....4B
- Sports.....8-12B
- Television.....6-7B

# Registration Ends Monday To Vote For Local Boards, State Issues

There's still time to register to vote Nov. 2 in the statewide constitutional amendment and bond referendum and in any of the 17 municipal and three district elections scheduled across Brunswick County.

Monday, Oct. 11 is the last day to register, said Lynda Britt, supervisor of elections for the Brunswick County Board of Elections. Anyone who is already registered to vote in Brunswick County is eligible to vote in their respective municipal or district elections.

Would-be voters can register at the elections board office at the Brunswick County Government Center at Bolivia until 5 p.m.

Monday. They can also register at branch libraries, at the Department of Motor Vehicles License office if conducting other business there, or with other registrars located in every precinct.

The elections board is already receiving applications for absentee voting by mail, with Oct. 26 the last day forms can be mailed out.

One-stop absentee voting begins Oct. 12 and continues through Oct. 29 at the elections board office. Holden Beach residents cannot vote absentee.

In the Nov. 2 elections, 17 municipalities will elect officials, along with the Leland

Sanitary District, Doshier Hospital Board of Trustees (Smithville Township) and Southeast Brunswick Sanitary District.

Voters will also cast ballots for or against a constitutional amendment that would allow local governments to sell bonds for economic development that would be secured in part or entirely by the increase in property tax revenues that would be collected from the new business or industry.

Also to be decided are four proposed general obligation bond issues to pay for capital improvements:

- \$310 million for campuses of The

University of North Carolina and the Center for Public Television;

- \$250 million for the state's community college campuses;

- \$35 million for land acquisition and capital improvement of state parks; and

- \$145 million in Clean Water Bonds to make loans, revolving loans and grants to local governments for clean water projects.

Profiles of the candidates for office in Brunswick County and more information on the five statewide issues to be decided Nov. 2 will be included in the Oct. 28 issue of the *Beacon*.