

## Holden Officials Working Under New Code

BY DOUG RUTTER

Holden Beach Commissioners, who constantly make decisions that affect business and development, have adopted an ethics policy designed to keep town officials and employees from using their positions for personal gain.

Written by commissioners Jim Fournier and Gil Bass, the code of conduct adopted last week applies to the mayor, board of commissioners, planning and zoning board, board of adjustment and all town employees.

"I think we wound up with a good compromise. It's less than some of us wanted and more than some of us wanted," Fournier said. "At least we have a declaration of intent."

Bass, who recently attended a two-day ethics seminar in New Bern, said he doesn't think the ethics code will be needed very often.

"I have not seen any conflict in the past where we have needed one, and I've been following it closely for 12 years," he said. "I don't think it's going to shape the town one way or the other."

The policy prohibits officials from using their positions or the town's facilities for private gain, granting special treatment to any residents or disclosing confidential information for the purpose of personal profit.

The mayor or any commissioner who has a private interest in an official action that comes before the board will be required to publicly disclose the nature and extent of the interest and withdraw from the discussion.

"It's not ideal but it's much better

*"I think we wound up with a good compromise. It's less than some of us wanted and more than some of us wanted."*—Commissioner Jim Fournier

than nothing," Fournier said. "It's basically good if it's adhered to, and it does ask for voluntary disclosure of conflict of interest."

Town officials also are prohibited from accepting any gifts or services that have a value greater than \$50, except for political contributions.

The town manager has the power to discipline town employees who violate the policy. If a town board member or other official acts unethically, the commissioners can adopt a "resolution of censure."

"I don't know that that amounts to anything more than a little public embarrassment," Fournier said of the resolution, which would be included in the official town records.

Fournier says town commissioners do have opportunities to help their own interests, particularly because the board routinely makes decisions on zoning and building code issues that affect development.

Fournier said he urged the town board to adopt an ethics policy earlier this year after it voted 3-2 against a proposal to prohibit the misleading advertising of rental homes.

Commissioners Bass, Gay Atkins and David Sandifer opposed the ordinance that would have prohibited

people from advertising that their rental property can sleep more people than its septic system is designed to accommodate.

All three are involved in the tourism business at Holden Beach. Atkins and Sandifer work for real estate companies, while Bass manages a campground and fishing pier.

"There was some opinion then among some people that perhaps we had a conflict of interest on the board," Fournier said.

However, Bass said N.C. Institute of Government officials ruled there was no conflict of interest. "There was no reason for us not to vote on that because there was no direct gain involved," he said.

The policy adopted last week was the third to come before the town board. The first one, based on the ethics code used in Charlotte, was too strong for some commissioners, and the second proposal was too weak for others.

Fournier said he liked the original proposal, which asked town officials to disclose all ownership and business interests. "I don't think anybody who takes public office should be reluctant to disclose their interests," he said.



PHOTO BY MARJORIE MEGVERN

### Walking With Dinosaurs

These Union Primary School second- and third-graders were among 120 Brunswick County students walking with the dinosaurs at the Wilmington's Cape Fear Museum on Friday. Students from Union and Supply Elementary viewed the museum's "Dinosaurs in Motion" exhibit and enjoyed a picnic lunch provided by NationsBank, a \$3,000 corporate sponsor of the exhibit. In addition to half-size and full-size robotic dinosaurs that move and make sounds, the exhibit features a video presentation and hands-on interactive displays designed for children. It will remain at the museum until Oct. 31.

## Holden Beach Marina Worker Recovering From Flash Fire Burns

A Holden Beach Marina employee was listed in fair condition Tuesday at the UNC Hospital Burn Center in Chapel Hill after receiving burns from a flash fire Saturday.

William "Dean" Rivenbark suffered second-degree burns on his face and arms from the fire aboard a private vessel Saturday around 8:30 a.m., said Gary Carr, general manager at the marina.

"It was a gasoline flash fire," Carr said. Rivenbark was in the cabin area of the boat at the time of the accident. There were no other injuries.

Rivenbark, who has been working on the Holden Beach waterfront for several years, has been a yard worker at Holden Beach Marina for about six months.

Carr said Rivenbark's wife, Linda, and son, Michael, are staying in Chapel Hill.

"Right now if there are no complications in his lungs he should get well with no problem. Right now they are just monitoring him," Carr said. "He can talk now and they have had him up walking."

Donations are being accepted to help pay Rivenbark's hospital bills.

As of Tuesday, Carr said Holden Beach merchants had donated more than \$1,000 and the marina had donated \$1,000.

Contributions are being accepted

at the marina. Also, cards may be dropped off at the marina or mailed to Dean Rivenbark, UNC Hospital Burn Center, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27514.

## Five People Injured In Two Accidents On U.S. 74

Five people were injured in two accidents on U.S. 74 near Leland this past week.

Henry Samuel Grange, 63, of Route 1, Riegelwood was admitted to New Hanover Regional Medical Center in Wilmington Tuesday, Oct. 5 with serious, incapacitating injuries after his 1986 Chevrolet pickup was struck in the rear by a 1986 International.

The collision happened around 10 p.m. 5.5 miles west of Leland on U.S. 74.

According to Trooper J.H. Kerr's report, both vehicles were eastbound when Bryon Stallings, 29, of Jacksonville fell asleep behind the wheel of his 1986 International. His truck ran into the rear of the Chevrolet, and the pickup went out of control, running off the right side of the roadway and striking a group of trees.

The International came to rest on the shoulder of the road. Stallings was not injured.

Damage to the Chevrolet truck was estimated at \$2,000 and to the International, \$1,500.

Stallings was charged with careless and reckless driving and failure

to reduce speed.

Four persons were injured Saturday Oct. 9, in a 3:15 p.m. accident that happened near Leland on U.S. 74.

Jenny Spriggs, 19, of Ladson, S.C., had pulled her 1990 Plymouth onto the right shoulder of the highway and a passenger door was open, reported Trooper D.A. Lewis. One passenger, Walter Wong, 19, also of Ladson, was getting ready to attend to the needs of a 2-year-old passenger, Amanda Spriggs, when the car was struck by a 1989 Nissan operated by Matthew Wells, 26, of Leland.

Wells told Trooper Lewis he was looking down at his radio when his westbound Nissan drifted onto the right shoulder and struck the stopped vehicle.

The Plymouth was pushed farther to the right of the shoulder, while the Nissan ricocheted, turned and came to rest across both travel lanes on U.S. 74.

Damage was estimated at \$5,000 to the Plymouth and \$4,000 to the Nissan.

Spriggs and her two passengers were all injured, as was Wells, but none of the four were transported to

the hospital.

Wells was charged with a safe movement violation.

### Holden Candidates To Participate In Information Forum

Candidates for office at Holden Beach will participate in a "Candidate Information Night" sponsored by local citizens on Oct. 25.

The session will take place from 7-9:30 in the town hall.

Eleven candidates are running for five seats on the Holden Beach Board of Commissioners.

They will be allowed to express their views regarding their qualifications, followed by a monitored question-and-answer session.

After the formal session, an informal open meeting forum will be provided "for as long as candidates and citizens desire to participate," according to a news release.

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## State Sets Area Hearing

Have some suggestions for the N.C. Board of Transportation on local transportation projects that should take priority over the next seven years?

Wednesday, Nov. 10, you'll have a chance to make your case with the board at the Division 3 hearing on the next Transportation Improvement Program, or TIP. Public comments and information received at hearings conducted this fall will be used by the board to update next year's TIP, due out in spring 1994. The plan sets funding schedules and

priorities for aviation, bicycle, highway, public transportation, rail and safety programs.

The hearing begins at 2 p.m. at the Pender County Public Library, 103 South Cowan Street, Burgaw. Speakers can sign up starting at 1 p.m. Accommodations will be made for the handicapped. If assistance is needed, call the Program Development Branch at 919-733-2039.

The board also accepts written comments. Odell Williamson of Ocean Isle Beach represents Division 3 on the state board.

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