



Taking The Oath At Ocean Isle

Ocean Isle Beach Mayor Betty Williamson takes the oath for her second term of office along with Commissioners Bill Benton (left) and Ken Proctor (right) on Dec. 14. The commissioners unanimously chose Benton to continue as mayor pro tem. Administering the oath was Town Clerk Daisy Ivey (not in photo).

Ocean Isle Homeowners To Receive Warning About Lead

BY LYNN CARLSON

Some 1,500 Ocean Isle Beach property owners are being sent warning letters about the possible lead content of their water after a single home's water tested two one-thousandths of a milligram per liter above the federally allowed level.

The town, which buys its water from Brunswick County, was required by the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to provide all homeowners and news media copies of a four-page document informing them of the lead levels and actions which can reduce exposure to lead in drinking water.

Town Clerk Daisy Ivey said lead tests are conducted every six months. Twenty homes were tested in Ocean Isle Beach. "We know exactly which house it is, and the people have lead and copper pipes and they haven't been there in a long time, so the water hasn't been turned on."

According to the EPA-ordered document, lead enters drinking water primarily as a result of corrosion of materials containing lead in the water distribution system and household plumbing. When water stands in lead pipes or plumbing systems containing lead for several hours or more, the lead may dissolve into the drinking water.

Lead tests were conducted among central water system consumers throughout Brunswick County, but only the one Ocean Isle site indicated a problem.

Lead is a common metal found throughout the environment in some paints, air, soil, household dust, food, certain types of pottery, porcelain, pewter and water. If

lead builds up in the body over many years, it can cause brain, kidney and blood cell damage.

The greatest risk is to young children and pregnant women, EPA says. "Amounts of lead that won't hurt adults can slow down normal mental and physical development of growing bodies," states the letter the property owners will receive. "In addition, a child at play often comes into contact with sources of lead contamination—like dirt and dust—that rarely affect an adult."

Among precautions for avoiding lead exposure, the EPA recommends:

- washing children's hands and toys often, and trying to make sure they put only food in their mouths;

- having your tap water tested;

- letting water run from the tap 15 to 30 seconds before using it for drinking or cooking if the faucet has been unused for six hours or more;

- not cooking with, or drinking from, the hot water tap. Hot water can dissolve more lead more quickly than cold water.

- removing loose lead solder and debris from the plumbing materials in newly constructed homes, or homes in which the plumbing has recently been replaced, by removing the faucet strainers from all taps and running the water three to five minutes.

- replacing lead pipe and lead solder with other materials.

For information about having water tested, call the town hall at 579-2166.

For information about having children's blood tested for lead levels, call the Brunswick County Health Department at 253-4381.

OIB Property Owner Loses Bid For Prior-To-Need Variance

BY LYNN CARLSON

Ocean Isle Beach's zoning board of adjustments Tuesday unanimously denied a request for variance which would have allowed a property owner to rebuild on a canal lot which doesn't meet the town's square footage requirements if the home is ever destroyed.

The board began discussing last week the request of Charles Adams, acting on behalf of elderly Elsie Adams, for a variance on the 4,500-square-foot Driftwood Street property. Since 1975, Ocean Isle Beach has enforced a 5,000-square-foot minimum for residential lots.

Real estate broker Stuart Cooke, representing the Adamses, said the home and lot are under contract to sell for \$79,000, but that the buyers cannot get a mortgage because town ordinances would prohibit the cottage being replaced if it ever is destroyed.

"We are trying to help Elsie get her assets in order," said Charles Adams. "It would be unconscionable to deny her the right to sell this property. It's very important to her. Legalities are not the overbearing feature here. It's a matter of what's right for the individual."

However, Commissioner Debbie Fox, chairing the proceedings, reminded the adjustments board that state law narrowly prescribes the circumstances under which variances can be granted. "It has nothing to do with our desires, wants or being nice."

Board member DeCarol Williamson argued against granting a variance before the need has arisen to replace a building, an action he said would "set a bad precedent." Williamson, who chairs the town planning board, was serving as an alternate adjustments boards member in the absence of Commissioner Ken Proctor, who sat out because of conflict of interest.

Williamson argued that because Proctor has available property adjacent to the Adamses, and is willing to sell part of it, that no hardship exists.

Commissioner Kendall Suh agreed, making the motion to deny the variance. "Quite frankly I think this issue is exhausted," he said.

"There clearly is no hardship here that can't be repaired."

Proctor said his ownership of neighboring property was the conflict of interest which caused him to refrain from the deliberations.

Cooke argued that his client was not informed until the meeting that Proctor had adjacent property to sell. Adjustments board members argued that the Adamses should have explored buying more land to make the lot conform and avoid the need for a variance.

Williamson said, "As a board, we can't get involved in your negotiations. But there are lots of laws to protect the environment that cause a hardship and cost people a lot of

money, but there's a purpose for them."

In a conversation after the meeting, Cooke said Proctor offered to sell the Adamses a six-foot-wide addition to their property for \$75,000. "My clients weren't excited about that," he added.

Proctor later confirmed the figure, but added that selling six feet to the Adams family would in turn make his lot unbuildable and, consequently, impossible to ever sell.

Building Inspector Druied Robertson said a number of lots in the neighborhood at one time did not meet the square footage requirements but most were subsequently combined and re-subdivided to conform.

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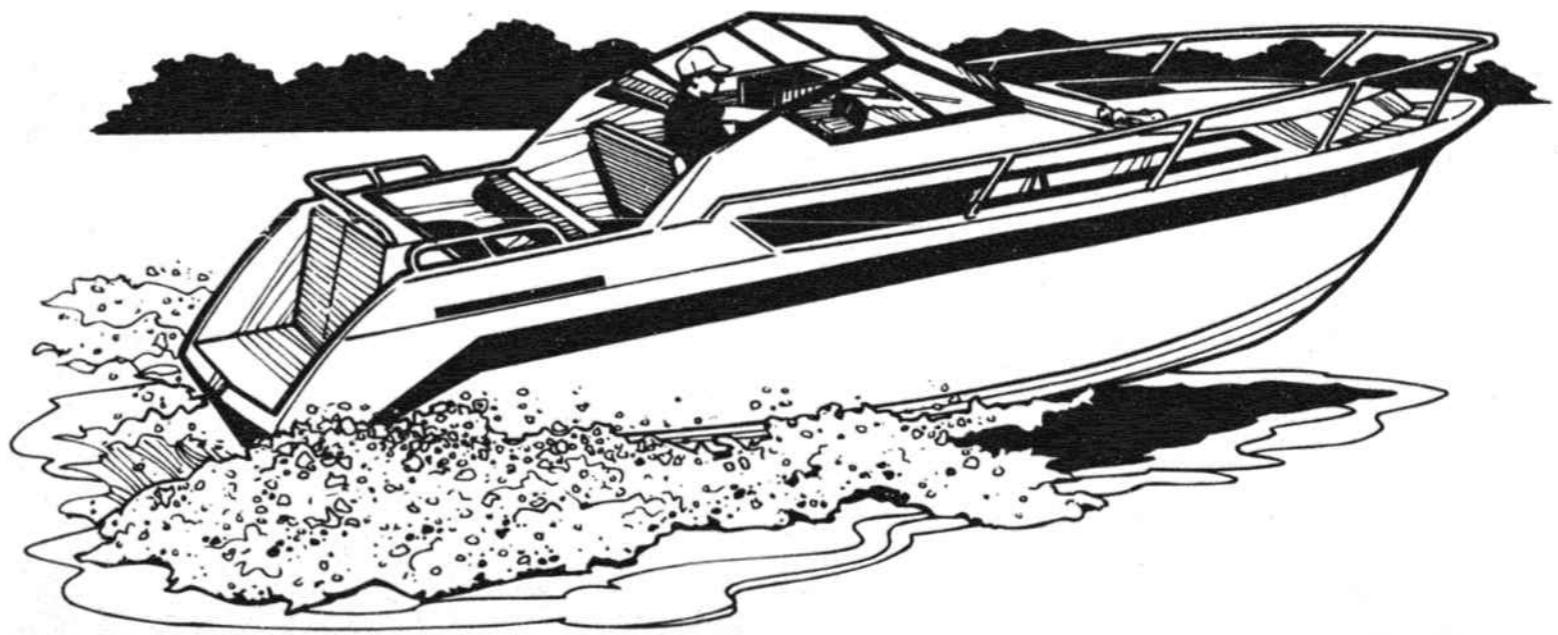


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