

EDC Courting Developers Of \$100 Million Hunting, Fishing Museum

BY ERIC CARLSON

The county Economic Development Commission is trying to convince a committee of investors to build its proposed \$100 million "National Hunting and Fishing Museum of the Americas" on a 3,000-to-10,000-acre site in Brunswick County, EDC Director Tom Monks announced Monday.

The unnamed group is scouring the East Coast for the right place to build a 500,000-square-foot educational facility that will house a fully-stocked indoor trout stream, aquariums, an aviary, hunting and fishing exhibits, a theater, art and photo galleries, a library and several indoor shooting ranges for rifles, pistols, shotguns, archery and black powder firearms.

An estimated 800,000 visitors are expected to tour the museum and participate in its educational programs each year, Monks said. Planners estimate that the facility will bring its host county 3,500 jobs during construction, with a permanent payroll of 316 full-time positions.

"On an annualized basis, the permanent positions

would generate a minimum additional disposable income in the museum site area of \$3.5 million for the first year of operation," according to a 12-page executive summary of the project sent to the EDC by the N.C. Department of Commerce.

The proposal assumes that the museum will also attract numerous sporting goods retail outlets, restaurants and other spin-off businesses to the area.

Although he admits that Brunswick County has only "a slim chance" of attracting the museum, Monks said the area meets a number of the site selection criteria listed in the group's proposal. He said the EDC is actively trying to recruit the facility and is preparing a formal report outlining Brunswick County's strong points as a site for the museum.

"We expect to know if we're in the running by February," Monks said.

The group wants to build the museum somewhere along the East Coast in a state "wherein there are high interest levels and generous seasons in the sports of hunting and fishing." A preferred site would be a natur-

al wooded setting "in close proximity to an appropriate highway network and air and train travel facilities."

Of prime interest to the museum board is a location "featuring fresh water frontage as well as salt-water access via established waterways."

Monks noted that Brunswick County meets all those criteria, with the added incentive of relatively reasonable land prices. Still, he cautioned that there is probably no more than a "one in a hundred" chance of attracting the project.

"They're peddling this idea all over the East Coast. You can be sure that there will be a lot of counties interested," he said.

In its "mission statement," the museum proposal says it is intended as a place to "celebrate, preserve, memorialize and perpetuate the timeless American tradition of hunting and fishing through the enshrinement of that tradition, with all of its attendant history, in a state-of-the-art museum facility dedicated to that tradition, its educational dissemination and its future."

Among the attractions planned for the facility are:

- An indoor trout stream flowing throughout the museum, featuring educational and participatory demonstrations on fly fishing.

- Aquariums holding all the game fish and related species in the western hemisphere.

- Indoor and outdoor rifle, pistol, black powder and archery ranges and sporting clays sites staffed by certified instructors for educational and recreational purposes.

- A world-class wildlife art and photographic gallery.

- More than 50 state and country rooms displaying each area's game and fish species within the western hemisphere.

- Manufacturers' rooms for display of new and historical artifacts including antique and contemporary hunting and fishing equipment.

- An aviary, map room, theater, exhibit hall and a computerized library of all known data, books, manuscripts, videos and other materials pertaining to the sports of hunting and fishing.

Sunset Okays More Engineering Funds, Is Criticized On Bond Ad

BY LYNN CARLSON

Sunset Beach and Calabash town governments have committed \$50,000 each for additional engineering services to keep the two towns' proposed central sewer project moving until a design contract is finalized with Piedmont-Olsen Engineering in mid- to late February.

Calabash's appropriation came last week, along with a preliminary design budget of \$100,000 for engineers to prepare construction drawings and to obtain regulatory approval of a sewer collection system for downtown Calabash.

The Sunset Beach Town Council unanimously approved its \$50,000 funding request Monday night near the end of a three-hour session in which council also was called upon to defend its upcoming sewer bond referendum and to strengthen its position on stormwater runoff control.

New Councilman Herb Klinker criticized the town's newspaper advertisement announcing its intent to apply to the state Local Government Commission for approval of \$5 million in sanitary sewer bonds subject to an April 5 referendum.

Klinker and Mayor pro tem Ed Gore serve as an appointive committee representing council on sewer issues.

Klinker called the town's advertisement, published in the Jan. 6 issue of *The Brunswick Beacon*, "misleading" because it did not mention that the central sewer system is projected to cost \$35 million.

Engineer Joseph Tombro said the \$5 million figure was chosen because that is the amount of a Clean Water Fund grant the project is expected to receive. That grant, he said, would be used to pay off the general obligation bonds, if voters

approve them.

Tombro said representatives of the Bond Council of Brown and Wood, New York, dictated the wording of the advertisement and said the town could not legally hold a referendum on the sewer system question without calling for issuance of bonds.

In a meeting Dec. 28, the engineers warned council that if preliminary design and other work doesn't begin soon, the project could fall behind schedule and endanger eligibility for state funds to be awarded next July.

The two towns' combined \$100,000 will go toward site selection and acquisition, preliminary treatment plant design, application for a major CAMA permit and evaluation of the suitability of golf courses to receive treated effluent.

The engineers say the granting of state revolving loan and Clean Water Bond funds is contingent on the sewer project being "ready-to-go," with plans and specifications completed this July. Sunset Beach and Calabash are ranked among the state's top priority communities to receive those funds as long as the towns are in a position to accept and use the funds when offered.

Klinker, reading from a prepared statement, raised several concerns about the proposed system, including the fact that the advertisement fails to address council's earlier commitment to include stormwater runoff controls as a component of its sewer referendum.

Town Administrator Linda Fluegel said the Bond Council had rejected the town's attempt to include stormwater runoff funds in the bond referendum because no design or funding plans exist for a stormwater system.

Tombro said he anticipates an announcement soon that Brunswick County will serve as lead agency toward a regional stormwater management system endorsed by eight local governments.

In the meantime, council agreed to pursue Gore's suggestion that the town prove its seriousness about stormwater management by initiating a study of how to manage stormwater runoff on the island of Sunset Beach.

"If we only did the island, it wouldn't have too much of an impact on our waters, because we all know it's a regional problem," Gore said. "But we can commit to a study for the island, an expand it to the mainland if the county doesn't get involved."

Klinker said, "My position on the sewer system is that I want to see it move ahead, for the right reasons and in the right areas," but later added, "Certain citizens will not vote for this referendum if we do not address stormwater runoff. I'm just concerned whether we'll get the vote or not."

One of those citizens is Clete Waldmiller, president of the Sunset Beach Taxpayers Association, who argued that council has not done enough toward implementing a stormwater project as it has pursued wastewater funds over the past two years.

"One without the other is insufficient," he said. "As soon as the wastewater system is in place, development is going to go crazy, and asphalt contributes to stormwater runoff. If we don't do something to stop it, we're not going to help anything."

Waldmiller and other SBTAs members referred to a recent Wil-

ington symposium on integrated stormwater and wastewater management. "They said wastewater without stormwater is foolish," he argued. "We know where every sewer line is, but we still have no

(stormwater) plan."

Tombro, in a telephone interview Tuesday, said the town has opted to pursue wastewater funds because that money is more readily available. With the recent reauthorization

of the federal Clean Water Act Reauthorization, however, stormwater management plans will be required of communities, and more monies will be made available at the federal and state levels, he said.

Underwood Appointed To OIB Plan Board; Expansion Proposed

BY LYNN CARLSON

Norfleet Underwood was appointed to the Ocean Isle Beach Planning Board on Tuesday to replace Ken Proctor, who says he'd like to see the board expanded.

Underwood's appointment was unanimously approved after he was nominated by Commissioner Janet Sanders. Both Proctor and Commissioner Kendall Suh said they had planned to nominate Underwood also.

Proctor resigned from the planning board when he was sworn in to the Ocean Isle Beach Board of Commissioners this past December. He told the commissioners Tuesday he thinks the planning board would be "not as complacent" if it had five representatives from the town limits instead of three.

The planning board currently is comprised of Chairman DeCarol Williamson, Bill Bullington and Underwood, all from the town limits.

Judy McHenry and John David Frink represent the extraterritorial zoning and planning area (ETA) and may vote only on issues pertaining to it.

Proctor read an opinion from a N.C. League of Municipalities attorney who endorsed the idea of a larger planning board and added, "With only three members you tend to go through things too quickly, and one person tends to have a position of power, with the others following. I think it's essential we expand to get some ideas we're not now getting."

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