

Mandatory Tap-Ons In County Area Are 'Key' To Sewer System Financing

BY SUSAN USHER

Plans for financing a proposed regional sewer system in southwestern Brunswick county depend in part on having the power to require tap-ons in unincorporated sections of the service area.

"The county is going to play a key role in your financing process," Joseph Tombro of Piedmont, Olsen and Hensley consulting engineers told the six members of the South Brunswick Water & Sewer Authority at their orientation last week at Sea Trail Plantation.

In January, Brunswick County Commissioners authorized County Engineer Robert Tucker and County Attorney Michael Ramos to begin exploring the "legal and engineering ramifications" of the county taking some role in development of the authority. Chairman Don Warren said he favored a "partnership" rather than "lead agent" role by the county in any effort to develop a regional stormwater or sewer project.

As of last Wednesday, the county was still considering its options.

County Engineer Robert Tucker told authority members he had been talking with County Manager Wyman Yelton and Ramos regarding the authority. "We're still evaluating how we could best serve the county as a whole in this type of arrangement," he said.

Initially the towns of Calabash and Sunset Beach are pursuing a joint sewer system, but a regional system offers a larger potential customer base and lower per-customer costs.

A county partnership with the authority could be achieved in any of

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—Joseph Tombro

several ways, including full membership like the towns of Sunset Beach and Calabash, or appointment of one of two persons to the authority board of directors.

The projected service area for the authority covers a broad swath of southwestern Brunswick County. It includes all of Sunset Beach and the Calabash business district, plus numerous subdivisions and golf course developments between the state line and Ocean Isle Beach.

These range from Marsh Harbour Marina, Ocean Forest, CedarTree, Brunswick Plantation and Shingletree Acres near the South Carolina state line to subdivisions and golf course developments on both sides of N.C. 179 from Calabash almost to Ocean Isle Beach, Calabash Acres and Clariday Woods to Ocean Haven. It also extends from Seaside Station out N.C. 904 to include Sea Trail Plantation, Sea Village and Lion's Paw.

The county's consent isn't required to serve voluntary customers in unincorporated areas, but would be sought.

If the county enters into an agreement with the authority, then, like the towns, it could transfer some of its powers. Those include requiring mandatory hook-up to the sewer system and the ability to levy assessments in areas within the county's jurisdiction.

Transfers of power are among the terms to be specified in interlocal agreements that must be drafted between the authority's board of directors and the boards of the local governments involved in the project.

"These agreements are probably the most difficult job you are going to have initially," Tombro predicted. The agreements are adopted along with the charter and bylaws, and must satisfy the authority and local governments and the state Local Government Commission.

The documents can also allow for an expanded role for the authority. State law allows authorities to be involved in stormwater management, septic tank management, planning, and sedimentation and erosion control.

"That would truly make it a water quality management entity as we envision," said engineer Jim Billups.

Much of the authority's work can't begin until after the April 5 sewer bond referendum at Sunset Beach. If the measure passes, Sunset Beach will proceed with plans for the authority. Town council members have not committed publicly to any specific course of action should the referendum fail.

Calabash Town Council has already "activated" its appointees to the sewer authority, while Sunset Beach has directed its appointees to

do no more than study and prepare for their roles. Authority members are MaryNell Eaddy, Bud Scrantom and George Knott from Sunset Beach and Russell Price, Hank Mattutat and Hal Todd from Calabash.

The authority proposes to build a 2 million gallons per day (MGD) collection and treatment system.

If the authority is to remain eligible for state loans for the project, engineers must have construction-ready designs for the treatment plant completed and submitted to the state during July.

The authority anticipates getting the entire \$3.8 million in state Clean Water revolving loan funds available to small communities this funding cycle and a \$5 million Clean Water Bond loan. It will finance the balance by issuing \$26.1 million in revenue bonds. Revenue bonds are repaid with system revenues.

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An internist specializes in all aspects of adult medical care, from a common cold, stomach or skin problems to chronic illness to intensive care. Internists provide preventive and acute care and many outpatient and inpatient medical needs. Also, they provide diagnostic services and referrals to subspecialists, if necessary.

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State Expected To Approve \$1 Million For Interchange Right-Of-Way Acquisition

State Board of Transportation members Friday are expected to approve spending \$1.15 million to acquire additional right of way for the interchange planned at the intersection of N.C. 130 and the U.S. 17 bypass of Shallotte.

The board will meet starting at 9 a.m. in the Highway Building in Raleigh.

Concerned area residents launched a campaign for the interchange following a double fatality at the grade-level intersection in November 1991.

The state has already allocated \$450,000 in right of way acquisition. The project will permanently displace a service station and at least one apartment building. Other properties will be affected by the construction of a temporary roadway that will be used while the interchange is constructed.

The board will also consider:

- allocating another \$150,000 for preliminary engineering on U.S. 17 from the South Carolina line to N.C.

211 at Supply. Previously \$1.95 million has been approved for this purpose.

- allocating another \$125,000 for preliminary engineering plus right of way and utilities for improvement of N.C. 179 from the South Carolina state line to Clariday Road (S.R. 1164) north of Calabash, 2.4 miles.

- approving preliminary engineering on N.C. 179 from N.C. 904 to Ocean Isle Beach Road (S.R. 1184), a length of 2.7 miles, with initial funding of \$300,000.

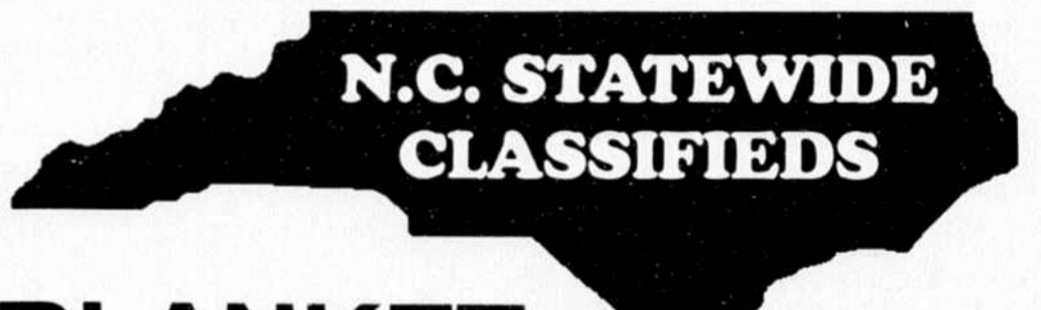
- awarding a contract for widening and resurfacing 66.7 miles of primary and secondary roads in Brunswick and New Hanover counties. Both bids received are more than 5 percent over the departmental estimate of \$3.3 million.

- authorizing reimbursement of Brunswick County upon satisfactory completion of an access road to serve the proposed Tri-Tech Industries in Southport-Oak Island Industrial Park, a project approved in August at a cost of \$25,000.

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