

OIB Defers Seeking State Loan To Build Larger Water Tank

BY SUSAN USHER

After asking plenty of questions Tuesday morning, Ocean Isle Beach Commissioners decided they aren't ready to pursue a state loan toward construction of additional elevated water storage for the town.

No action was taken on proposals to bill water users based on meter size or to increase the town water rate.

Commissioners asked most of the questions directed to consulting engineer Finley Boney during a 50-minute public hearing on the idea of applying by the end of the month for a \$465,000 low-interest Clean Water Bond loan from the state. The grant, if received, would be matched with \$125,300 in local funds for a total project cost of around \$670,000.

According to a preliminary engineering study by Boney, construction of a 500,000-gallon elevated tank would increase storage capacity to 700,000 gallons. He expects that would meet the town's projected water storage needs for peak domestic use and fire protection through the year 2020.

State law provides that municipalities maintain adequate water reserves for fire fighting at all times, which means maintaining more storage than is needed most of the year for Ocean Isle Beach and other tourist destinations with populations that swell dramatically in season.

He proposed construction of the tank adjacent to the existing 200,000-gallon tank erected in 1972.

Boney fielded questions on comparative advantages of an island or mainland site in surviving a hurricane storm surge, dealing with extreme seasonal variances in water usage, the possibility of stagnant stored water, and the feasibility of alternatives such as drawing water for firefighting from the island's saltwater canals.

Boney said the tank would be built to withstand 150 mph winds as required on barrier islands by the state building code. If the tank wouldn't withstand a hurricane storm surge or peak winds, he speculated, then neither would the bridge leading to the island or the 12- and 8-inch water mains suspended from it.

"Then we would have a lot of rebuilding to do," he said.

Building on the mainland would require regulating pressure between

Board Approves Greenhouse

Meeting briefly Tuesday morning, the Ocean Isle Beach Board of Adjustment granted a special use permit for a greenhouse operation within the town's extraterritorial area (ETA).

Consideration of the request from Bill Abshire had been delayed from March 15 until representation from the ETA could be added to the membership of the board chaired by Commissioner Debbie Fox.

"We had never had an appeal or permit application come before the board of adjustments until now," said Mayor Betty Williamson. "We're trying to do things right."

At the town's request, Monday night the Brunswick County Commissioners appointed Joseph Frank Williamson, the mayor's son, as the second ETA representative on the planning board. Then Williamson and fellow ETA representative John Frink were also appointed to serve on the board of adjustment.

Tuesday, Mayor Williamson administered oaths of office to the two before the start of the meeting.

The greenhouse will be constructed on Beach Drive in Branchwood Bay on property zoned C-3, commercial highway district. A special use permit is required in that district for light industrial use such as the greenhouse, according to Building Inspector Druid Roberson.

At its earlier meeting on March 15 the board of adjustments granted an appeal by John Sutton for a side yard building setback variance. He will be allowed to build a dwelling with less than the required seven feet setback from the side lot lines.

the new tank and the existing tank, he said, but the cost would be insignificant.

Commissioner Kendall Suh said he thought a mainland site should be considered for aesthetic and cost reasons as well as storm safety reasons. While the existing tank is "pretty tasteful," he said, a larger tank might be "unsightly" as well as more expensive to build on the island than on the mainland.

However, he still advocated the existing central island location over the mainland or either end of the island because of the distribution of residences and businesses the system serves.

Boney also said Brunswick County is working to solve a problem with the meter vault for the 8-inch line under the bridge so that it can be used to provide water to the island, supplementing a newer 12-inch line. The town uses the 8-inch line now only to pump water from the elevated tank to the mainland causeway, with a restaurant and bank the last customers before it dead ends.

Getting out of the water distribution business isn't really feasible for the town, Boney suggested because water service and rates are intertwined with the town's full mix of services and tax rate.

In the end commissioners said

they still weren't ready to apply for the grant. They will study the need for the larger tank a while longer and consider applying for a grant when the second round of funding becomes available in September.

The town recently expanded its sewer system, reducing capital reserves available in the utility budget. Investing now in a new tank would deplete those reserves, said Commissioner Debbie S. Fox, at a time when the town needs to be rebuilding them.

On a related note, a water committee had no recommendations Tuesday on a possible change in water billing or on an appropriate water rate increase.

Led by Fox, the committee had been studying the feasibility of switching to billing for water usage on the basis of meter size rather than the number of units in a building. The panel is also looking into raising water service rates to reflect a county rate increase that went into effect last year and was not passed on to customers. The town pays \$1.35 per gallon for county water.

Tuesday she said the committee had "a lot more work to do."

"In looking at changing to billing by meter size it appears that would not have a positive effect on town revenues so we're studying it further," said Fox.

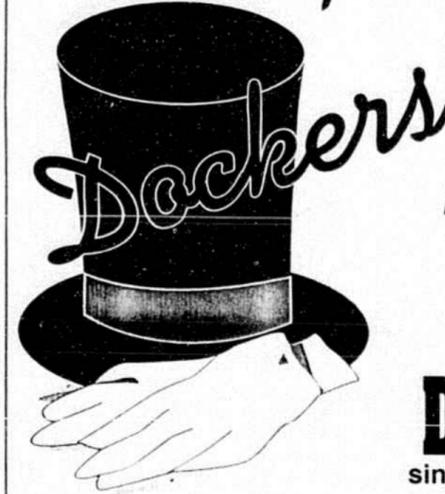


STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

Digging In At Ocean Isle

Long-sleeved shirts on toddlers were the only clue summer hadn't arrived Saturday at Ocean Isle Beach. While older, more skimpily-clad beachgoers basked in the sun or hit the waves, Wiley, 2, and her brother, Foster, 1, dug a large hole and tunnel with the help of their parents, Mr. and Mrs. Bobby Marshall of Beaufort, S.C.

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Dear Friends, Neighbors, and Fellow Citizens:

As you are probably aware, I am seeking the office of Sheriff of Brunswick County in the upcoming election. This decision is the result of a lifelong ambition. Beginning with my swearing-in at Holden Beach in 1983 as North Carolina's youngest officer, I have devoted much work and many long hours to arrive at this point in my career.

Those of you who know me know that I am dedicated to making Brunswick County a safe place for my children and yours. You probably feel as I do—that the drug problem in our county is clearly the root of many other crimes. I don't think anyone would question my sincerity, given my record, when I say to the drug dealers and users that their activities can no longer be tolerated in this county. I have seen firsthand through my daily work with the children of this county what a difference a step in the right direction can make.

Our Sheriff's department needs to continue to take steps to improve its operation and professionalism. I have been a member of this Sheriff's department for nearly eleven years and, over the years, have seen areas I feel need attention. I would like to see the door of our Sheriff's department open 24-hours a day to serve our people. I would like to improve the relationship of this department with all municipal departments by forming a City-County Drug Task Force. I would like to see the D.A.R.E. program expanded into the junior and senior high schools.

These are but a few of the goals I would work for when elected Sheriff. But these goals cannot be realized without your vote of confidence. Together, we can.

Ronald E. Hewett

- ★ National D.A.R.E. Officer of Year
- ★ State D.A.R.E. Officer of the Year
- ★ Brunswick County D.A.R.E. Program Coordinator & Narcotics Investigator
- ★ Certified NC Law Enforcement Instructor (over 1,000 hours taught)
- ★ Brunswick County Sheriff's Department Lieutenant, Narcotics Investigator since 1990
- ★ Uniformed Patrol Sergeant (1987-1990)
- ★ Uniformed Patrol Deputy (1983-1987)
- ★ B.A. Criminal Justice UNCW (1985) Honor Student
- ★ NC Advanced Law Enforcement Certification (1989)
- ★ Brunswick Community College Basic Law Enforcement Instructor since 1989
- ★ NC Fire & Rescue Instructor since 1991
- ★ Holden Beach Police Department N.C.'s youngest police officer (1983)
- ★ Certified CPR Instructor, EMT
- ★ NC Institute of Political Leadership
- ★ Member & Active Participant N.C. D.A.R.E. Officers Association National D.A.R.E. Officers Association N.C. Law Enforcement Officers Association Supply Baptist Church (Sunday School Teacher) Brunswick County Shrine Club (Treasurer) Sudan Temple, New Bern, NC Scottish Rite, (32nd degree Mason) Shallotte Lodge 727 (Master Mason)

Ronald E. HEWETT

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Brunswick Community College Meeting To Address Workforce Training Needs

Local business people will preview continuing education opportunities for employees and offer their own suggestions at a breakfast meeting sponsored by Brunswick Community College.

The "Preparing the Workforce for the Future" meeting will be held on the BCC campus Friday, April 1, from 7:30 a.m. to 9 a.m.

Associate Dean of Continuing Education Velva Jenkins said the session will address initiatives such as workplace literacy, occupational training, Job Training Partnership Act opportunities, pre-employment training, new and expanding industry training and resources and assistance for small businesses.

The purpose of the meeting is to share information on available workforce educational and training services and look at ways to improve or expand them.

A guest speaker, Glynda Lawrence, associate director of existing industry services with the N.C. Department of Community Colleges, will discuss the state's perspective of workforce preparedness.

All interested business persons are welcome, but reservations are required no later than March 29 so that adequate arrangements can be made. To reserve a space, contact Jenkins' office at 754-6900, 457-6329 or 343-0203, Ext. 380.

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