

# Sewer Bond Passes Easily With Heavy Voter Turnout

BY SUSAN USHER

Now the work will really begin. Sunset Beach voters endorsed a central sewer system by better than a two-thirds majority Tuesday, approving a \$5 million sewer bond issue the town never expects to issue.

"I think this vote really speaks for itself," said Mayor Mason Barber. "I don't think there's any doubt where this community stands."

Of the 260 ballots cast, 184 were for the sewer system and 76 against, said Brunswick County Board of Elections Supervisor Lynda Britt.

Barber said the endorsement was a "total community project" that involved town council members, authority directors, town and engineering staff. And hours of one-on-one consultations on projected water bills.

"We had many, many one-on-one's," said Barber.

"People really looked hard at it and I'm glad they did. There won't be any surprises."

"Wow!" was Sunset Beach Town Administrator Linda Fluegel's first reaction to a walloping vote for sewer and the high turnout of voters.

Barber said voting was heaviest in the afternoon, when Sea Trail residents went to the polls after a morning of association golf.

Tuesday's vote will allow Sunset Beach Town Council to activate its appointees to the South Brunswick Water & Sewer Authority, triggering a flurry of work on the part of the authority in order to meet state deadlines for several loan award deadlines.

The authority was created by Sunset Beach and Calabash, with Brunswick County soon to join its membership. It plans to provide sewer and related services to a 45-square-mile section of southwestern

Brunswick County that includes 12.5 golf courses. The authority's first project is a \$35 million central sewer collection and treatment system.

Barber said he anticipates a special meeting of the town council will be called within a week to 10 days, when all members are available, to begin the next steps of the project. The town plans to establish a program for property owners to install separate meters for irrigation and other non-household uses. Sewer rates will be based on peak household water usage; the lower the water flow through the house, the lower the bills.

"We're probably going to provide the meters at cost," the mayor said. "We're going to try to assist residents as much as we can."

Once the authority begins work, interlocal agreements and transfers of authority must be reached with each member government—Sunset Beach, Calabash

and Brunswick County, and a charter and bylaws adopted.

With more than 51 percent of the 504 registered Sunset Beach voters either going to the polls or casting absentee ballots, Britt said the turnout for the bond issue vote was very high. "A bond issue can usually pass with a 25 percent turnout," she said.

With several low-interest loans anticipated and plans for the authority to issue \$27 million in revenue bonds, Sunset Beach has said it has no plans of issuing the \$5 million in sewer bonds approved by voters, but wanted a vote of commitment for or against sewer.

Saying it would fuel rapid, dense development without adequate controls, opponents of the referendum had questioned the town's wisdom in proceeding with just the sewer system rather than a combined (See SUNSET, Page 2-A)

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## Report: Holden Rental Firms Complying With Occupancy Law

BY DOUG RUTTER

All seven Holden Beach companies that manage vacation rental units are complying with a state law that limits occupancy to two people per bedroom, according to a report released this week.

"I think they've made an awful lot of progress," Commissioner Sid Swarts said in a phone interview Tuesday. "I think most of them will conscientiously make sure they're not overloaded."

Swarts wasn't saying that a year ago, when he spearheaded an effort to get the island's real estate firms to change brochure advertisements as a means of discouraging overcrowding of homes.

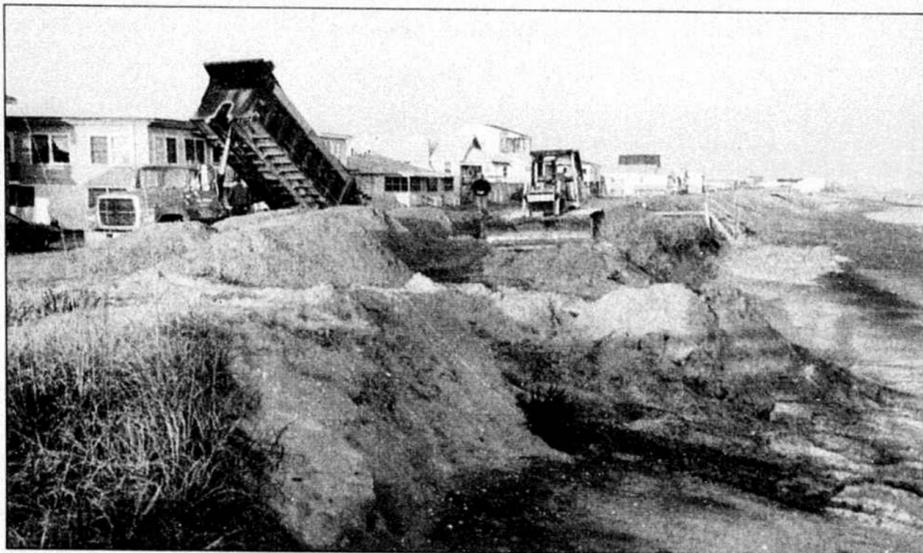
A study of 1993 rental brochures found that nearly 68 percent of the units advertised claimed to have a greater sleeping capacity than their septic tank systems were designed to accommodate.

That study of the town's wastewater management committee led to a meeting with state and county health officials, who vowed to crack down on rental firms and homeowners who allow overloading of septic systems.

Swarts released an updated version of the study Monday night based on 1994 brochures. He pointed out that all seven firms note in their new brochures that state law limits occupancy to two people per bedroom.

"What it boils down to is all the (real estate companies) fall within the state law," Swarts said at Monday night's town meeting. "I want to stress that what they've advertised is perfectly legal."

(See HOLDEN, Page 2-A)



STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

## New Dune Constructed

Workers build an oceanfront sand dune at Holden Beach last week. The dune was completed on Good Friday and covers the south side of Hillside Drive. The approximately 11,420 cubic yards of sand came from a nearby dredge spoil area. The Federal Emergency Management Agency will pay for the project. More about the project on Page 6D.

## Rates Could Double If Authority Buys Blythe

BY ERIC CARLSON

The Lower Cape Fear Water and Sewer Authority decided Tuesday to delay studying the purchase of Carolina Blythe Utility Co. in Calabash until the town decides whether it wants to buy the sewage system.

"We basically decided that the authority would put its plans on hold, to give local governments the opportunity to go through their due process," said Kurt Taube, the authority's executive director. "This authority is not in business to compete with local governments for water and sewer service. We will support their efforts and share the findings of our feasibility study."

"And we'll be here as an alternative if nothing else seems to work."

The authority, which provides untreated water to

Brunswick County, asked its consulting engineer C.A. Willis of Wilmington to study the condition of Carolina Blythe's treatment plant and distribution lines and to advise the authority on the feasibility of buying it. He gave his report to the authority board at its regular meeting Tuesday morning.

The Calabash Board of Commissioners recently agreed to send Carolina Blythe the owner Billy Burnett a letter of intent to purchase the utility in an effort to gain access to financial records and contracts the town feels it needs to analyze the feasibility of Burnett's "non-negotiable" asking price of \$4.5 million.

Carolina Blythe already provides water and sewer service to the Carolina Shores golf and retirement community (See AUTHORITY, Page 2-A)

## County Manager Stable After Wreck That Killed His Wife

BY ERIC CARLSON

The condition of Brunswick County Manager Wyman Yelton remained in serious but stable condition Tuesday after he was taken off a respirator and told for the first time that his wife had been killed in a head-on collision that also claimed the life of a female college student Sunday afternoon.

Yelton, 56, suffered a broken shoulder, a crushed knee, a compound fracture of the lower arm and fractured ribs when the Mercedes Benz in which he was riding crashed into a car that left the eastbound lane of Interstate 40 in Durham, crossed the grass median and slid sideways into the westbound lane.

Kathryn Shirley Yelton, 52, was driving their Mercedes en route to the couple's home in Southport when the accident occurred at about 2 p.m. She was pinned in the car by its crumpled door and steering column for more than an hour before rescue workers were able to free her from the wreckage.

Wyman Yelton was also trapped in the car for about 20 minutes. The car's roof had to be cut away to extricate the two.

The Yeltons were taken by helicopter to Duke University Medical Center, where Mrs. Yelton died Sunday night. Wyman Yelton remained in the hospital's intensive care unit Tuesday after surgery on his arm and shoulder.

Also killed in the wreck was Olivia Frigga Tjia, 21, of Cary. She was returning to classes at the

University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill after spending Easter with her parents. Police say they don't know what caused Tjia to lose control of her 1986 Acura Integra and cross the I-40 median.

As emergency personnel worked to free the Yeltons, Easter Sunday traffic was stopped for more than two hours along a two-mile stretch of the interstate near its intersection with N.C. 54.

Yelton's seat was conspicuously empty as the Brunswick County Commissioners convened for their regular meeting Monday night. After calling the proceedings to order, Chairman Don Warren asked for a moment of silence and said a prayer for the Yeltons.

Warren suspended the meeting agenda and requested nominations for an acting county manager. Warren was appointed by a unanimous vote. The meeting was recessed until April 11 at 6:30 p.m.

After the meeting, Warren said he would immediately begin the search for a temporary county manager to serve until Yelton recovers. He said he hopes to find a "non-political" candidate for the job and may seek to ask "some retired people we know with experience in government."

Warren said he hopes to find a temporary replacement for Yelton "as soon as possible." However, he said it is unlikely that the position will be filled at the next meeting.

County department heads are (See YELTON'S, Page 2-A)

## WANTS STORMWATER MANAGEMENT INCLUDED

## SBTA Eyes Lawsuit To Delay Sewer

BY SUSAN USHER

Sunset Beach Taxpayers Association directors are exploring the possibility of a lawsuit to block construction of a regional sewer project.

On a voice vote, SBTA directors were told to explore a lawsuit aimed at blocking Sunset Beach participation in the planning or building of any sewer system that does not also include a stormwater management system.

Sunset Beach is a member of the South Brunswick Water & Sewer Authority, which is planning to build a system that will eventually serve a 45-square mile area from the South Carolina state line east toward Ocean Isle Beach and Grissetown. Town voters went to the polls Tuesday to vote on continued participation.

"A suit might delay the sewer system until regulations

catch up with reality and a stormwater management plan is required," said one unidentified SBTA member during the 2-hour meeting at the Sunset Beach fire station.

The vote came after a lengthy discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of a central sewer system, especially monthly user fees based on peak demand and growth.

SBTA Vice President Sue Weddle told members the sewer system would "open the door for rapid, dense development," with no guarantee of a stormwater management system later. She and other proponents argued that stormwater management rely heavily on density controls and buffer zones, which should be established before growth occurs. After the fact engineered solutions are (See TAXPAYERS', Page 2-A)

## SET TO BEGIN FRIDAY

## Weather Delays Start Of Gypsy Moth Spraying

BY ERIC CARLSON

Cool temperatures and a forecast of rain from an approaching cold front has delayed the first round of aerial insecticide spraying for Asian gypsy moths until Friday, state agriculture officials said Tuesday.

"We plan to begin spraying in the Long Beach area at daybreak on Friday," said Greg Cook at the N.C. Department of Agriculture in Raleigh.

Latest plans call for the first application of insecticide to begin in the southern coastal areas of Brunswick County and continue north across an area of about 130,000 acres.

The target area for each day's spraying will not be determined until that morning, depending on weather and the previous day's progress, said Bill Dickerson, NCDA plant pest administrator and head of the state's

Gypsy Moth Task Force.

Once the project gets underway, residents may find out exactly when a specific area will be sprayed by calling the Gypsy Moth Hotline during the day at 1-800-449-9007. At night, a recorded message will provide a forecast of the target areas for

the next day's application.

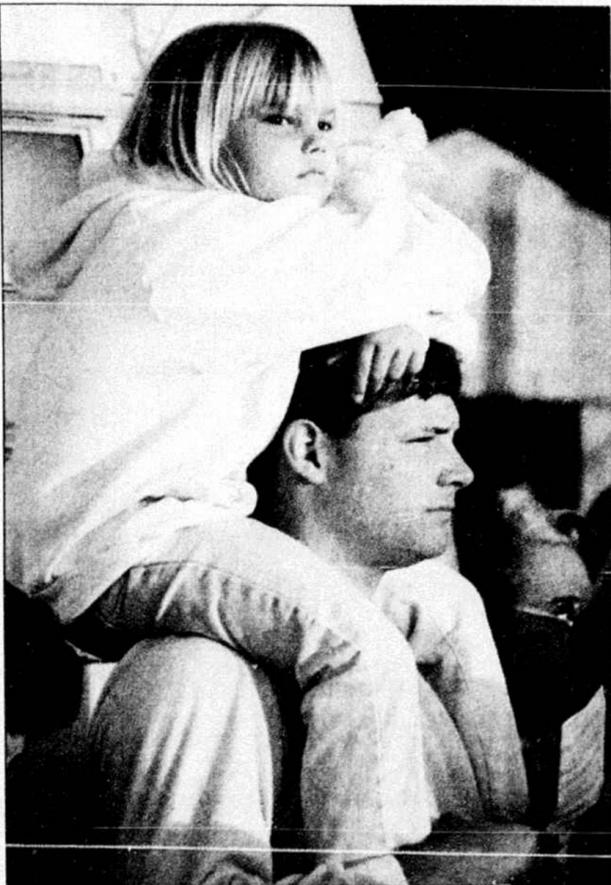
Because the goal of the program is to coat the leaves that provide food for the gypsy moth caterpillars, the spray is most effective when applied during periods of low wind when there is not an immediate threat of rain, Dickerson said.

## Suggested Precautions:

- Remain indoors for at least 10 minutes following the spray application.
- Wait until moisture from the spray and dew has dried on the grass/shrubs before allowing children to play outside. Encourage hand-washing.
- If contact is made with the spray, wash the affected skin with soap and water. If the material should get into the eyes, flush with water.

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STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC CARLSON

## Sleepy Eyes At Sunrise

Six-year-old Ashley Wheelock clutches a stuffed bunny rabbit on the shoulders of her father Doug Wheelock as a bright morning sun casts its first rays on an Easter sunrise service at Holden Beach. The Wheelocks are frequent visitors to the area from their home in Enterprise, Ala.

Periods of high humidity—usually in the morning and afternoon—are preferred because the spray sticks to the leaves better under those conditions.

"Under perfect conditions we could finish the first application in three days," Dickerson said. "A more realistic estimate would be somewhere between seven and ten days." Each treated area will receive a second application of insecticide seven to 14 days after the first spraying.

A squadron of six crop-duster type aircraft will do the spraying from a base of operations set up at the Brunswick County Airport near Long Beach.

According to the most recent project map released by the task force Tuesday, the area to be sprayed includes a strip extending inland about (See MOTHS, Page 2-A)