

# County Board Says No To Cement Plants In Rural Zone

BY ERIC CARLSON

Responding to protests from zoning watchdogs, the Brunswick County Commissioners on Tuesday shot down a planning department proposal to allow cement mixing plants and seafood processing operations in the rural zones that encompass most of the county's land.

The board voted unanimously to reject the idea even after Planning Director Wade Horne suggested a compromise that would have allowed such uses on rural property as a "special exception" requiring approval by the zoning board of adjustment.

Horne said afterwards that the request for a zoning change to allow concrete plants was sparked by a request from "members of the public" who he declined to name. He suggested that they might be persons interested in building such a plant somewhere in the county, probably north of U.S. 17.

"It was brought to our attention that due to the growing development in our county, we may need to expand concrete mixing facilities into other areas," Horne said.

Ten people spoke in opposition to the proposal at a public hearing before Monday's commissioners meeting. Many were residents who got involved in land use issues during last year's fight to prohibit a proposed gravel mine near Southport and have continued to take an interest in zoning.

No one voiced support for the idea of allowing concrete mixing or

seafood processing in rural areas.

"There is already an existing zone to accommodate these uses," said Greta Watts. "What is the purpose of allowing them in a zone where people make their homes? The dust and the stench would be reason enough to keep them in their existing zone. I see absolutely no logic in this request."

Mei Hart of Moores Creek called the proposal "as wrong as it can be," saying that to allow such heavy uses would violate the intent of the rural zone.

"People buy land in a rural zone because they want to live there," he said. "They don't want to find a plant operating next to them. This is wrong, people."

Sabrina Puckett of Moores Creek said three concrete mixing facilities currently operate in the county, but none of them are in rural zones. She questioned the need to alter the zoning ordinance to add a permitted use to the rural zone that is already allowed in the industrial zone.

"It's wrong to take uses specifically allowed in one zone and put them in another," she said. "This zoning law is changing faster than the clock ticks."

Robert Quinn of Southport said the idea of allowing heavy uses like concrete mixing and seafood processing violates the stated intent of the rural zone. He noted that the farms and single-family homes are designated first and second on the list of permitted land uses in rural zones.

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—Bob Quinn

Under prohibited uses in rural zones, the law lists any use that is potentially offensive to residents "by reason of odor, smoke, noise, fumes" and other effects that might be "incompatible with the character" of the zoning district.

"The idea is to allow homes in an atmosphere that is compatible for homes and industries in a compatible atmosphere for industry," Quinn said.

Also speaking against the zone change were Suzanne Osborne, Regina Winders, Rosetta Short, Norm Puckett, Roberta Hart and Nancy Leggett.

During their regular monthly meeting, the commissioners voted unanimously against the change in rural zoning and also denied a planning department request to allow seafood processing operations in commercial low-density zones.

Horne said afterward that the latter issue deserved consideration and should not have been included in the zoning change request. He said there are currently no seafood processing operations doing business in zones that allow such uses.

Even the fish houses and oyster packing businesses that have been operating in Brunswick County for many years are currently listed as non-conforming uses in their zoning districts, Horne said. The request to allow them in C-LD zones was an attempt to encourage the opening of new seafood processing operations, he said.

"I think we'll bring that one up in a different form at some later date," he said.

In other business the board: ■ Put off consideration of a 25-year contract with BCH Energy Corp. for recycling and disposing of

solid waste currently being buried at the county landfill. The contract calls for the county to construct a new \$700,000 transfer station and to pay BCH \$37 a ton to haul off the waste. The board will be asked to approve the agreement, with minor changes, at its next meeting.

■ Agreed to relax minimum lot size requirements in areas such as the Holden Beach causeway and the approaches to Ocean Isle Beach and Sunset Beach to allow businesses to operate with 75 feet of road frontage. The zoning law previously required a 100-foot lot size.

■ Approved a revised county sign ordinance that Horne called "more lenient and accommodating to businesses" than the original regulations included in the county zoning law.

■ Heard a proposal from a Murrells Inlet, S.C. firm that wants to collect fees for ambulance transports in the county in return for a percentage of the insurance reimbursements. The board named Commissioner Tom Rabon, County Manager Wyman Yelton and Emergency Services Director Doug Ledgett to a committee that will study the possibility of charging fees for ambulance service.

■ Unanimously agreed to appoint seven members to a zoning overlay committee at the board's next meeting. The committee, with one representative from each district and two at-large members, will study and make recommendations about land use priorities throughout the county.

■ Endorsed a letter of support for

Town Creek Vision Corporation, a non-profit organization seeking state and federal grants to build a "multi-purpose family resource center" for youth in northern Brunswick County.

■ Adopted proclamations declaring September as "Brunswick County Literacy Month, Sept. 24 as "Hunting and Fishing Day" and Sept. 11 as "911 Day" in North Carolina.

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THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

# Turnout Light For Shallotte Sewer Hearing

BY DOUG RUTTER

Most Shallotte residents apparently support the town board's proposal for a \$1.9 million sewer system expansion project.

Turnout was light for Tuesday night's public hearing on the facilities plan, and the dozen residents who did attend had nothing but good things to say about the idea of more than tripling the sewer system's capacity.

"I think we should get on with it as quickly as possible," said John Twomey of Briarwood Estates.

"I just feel like anything we can do to better our community we should move ahead," added Dillon Taylor.

Shallotte officials plan to expand the system capacity from its existing level of 206,000 gallons per day (gpd) to 750,000 gpd. The project should take about 18 months to complete.

Based on residential and commercial growth projections, the 550,000 gpd expansion will be needed in order to serve Shallotte adequately for the next 20 years.

The 10-year-old sewer plant currently treats about 140,000 gallons of wastewater per day. That figure is expected to more than double within the next 10 years and reach 750,000 gpd by the year 2014.

Town officials are proposing the expansion in two phases, with the first phase increasing capacity to 400,000 gpd at a cost of \$1,113,200. The cost estimate for the second phase is \$681,200.

Engineer Street Lee, project manager with McKim & Creed of Wilmington, said Tuesday night he feels good about Shallotte's chances of receiving a low-interest State Revolving Fund loan to pay for the project.

To pay back the loan, town officials will use impact fees, capital reserve fees and acreage fees—all of which the town collects from landowners when they develop property.

Aldermen also anticipate increasing the minimum monthly sewer rate from \$12.84 to \$17.04, which adds up to an extra \$50 per household per year.

Residents and businesses that

*"Our future's bright if we don't slip up. We've got to get our sewer in and be ready for it."*

—Alderman Carson Durham

generate more than 3,000 gallons of wastewater per month would pay an additional \$5.18 per 1,000 gallons. They now pay \$3.78 per 1,000 gallons.

Alderman Bill Allen said Tuesday he expects the sewer rates to drop a few years after the expansion, once the town starts benefiting from residential and commercial growth.

"I think over a period of time that would start to decrease rather than increase," Allen said.

Town officials say the system expansion will open the door for a lot of residential and commercial development. Several landowners in and around town have talked about developing once the project is complete.

"Our future's bright if we don't slip up," Alderman Carson Durham said. "We've got to get our sewer in and be ready for it."

To expand the capacity, the town will have to construct a 24-acre storage lagoon and a 1,500-gallon-per-minute pump station, upgrade the chlorine feed system at the Forest Drive plant and add 170 acres of spray irrigation fields.

Lee said the town will have to purchase land for the additional spray fields. Lease arrangements could not be worked out with the property owners, Federal Paper Board and International Paper Company.

"Basically they're in the business of growing trees and they don't want to accept any more liability than they have to," Lee said.

Cost estimates in the facilities plan are based on \$1,200 per acre of land, but Lee said the price has not been determined. It will have to be

negotiated with the paper companies.

The town will continue accepting written comments on the facilities plan for the next 15 days. Aldermen plan to pass a resolution accepting the plan at a special meeting Sept. 21.

The design plans and loan application must be submitted to the state by Sept. 30, Lee said.

In a related matter Tuesday, aldermen voted to pay McKim & Creed an additional \$4,000 for an engineering evaluation of the existing sewer collection system and another \$8,000 for a sewer system master plan.

Engineers will develop a computer hydraulic analysis of the wastewater collection system and deter-

mine how the town can reduce its annual operation and maintenance costs.

The master plan would determine the most effective methods of serving all areas inside the town and extraterritorial area within a mile of Shallotte. Cheers voted against authorizing the master plan.

Lee said the system evaluation will be completed by the end of October, and the master plan by mid-November.

The \$12,000 for both projects will be taken from the town's capital reserve fee/acreage fee fund.

### Other Business

In other business Tuesday, aldermen:

■ Took no action on a proposed ordinance regulating vendors, peddlers and sidewalk sales in the town and extraterritorial area. Aldermen plan to vote on the ordinance at their Sept. 20 meeting.

■ Voted to rezone Paula Stone's property at 221 Smith Avenue from Highway Business to R-10 (residential). Stone requested the change so the property can be sold.

■ Voted to spend up to \$1,000 for a copier for the police department.

■ Adopted a Planned Residential Development ordinance as recommended by the planning board.

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