

SHALLOTTE TRANSPORTATION

Bluff Bridge, Brierwood Access Removed From Thoroughfare Plan

BY DOUG RUTTER

Shallotte officials approved a town thoroughfare plan last week after deleting two new entrances into Brierwood Estates and a proposed bridge that would have turned residential Bluff Drive into a major traffic artery.

The plan features a series of proposed road construction and improvement projects designed to reduce traffic congestion on Main Street and improve travel on the outskirts of Shallotte.

Aldermen adopted the plan at a meeting last Wednesday, one night after presenting their top two priorities to the N.C. Board of Transportation at a public hearing in Wilmington.

Shallotte officials say one of the most important elements of the thoroughfare plan is a short road through the Wal-Mart parking lot that would connect Holden Beach Road and Smith Avenue.

The board's other top priority is a proposed extension of N.C. 179

from its intersection at Hale Swamp Road north to U.S. 17 Business near Shallotte Township Park. The road would continue across U.S. 17 Business to N.C. 130 West near Bridger Road, then continue east to Smith Avenue.

If they can be constructed, Shallotte officials say the new roads would help keep vehicles heading to and from Holden Beach and Ocean Isle Beach from adding to downtown congestion.

Rick Blackwood of the N.C. Department of Transportation's statewide planning branch drafted the thoroughfare plan, which was adopted as proposed with two exceptions.

Responding to residents of Brierwood Estates, aldermen deleted two new entrances into the golf course community.

Blackwood said he included the additional accesses into Brierwood in the plan for the safety and convenience of residents, but he said the entrances are not needed to aid traf-

fic flow.

Aldermen also deleted from Blackwood's plan a proposed bridge across the Shallotte River connecting Bluff Drive to the south end of Cheers Street.

The final plan does include construction of a road from the south end of Cheers east across Holden Beach Road and Red Bug Road and ending at Royal Oak Road. Bluff Drive also is targeted for extension from its intersection at Copas Road behind Shallotte Middle School to N.C. 179.

Blackwood proposed the Bluff Drive bridge and extension to reduce traffic on Main Street, but area residents said last month they didn't want their road turned into an alternate route to U.S. 17 Business.

Blackwood said 17,000 vehicles use Main Street on an average day, and a parallel road south of Main is needed to reduce congestion that is expected to get worse in the future.

Other proposals in the thoroughfare plan include the following:

■ A road connecting Mintz Street and Pender Road.

■ An extension of Georgetown Road from Ocean Isle Beach Road to Hale Swamp Road.

■ An extension of Ocean Isle Beach Road across U.S. 17 to intersect with McMilly Road, and ultimately N.C. 130, west of Shallotte.

■ An extension of Mulberry Road west to N.C. 130 West and an extension of New Britton Road west to Mulberry Road.

■ An extension of McMilly Road across N.C. 130 West and connecting with Mulberry Road.

Although the town board has adopted the plan, there is no guarantee the new roads will be built or existing ones improved.

Blackwood said aldermen will have to request funding for any projects they want, and it takes at least seven years for a project to be approved and constructed.

Property Rezoned
Aldermen approved two requests for rezoning last Wednesday, follow-

ing recommendations of the town planning board.

The board rezoned 14.82 acres owned by Bobby Ray Russ and located on the east side of U.S. 17 Bypass between Northside Drive and Forest Drive. The zoning was changed from B-2 (commercial) to RAM-15 (residential).

Rezoned from RA-15 (residential) to B-2 (commercial) a portion of Paul Smith's property on Paul's Trail off Holden Beach Road. The town rezoned 310 feet of property along the road to a depth of 200 feet.

In both cases, the vote to rezone the property was 4-1 with Alderman Bill Allen dissenting.

Town board members voted unanimously to appoint Shallotte businessman H.L. Holmes to the planning board seat recently vacated by Tony Maglione. The term expires Feb. 4, 1996.

Other Business
In other business last week, aldermen:

■ Appointed seven people to the

newly-formed Committee For The Improvement of Shallotte. Appointed were Gregory Rupp, Buddy Milliken Jr., Edward Thomas, Kathy Bartlett, Jo Ann Simmons, Joe Hewett and Shirley Waggoner-Eisenman.

■ Received the 1993-94 financial audit report from Mike Chandler of Brock, Padgett and Chandler CPA of Shallotte. Chandler reported that the town's tax collection rate has increased from 92 percent three years ago to 95.1 percent last year. Aldermen vowed to make an effort to collect at least some of the \$8,900 in unpaid water and sewer charges.

■ Agreed to sponsor a Shallotte Fireman of the Year Award. Fireman Matthew Pait suggested that aldermen and town employees vote on the recipient, but aldermen said fire department members should vote.

■ Took no action on a request from Surf City's town board to pass a resolution opposing a North Carolina saltwater recreational fishing license.

Delegation Of Democrats Learning To Be Minority

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settled by encouraging better cooperation between the school board and the commissioners.

Each representative was asked what issue they plan to emphasize during the next legislative session.

Hill said "economic development will be high on my priority list." Redwine said he hoped to promote education and welfare reform. Rep. Thomas Wright said despite the change in political climate, health care would remain a focus of his legislative efforts.

"This is a problem that has to be addressed," said Wright, a member of the N.C. Health Planning Commission who works as a paramedic. "There is a crisis in health care and I will debate any Republican who says there isn't a crisis."

"You can go down to that emergency room right now and I guarantee that 60 percent of the people in

there would get medical treatment somewhere else if they had health coverage," Wright said. "The chances for a major health reform package may be bleak, but I'm going to work my fanny off to see that pieces of it pass."

Wright's 98th District includes a small portion of northeastern Brunswick County along with parts of Columbus, New Hanover and Pender counties. He is chairman of the House Special Populations Committee.

In thanking them for their participation, Joe Stanley, president of the South Brunswick Islands Chamber of Commerce assured the legislators that "you don't have to be in the majority to get things done."

"I can tell you from experience that being in a minority does not make you helpless," he said.

Co-sponsors for the event were the Southport-Oak Island Chamber of Commerce and the North Brunswick Chamber of Commerce.

Outgoing Board Okays Final Expenditures; One More Meeting Set

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Bladen and Columbus Counties.

At the continuation of its recessed meeting Nov. 30, the commissioners will consider two appointments to the Brunswick County Board of Health, two positions on the Aging Advisory Board and one seat each on the EDC, the Brunswick County Library Board of Trustees, the Coastal Resources Commission and several other boards.

In other business Monday night, the commissioners:

■ Accepted a bid of \$86,263 from Camp Construction Co. of Wilmington for replacing the roof on the sheriff's department building and the tax offices. The expenditure was included in this year's budget. The contract was awarded to the

lowest of five bidders.

■ Tabled consideration of a resolution approving an installment financing plan to provide a maximum of \$8 million for the construction of a new North Brunswick Elementary School in Leland.

■ Approved a request from county extension Director Milton Coleman to create a position of Commercial Horticulturist, to be jointly funded by Brunswick, Columbus and Robeson counties. Regionalizing the post and jointly funding it with the other participants will not require any county expense during this budget year, Coleman said.

■ Authorized the finance officer to hold a public auction Saturday, Jan. 14, 1995, to dispose of surplus personal property belonging to the county.

Sewer Authority, Taxpayers' Group Battle By Mail; Lawsuit Threatened

BY LYNN CARLSON

In a brief meeting Saturday afternoon, eight of nine members of the South Brunswick Water and Sewer Authority agreed to refute in writing a Sunset Beach Taxpayers Association mailing claiming the state Division of Environmental Management overrode its own staff's recommendation to issue a "Finding of No Significant Impact" (FONSI) on the proposed \$35.6 million Sunset Beach-Calabash central sewer project.

On a motion by member George "Tripp" Sloane, the authority approved a three-page letter claiming the SBTA "distorts the facts about the central wastewater treatment system...in order to elevate the self-interests of some of its individual members above the good of the community."

Letters were mailed Monday from the authority to everyone on the Sunset Beach tax rolls claiming that the SBTA mailing is "replete with factual misstatements, substantially distorts many of the facts which are correctly stated and attempts to impugn the integrity of key State environmental officials."

Authority president George Knott, speaking before his board and an audience including Sunset Beach Mayor Mason Barber and four town councilmen, accused the SBTA of "falsehoods, lies and innuendo" and said it is time for the authority to "draw a line in the sand."

The unsigned SBTA mailing, dated Nov. 15, asks the organization's members to comment on whether an environmental impact statement should be a prerequisite to the central sewer system.

"After carefully reviewing the proposal, the

SBTA Board's opinion is that the environmental problems associated with the consequential explosive growth have not been adequately addressed," it states.

Attached is a copy an Aug. 30 internal DEM memorandum from Reg Sutton, state environmental assessment coordinator for the project, outlining "some problem areas which lead me to conclude that there is sufficient justification for an environmental impact statement to be prepared on the proposed project."

The authority's mailing counters that Sutton "was just one of a number of people responsible for assessing the potential environmental impacts of the Project" and that by the time DEM made its decision "many of the concerns raised in Dr. Sutton's internal memorandum had already been fully addressed by the Authority's environmental and engineering consultants."

The SBTA letter contains a section entitled "Vote for Legal Action," saying the group's board of directors believes SBTA should be prepared to sue if an environmental impact statement is not required. The section includes a ballot to be completed only by members who oppose legal action. "No reply is considered an affirmative vote," the accompanying text states.

The authority's letter, over Knott's signature, says "any such litigation would be spurious and only result in the imposition of unnecessary additional costs on the taxpayers in the Authority's service area."

It continues, "The mechanism which the SBTA has established to determine whether its members are willing to pursue litigation once

again evidences a total disregard for the interests of all but an elite few."

SBTA's mailing states, "While not opposing a central sewer system, the SBTA Board does not believe DEM has collected sufficient information to determine that there will be no significant environmental impact from the project. We believe an EIS is essential to identify and plan mitigation measures for the inevitable adverse environmental impacts created, and that an enforceable stormwater ordinance exist prior to State approval of the project."

The authority claims "the proposed system...including a stormwater management program, serving southwest Brunswick County, including the Towns of Sunset Beach and Calabash, will be of significant benefit to both the environment and the people in the area which it serves."

Of the SBTA mailing it concludes, "The Letter states that the SBTA does not oppose a central sewer system. Their actions say otherwise. The fact is, the SBTA clearly does oppose a central sewer system and is willing to go to any lengths, including distorting the truth, to stop the project."

Both the SBTA board and the South Brunswick Water and Sewer Authority have called for public comment on the DEM "Finding of No Significant Impact."

Comments to be considered must be received by Nov. 28 at this address: Mrs. Chrys Baggett, Director, North Carolina State Clearinghouse, 116 West Jones St., Raleigh NC 27603-8003. Letters should include a reference to the SBWSA project number 95EA3000268.

Panel Votes Down New Bird Island Protection

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break a tie. Molly Fearing was absent and there is one vacant seat on the commission.

"If the public wants to preserve this land, they need to cough up the money to buy this land," said Thornton.

Ducker said the CRC vote was not detrimental to the society's preservation effort, but was "not good for momentum."

The nomination process did get on record the CRC's assessment that Bird Island qualifies as a coastal complex AEC because of its natural and aesthetic values, he said. "Hopefully the staff will utilize that when considering permits for the bridge or for any future development that might occur on the island."

It was the second time the commission voted to override a staff recommendation relating to Bird Island

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—CRC Member Timothy Thornton

and the AEC nomination.

Staff to the CRC, the N.C. Division of Coastal Management, this summer first recommended taking no action on the nomination, but the commission overrode that proposal.

Following a detailed study ordered by the CRC, the staff's new recommendation was to award the new AEC designation and to adopt use standards that would allow low-density development and provide additional protection to natural and aesthetic values such as rare species and wetland and upland habitat. Examples include lighting design to reduce impact on nesting sea turtles

and restrictions on introduction of non-native plant species.

The recommended overall management strategy would have been "to safeguard its biological relationships and aesthetic qualities". Developers would have been required to show how they would protect certain plant and animal life.

The CRC vote was one of two actions at last week's meeting that benefitted Bird Island's owner.

Another CRC committee, on implementation & standards, informally interpreted a rule favorable to development of Bird Island. The N.C. Coastal Federation had pointed out to the CRC that its inlet hazard area designation does not allow structures with a "total floor area" larger than 5,000 square feet, and asked if a bridge were considered a structure.

Several environmental organizations had hoped the requirement could be used to block issuance of a permit for a concrete bridge across Mad Inlet to Bird Island.

The committee interpreted the

reference as applying only to enclosed structures, not to bridges or roads.

The CRC's Friday session was cut short by a voluntary evacuation of Bogue Banks because of Tropical Storm Gordon, said staff spokesman Alison Davis, and commission did not get to vote on the committee's interpretation.

Based on the interpretation staff plans to go ahead and issue permits for two projects within inlet hazard areas. One is for a road to serve a house built in an inlet hazard area, and the other for Dunescape subdivision on the east end of Holden Beach.

"The question was raised regarding Bird Island but we had these other two similar permit cases pending where the review was completed and the clock was ticking," said Davis.

The commission delayed hearing several variance requests until its January meeting, including one by David Hill of Ocean Isle Beach. He wants to screen in a porch that lies within a hazard area.

At that meeting the CRC could decide to proceed with a major rewrite of its sandbag ordinance following a public hearing last Thursday at which 10 people spoke. Most raised objections to specific points, such as limits on how long a sandbag structure could be maintained and allowing only one sandbagging permit for the life of the property.

Thanksgiving Temperatures Expected To Feel Like Fall

After several weeks of warmer than usual weather, temperatures are expected to swing a little below average over the next few days across the South Brunswick Islands.

Temperatures will probably average from the mid-40s at night into the lower 60s during the daytime, with typical rainfall, about one-half inch, Shallotte Point meteorologist Jackson Canady said Tuesday.

For the period Nov. 15-20; he

recorded a high of 78 degrees on Nov. 15 and a low of 48 degrees on Nov. 20.

The daily average temperature was 64 degrees, or 10 degrees above average. It was based on a daily average high of 72 degrees and a nightly average low of 57 degrees.

Canady recorded one and two-thirds of an inch of rainfall, which is above average.

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