

OUR TOWN

Bald Head Island

The Bald Head village council will be asked to set specific guidelines for benefit zone assessment to pay for beach renourishment in the regular monthly session on Saturday.

The recently completed beach renourishment is to be financed in part by money from the village. The present tax levy will account for \$150,000 of the village share but the remainder will be raised by assessment of near-beach sites benefiting most from the refurbished beach.

The council has already decided to assess on the basis of land valuation, because land is threatened while houses can move, and to use the ten-year and 25-year erosion projections as boundaries of the benefit zones.

But erosion zones follow engineers' marks, not property lines, and on Saturday village manager Wallace Martin will be seeking guidance on how to determine in which zone a two-zone property lies.

Assessment will follow receipt of the final bill from the U. S. Corps of Engineers, probably in March.

The council is also expected to authorize advertising for bids on the proposed town hall.

Meetings in the new public safety building, Muscadine Wynd at Edward Teach, start with the Bald Head Association board work session at 8:30 a.m., followed by the board business session at 9:30 a.m. and the village council session at 10:30 a.m.

Southport

More changes to the city's utility policy may be in the works, but they likely won't be discussed when aldermen meet in regular session Thursday night.

City manager Rob Hites said Monday that board members are likely to conduct a special meeting on the matter of utility charges. An originally published agenda suggested finance officer Sylvia Butterworth would discuss the subject along with nine other items of business Thursday.

It seems auditors reported the number of delinquent utility customers has about tripled since aldermen raised re-connect fees from \$10 to \$20. Aldermen anticipated just the opposite reaction. Renters are also skipping town at break-neck speed, leaving the city holding the bag for water, sewer, electric and garbage services. No date for a special meeting has been set.

Aldermen are expected to conduct yet another "retreat" session next Monday night at City Hall. The board has already devoted about 11 retreat hours to initial budget discussions.

Hites said the Monday night session will be devoted to goal-setting. Aldermen have discussed personnel and service needs and cost-shaving possibilities in two prior sessions.

Caswell Beach

A possible zoning ordinance revision will be the subject of a 5 p.m. public hearing when Caswell Beach commissioners convene in regular monthly session Thursday.

Presently, the zoning ordinance requires all structures in a planned unit development (PUD) to be built at least 35 feet from any adjoining property line. In PUDs there are no lot lines, so setbacks in areas zoned for PUD development are measured from golf course property, Carolina Power & Light Co. property and the CP&L canal. Under the terms of the amendment, construction in a PUD could be allowed 25 feet from a property line if: the structure is a residential unit similar in height to a single-family residential unit; or, if the adjoining parcel will never be "inhabited" by other residential zoning units, as in instances where property may adjoin marshes, the golf course or the CP&L canal.

A second public hearing will be conducted immediately following on a preliminary site plan submitted by developers of OceanGreens subdivision.

In other business to be brought before commissioners, board members will be asked to rule on proposed driveway development permits to be included in the town's building code.

Commissioner Bill Boyd is expected to report on new public health requirements relative to the town's water system. A new state regulation mandates the town must now test quarterly for the presence of trihalomethanes (TMH) in the municipal delivery system. A budget amendment to cover the estimated \$160-per-year cost of testing will be presented.

Long Beach

With their seemingly insatiable appetites for public forums and things political, Long Beach voters will be in Seventh Heaven. Just look at this line-up of public meetings and happenings on tap in the next six weeks.

•Tuesday, February 18, commissioners will conduct their regular monthly meeting. The meeting begins at 7 p.m. with a half-hour public input session, followed at 7:30 by commissioners' business session.

•Wednesday, February 19, commissioners will conduct yet another workshop devoted to discussion of possible sewer construction.

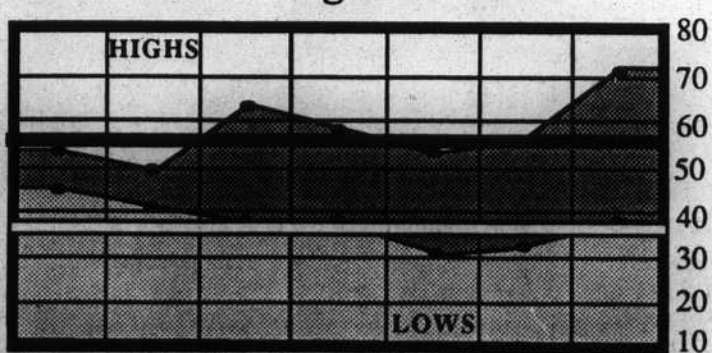
•Monday, March 2, commissioners will unveil completed plans for construction and finance of a sewer system. As one put it, this will be the proposal commissioners will suggest, if voters opt to finance a sewer system.

•Wednesday, March 4, commissioners and the public will meet with soil scientists from the N. C. Cooperative Extension Service to discuss soil suitability for septic systems.

And, next month will culminate with the all-important \$15.5-million bond referendum to finance sewer construction.

Captain Mark Sharpe of the Long Beach Police Department this week completed the course leading to his certification as a firearms instructor.

Past week's highs & lows



Data courtesy of Foxy Howard

Graph by Debi McKellar



The Oak Island strand is a wonderful spot for a contemplative stroll these days -- plenty of fresh air, plenty of sunshine, plenty of solitude. It is for many the preferred time of the year to enjoy the beaches throughout the community.

Monitoring is not town function

Beach septic tank status aired

By Ed Harper
Pilot Editor

Concern about the status of existing septic systems was echoed in the public comment section of Thursday's workshop on a proposed Long Beach wastewater management plan.

About 25 people attended Thursday's session, held in a smaller recreation center room because of a conflicting aerobics class. The first 30 minutes was devoted to public input, the remainder to assessments and fees that will be formally presented to voters in a March 31 referendum. The proposed rates should be finalized by the end of this month, commissioners have said.

One spectator said the Town of Long Beach "has been remiss in checking on septic tanks," and said she felt some plan should have been formulated to ensure their proper maintenance. "Maybe it is too late," she said.

Mayor Joan Altman said septic tank regulation is a function of the Brunswick County Health Department. Commissioner Bill Easley later said the health department "won't come down and check" to see if a septic tank is working properly; the health department function, he said, is to issue a permit for repair if a septic tank is reported defective.

Spectator Bob Miller told commissioners he has been asking for a study that shows specifically that Long Beach needs a central sewer system. He said he has only been told about septic tank failures.

"Where are they?" asked Miller, who said he would think the room would be full of people clamoring for a sewer system if septic tank failures were widespread.

"Show us a list of people who can't live in their homes because their systems are no good," he told the town board.

In other comments Thursday night, Harold Watson said the grinder pump system proposed by consulting engineer Finley Boney may end up costing more than a gravity system he said would cost \$3.5 million more initially.

Mayor Altman said the board has asked for a cost estimate over the life of the systems and still is studying its options. Easley said the other system cited by Watson would use a combination of pumps and gravity-feed.

Mayor Altman said the wastewater treatment plant to be located across the Intracoastal Waterway has been designed for the needs of Long Beach but the plant could accommodate other users. She said that decision would rest with the board of commissioners but expected users would be "charged a premium" to tap onto the town's system.

The mayor said purchase of the off-island site and all engineering costs have been figured in the \$15.2-million price tag of the wastewater management project.

Mayor Altman also responded to an inquiry about septic tanks, saying that unused tanks would have to be left "in a safe condition" but residents likely would not be required to fill them with dirt nor remove them.

Easley said the Town of Long Beach will have development with or without a wastewater management system and urged residents to "look down the road." He said the town's water is being pumped from elsewhere onto the island and therefore the water table will rise over the years, thus increasing the potential for problems.

Spectator Lou Erway responded "with facts" about what can be built on properties in Long Beach. Commissioner Jeff Ensminger said Erway cannot legitimately "take one paragraph and tell people these are the facts."

The next wastewater management workshop will be held Wednesday, February 19, at 7 p.m. A soil scientist from the N. C. Cooperative Extension Service will be available to meet with the town board in early March.

SEPTIC TANKS: Early installations faulty? p. 1
FEES, ASSESSMENTS: Pay now or pay later. p. 6

Yaupon meets on sewer plan

By Richard Nubel
Municipal Editor

Yaupon Beach utility customers may be able to enjoy a monthly sewer charge as low as the one projected in Long Beach, a consulting engineer told town commissioners Monday night.

Finley Boney, of Boney and Associates of Raleigh, serves as consulting engineer to both towns. He has been successful in securing 3.57-percent financing for the project in Yaupon Beach, obviating the need for the sale of general obligation bonds to build a wastewater collection, treatment and disposal system. The loan will be paid by user costs, tap fees and assessments.

In Long Beach, Boney has proposed a \$15.5-million bond sale, but expects to get some \$9 million in low-interest loans and raise most of the rest of the cost of the system through tap fees, assessments and impact fees.

But what Boney has been able to do in Long Beach -- project an average \$16-per-month user fee -- he has not been able to guarantee Yaupon Beach. The projected average monthly user fee in Yaupon Beach has been quoted consistently at \$28 per month.

That was until Monday night.

The impact fee, absent from prior proposals for Yaupon Beach, has now been factored in by the engineer.

"We cannot charge them \$16 per month, unless ... we charge an impact fee," Boney told commissioners. "You've got to establish a tap fee and an impact fee."

Impact fees are those fees charged individuals who develop their property after the public wastewater management system is brought on line. In Long Beach, commissioners last week decided to charge a graduated schedule of tap fees and a \$2,000 impact fee for development before an initial assessment role is published.

"Boney Monday night suggested

Yaupon Beach commissioners charge a \$3,000 impact fee for all new construction. He said the impact fee was justifiable as the sewer system would "make undevelopable lots developable."

Under the terms of a revised finance plan presented commissioners by Boney, the 600 presently available sewer customers in Yaupon Beach would be charged \$16 per month in use charges, raising just over \$115,000 a year.

Figuring four-percent growth per year, Boney said, 25 new houses would be built annually, providing

not only \$8,750 in tap fees but an additional \$75,000 in annual impact fees. At two-percent growth per year, 12 new homes would provide \$4,200 in tap fees and \$37,500 in annual impact fees.

Boney said the town could expect to receive about 20 percent of all assessments in the first year the system is in operation, though the town will likely allow customers to finance assessments over a specified period of years. The engineer has recommended the finance period not exceed three years, although state law will permit the town to finance utility assessments for up to ten years.

Commissioners appeared wary of Boney's growth projections. New building starts have averaged only four to six units for most of the last several years.

But, the sewer system might make Yaupon Beach a better host for construction interests, the engineer said.

"It might spur greater development," Boney said. "In Shallotte it spurred greater development."

Commissioners have scheduled workshops on sewer system development for February 17-18.

In a related item of business, commissioners received a revised appraisal of land on which they hope to build the sewer system's wastewater treatment plant. The board authorized Boney to proceed to secure the parcel, which lies off Fish Factory Road on the mainland.

'Ski the Centennial Center'

If you can't get to the mountains, at least you can pretend on Saturday, February 15, when the Brunswick Concert and Theatrical Society hosts "Ski the Centennial Center" at the corner of North Lord and Eighth streets in Southport.

Tickets for the event, which will raise money to heat and air-condition the center, are \$7 per person or \$12 per couple. The price includes music by DJ Teresa Robbins, snacks and two varieties of hot punch. The party will get underway at 7:30 p.m.

Although not a requirement for admission, those who wear their skiwear will be eligible to participate in a ski costume contest. Prizes will be awarded for the best original ski outfit and best ski couple, among others. Door prizes also will be awarded.

Travel agents will be on hand to discuss ski destinations and make arrangements for ski trips. Ski shop owners will be available to discuss equipment needs.

Tickets can be purchased at Klein Paints and from any board member, or by calling Curt Little at 457-0743 or Mary Campbell at 278-3371.