

Compromise is considered New read on billboard ban

By Terry Pope
County Editor

All sides seem at ease with an amendment to the billboard ordinance which may increase the spacing of signs along major county thoroughfares. A proposal will be presented to the Brunswick County Planning Board on December 20 that recommends billboards be allowed every 3,000 feet rather than the current 1,500-foot spacing requirement.

The Brunswick County Board of Commissioners issued a second 90-day moratorium on all billboard permits Monday until the issue may be resolved by the February commission meeting.

An ad hoc committee recommendation must first be accepted by the planning board and then forwarded to commissioners for public hearing. At first glance, county planners suggested a 5,000-foot limitation on further billboards to prevent congestion along county roadways, especially along U. S. 17 south.

But county planning director Wade Horne said a 3,000-foot space restriction represents a compromise that all parties seem to accept. Only one person spoke at a public hearing held Monday to legally extend the moratorium, which has been in place since August 8.

"I think it's the consensus of all people in the billboard industry to work along the lines of what commissioners deem fit," said Ed Scherer of Fairway Sign Co.

His company was one caught in the middle when the moratorium was enacted 90 days ago. Fairway Co. has had applications on file for new billboards since the end of June. In order to erect a billboard, permit applications must be approved by the Brunswick County Board of Adjustments, as

a special use.

Companies pay a \$75 permit fee for each application. Scherer said his permits were placed on hold for six to eight weeks even before the moratorium was approved by a 4-1 vote. District 3 county commissioner Leslie Collier of Long Beach voted against the measure at first, but what she heard Monday convinced her to change her mind.

"After public comment, I'm going to vote with you all this time," she told the board.

Horne said the committee has written three drafts of the new ordinance. Serving on the panel are county planners, two citizens at-large and representatives from the billboard industry. County zoning administrator Judy Russell is overseeing the entire process.

"What the committee has come up with is definitely easier to read than what we had before," said Horne. "If nothing else, it has been improved in that aspect."

The committee was intense with its work, but 90 days slipped by quickly, Horne said. County attorney Mike Ramos advised an extension of the moratorium should be handled like an amendment to the ordinance, with a second reading and new public hearing held to give the public a chance to comment. But few people did.

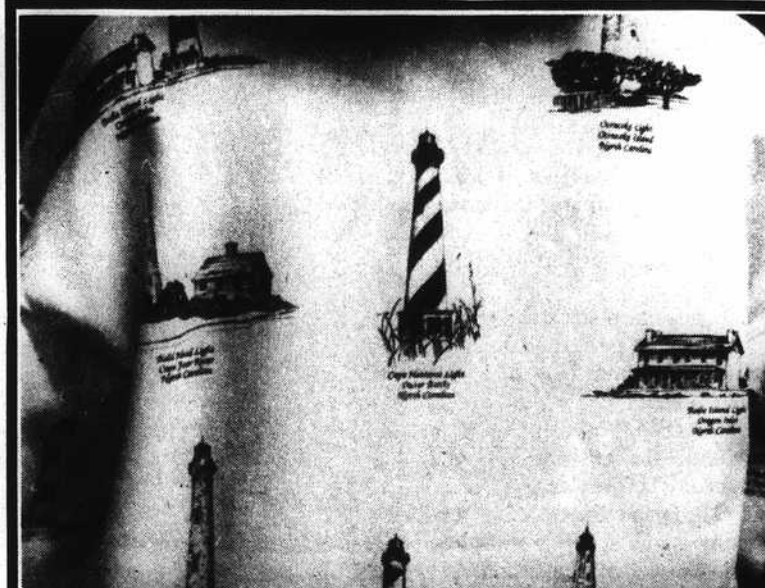
"Assuming it goes through at the planning board, it could be back as early as January to the commission, with adoption in February," said Horne.

Horne said there is concern that too many billboards pose a safety hazard for drivers when they are spaced closely together. Some counties have adopted 5,000-foot limitations, but the committee felt that was too restrictive. The requirement will apply to all major thoroughfares in the county - U. S. 17, U. S. 74/76, N. C. 133, N. C. 87 and N. C. 211.

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Citizens' help applauded 'Street-level dealers' take the heat in sting

By Terry Pope
County Editor

In the summer heat, undercover officers purchased drugs from unsuspecting dealers on the streets of Brunswick County.

Several months later, those suspects are facing charges from conspiracy to sale and delivery of cocaine in neighborhoods that reach from Longwood to Phoenix.

Detectives at the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department began their round-up of the 25 suspects last Thursday.

By Monday afternoon, 15 had been arrested on warrants or were being held in custody on other charges. The search for ten others continued as officers hope to pull the shade on Summer Heat.

"It went very well," said narcotics detective Billy Hughes. "We appreciate the help from the community. They're the ones that came forward and told us where to go."

Concerned residents who want to see drug dealers removed from their streets and neighborhoods are stepping forward with complaints to sheriff Ronald Hewett and his narcotics unit. The recent arrests stem from two months of drug purchasing by undercover detectives at work with the Leland Police Department, North Carolina Alcohol Law Enforcement, sheriff's department, Shallotte Police Department and State Bureau of Investigation.

"It was a cooperative effort aimed at street-level dealers," said sheriff Hewett. "We were able to buy quantities of drugs from individuals."

Street dealers sold "rocks" of

crack cocaine and marijuana to officers. At the same time, a tri-county task force is seeking federal indictments against the larger dealers, hoping some defendants will receive stiffer sentences on federal charges.

"There are different tiers of our drug investigation," said Hewett. "We have gone after the street-level dealers, and we have run a reverse where we go after the customers. The reasoning behind this is both from a supply and a demand standpoint. We must be at the forefront when it comes to the intervention and we must aid in the removal of drugs from our community."

Hewett served as DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) officer in the Brunswick County schools before he was elected sheriff last November. While some may question the effectiveness of hammering away at street-level dealers, many of whom are repeat offenders, Hewett said it must remain part of his department's training and teaching -- strong drug interdiction is a message he wants to convey.

"Working with both federal and state authorities," said Hewett, "we get people from the bottom of the food chain to the top of the food chain. The calls from our citizens have been heard. The arrests Thursday night was the result of citizen complaints we have received. We're going to need that continued public support to be effective. This is not a Brunswick County Sheriff's Department problem. It is a county problem, and we all must work together on it to make a difference."

Arrested so far from Operation Summer Heat were:

■ Gregory Ballard, 26, Rt. 5, Box 56, Leland; possession with intent to sell and deliver cocaine.

■ Marshall Donnell (Radford) Ballard, Rt. 1, Box 234, Leland; possession with intent to sell and deliver cocaine.

■ Reginald Royce Ballard, 39, Lot 5, Oak Crest Mobile Home Park, Leland; possession with intent to sell and deliver cocaine.

■ Larry Darnell Hooper, 33, Rt. 1, Box 382, Leland; possession with intent to sell and deliver cocaine.

■ Greglin Bennett White, 41, Rt. 4, Box 39, Navassa; two counts possession with intent to sell and deliver cocaine.

■ David Carl Marlowe, 34, Rt. 1, Box 134A, Ash; possession with intent to sell and deliver cocaine.

■ Adolph Holmes Jr., 29, 601 Mulberry Street, Shallotte; possession with intent to sell and deliver cocaine.

■ Gregory Anthony Hill, 25, 1046 Hale Swamp Road, Shallotte; two counts possession with intent to sell and deliver cocaine.

■ Gregory Duard Hewett, 35, 5041 Main Street, Shallotte; two counts possession with intent to sell and deliver marijuana.

■ Elizabeth Marie Bradshaw, 17, 90 Elm Street, Boiling Spring Lakes; possession with intent to sell and deliver marijuana.

■ Willie Malcom Butler, 34, 2135 Pine Needle Lane, Longwood; conspiracy to sell and deliver cocaine.

■ Bruce James Daniels, 34, 1569 Longwood Road, Longwood; possession with intent to sell and deliver cocaine.

Sales tax report

Collection of the local-option sales and use tax totaled \$1,172,528 in Brunswick County during the month of October, a report from the N. C. Department of Revenue indicates.

The amount will be added to November and December collections, to be distributed quarterly on a per-capita basis to Brunswick county and municipal governments.

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includes Transportation, minigolf, lunch			
MONDAY, DECEMBER 18			
Kids Crafts*	\$1	All Ages	9 a.m.
Christmas Storytime	\$0	Ages 3-7	10 a.m.
Games & More Games	\$0	Ages 8 & up	1 p.m.
Flag Football	\$0	Ages 10 & up	3 p.m.
Santa Comes Calling	\$0	Any who believes	6:30-8 p.m.
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 19			
Field Trip To Wilmington*#	\$15	Ages 8 & up	9-4 p.m.
includes transportation, games at Jungle Rapids & Lunch			
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20			
Cookie Monsters	\$1	Ages 3-7	9 a.m.
Games & More Games	\$0	Ages 8 & up	10 a.m.
Movie Time	\$0	Ages 3-7	10 a.m.
Cookie Monsters	\$1	Ages 8 & up	2 p.m.
Movie Time	\$0	Ages 8 & up	4:30 p.m.
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 21			
Mom's Day Out*#	\$7	Ages 3-5	9-3 p.m.
includes transportation, minigolf & lunch			
Bring a Favorite Board Game	\$0	Ages 6 & up	9:30 a.m.
Pillo Polo	\$0	Ages 10 & up	1:30 p.m.
3-on-3 Basketball*	\$0	Ages 10 & up	3 p.m.
Kids Crafts*	\$1	All Ages	6 p.m.
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