

# Mobile Home Families: Are They Good Neighbors?

A stick of potential dynamite may soon be lighted in the North Carolina General Assembly, one that will send planning boards and town commissioners all over Brunswick County right straight into orbit.

Having squeaked past Sen. R.C. Soles judiciary committee by virtue of his affirmative vote, a bill to outlaw discrimination against mobile homes is now in a finance committee, headed for the Senate.

Simply put, the bill says manufactured housing must be allowed in every single-family residential area in the state.

In other words, there goes the neighborhood! That's the dismayed reaction of many homeowners. Their vision is that of a tacky shoe-box of a trailer moving next door to a \$65,000 brick home, the exposed undersides of the trailer a haven for rusty appliances, broken toys, and trash.

Aside from aesthetics, these panic-stricken owners of "fine" homes see their property value plummeting with single- and double-wides as neighbors.

And officials in beach towns have still another kind of headache. "Most of those mobile homes are pretty flammable, and if one catches on fire, it burns quickly," one commissioner observed, "and on the beach, houses are so close together, that's really dangerous."

It's easy to commiserate with people concerned about the appearance, value and safety of their neighborhood. Being human, we all worry more about our environment than we do about unfair treatment of the manufactured housing industry.

However, before hysteria sets in, it would be well to take a careful look at Sen. Plyler's bill and at today's mobile homes.

Just for starters, the manufactured house, always a boon to the lower-income family, is now about the only housing affordable by the young and the elderly. At half the price of a modest "stick-built" house, a widow on fixed income, or newlyweds working for minimum wage, can have their own home, the American dream.

In respect to the appearance of these homes, the picture has changed considerably. Peaked roofs, bay windows, built-on porches, and flower gardens are among the features adorning many of today's manufactured houses, both single and double.

Increasingly, manufacturers are adding decorative touches to that stark rectangle, and exterior covering resembles more and more that of many site-built homes. Lap siding of wood or aluminum is more attractive than the flimsy aluminum panels covering early trailers.

Interiors are, of course, practically indistinguishable from those of the finest houses, but we're talking outside appearance right now. And, with brick underpinning, that appearance, in recently-built mobile homes, is a vast improvement over the stereotypical trailer.

Safety factors have improved, too. Whereas once, thin wood paneling covered interior walls, now dry gypsum, similar to sheetrock is required. The modern manufactured house burns no faster than any other.

Mobile homes must meet federal HUD safety regulations, while modular homes (the largest models, with corner bracing) conform to state building codes.

Now, let's take a look at the proposed legislation. While it says a county or town can't specify in zoning laws that manufactured houses cannot be located anywhere single-family residences are allowed, it does allow for some requirements.

Listen closely, planners: You can, to begin with, require the removal of hitchhikes, wheels and axles. In addition, you can require a minimum square-footage of heated space and certain exterior dimensions, and establish criteria for appearance (such as particular kinds of roofing materials).

Sen. Soles declared, "If municipalities study this carefully, they can find a way to control where mobile homes are placed." Single-wides, at least, could be ruled out, he said.

The League of Municipalities, however, opposes the

legislation simply because municipalities are not in the driver's seat.

They believe the bill overrides local zoning authority, something state legislators should not take from local government.

Attorneys for the League say that, instead, towns should be encouraged to re-examine their zoning ordinances and allow more flexible placement of manufactured houses. The prerogative for change should lie with towns, not the General Assembly.

There are reasons, then, to both defend and attack Senate Bill 306, and its accompanying House Bill 507, but no reason for despair.

In fairness to the housing industry, any home meeting state as well as federal building codes should have equal access to any part of town. The key words here are "as well as;" all manufactured housing except modular is presently exempt from meeting state codes, some of which are more stringent than those of HUD.

In fairness to homeowners, they should have some assurance that their property will not be devalued by unattractive houses. Homes of similar value have tended to congregate in neighborhoods. Why should this practice not include the manufactured house?

The most telling point is the matter of jurisdiction. The closer to the people such an anti-discrimination decision is, the more sound it's apt to be, and the more readily accepted.

State legislators should probably leave this one to county commissioners, or even better, to the municipalities. We don't need anymore inroads on local government.

However, the consciences of town commissioners should be heavily pricked to take another look at today's manufactured housing. They should include in our communities to a greater extent those families whose houses were built in factories.

Such families can make mighty good neighbors.

## Opinion Page

### THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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Page 4-A Thursday, April 23, 1987

## Calendar Of Events

### Thursday, April 23

A PROGRAM ON RECREATIONAL FISHING is offered at the West Brunswick Branch Library, Shallotte, 1 p.m.  
GAME NIGHT at the American Legion Post one mile south of Shallotte, U.S. 17, 7:30 p.m.

### Friday, April 24

A FREE BLOOD PRESSURE CLINIC will be held by the Brunswick Hospital at the Ocean Isle branch of United Carolina Bank, 10 a.m.-12 noon.  
PRESCHOOL STORY TIME will be held at the Leland Branch Library, 10 a.m.-10:45 a.m., 11 a.m.-11:45 a.m.  
BOWHUNTERS interested in forming a county bowhunters and archery club meet at Margie's Homestyle Restaurant, Shallotte, 7:30 p.m. For more information call Ricky Holden or Larry Oxendine.  
GAME NIGHT at the Shallotte Point Volunteer Fire Department, will be held at a new time beginning this week, 8 p.m.  
SHALLOTTE ALANON FAMILY GROUP meets at Camp United Methodist Church, 8 p.m. This is a support group for families of alcoholics.  
CLOSED MEETING of Alcoholics Anonymous for individuals who have a problem with alcohol, AA Building, Grissetown, 8 p.m.  
SHALLOTTE WHEEL AND DEALERS Square Dance Club dances each Friday at the American Legion Hut south of Shallotte, 8 p.m. Public welcome.  
GAME NIGHT at the Sunset Beach Volunteer Fire Department, 8 p.m.

### Saturday, April 25

CALABASH VOLUNTEER RESCUE SQUAD THRIFT SHOP, beside the squad building on N.C. 179, will be open, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.  
DEADLINE IS TODAY for entering the Teen and Junior Miss Brunswick County Pageants (ages 9-16). For more information contact Dinia Woodard or Karen Moshoures.  
GAME NIGHT will be held at the Calabash Volunteer Fire Department, 8 p.m.

### Sunday, April 26

OPEN MEETING by Alcoholics Anonymous at the AA Building, Grissetown, 8 p.m.

### Monday, April 27

UTILITY OPERATIONS BOARD meets to discuss special assessment water districts, conference room, Planning and Resources Building, Brunswick County Government Center, 3:30 p.m.  
BRUNSWICK COUNTY BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES meets in the social services department, Brunswick County Government Center, 5:30 p.m.  
OPEN MEETING by the Holden Beach Property Owners Association on the referendum on two-year terms for town commissioners, at the Holden Beach Town Hall, 7:30 p.m.  
CALABASH VFW LADIES AUXILIARY meets at Ella's Restaurant, Calabash, 7:30 p.m.  
CLOSED MEETING for individuals who have a problem with alcohol, Alcoholics Anonymous Building, Grissetown, 8 p.m.

### Tuesday, April 28

PRESCHOOL STORY TIME, West Brunswick Branch Library, Shallotte, 10 a.m.-10:45 a.m., 11 a.m.-11:45 a.m.  
A BIKE PROGRAM for youngsters ages 8 to 13 will be held at the West Brunswick Branch Library, Shallotte, 3:30 p.m.-5 p.m.  
PILOT CLUB of the South Brunswick Islands meets in the Brunswick Electric Membership Corp. community room, 6:30 p.m.

### Wednesday, April 29

BRUNSWICK TOASTMASTERS meet at the Ship's Chandler in Southport, 7 a.m.-8 a.m. Guests welcome. Call 754-5082 evenings and weekends for more information.  
PRESCHOOL STORYTIME is offered at the main library in Southport, 10 a.m.-10:45 a.m., 11 a.m.-11:45 a.m.  
A BIKE PROGRAM for youngsters ages 8-13 will be held at the main library, Southport, 3:30 p.m.-5 p.m.  
CLOSED MEETING for individuals who have a problem with alcohol, at the Alcoholics Anonymous Building, Grissetown, 8 p.m.

## Everybody Was A Winner At Special Olympics

Everyone who attended the Brunswick County Special Olympics last Friday left those events with something extra.

That something extra was the inspiration that comes from seeing courage and determination in the form of about 600 special education students from throughout the county.

The students had come from different schools in the county to compete for trophies in track, ball throw and long jump events. But to these special participants the events meant more than just winning a trophy.

They gave the participants a chance to believe in themselves, and to accomplish what most of us take for granted.

For instance, I saw children's



Etta Smith

faces covered with laughter—brought on by that special joy felt when you've accomplished something important.

And there were faces that symbolized courage, worn by participants in the track events. Some of those participants rolled across the finish line in wheelchairs, but not an inkling of doubt in themselves was evident.

One young boy was particularly touching. After he completed the long jump he yelled, "I did it, I jumped!"

Another little boy who won a ribbon in the ball-throwing event asked me, "See my ribbon? See how far I threw that ball?"

And then there were the other winners in the crowd—they too had smiles on their faces.

They were the many volunteers busy coordinating the different events. Many of them are teenagers who attend local high schools.

Standing at the finish line preparing to photograph a race, I was moved by those young men and women. They were obviously excited to be a part of this extraordinary event.

There were the special education teachers who cheered and jumped up

and down with excitement after one of their students won in an event. They were winners, too.

The enthusiasm shared by everybody who attended was only one of the prizes we took home. We also took with us a lesson in what courage and determination can accomplish.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Zoning Is Vital To Survival

To the editor:

We are indeed fortunate to have a man of the caliber of (Brunswick County Commissioner) Jim Poole to represent those of us who understand the need and value of zoning. The obvious deterioration of parts of our county can only spread and worsen in the absence of some form of sensible regulation and land use.

Anyone who has lived in a zoned community and compares it to an unzoned one can readily see the value of zoning. A study to develop a sensible, resident-friendly zoning ordinance is vital to the survival and protection of our community.

It will take courage, commitment and salesmanship to effect a workable ordinance.

For the sake of our children it must be done. The commissioners must bite the bullet and tackle this problem before it is too late. Zoning, coupled with a bottle/deposit law will help effect the miracle needed to clean up and ensure a brighter environment for all of us.

R. C. Kochersberger  
Sunset Beach

## Take Back Your Trash

### BY FILL FAVER

An early morning walk along the waterway reveals all kinds of debris and refuse. Bits of lumber scraps, foam cups, plastic bottles, drink cans, floats, wire, mismatched socks, insulation, and more adorn the fringes of the mudflats and marshes.

Some decorate the shrubs, left high by the syzygy tides or wake from a passing boat. The high tide line along the beaches reveals much of the same discards—symbols of our way of life.

High tide does its cleanup of the waters by depositing these floating pieces of trash back up on the land. It's almost as if the waters said, "No thanks! Take it back! Take back your trash!" The higher the tide, the farther up on land it goes. In marshes, where elevation differences of only a few inches may cover a wide area, trash can be strewn for many yards from the deeper water itself.

Most of the trash, of course, comes from careless or uncaring boaters, fishermen, and strollers who find it easier to throw their used bottles and cans and lunch wrappings in the water than to deposit them in a plastic

bag to take back for disposal. Some of the trash comes from storms and accidents where trash gets in the water by mistake. Some of it comes from ocean liners that dump their trash and garbage in the ocean out past the jurisdictional limits of regulations.

Americans are not the only offenders, of course. We find trash in many parts of the world. But too often what we find is tied to an attitude similar to ours. Several years ago, I was in Beirut with a group and we were visiting one of the beautiful white sand beaches on the Mediterranean. Trash was everywhere along the high tide line. A lady in our group asked the guide, "Why do these people throw their trash on the beach? Don't they have any pride?"

The answer was an embarrassing one: "They don't throw trash on the beach. This trash comes from garbage dumped by cruise ships like yours carrying rich Americans and Europeans on holiday!"

What are our excuses? No doubt many of the same folk who throw trash from their cars also feel it is "natural" to get rid of their refuse in the streams and marshes. The vastness of the ocean makes it seem like a good dumping ground. But we can see at each high tide that the ocean is telling us to take it back! Do something else with it! Take back your trash!

## Artificial Seaweed: Does It Help Or Hurt?

Nothing can stop the ocean from devouring the shoreline. But over the last few years, artificial seaweed has been touted as a viable option for erosion control.

Yet coastal experts continue to question its effectiveness.

In theory, the long strips or tufts of fiber called "fronds" act as an underwater sand fence trapping sand and forming an offshore sandbar or reef. Dense, floating quantities of the seaweed resemble breakwaters that can cut the force of waves.

Since its inception in the early 1960's, artificial seaweed has taken root in North Carolina, other states and Europe.

One of the most widely publicized and acclaimed seaweed installation projects occurred at the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse in 1981.

A slow build-up of the beach prompted additional applications in an effort to ease severe erosion rates (20

to 24 feet each year since 1823) and the threat of losing the nation's tallest lighthouse.

The build-up also incited coastal scientists to take a closer look at the seaweed's effects.

Evidence correlating the seaweed and accretion was shallow.

Scientists concluded that the build-up was most likely due to the natural shoreline fluctuations.

Their tests, and tests throughout the United States and Europe, consistently have shown that artificial seaweed is ineffective in controlling shoreline erosion produced by waves, says Spencer Rogers, Sea Grant's coastal engineer.

Although some European products show potential in controlling tidal scour as around offshore oil platforms, their application to wave-induced erosion is entirely different, Roger says. Sea Grant has a publication for more information on artificial seaweed. For a copy of Ar-

tificial Seaweed for Shoreline Erosion Control? by Spencer Rogers, write Sea Grant, Box 8605, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC 27695-8605. The cost is \$1.

Sea Grant is a federal and state program that promotes the wise use of coastal and marine resources through research, education and extension.

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