

# Varnamtown Residents Learn More Details About Incorporation

BY DOUG RUTTER

About 40 residents of the Varnamtown community gathered Monday night to learn and form opinions about something which has been a hot topic of conversation in that area for several years.

Meeting for about 90 minutes at Gospel Center Baptist Church Fellowship Hall, residents received a general education concerning the advantages and disadvantages of incorporation as well as the procedure a community must follow to become a town.

Jake Wicker of the N.C. Institute of Government and State Rep. E. David Redwine provided general comments throughout the meeting, while also answering specific questions raised by members of the incorporation committee and residents.

Outlining the advantages of incorporation, Wicker said the ability of local government to respond to community needs is the major benefit all areas receive through incorporation.

Wicker, who has been with the Institute of Government for more than 30 years, said towns can do as little or as much as the people want. He said services commonly provided by incorporated areas include police and fire protection, garbage pickup, water and sewer and street maintenance.

In the area of disadvantages, he said taxes top the list. "If something is done," he joked, "there is a good possibility that somebody will have to pay for it."

He added that regulation of property and personal conduct can be both an advantage and disadvantage, depending on each individual situation.

Wicker said the only way the area could become incorporated would be through a special act of the N.C. General Assembly.

He said before approaching the state legislature, residents would first have to determine the name of the town, exact boundaries, interim town board members, how the governing board would operate and several other details contained in a model town charter he presented to the committee.

Redwine told committee leaders that he would need all pertinent information included on the town charter before the General Assembly reconvenes in mid-June if the area is to be incorporated this year.

Recounting previous experiences with areas considering incorporation, Redwine told those in attendance that he would require a referendum of voters in the proposed town limits before the area could become incorporated.

He said the vote would have to be arranged through the Brunswick County Board of Elections, either before or in conjunction with the general election in November.

Although committee member James Callan pointed out that the area's registered voters had already supported incorporation through a petition, Redwine said he would require a referendum.

"It may seem to be very repetitive, but I have found that people feel better about exercising their right to vote," he said. "Whatever I do, I want to make sure I'm following the wishes of you folks."

The result of a canvass of area voters earlier this year was 126 in favor of incorporation and 26 opposed.

One major topic of discussion Monday centered around the local governing board. As with any operations of a town, Wicker informed area residents that they could establish the governing body as they saw fit.

He said board members could be elected at large or from equally-populated districts or wards. Wicker also said the town could set up partisan or non-partisan elec-

tions and conduct them on a majority or plurality basis.

Redwine advised that the area would be better off paying for the services of the county board of elections rather than establishing a local board and conducting its own elections.

Committee member Marion Davis also reported Monday that he had been informed by the state Department of Transportation that it would continue to maintain all area roads that it is currently maintaining.

Wicker said towns are not required to take over any street, that it is up to the town board to decide what streets will be maintained. He added that the state must take care of all major roads leading into town or running through town.

In response to a question from area resident Terry Varnam, Redwine said any town with a population of at least 300 can hold a referendum to have an ABC store. This minimum population mark was reduced last year from 500.

Also Monday, committee member Callan provided an "uneducated guess" of between \$7 million and \$10 million for the tax base of the proposed town. He said his research of the area's tax base was 60 percent complete. A tax rate has yet not been discussed.

In response to several questions from audience members, Wicker said towns do not have to provide services such as fire and rescue or police. He added that municipalities are not required to develop land use plans, construct a town hall, purchase liability insurance or establish zoning restrictions.

Although the state does not require towns to provide any services, Wicker added that incorporated areas must maintain balanced budgets, follow proper accounting procedures and undergo an annual audit.

Referring to monthly reports which must be filed

with various state agencies, he said, "While a town is not required to do very much, they are required to do a lot if they do anything."

According to a map outlining the proposed area of incorporation, the southern border of the town would run along the northern property line of the newly-developed golf course community Lockwood Folly. On the east, the town would border the Lockwood Folly River.

The western border would primarily run along Stone Chimney Road (S.R. 1119) from the Stanbury Creek bridge south to the intersection with Sabbath Home Road (S.R. 1120). The proposed town limits also include about 16 lots west of Stone Chimney Road and south of Sabbath Home Road.

On the north, the proposed boundary runs along northern lot lines of properties located north of Varnumtown Road.

Answering a question of Terry Varnam Monday night, Ennis Swain, chairman of the incorporation committee, said the idea to exclude the subdivision Riverside II but include the neighboring Riverside I within the proposed boundary was approved at a previous public meeting. Both of these areas are located north of Varnumtown Road near the river.

Fellow committee member Roger Robinson added that the original proposed boundary had to be altered after learning that it was best to establish town limits along existing lot lines or natural borders.

In addition to those mentioned, John David Dawson also serves on the incorporation committee. The only action taken by residents Monday night was approval of Pam Galloway as secretary to the committee.

The next community meeting date was not determined.

## Weather To Be Warmer

The weather should be warming up a bit in the Shallotte area over the next few days, according to Shallotte Point meteorologist Jackson Canady.

Canady's weather outlook calls for temperatures to be above average, ranging from the mid 40s at night to the upper 60s during the day.

Rainfall is expected to be near normal at about one-half inch.

For the period of March 15 through 21, the average daily temperature was 47 degrees, which was seven degrees below normal, Canady said.

The average nightly low temperature was 33 degrees, and the average daily high temperature was 61 degrees.

The minimum low temperature was 23 degrees on March 16, and the maximum high temperature was 73 degrees on March 21.

Canady measured 1.13 inches of rainfall during the period.

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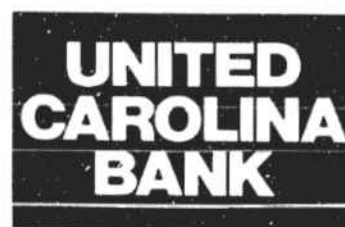
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