

# Shallotte Will Sign Contract For Bypass Utility Crossovers

BY DOUG RUTTER

Shallotte aldermen agreed last week to sign a state contract for construction of utility crossovers at two locations on the U.S. 17 bypass, but not without extended debate first.

Still in question is the town's role in funding utility expansion projects which may or may not prove beneficial to the town in the future.

Some board members argue that the future of Shallotte will depend to a large extent on its ability to supply water and sewer service to areas west of the bypass. Mayor Pro Tem Paul Wayne Reeves and Alderman Jody Simmons have both indicated their approval of a planning board recommendation that the town invest in several bypass crossovers in areas currently located well outside the town limits.

Reeves said last week that the cost of adding utility crossovers now is a lot less than the cost of construction once the bypass is completed.

Simmons added, "We are planning to grow and if we are going to grow we have to make provisions." Earlier, he had stated that a small investment by the town at this time could pay big dividends later, as businesses are not likely to locate near Shallotte if the town cannot provide water and sewer.

The board's three other members, however, have said they oppose funding projects outside the town limits which may never pay off.

Alderman David Gause asked last week that discussion of the matter be tabled until all board members were present. Wilton Harrelson, the member of the town board who most openly opposed additional crossovers when the matter was discussed in March, left last week's meeting prior to discussion of the issue.

While board members do not agree on provisions addressing future growth of the area, all agreed to the signing of the state contract, contingent on review and approval by the town attorney.

Under the contract, the N.C. Department of Transportation will include two town utility crossovers in bid specifications for construction of the bypass.

The town board requested a crossover at Smith Avenue and improvements to the work the state plans to do at Forest Drive. Aldermen also plan to request a crossover at N.C. 130 West before bids on that section of the bypass are accepted.

According to Water Supervisor Albert Hughes, the crossover at Smith Avenue will cost the town an estimated \$13,600, while increasing the size of water lines at Forest Drive from two inches to eight inches and the size of the bypass crossover from 6 inches to 12 inches will cost about \$5,900.

Reaffirming what he had reported earlier, Hughes advised the board it will have the right to reject bids on the project if it feels the cost is too high.

"Based upon what you all discuss-

## Shallotte Sets Agenda Deadline

Shallotte residents wishing to bring something before the town board of aldermen will now have to notify town hall at least five days prior to the upcoming meeting.

At the request of Alderman Jody Simmons, town board members last week decided to establish a noon Friday deadline for any items to be placed on the agenda of meetings for the following Wednesday. Emergency situations can still be added as needed.

Simmons said under the current system, where items are added until right before the 7:30 p.m. meeting time, the town board has to table a lot of matters because aldermen do not have adequate time to consider them. He said the deadline would allow board members to study the issues several days prior to meeting.

ed at the other meeting, this is what we want," said Hughes.

### Street Accepted

Aldermen also agreed to take over and maintain Bluff Drive from its point of intersection with Copas Road to the Shallotte River. First the board will require the state to make minor repairs on the street and slope the shoulders to allow the road to drain. The state previously maintained that portion of the road.

The board considered postponing acceptance of the street until repairs were completed, but decided to make a commitment to the state.

"They might not want to repair it if you ain't gonna take it," said Hughes, adding that DOT is willing to make the corrections.

### Offers Reviewed

Aldermen tabled action on construction of a town maintenance shed until offers from three local contractors can be reviewed.

The town budgeted \$30,000 this year for construction of a 100-foot by 40-foot metal building, which they have discussed locating near the water tower.

Aldermen received offers last week from Steve Mann Construction, Raysand Building Corporation and Rooks Construction Company.

Mayor Jerry Jones said all three offers were within a few dollars of one another, but he did not want to reveal the prices because the town may ask for more proposals in the future.

### Dump Truck Sought

Supervisor Hughes will pursue purchase of a dump truck for the town with a budget of \$4,200.

Referring to the relatively small amount of money allocated for the vehicle, Reeves told Hughes, "If it don't work, you bought it."

### Property Zoned

Following a public hearing,

aldermen zoned approximately 200 acres of property located along N.C. 130 West and Bridgers Road as requested by landowner John Ward and recommended by the planning board.

All acreage west of Bridgers Road and south of N.C. 130 West is zoned commercial. Land situated east of Bridgers Road and north of N.C. 130 West is zoned R-10 (residential), except for 1,000-foot strips along the northern edge of N.C. 130 West and the eastern edge of Bridgers Road, which are also commercial.

### Easement Sought

The town board postponed action on an easement sought by AT&T through sewer plant property on Forest Drive.

After hearing from Hughes that AT&T is willing to accept the easement free of charge or pay the town for the land, aldermen requested an offer from the communications company.

Hughes said AT&T needs the easement as soon as possible to construct an underground fiber optic cable line through the county. He added that the easement was requested at the northwest corner of the wastewater treatment plant property and is about 20 feet wide and 300 feet long.

While board members said they didn't want to delay construction, they indicated that the town should not turn down any amount of money if it is offered.

"Tell them to make us an offer," said Alderman Harrelson. "I learned a long time ago that you don't get nothing if you don't ask for it."

### Meter Demonstrated

Also last week, aldermen postponed action on a possible rental agreement for a postage meter and scale until board members can examine the proposal in detail.

During a 30-minute demonstration last week, Terrie Wade, area sales representative with Pitney Bowes of Wilmington, demonstrated the benefits of postal meters and scales and recommended that the town rent a system for about \$28 per month.

The meter prints the exact postage of the letter on the envelope, eliminating the need for stamps. A one-pound electronic scale included in the rental package weighs the mail and translates the measurement into the amount of postage required on the package.

The company leases or rents about 300 postal meters in the Shallotte area. Wade rental would save the town money and its employees the inconvenience of working with stamps and dealing with an overcrowded post office.

"Basically, what you have is a post office in your office," he said. "It won't let you waste money."

The Town of Shallotte mails out about 400 pieces of mail each month and has annual postage costs of about \$1,200.

### Other Business

In other business last week, aldermen:

- Set a public hearing for 7:30 p.m. May 18 at town hall concerning the



TERRIE WADE (standing) of Pitney Bowes demonstrates the benefits of a postal meter to Shallotte aldermen. Seated, from left, are Wilton Harrelson,

Jody Simmons, Mayor Jerry Jones and Mayor Pro Tem Paul Wayne Reeves.

STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

annexation request of Roy Mintz for his property located on N.C. 130 West across from Shallotte Manor. Mayor Jones said the land is about 600 feet by 800 feet and adjoins the U.S. 17 bypass.

•Tabled action on a request for water service outside of town pen-

ding the town attorney's review of applicable policies. Dr. Nora Hsu, who lives in a section of Briewood Estates not included in the corporate limits of Shallotte, requested the water service.

•Tabled action on the purchase of an additional fire truck. Proposals on

how the truck can be funded and financed are still being compiled by fire department officers.

•Released \$335 in town taxes to A.A. Utilities and \$93 to Billy Street. The town had mistakenly collected taxes from this company and individual earlier this year.



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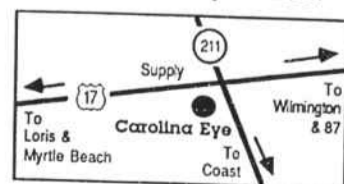
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