

# Holden Beach POA Supports Proposed Change In Town Charter

BY DOUG RUTTER

Holden Beach Commissioners anxious to amend the town charter and hire a town manager can count on support from the island's largest property owner group.

The Holden Beach Property Owners Association, which included 819 members as of Saturday, went on record this past weekend as supporting a proposed switch from the mayor/council to council/manager form of government. The organization includes both resident and non-resident property owners.

The issue will be decided in a referendum on May 2.

If a majority of town voters favors the change, a town manager would be hired, doing away with the less-powerful town administrator position. Gus Ulrich, who started as town administrator in January, would almost certainly become town manager.

During Saturday's general meeting of the POA, concerns of one member about citizens losing control of town affairs were quickly refuted by association executive secretary

and Commissioner Bob Buck, a major proponent of the proposed change since its introduction last fall.

Buck said the only major changes would be that a town manager can hire and fire town employees and would be responsible for administrative tasks now handled by commissioners. He said hiring a town manager will allow elected officials to concentrate on formulating policy.

Support from the general membership of the POA mirrored that of the board of directors, which voted unanimously in January to favor the proposed change.

Holden Beach Commissioners have also voiced strong support of the amendment. Although the board can change the town charter without a referendum, commissioners have said the people should decide such an important step in town history.

The referendum date, originally set for Feb. 7, has been delayed three times because of problems meeting election guidelines.

### Members Informed

The approximately 80 POA members who packed town hall Saturday were brought up to date on a number of town matters, including collection of the occupancy tax, town personnel changes and the ongoing underground utilities project.

Ulrich said aerial lines and poles in the first phase of the utility project, Ocean Boulevard between High Point and Rothschild streets, should be coming down within the next few weeks.

But that could be delayed by a number of homeowners who have still not converted the connection from their house to the pole to an underground cable. About 25 percent of the residents in the initial phase have yet to complete that work, said Ulrich.

The town administrator said that the \$50,000 allocated for the project in this year's budget should last through the fiscal year. Although property owners will be assessed for the work once it is completed, the town has collected about \$6,000 in up-front payments so far which will help keep the project moving.

Utility officials earlier projected that the island-wide project would

take about five years to complete, but Ulrich said Saturday he expects it to be closer to three years.

In another matter, the administrator reminded members that the first occupancy tax payment to the town is due no later than April 15. The three-percent tax levied on the rental of dwellings took effect March 1.

Ulrich stressed that property owners are ultimately responsible for collecting and remitting the tax to the town, even if their home is rented through an agency.

POA Members also heard from Commissioner Georgia Langley that the town board is basically waiting for the state Division of Health Services to proceed with its revision of septic tank laws before taking any more steps toward easing permitting problems at Holden Beach.

Also, Margaret Vasco, chairperson of the town beautification committee, talked about forthcoming improvements at the foot of the bridge and announced that the committee would start selecting a "yard of the month" in April.

### Membership Growth

The 819 property owners registered as members of the association Saturday set what was probably an all-time high, according to the executive secretary.

Buck said membership has increased by 131 since last fall and by

94 since last Easter.

He also reported that the POA fund balance as of Saturday was \$13,072. Since the last general meeting on Nov. 26, 1988, the association has received \$5,039 in revenue and spent \$1,501.

### Sticker Situation

The POA will ask the Holden Beach Board of Commissioners to keep town hall open four Saturday mornings per year to allow property owners to pick up vehicle windshield stickers.

The free stickers are needed to get back on the island following an emergency evacuation. Several members indicated Saturday that

they had trouble getting the stickers because town hall is not open weekends when they visit the beach.

The POA will ask that town hall be opened from 9 a.m. until noon on the Saturday before Easter, Memorial Day and Labor Day and the Saturday closest to the July 4th holiday.

### Booklet Coming Soon

An association booklet including information on planting beach grass should be in the hands of members sometime in May.

Buck told the crowd Saturday that he has not had as much time to work on the pamphlet as he had hoped, but expected to have a draft completed before the end of April.

## Holden Beach POA To Sell Lists Of Registered Voters

Candidates vying for a seat on the Holden Beach Board of Commissioners this fall will be able to find out exactly who has the right to vote and target their campaigns accordingly.

The Holden Beach Property Owners Association will sell lists of registered voters to candidates for a fee of \$5.

The POA board of directors decided Saturday to offer the lists during its one-hour meeting which preceded the general membership meeting.

POA Executive Secretary Bob Buck, who suggested that the lists be made available, was the only director to oppose the motion. He argued that the lists should be free to candidates.

Director Daphne Fournier said the POA should charge more than \$5 for the lists, but later voted in favor of the fee.

In other business Saturday, the board of directors approved the purchase of 500 sheets of association stationary and envelopes from a Shallotte printing company.

The board decided against buying a \$110 computer program which could produce the stationary. The supplies from the printing company will cost about \$114.

Buck said spending the few extra dollars would provide for better quality paper and individual sheets instead of continuous sheets produced by the computer printer.

Directors also voted to excuse the absence of board member Rev. Ralph Eanes of High Point who had to be with his congregation for Easter Sunday service.

## Farm Conservation Tillage Can Benefit Local Growers

Area farmers are ignoring a program that can both increase their yield and control soil erosion, according to a local conservation official.

Conservation tillage, which includes no-till and reduced tillage methods, is being ignored by many local growers, said Harold Jones, district conservationist with the Brunswick County Soil Conservation Service.

Jones said reducing tillage helps maintain water quality by keeping soil out of surface waters and preventing fertilizers and chemicals such as pesticides and herbicides from

reaching streams.

Also, he noted that yields seemed to improve following conservation tillage practices, but they usually take five to seven years to show up.

No-till, which is included in the N.C. Agriculture Cost Share Program, can take the highs and lows out of yield histories, while moisture conservation achieved from leaving residues on the surface help stabilize production, said Jones.

For more information, contact that Brunswick County Soil Conservation Service at 253-4458.

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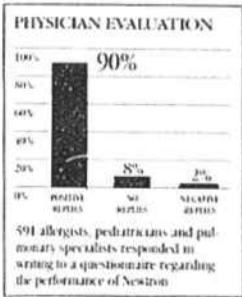
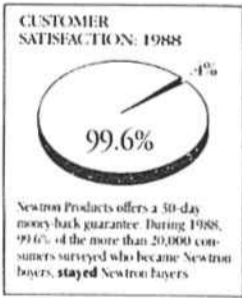
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