

Lawmakers Will Kill Provision On Local Septic Permit Appeals

BY DOUG RUTTER

State legislators will not approve a bill amendment that would allow landowners denied septic tank permits to appeal to county health boards instead of state government, according to a local representative.

State Rep. David Redwine said Monday the proposed amendment to House Bill 268, which he sponsored, will not get past a committee of state legislators.

Although the provision allowing for local appeals was included in the original version of the bill introduced by Redwine, it was taken out during House debate. When the proposal traveled



REDWINE

to the Senate, the provision was stuck back in as an amendment and approved by the Senate before being rejected for a second time by the House.

Redwine said a joint conference committee made up of members of the House and Senate is now working out differences in the bill. Once the committee agrees on the exact language, it will become law.

The local representative, who serves on the conference committee, said this week the group will not pass the amendment allowing for local appeals because of strong opposition in the House of Representatives.

Although he supports the provision, Redwine said he now has to go along with his colleagues in the House and reject it.

Redwine said he likes the idea of local appeals because it would

simplify the appeals process and bring it closer to home. "The best government is that government which is closest to the people," he said.

Brunswick County Health Director Michael Rhodes said the local health board went on record as supporting the proposal earlier this year. It was included in a long list of recommendations that came out of a legislative septic tank study committee co-chaired by Redwine.

Holden Beach Mayor John Tandy said he feels the local health board could do just as well as state officials in hearing appeals. "If you've got the right leaders, you can go any way you want to."

A number of canal lots on Holden Beach and other local barrier islands have been left unbuildable due to lot

restrictions and because soils are considered unsuitable for septic tanks.

Among other things, the bill deals with the granting of permits for innovative sewage treatment systems, extending the life of a septic tank permit from three to five years and training for sanitarians.

Although the provision allowing for local appeals received support in Brunswick County, Redwine said state health officials and county health boards around the state have opposed the measure.

Opponents have said a local appeals process would put more pressure on county health boards, which they feel are more likely to yield to pressure from local developers and grant septic tank permits.

However, Redwine puts more faith in local health boards. "They're not going to be intimidated by a developer coming in for a permit," he said. "I think they're smart enough for that not to happen."

Richard Rowe, chief of the environmental health section of the N.C. Division of Health Services, said the provision is not needed because state statute already allows county health boards to adopt and enforce their own septic tank rules and hear their own appeals. He said it has worked well in the counties that have their own rules and appeals procedures.

"To have an appeals process at the local level on state rules creates a number of problems and raises a number of questions," said Rowe.

One of the potential problems, he

said, is that local health boards would likely have different interpretations of the septic tank rules and that a permit granted on an appeal in one county may be denied in a neighboring county. Keeping the appeals process at the state level would ensure that the rules are being applied the same everywhere, said Rowe.

"It would certainly increase the workload on the local board," he added. "When you get into an appeals process, it's not something that's handled in a matter of minutes."

But according to Redwine, there have been very few appeals to local health boards in the nine North Carolina counties that allow them. In five of those counties that responded to a survey, he said there have been only 22 appeals and approximately 15,000 permit applications.

Waccamaw Puts New Pumper Into Service

Waccamaw Fire & Rescue's newest red truck came with a few miles on it, but Fire Chief Gregg Warren figures the demonstration model was a bargain.

The squad paid \$97,000 for the 1988 Ford pumper, while a comparable model from another company would have cost more than \$110,000. In excellent condition, the Ford has less than 2,000 miles on it, he said, and is equipped with a 1,000 gallon tank and a 1,000 gallon per minute pump.

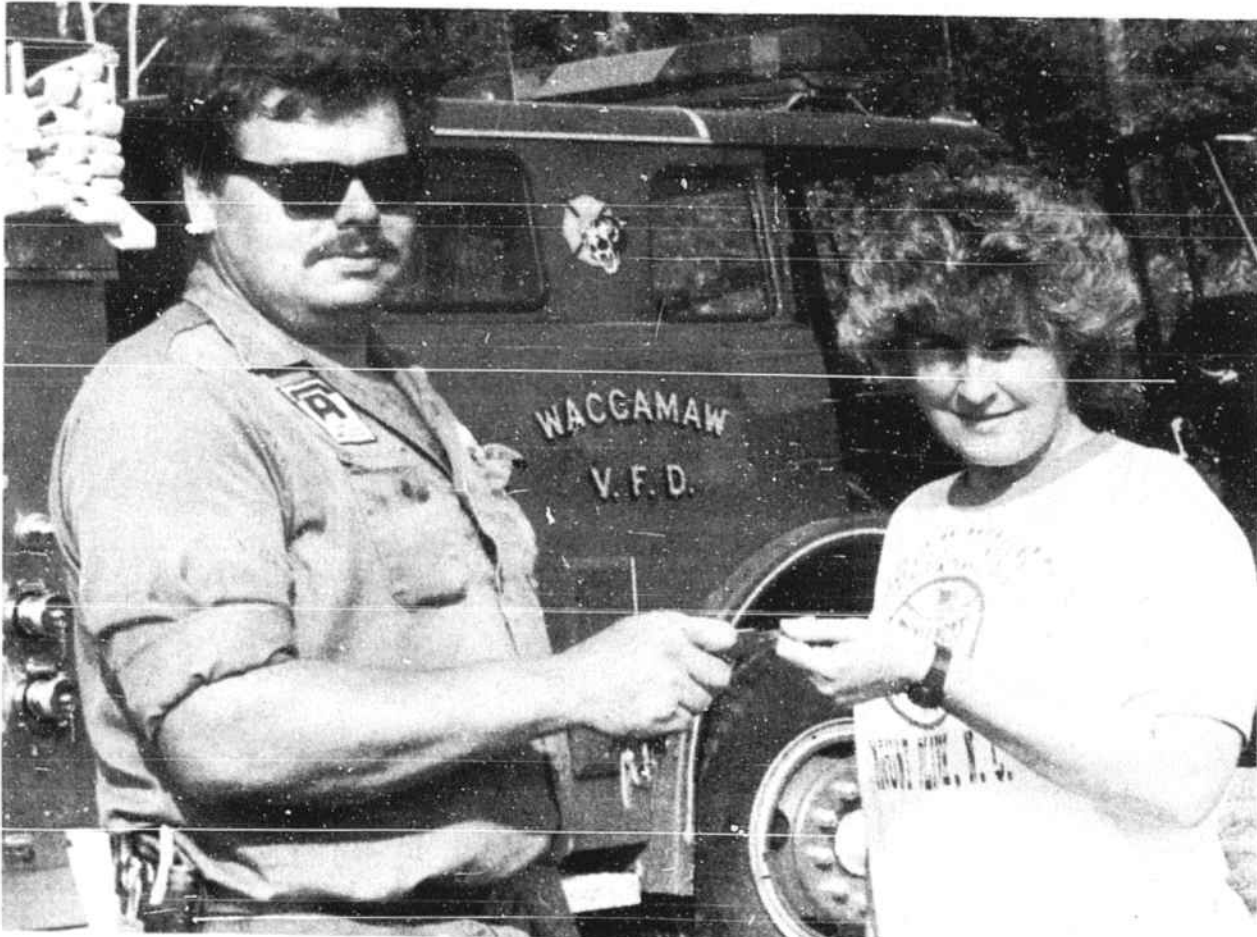
This addition brings the unit's fleet to four. However, Warren and Assistant Fire Chief Glenda Smith said the fire department's oldest vehicle, a 1964 pumper, may eventually be taken out of service. Meanwhile, the recent purchase will allow the department to make repairs to two other vehicles.

"That was one of the problems we had," said Warren. "We couldn't do repairs without putting other departments on standby. If it was going to take more than a day, we had to patch it up and let it go."

To purchase the new pumper, Waccamaw members raised \$20,000 through fundraising projects such as dinners and obtained another \$40,000 in matching funds from the county's District I fire and rescue contingency fund. It financed another \$40,000.

To clear this debt, Warren figures the department needs to sell only a few more chicken bog and barbecue plates.

On a "good" day, said Ms. Smith, the department will sell between 1,500 and 2,000 plates at \$3.50 per plate, clearing a profit of about \$1,400.



FIRE CHIEF Gregg Warren of Waccamaw Fire & Rescue shares the keys to the department's newest truck with Assistant Fire Chief Glenda Smith.

Booklet Offers Money-Saving Tips About Flood Insurance

While hurricanes, severe storms and extreme flooding rarely occur in this area, there's always a chance they will.

And, according to the UNC Sea Grant College Program, living on a sound, river or oceanfront increases the chance of property damage or loss from flooding—and makes flood insurance a good investment.

Spencer Rogers, Sea Grant's coastal engineer, said that typical homeowner policies don't cover damage caused by rising water from coastal storms, erosion, stream flooding or stormwater runoff. That is covered by a separate flood insurance policy, typically required for most mortgages in flood-prone areas

and recommended for coastal property owners in threatened areas, he said.

Such insurance can be expensive; that's why Rogers recently wrote a 12-page booklet, "Saving Money on Flood Insurance for Coastal Property Owners." It outlines construction techniques and building modifications that can reduce the annual cost of flood insurance premiums. It also explains little-known details of the flood insurance program that can help owners and their insurance agents optimize rates.

As an example, one building style typical of coastal construction is described and modified to show the effect on annual flood insurance premiums.

Prospective builders, current homeowners or designers at the coast will find the guide helpful, Rogers indicates. Copies are available for \$1 each from UNC Sea Grant, Box 8605, N.C. State University, Raleigh, NC 27695-8605. Ask for publication number UNC-SG-89-05.

Ferry Incident Under Scrutiny

No arrest was reported as of Monday in a case involving two girls who said they were molested Saturday by a man on the Southport-Fort Fisher Ferry.

According to Brunswick County Sheriff's Det. Lindsay Walton and a report on file at the sheriff's department, the incident occurred Saturday around 7 p.m., as the ferry was en route to Southport from Fort Fisher.

The girls, ages 13 and 8, are residents of the Fayetteville area and Clarkburg, W.Va. The Fayetteville girl's father accompanied them on the ferry.

The report stated that an unidentified man touched both girls "about the private parts of the body." Walton explained that the

perpetrator allegedly "grabbed" the girls' chests.

Walton said Monday afternoon that an investigation into the matter was still underway. An initial suspect was located and found not to have been involved in the incident.

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