

Holden Beach To Look At Adjusting Setbacks

With dozens of oceanfront lots left unbuildable following Hurricane Hugo, Holden Beach officials are considering amending or waiving street setback rules to free up more valuable land for development.

During a special meeting Monday, commissioners referred the matter to the town planning and zoning board. They requested a recommendation as soon as possible. A public hearing will be required before the setbacks can be changed.

Holden Beach currently requires that oceanfront homes be built at least 25 feet from the street. However, that setback coupled with the state-mandated 60-foot setback from the dune vegetation line and erosion resulting from Hugo has left a number of lots unbuildable because there is not enough room for a septic tank.

Ricky Parker, chairman of the Brunswick County Board of Health, said during last Thursday's town meeting that 60 percent of the vacant oceanfront lots between the east end of the island and Captain's Villas condominiums near the west end are too small for septic tanks.

Based on that estimate, Mayor John Tandy said about 70 vacant lots on the oceanfront are affected. He figured that land is worth about \$1 million.

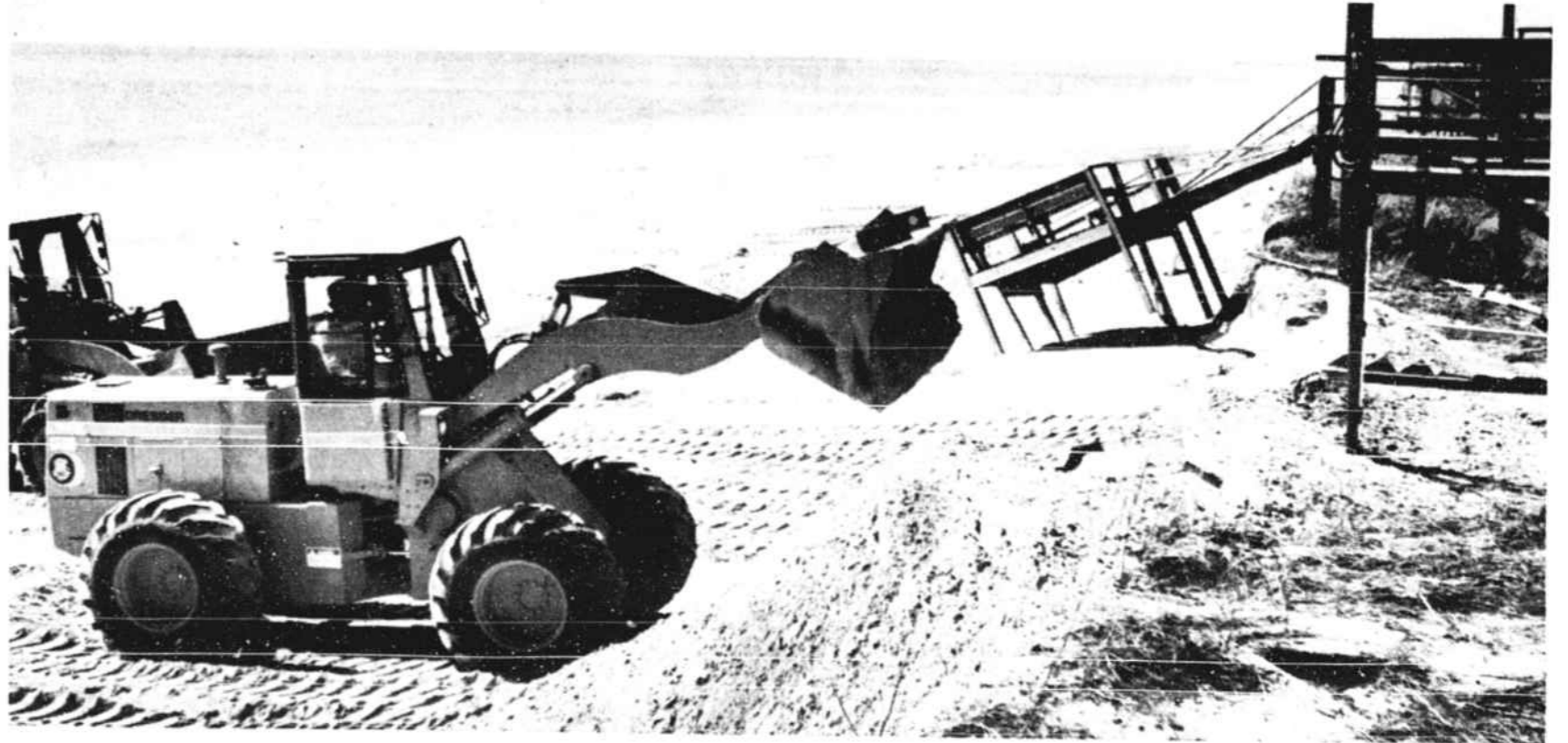
Parker said last week the N.C. Division of Coastal Management is trying to limit oceanfront development, triggering a number of comments supporting and criticizing the state's coastal development rules.

Mayor Tandy said state regulations don't always fit each situation and that some things need to be done differently following a hurricane.

Commissioner William Williamson suggested that the town "suspend CAMA for six months." He later added that the new dune line staked by state officials is not reasonable. He said the dune should be built back the way it was before the hurricane and that the dune line was staked too far landward.

Building Inspector Dwight Carroll pointed out that no structures built within the past eight years were damaged in the hurricane, indicating that the regulations have helped in that respect.

Sid Swarts, a member of the town's planning board, spoke in favor of coastal management regulations. "If it wasn't for CAMA keeping people back, there wouldn't be dunes out there," he said. "If it wasn't for CAMA, we'd be in miserable shape right now."



BULLDOZERS REBUILD DUNES to protect this oceanfront home at 193 Ocean Blvd. West owned by Rutherford B. Thompson Jr. of Raleigh. Dozens of beachfront homeowners have hired contractors over the past two weeks to push sand. The town has committed to plugging the gaps in the frontal dune.

STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

Holden Beach Plugging Holes In Frontal Dune

BY DOUG RUTTER

These days the Holden Beach strand is lined with bulldozers instead of sunbathers.

With dozens of beachfront homeowners paying contractors to rebuild dunes toppled in Hurricane Hugo, town officials took action of their own last week in an effort to protect the island from astronomical high tides expected this weekend.

Following a unanimous vote of the town board last Thursday, the town manager hired a contractor to fill gaps in the frontal dune line. As a temporary measure, the town plans to plug holes where the storm surge completely broke through the dunes.

Using specifications offered by Commissioner Bob Buck, the board voted Monday to have sand pushed wherever the dune is less than four feet above the high water mark. Sand on the beach in front of those areas will be pushed to form a dune with an average height of five feet.

Town Manager Gus Ulrich said workers with L.M. McLamb & Son Construction of Hickman's Crossroads began plugging holes in the frontal dune Tuesday. "We're going to take what's existing and bridge the gap," he explained.

The manager said the work should take about four days to complete with two bulldozers working 10 hours per day. The maximum cost to the town will be \$5,200.

Ulrich said he was working with the building inspector and contractor to determine the areas to be filled. Between the east end and Neptune Street, he said the group had identified roughly seven areas ranging in width from 50 to 100

feet.

Discussing the project at a town board meeting Monday, officials agreed that some homeowners will argue that the town pushed sand in front of some lots and neglected others. Though sand will be pushed next to private property, town officials say the project will benefit the whole island by protecting Ocean Boulevard.

"We've all got to pull together on this thing to get the beach ready by next summer," said Mayor John Tandy.

Meanwhile, the town is taking advantage of an offer from Brunswick County for the temporary use of a bulldozer and county employee. Holden Beach plans to put the county bulldozer to work pushing sand at the public beach accessways.

The town manager also said he plans to apply for a state grant that could be used to repair public accessways damaged in the storm. Ocean Isle Beach plans to apply for the same funds.

While plugging holes in the frontal dune may work for the time being, Holden Beach Commissioners agree that a dune rebuilding project is what's needed. "But we don't have the money right now to do anything else," Commissioner William Williamson said last week.

Town board members hope to find out the cost of an engineering study that would provide specifications and an estimated cost for a frontal dune before deciding on a long-term solution. Commissioners planned to discuss dune rebuilding with a representative of the Army

Corps of Engineers Friday at 10 a.m.

The town manager has estimated it would cost about \$1 million to build a dune the entire length of the island. That eight-mile-long dune would have a 50-foot-wide base and stand about 10 feet tall.

Funding proposals mentioned to date include emergency borrowing with the governor's approval, borrowing money following voter approval and assessments.

Under state law, Ulrich said lot owners can be assessed the full cost of the project based on the benefit to each lot. But even with assessments, the town still needs money for the project upfront.

The town has \$60,000 in its dune replacement fund. Other potential

sources of money include \$30,000 in unappropriated occupancy tax funds and \$30,000 previously earmarked for sidewalk construction.

County And Towns Seek Federal Disaster Aid

Brunswick County and seven area towns are among local governments hoping federal aid will cover some of the costs associated with Hurricane Hugo.

Following a public assistance briefing Saturday in Bolivia, representatives of nine governments or agencies indicated an interest in applying for federal disaster funds.

In addition to the county, officials from Sunset Beach, Ocean Isle Beach, Holden Beach, Long Beach, Yaupon Beach, Bald Head Island and Southport turned in notices of interest at the meeting. Filing the notice is the first step in the federal public assistance process.

Besides counties and towns, private non-profit groups such as utilities and rescue squads are eligible for federal assistance. Brunswick Electric Membership Corp. also filed a notice of interest at last week's meeting.

On the notices, officials checked boxes indicating the type of damage to property and facilities. Later, federal and state inspectors will conduct a formal survey.

Under the public assistance program, the federal government reimburses counties, towns and other groups for some of the money spent

as a result of the storm. If an expense falls under another federal program, it does not qualify.

Expenses such as clearing debris and repairing roads and water lines are eligible for federal assistance. Also, the federal program pays for repairing or replacing buildings and equipment damaged in the storm.

Denise Yandle, a deputy state public assistance officer who handled most of Saturday's briefing, could not estimate how long it may be before the local groups receive the federal funds.

Eligible agencies have until Oct. 25—30 days after the disaster declaration date—to submit a notice of interest. Public assistance becomes available whenever a site is declared a federal disaster area.

Filing the notice starts a long process in which federal and state inspectors, along with a representative of each applicant, survey damage and determine how much assistance each petitioner will receive.

In order to file for federal aid, towns and agencies need to document any funds spent as a result of the hurricane. That includes money spent on supplies and hours worked by cleanup crews, police officers and other personnel.

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Holden Beach POA Cancels Meeting

A meeting of Holden Beach Commissioners, real estate representatives and county health officials relating to the problem of overcrowded rental units on the island has been canceled.

Originally set for Oct. 4 and later postponed until Oct. 18, the Holden Beach Property Owners Association (HBPOA) has now put off the meeting indefinitely.

In a letter from HBPOA President Kenner Amos, he says the association directors will consider the problem at their regular meeting Thanksgiving weekend.

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