

Tardy Water System Study Holding Up Expansion In Southwestern Brunswick

BY RAHN ADAMS

While county utility officials don't have much to say about the delay, a long-range study of the Brunswick County water system—almost a year overdue—has been postponed again by a Wake County engineering firm.

The \$20,000 study—which was begun in June 1988 by William G. Daniel & Associates of Cary—was not a topic of open discussion at Monday's Brunswick County Utility Operations Board meeting. However, discussion of other matters indicated that the overdue engineering report is at least indirectly responsible for delaying much-needed water system improvements and expansion projects southwest of Shallotte.

UOB members Robert Nubel, Burton Myers, Al Morrison, John Jones and Rudy Simmons attended the 3 1/2-hour meeting, which included a 15-minute executive session recommended by Public Utilities Director Jerry Webb to discuss "contractual relations." Nubel—who directed the meeting in the absence of board Chairman D.V. Jones and Vice Chairman Ernest McGee—said no action was taken during the board's closed-door conference with Webb.

After the meeting, Webb told the *Beacon* that preliminary results of the engineering study will not be available until March, even though Daniel appeared before the UOB in mid-December and assured the board that his firm would provide a preliminary report by the end of

January and a final report in July.

As the Cary engineer himself stated in December, Webb said Monday that Daniel simply "underestimated" the amount of time needed to complete the study, which was initially expected to be finished in March 1989. This is the fourth time that the study has been postponed.

The purpose of the engineering analysis is to identify "major missing links" in the county water system and prioritize potential projects that would fill those gaps. UOB consulting engineer Alan Lewis reiterated Monday that the study will not recommend specific areas of the county—special assessment districts, for example—where lateral water lines should be installed. He said the Cary firm's report will involve only major transmission lines.

Over the past year, county commissioners have cited the long-awaited study as their reason for delaying action on certain water projects, such as the proposed extension of water service in the Shallotte Point area and UOB-recommended improvements to the water system southwest of Shallotte. The study is supposed to address system needs through the year 2010.

Residents Want Water

But approximately 30 Calabash area residents on hand at Monday's meeting told the UOB that they need county water service now, because their groundwater is in short supply and of poor quality—a common predicament for many residents in densely-populated, coastal



STAFF PHOTO BY RAHN ADAMS

RAYMOND DAYKA, president of the Bonaparte Retreat II home owners association, addresses the county utility board Monday.

sections of the county.

Two subdivisions represented Monday were Bonaparte Retreat II and Heritage Haven, both located off N.C. 179 between Calabash and Sunset Beach. Several other neighboring subdivisions have received water service through the county's two-year-old special assessment district program, in which property owners pay for installation of lateral water lines.

Bonaparte Retreat II Home Owners Association President Raymond

Dayka presented the board with a 30-name petition in support of initiating an SAD project in the subdivision, which consists of 77 lots and 26 permanent residences. Heritage Haven representative Guy Maple also asked that his subdivision be included in the project. With more than 100 lots, Heritage Haven contains at least 30 dwellings, Maple said.

"The board is sympathetic to so many people in the county who have poor water," said Nubel, adding, "The other problem we've run into is that in small, isolated communities, the unit cost (of an SAD project) is high." He estimated that the property owners' assessment rate could exceed \$7 per foot of frontage.

Still, the residents indicated that they would gladly pay high assessments to get county water service. "Seven dollars (per foot) is still a bargain, if you don't have any water," said Dayka. Another property owner commented, "That's as cheap as putting down a new well... We just don't have any water—good or bad."

Water Supply 'Marginal'

Unfortunately, the county water system itself doesn't have enough water to meet peak summer demands southwest of Shallotte, according to a short-term engineering study that was done by Houston & Associates of Shallotte in the fall of 1988.

Noting the county's "marginal supply of water," Nubel told the

Calabash area residents Monday that the water system has not been able to keep up with population growth in southwestern Brunswick County since 1984, when water mains were installed.

"One of the things we've been reluctant to do is put more burden on the system in that area," Nubel said. "It's not a particularly good situation." He pointed out that groundwater wells at Sunset Beach had to be turned on to meet water demand over the July Fourth holiday last year.

UOB consulting engineer Jay Houston explained to the gathering that the water system "bottlenecks" at Shallotte. He said the county's new Northwest Treatment Plant can pump nine million gallons of water per day to Shallotte; however, the system can carry only two million gallons per day past the town to the Ocean Isle Beach, Sunset Beach and Calabash areas.

In early 1989, the UOB recommended that commissioners approve a \$5 million capital improvements project that would solve the water system problem southwest of Shallotte. Commissioners have taken no action on the proposal over the past year.

The proposed project involves construction of a 2,200 gallon per minute booster pump station near the intersection of N.C. 179 and N.C. 904; a one million gallon elevated storage tank near the intersection of N.C. 904 and Old Georgetown Road; and a 12-inch trunk line on Old Georgetown Road from

N.C. 904 to N.C. 179 near Calabash.

Monday, the UOB agreed to recommend starting an SAD project in the Bonaparte Retreat II/Heritage Haven area, as long as the subdivisions can be added without overburdening the system. The board instructed Houston and Lewis to review the proposed SAD's impact on water availability; the engineers are expected to report on the matter at the board's March 12 meeting.

Other Business

In other business at Monday's meeting, the utility board:

—Heard a request from Yvonne Bright for extension of county water service into the Mt. Misery Road area near Leland. Nubel said the UOB was "stymied" on the request, since water service in that area would require installation of main lines—a capital project that would be up to commissioners to approve.

—Denied a request from three property owners in SAD 8 (Calabash area) who contended that the board's policy for assessing their "pie-shaped" cul-de-sac lots was unfair. "Front" footage of pie-shaped lots is figured by averaging the width of the front and rear property lines.

—Decided to poll property owners in Fisherman's Paradise, Coastal Shores, Seashore Estates and Carl Andrews subdivisions about whether or not they wish to be included in a Holden Beach area water project involving SADs 7, 9, 16 and 18.

Calabash Approves Changes

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commission.

After a lengthy discussion, town commissioners approved changes in the ordinance establishing the planning board. The most notable change is that four of the five regular members on the board will be appointed from District II and the other will come from District I.

Also, there is one alternate member from each district and three members from the town's extraterritorial area who act only on matters concerning that area.

Schaack, who originally proposed the makeup of the new planning and zoning board, said he based his recommendation for the four-to-one district split on the amount of interest shown from residents of both districts to serve on the board.

But some representatives from District I voiced concerns Tuesday about giving nearly all of the voting power to members from District II.

Mayor Doug Simmons, who lives in District I, said he would have liked to see at least two regular members from his district.

District I Commissioner Ed Rice also questioned the makeup of the board. "I personally am very unhappy yet as far as the four-to-one split."

However, Keith Hardee, the third representative from District I, said he had no problem with the way the board was set up.

Town Attorney Mike Ramos and others pointed out that the planning and zoning board only makes recommendations, which then must be approved by the board of commissioners.

Taubel said commissioners can follow the recommendation of the planning board or accept a minority opinion instead. "I hope within five years there is no District I and District II," he added.

Appointed to three-year terms on the planning and zoning board were Pati Lewellyn from District I and Warren "Bud" Knapp and Brendford from District II. District II residents appointed to two-year terms on the board were Warren Pienak and Hank Muttutat.

Planning and zoning board alternates, who will each serve two years, are Gordon Ragsdale from District I and Schaack from District II.

Representatives from the town's extraterritorial area are Bob Crocker and Bill Rate. They will each serve three-year terms, and a third representative from the area will be appointed later.

In other appointments, Jim Deehan and Ernie Schoeber were each named to three-year terms on the drainage board.

VA Cemetery To Be Closed

Based on current interment rates, the Raleigh National Cemetery will close by the end of this month, according to the Veteran's Administration National Cemetery System and Brunswick County Veterans Services Officer Jess Parker.

Burials of casketed remains will be made of eligible spouses and children of veterans already interred in the cemetery and of those holding gravesite reservations. Burial

space is available to continue interment of cremated remains.

As a result of the closing, eligible veterans and their families must now consider other locations for gravesites. Of the two other national cemeteries in North Carolina with available grave space, New Bern National Cemetery will have sites available until 1993, and Salisbury National Cemetery will be open until the year 2010.

Mild Weather To Continue

The spring-like weather conditions that the Shallotte area has enjoyed over the past few weeks are expected to continue through the weekend, according to Shallotte Point meteorologist Jackson Canady.

Temperatures over the next several days should be slightly above normal, averaging from the low 40s at night to the low 60s during the day. Rainfall is expected to be near normal at about one-half inch.

For the period of Feb. 6 through 12, the daily average temperature in the Shallotte area was 53 degrees, which Canady said was six degrees above average.

The daily average high temperature was 68 degrees, and the nightly average low temperature was 38 degrees.

The maximum high temperature during the period was 74 degrees on Feb. 7. The minimum low temperature was 28 degrees on Feb. 6.

Canady measured 0.11 of an inch of rain during the seven-day period.

Steele Resigns

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son late last week. The four-year term ends December 1991.

Due to poor health, Steele said he had been considering resigning for a couple of months. The 71-year-old said he was forced to miss the last two town board meetings because of conflicting medical appointments.

"I've enjoyed being a part of the town governing board and regret the fact that I have to leave," he said.

In his letter of resignation, Steele also noted the honor and pleasure in of having "served with such fine people that are sincerely concerned and aware of the needs of Ocean Isle..."

In accepting Steele's resignation Tuesday, Mayor Williamson expressed the town's appreciation for his service.

Petition Presented To Redwine

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community to go back to the way it was before. However, she would list no concerns with Varnamtown being a town. "I'm not having any problems," she said.

In her unsuccessful bid for Varnamtown mayor last fall, Mrs. Varnam did not return a questionnaire from the *Beacon*. However, she told another area newspaper that while she had first opposed incorporation, she at that time supported the town.

At least two other would-be town officials signed the petition. The first name on the list is that of Joe Herring, an unsuccessful candidate for alderman who has since moved out of town. Also signing the petition is Samuel Terry Varnam, Mrs. Varnam's son, who also ran unsuccessfully for the town board.

Mayor Judy Galloway said she received her copy of the petition Monday night and wasn't surprised by the names of those who had signed, though she said some board members were surprised.

"We'll talk with them," she said. "All they need to do is come to talk with us."

Mayor Galloway is convinced the two groups can work out any differences that might exist. "I really feel confident, I don't feel like these people in the long run will want to go through with this once they hear the facts. I think they're being misled."

"Our purpose (as a town) is to stay as much like we are as we can be," she continued. "I think they've been told that we're planning on adopting a lot of rules and regulations that people would have to follow, which isn't the case."

Of the concerns she's heard expressed about the town, Mayor Galloway said the question of town taxes is the only real issue. Townspeople are currently taxed at 4.5 cents per \$100 valuation in addition to paying county taxes. Most of those elected to the town board ran on a platform advocating keeping

the tax rate low.

However, Simmons, spokesman for the petitioners, would not discuss the group's reasons for seeking unincorporation. "I'll be honest with you," said Simmons. "I'd rather not say anything right now. I believe the petition speaks for itself."

Redwine acknowledged that his handling of the petition will relate also to the N.C. General Assembly's adjournment resolution regarding the upcoming short, election-year session. "It says we are to take up non-controversial local bills," said

Redwine. Both he and Sen. R.C. Soles Jr. would have to sign a statement saying the Varnamtown bill was not controversial, he continued, with non-controversial meaning "that somebody won't call for a public hearing."

However, Redwine said that should the Varnamtown board go to legislative committee hearings on the bill—which he said he thinks it would do as a matter of course—and ask for a public hearing, then he could end up in violation of the adjournment resolution.

Animal Cruelty Case Continued

The trial of Calabash veterinarian Dr. Kenneth Neal has been rescheduled for Feb. 27 in Brunswick County District Criminal Court, according to the clerk of court's office.

Neal, 30, operator of Calabash Animal Hospital, appeared in district court Monday morning to face four misdemeanor counts of cruelty to animals. However, the trial was continued two weeks at the prosecution's request. Neal has denied the charges.

Assistant District Attorney Thomas Hicks handled the case Monday. Neal appeared in court without an attorney. After his Jan. 31 arrest, the veterinarian said he was represented by a North Myrtle Beach, S.C., lawyer.

The charges against Neal stem from four separate incidents that allegedly occurred at his animal hospital between Nov. 7, 1988 and Jan. 4. He is accused of beating two cats and two dogs.

Brunswick County Animal Control began a month-long investigation Jan. 5, after a complaint was filed by one of the pet owners, Debbie Somersett of Grissetown. Veterinary examinations of her 3 1/2-year-old cat indicated that it had suffered a broken tooth, mild con-

fusion, paralysis to one side of its body, bruises and bleeding from its lips and gums.

If convicted, Neal could receive a possible maximum sentence of up to a year in prison and be fined up to \$1,500 on each count. Also, according to a spokesman for the N.C. Veterinary Medical Board, an animal cruelty conviction could result in revocation or suspension of Neal's veterinary license.

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