

LESSONS LEARNED FROM HUGO

Holden Beach Hoping For Smoother Sailing When Next Hurricane Hits

BY DOUG RUTTER

Holden Beach Mayor John Tandy admits the town made some mistakes in handling the return to the island following Hurricane Hugo last fall.

A group of tired and anxious property owners was detained on the mainland while building contractors and others were allowed to cross the bridge and survey damage.

"I really wasn't satisfied with the way things went the last time at all," Tandy said last week. "I think we learned a lot from that experience."

The mayor says things will be different if and when the next hurricane hits, now that town officials are armed with a new hurricane evacuation plan which includes some of the lessons learned during Hugo.

"We've tried to plug all the holes we could think of," Tandy said. "I'm confident we're going to do a bet-



TANDY

"I'm confident we're going to do a better job than we've ever done before."

—Mayor John Tandy
Holden Beach

ter job than we've ever done before."

The new plan, which was distributed to town commissioners at their Sept. 10 meeting, is designed to minimize danger to the public and ensure an orderly evacuation and recovery.

"The number one thing is not to lose any life," Tandy said. "The next thing after that is protection of property."

The 32-page plan outlines duties for town officials

and employees in five phases of a hurricane emergency, which begins whenever a hurricane watch is issued.

The document also includes lists of evacuation and damage assessment team members, people willing to help answer telephones and equipment contractors who could be called on to help the town recover.

Also in the plan are information sheets for ocean-front property owners that outline procedures to follow should they want to rebuild decks, homes or dunes. There also are forms for people who refuse to leave the island to fill out so the town knows who to notify in case of death.

One of the biggest changes from previous plans followed by the town is that two commissioners would be in charge of keeping property owners and the news media informed following a hurricane evacuation.

Commissioners Gay Atkins and Judy Bryan would run the information post, which would be set up near the foot of the bridge on the mainland.

Mayor Tandy said there was no formal contact between town officials and landowners following Hugo,

and there were all sorts of rumors about what had happened on the island.

"We didn't have anything in the way of good communication last time," Tandy said. "That was very poor."

If another hurricane hits Holden Beach, Commissioner Bryan said lot owners and residents would be able to get hourly updates at the information center.

"A lot of people were really upset last year," Mrs. Bryan said. "That's what we're trying to avoid the next time."

If there is electricity, she said the town plans to take a video camera on the beach and show the pictures to people waiting on the mainland.

Besides its public relations effort, the town also has changed its system of identifying people allowed on the island following an evacuation.

Property owners and residents still would be required to have vehicle stickers. Special one-day passes have been printed for contractors and other people who would go on the island to work.

Home Along N.C. 87 Burns Monday In Unrelated Fire

BY SUSAN USHER

A home that was threatened Sunday by a woods fire that blackened more than 100 acres in the Winnabow-Leland area burned Monday night in an apparently unrelated blaze.

Flames were shooting through the roof of the Jimmy and Mary Baggett home on north N.C. 87 when a Town Creek Volunteer EMS first responder and Winnabow VFD Chief David Short arrived shortly after getting the 9:07 p.m. call.

"The front of the house was fully involved when I arrived," said Short.

The front of the house, which included a living room and bedroom, was heavily damaged, while the rear of the home was "in pretty good shape," Short said Tuesday. Still, he added, "It's not livable at this time."

The fire appeared to have started in the attic of the house. "As best we could determine it was caused from an electrical problem," said Short, referring to the assessment

made after the fire by Brunswick County Fire Marshal Cecil Logan. "There were several indicators that it was electrical in nature."

However, firefighters checked to see if there was any connection between the house fire and Sunday's woods fire. The fire had burned into the auto salvage yard that stands in front of the Baggett house, causing at least three of the vehicles to explode.

"Since the fire started high in the house we were suspecting it was from sparks from the junkyard," said Short, "but we combed the area and couldn't find anything that could have sent sparks to the house."

Winnabow responded with three tankers and a pumper, with mutual aid responder Bolivia VFD responding with a tanker and pumper.

Short said the Baggetts were not at home Monday night when the fire was reported. "We still haven't had any luck locating them," he said early Tuesday.



FIRE HAD ENGULFED the front of the Jimmy and Mary Baggett residence on N.C. 87 Monday night when firefighters arrived. No one was at home when the fire was reported.

Employee Acquitted

A district court judge last week cleared a Brunswick Electric Membership Corp. employee of assaulting a union leader after a May 9 contract negotiating session.

Robert W. "Chip" Leavitt, staff assistant to the cooperative's general manager, was charged with simple assault after an encounter that involved Doug Smith, chairman of Local 495 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. The two scuffled at the end of contract talks held at the N.C. Baptist Assembly at Oak Island. Each later said the other started the incident.

Smith, who filed the charge, was fired by BEMC the following day.

On Sept. 10 in Brunswick County District Court Judge Jerry A. Jolly found Leavitt not guilty of assault.

Leavitt said in a prepared statement released last week, "We are glad that this incident has come to a conclusion and concur wholeheartedly with the judicial outcome."

Smith could not be reached for comment last week on several attempts, but had earlier told a Wilmington reporter he planned to ask the state Attorney General's office to investigate the ruling.

The union has also filed a complaint with the National Labor Relations Board, arguing that Smith's dismissal and other actions by BEMC management are part of an effort to discourage union participation at the electric cooperative. A decision has not been announced by the NLRB. Smith is seeking reinstatement and back pay.

A majority of eligible BEMC workers voted last September in favor of joining the union. The bargaining group represents more than 60 employees, including linemen, warehouse workers, dispatchers and drafting and mapping coordinators.

Pleasant Weather In Offing

Sunny days and cooler nights are in the forecast as the end of summer approaches.

Shallotte Point meteorologist Jackson Canady said area residents can expect temperatures to average near normal, with rainfall a little below average. That translates into temperatures ranging from the mid-60s at night into the mid-80s during the daytime, with probably less than a half-inch of rainfall.

"It's about as nice as you can ask

for this time of year," he said.

For the period Sept. 11-17, Canady recorded a maximum high of 93 degrees on the 11th and a minimum low of 60 degrees on the 17th.

An average daily high of 89 degrees combined with an average nightly low of 69 degrees for a daily average temperature of 79 degrees, which Canady said was about two degrees above average.

He recorded .56 inch of rainfall.

Suit Aims To Block Construction

(Continued From Page 1-A)

The suit contends also that the state ignored concerns expressed by agencies that commented on the project during the permitting process.

It claims the state did not explore, as required, alternatives to the proposed project, and did not fully consider both the direct (immediate) and indirect (reasonably foreseeable) impacts of the project on all aspects of the human and natural environment.

The documents allegedly made no reference to a land use plan completed in 1980 by the town of Sunset Beach, to a boat landing that would be destroyed by the project, or to fragile plant and animal species that might be adversely affected by the project.

Defendants argue short- and long-term adverse effects of the project would include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Threats to public recreational areas including the ocean beach;
- Threats to a number of endangered and threatened animal and plant species, including the loggerhead sea turtle, the wood stork, the piping plover and sea beach ama-

ranth;

- Loss of the boat landing on the Sunset Beach causeway, which provides water access at high and low tides for recreational and commercial boaters and fishermen;

- Increased pollution of shellfish waters resulting indirectly from increased development (run-off from paved areas)

- Change in the visual impact of the bridge on the current "low-key appearance" of the island;

- Other changes in the human environment, namely a faster-paced lifestyle; and

- Pressure for zoning changes resulting from construction of the proposed bridge on water quality, shellfish, property values, community services and the "distinct family-oriented nature" of the existing community.

The suit also asserts that the six permits issued were based not only on the "flawed" documents, but also on "misleading communications" from the defendants regarding use and ownership of a public commercial and recreational boat landing which would be destroyed by the new bridge.

The boat landing would be de-

stroyed, with no plans for replacement, when the existing causeway is removed as a means of mitigating the net loss of wetlands resulting from the project.

DOT has contended that the boat landing is "unofficial" and that users are "permissive trespassers." The plaintiffs contend that the public has earned an easement by prescription to the landing—regardless of who owns the property—through continued use of the site for more than 20 years.

The concept of easement by prescription was an argument used in the SBT's recent successful legal action to have "Lot 1-A" at Sunset Beach declared a public accessway.

In addition to temporary steps to block "further planning, financing, contracting or construction" of the bridge, plaintiffs are asking the court for a declaratory judgement, a decision that declares the rights of the two parties. They seek court orders that would declare the Finding of No Significant Impact unlawful, void permits issued on the basis of the earlier environmental studies, and declare that the defendants violated a federal law that requires consideration of alternative actions.

DA's Office To Receive Evidence

(Continued From Page 1-A)

County Engineer Robert Tucker has been named interim head of the building inspections department and, according to Clegg, is working with the church to help to get them back on track with the official inspections. Since the county never received the money for the permit, technically the "county never provided services," Clegg added.

Determining if there are other similar incidences may not be easy for the department. No other incidences have been brought to Clegg's attention so far.

Clegg is also rewriting the job description for the head building inspector's position.

"I don't see any need to rush," Clegg said. "Frankly, I'm quite pleased with Mr. Tucker's handling of it. I'm not ready to provide that department with another period of instability."

The need now is to allow Tucker time to re-establish a day-to-day routine for the building inspection staff and to allow him to observe the operations and to identify any particular weaknesses that need to be addressed.

"I want him to look at the department from a professional point of view," Clegg said. He said he thinks Tucker's engineering background will be helpful in that respect.

Septic Tank Rules Amended

(Continued From Page 1-A)

Until 1977 counties in North Carolina set their own rules for issuing site permits for septic tanks, though general state "guidelines" existed. In 1977 the state made its first attempt to standardize regulations statewide.

The first major amendments to the septic tank rules came five years later. The more stringent rules adopted at that time addressed specific soil types, water table separation, drainage and "restrictive horizons" such as hardpan.

Rhodes said the local health staff felt some questionable soils could be utilized in ways not allowed under the new rules.

A study completed here showed that some sites with restrictive horizons could be used, he continued, which would allow septic tanks to be used in places they otherwise could not have been used" under

existing rules.

The department surveyed 100 lots with septic tank systems placed in fill dirt and in operation since 1982. "We didn't find any that were failing," said Rhodes. "That made us believe that the methods in use before 1982 were not that bad. They were working."

Results of that study were submitted to a legislative study committee, co-chaired by Rep. David Redwine, that began meeting in 1987.

The panel recommended changes affecting site evaluations, including upgrading of qualifications and training for those conducting the evaluations and state funding for research, as well as changes in the regulations.

Most of those changes went into effect this year either in the form of legislation or changes in regulations.

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