

Holden Beach Changes Rules On Open Burning

BY DOUG RUTTER
Holden Beach has changed its rules on open burning in an effort to make sure controlled fires don't get out of control and to prevent the burning of some hazardous materials.

Town permits are now required for all open fires at construction sites and fires set to dispose of shrubs and other material cleared from land. Also, people are prohibited from burning vehicle tires, treated lumber and lumber treated with or containing creosote.

Town commissioners approved the changes as part of an ordinance adopted at Monday night's meeting, which amended the existing regulations on opening burning.

The town board imposed a moratorium on all open burning in early July when a fire set to burn material that had been cleared from a large tract of land caused a nuisance on the island.

Holden Beach Commissioners voted to continue the ban on land-clearing fires at their August meeting and started working on changes in open burning rules which were given final approval this week.

Permits are required for any fires set at construction sites, whether they are for the comfort of workers or to dispose of scrap building materials. Fires set to burn debris must be constantly attended and kept small enough so they can be put out with a garden hose.

In the case of land-clearing fires, the material to be burned must be kept in individual piles small enough to be easily extinguishable and the fires must be attended at all times. Before the fires are started, the fire department must be notified and arrangements must be made for

putting out the fire if it becomes necessary.

Fire permits are issued based on the location of the fire, type and amount of materials to be burned, weather and population conditions, means available for extinguishing the fire, time of day and expected duration of the fire and any other pertinent factors.

Police officers issue fire permits, but they now have to consult with the town manager when issuing permits for construction-site or land-clearing fires. The fire chief also may be consulted in certain instances.

Fees Increased

Permit and inspection fees for building the average new house at Holden Beach have jumped from \$201 to \$352 under changes approved Monday night.

Town Manager Blake Proctor said the fees haven't been changed in five years and that the increases are needed to keep up with inflation.

Commissioners approved different increases in the various permit and inspection fees. Building Inspector Dwight Carroll said the changes would add up to a \$150 increase in the cost of the average new house.

"The town isn't in business to make money, but we sure aren't in business to lose money," Mayor John Tandy said. "If we leave it alone, it's not paying (the building inspector's) salary."

Plans Approved

Commissioners moved forward on plans to renovate and expand the town hall complex Monday, but board members are split over the exact location of a door leading to a new conference room.

On a 3-2 vote, commissioners ap-

proved a rough sketch of the renovations planned in the garage area of town hall. An architect will prepare detailed drawings that are needed for the town to take bids on the project.

Gay Atkins and Judy Bryan voted against the plans. They said a door providing access to a conference room should be located in the meeting room instead of the administrative area of town hall, where it would be disruptive.

Other board members disagreed and said they liked the plans as they were presented by Southport architect John Thompson.

Plans call for the existing garage area to be remodeled to provide room for the police department, an office for the public works director and two new restrooms equipped for the handicapped. Commissioners plan to construct a new garage on the east side of town hall.

Other Business

In other business Monday, commissioners:

—Voted to pay \$600 to Tommy Morgan of Brunswick Surveying for adding federal flood zones to the town's plat maps. Town officials said the project should help property owners get lower flood insurance premiums in the future.

—Voted to reimburse \$900 to six property owners who voluntarily paid frontal dune assessments which were proposed by the town board but never approved.

—Appointed a committee made up of Commissioners Gay Atkins and Judy Bryan and the town man-

ager to address the need for more beach accessways.

—Approved the creation of a department of finance and administration, at the request of the town manager. Proctor said creation of the three-employee department will make town hall operations more efficient. The change involves no increase in personnel.

—Considered taking back badges given to members of the town's hurricane evacuation team, damage assessment team and telephone volunteers, but took no action. Commissioners agreed that people with badges would not get back on the island following a storm until their names were given to police at the bridge.

—Adopted on a first reading a resolution urging state legislators to take steps to reduce the solid waste stream at its source. Steps could include using chipped car tires to pave and resurface roads and selling liquids in returnable glass containers. The resolution came from the N.C. League of Municipalities.

—Asked the Holden Beach Planning and Zoning Board to review an ordinance that requires street rights of way to be clear of fences, shrubs, landscaping materials and other obstacles. Due to the location of some houses, the town may have to make some exceptions to the ordinance.

—Declared a 1980 Toyota and 1982 Chevrolet police car as surplus, giving the town manager authority to sell the vehicles at auction.



HOLDEN BEACH OFFICIALS are worried about hundreds of dead wax myrtles like this one that are creating a fire and health hazard.

Officials Worried About Dead Myrtles

Holden Beach officials are considering ways to get rid of dead myrtle shrubs on the island which pose possible fire and health hazards.

Town Manager Blake Proctor said hundreds of wax myrtles were killed last September during Hurricane Hugo when salt water washed over the frontal dunes. Dead bushes can be found on 100 or more lots on the island, he estimated.

The brittle bushes are packed close together, he said, and create a fire hazard because many of them are next to homes. Proctor said the bushes also cause water to collect, which attracts mosquitoes and creates a health hazard.

"Fire is our number one concern," Proctor said at Monday's town meeting. "If this started burning we could hang most of the town up."

The town received two bids for disposing of the bushes, but com-

missioners decided to wait until the town manager gets input from wildlife experts before doing anything.

Proctor said the low bid on the project would put the cost at \$300 per lot. He said the town could have the dead bushes removed and then charge the property owners for the work.

Proctor said the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has refused to reimburse the town for disposing of the bushes, even though their death was related to Hurricane Hugo.

Two island residents said at Monday's meeting they were concerned about cutting down the myrtle bushes because they provide shelter for wildlife including deer, foxes and birds.

"There's an extensive amount of wildlife on this island...that many of you never see," said Mayor John Tandy.

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