

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

Edward M. Sweatt and Carolyn H. SweattPublishers
 Edward M. SweattEditor
 Susan UsherNews Editor
 Doug Rutter and Terry PopeStaff Writers
 Johnny CraigSports Editor
 Peggy EarwoodOffice Manager
 Carolyn H. SweattAdvertising Director
 Timberley Adams & Cecelia GoreAdvertising Representatives
 Tammie Galloway & Dorothy BrennanTypesetters
 William ManningPressman
 Brenda ClemmonsPhoto Technician
 Lonnie SprinkleAssistant Pressman
 Phoebe Clemmons and Frances SweattCirculation

PAGE 4-A, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 1991

Debate Stirs Over New Subdivision Ordinance

There's an important subplot to the debate over how to word sewer system requirements in the county's new subdivision ordinance.

The real struggle isn't one over words; it's a fight between developers and the county government which exists to provide services to its residents.

The section of the new ordinance dealing with sewer system requirements will have a tremendous impact on the future real estate market in Brunswick County. It needs to be studied carefully by the county; perhaps a compromise is needed.

The goal of the new ordinance is to make developers more accountable for lots they might try to sell which are not suitable for septic tank systems, thus worthless to the person who is likely to buy the land thinking they have just invested in paradise. It is also intended to protect groundwater quality and coastal waters.

A developer who doesn't provide a guarantee in writing that the lot will perk may be a rare breed, but a few are indeed out there. In a draft of the new ordinance, the Brunswick County Planning Department staff recommends rather strong language, that each lot in a proposed subdivision be capable of service by a septic system or that a community sewer system shall be installed.

Developers have raised questions. What about proposed subdivisions where some lots may perk while the others won't? They are concerned that should one or more lots not meet state septic system requirements then the entire project would be rejected by the planning board.

A committee formed to look at this provision came up with an alternate wording, that each lot shall be capable of service by a septic system or the final plat recorded at the register of deeds office must bear the following label: Warning, these lots may not be suitable for human habitation.

While such a warning would likely scare a potential buyer clear out of the county, it is the planning department's job to protect consumers from risky land deals. It is the health department's job to help protect against environmental pollution from septic systems that will not work.

While tourism and new home construction is the hen that lays the golden egg in Brunswick County's economy, there has to be a solution, perhaps a compromise.

It's not asking too much to mandate that a high percentage of the lots in a proposed subdivision pass a perk test before the plat can be approved by the planning board.

Requiring a clear majority of lots to meet standards for safe living would force developers to leave wetlands alone, make it perhaps too risky to pursue large projects that would place coastal waters at risk.

Anything less would be uncivilized.

False Spring Fever Strikes Again

It's winter, but the daffodils don't care. They're bursting into bobbing dots of color all over. Let the groundhog see his shadow, they still don't care. It seems like spring, therefore they must act like spring.

Some of us are almost as confused as the flowers. Never mind that the temperatures could dip low again at any time. All we want to do is dig, dig, dig. It is almost as pressing as the urge to sneeze brought on by the early pollen.

The urge to plant and nurture is overwhelming, as strong as any nesting instinct. It's probably part of the master plan for mankind, too, rooted in species preservation.

Sandstorms may complicate the waging of war in the Middle East; young men may stand to lose their lives. Digging helps put all these things in perspective and gets the blood moving faster.

Apparently there are a lot of us out there overstimulated by the mild weather and sunshine we've been having lately. Another month and we'd be calling it spring fever. This time of year maybe "false spring fever" is better.

How can you tell if you've got it? It starts with the gardening catalogs that begin arriving after Christmas.

Of course you've not got a serious case until you're caught polishing the shovel, rake and trowel at night, drawing sketches on the table napkins of where you'd like to plant what or doing rough calculations on how much Osmocote it will take for that new flower bed.

These people can be found shopping garden supply stores which were abuzz with activity all week long as temperatures reached into the 70s. One customer was back for her second vehicle load of azaleas. While one employee was weighing out handfuls of seed for an early cool-season garden, another was answering questions about fertilizer and mulch and loaded up customers with onion sets and cabbage plants.

A lot of other folks were looking around and dreaming, planning, if not planting, their 1991 gardens.

It was a heady experience, as you might imagine, but not as good as actually getting out there and digging. Some of us have even taken to dreaming about digging in the dirt. Ask Don. The other morning I woke up with the entire yard rearranged and scrambled for paper and pencil to jot down the plan before it disappeared.

I'm blaming it on Bruce Williams. Earlier that day I had read in his column that aucubas like shade. My two green and gold bushes look more like black and green bushes and are in full sun. Complicating the project: the only part of the yard that gets any shade is already planted with something else.

Don didn't know it, but the notes were for him, too, directions for our next do-it-yourself project. Let me break the news to him, okay?

Susan Usher



Have You Hugged Your Dying Tree Today?

In Chapel Hill, there is this humongous tree on the edge of campus that is older than the university itself.

It now stands on a commercial lot, at a dark corner of a parking area to an apartment complex surrounded by Greek fraternity and sorority housing. Over the years, the people at Chapel Hill have been both kind and cruel to this huge tree which became quite a star recently in the local newspapers there.

Because it is so close and yet so far away from the maddening college crowd, the tree has served for years and years as an island of isolation, a spot for reflection, where future doctors and lawyers mapped out their lives while resting in the folds of its grandfatherly lap. And occasionally it would be visited by a few pot smokers (from what I've been told).

At some point in the past, the tree began to suffer from a form of disease that ate away at its trunk. A huge chunk rotted away but the tree survived. Hands helped to break away bits and pieces that were left clinging for life as people continued to frequent the spot.

Eventually, a hole had formed in the trunk, large enough so that a person could actually sit inside the

Terry Pope



tree (I hope you are still believing this because it is true.). Finally, the tree was able to ward off the disease, but the hole remained forever. The tree's branches and trunk reached as high as ever, only the base was weakened by the hole and the lack of support on one side.

That didn't stop students or kids from meeting or playing around the tree; it actually gave the huge tree a new personality, made it unique and easily recognizable.

The tree quietly regained its composure and did what a good tree should do, provide shade and help keep the area ecologically balanced. Developers came and one day noticed the hole in the tree and how students had kept it a tradition over the years to gather there, for no practical purpose than to just pass time and to socialize.

To these onlookers it was an eyesore, a useless piece of timber, a lame excuse for a tree that was tak-

ing the place of valuable commercial property.

They wanted to chop the tree down, claiming the disease was going to eventually cause it to die and come tumbling to the ground. There was only one problem. Chapel Hill has a town tree ordinance aimed to protect nature and its greenery from the kind of green that developers love so dearly.

When the developers carried their case to the town, instead of getting permission to cut the tree down they were ordered instead to hire a tree specialist to diagnose the tree's problem and to work toward corrective action to repair its hollowed trunk. The developers, stunned, argued that it would be cheaper to just cut the tree down. They lost their appeal.

Today, the tree has been patched and is under the care of a botanist. Conservationists have declared it a major victory for the village (what nature lovers still call the growing town of Chapel Hill).

This story could not have happened in Brunswick County. There was hope that the Brunswick County Planning Board was going to include in a new subdivision ordinance (that it is in the process of drafting) a tree preservation requirement. That would have made it a violation for developers to carelessly

destroy native hardwoods when building on a lot.

That provision now appears in danger of elimination from the ordinance. Planners want it taken out. They want area developers to have the right to bulldoze the land to nothingness before a structure is built on a deserted lot.

Ironically, last week, county school children each received a pine seedling to plant, courtesy of Brunswick Keep America Beautiful and International Paper Corp.

Arbor Day is some time soon and President George Bush is proposing that we increase the nation's tree coverage by a billion trees per year during the next decade to help reduce global warming, a changing of climates due to destruction of the earth's rain forests which is causing our planet to become ecologically unbalanced.

According to a pamphlet distributed by the Brunswick County Parks and Recreation Department, a Michigan State University study estimates that a tree over a 50-year lifetime generates \$31,250 worth of oxygen, provides \$62,000 worth of air pollution control, recycles \$37,500 worth of water and controls \$31,250 worth of soil erosion control.

Indeed, the world is a bit unbalanced, and not just ecologically.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Ordinance Permits Adequate Outside Lighting

To the editor:

It is with great sadness that I read your biased message to the public (Feb. 21 issue) wherein you equate unlighted beaches with loggerhead turtle habitat and thieves.

It is clearly a message with malice in that it seems to mock those many turtle program volunteers who spent many hours, both day and night, attempting to conserve a natural resource.

You could perform a real service to this community by printing, in its entirety, the Holden Beach lighting Ordinance No. 12-89 so that intelligent citizens, independent of your bias, could:

(1) determine that the ordinance has nothing to do with sea turtles

and that it was passed over a year before the turtle program was initiated.

(2) determine that the ordinance does not prohibit security lights, only requires that lights on poles be lowered to 10 feet in height.

(3) determine that the ordinance continues to allow personal house lights to include spotlights, porch lights, area way lights, dock lights, etc.

(4) consider that at the effective date of ordinance #12-89 which was November 6, 1990, only 56 out of approximately 1700 homes had lights on poles above the 10 foot height limit. Surely, lowering these few lights will not create a public security threat.

(5) consider that 10 foot high security lights illuminate a normal front yard area. Add to this the use of spotlights, porch lights, etc. around a building, and I submit that even the most timid of souls will feel secure-based on light.

(6) consider that light, in itself, does not prohibit crime. Ask those citizens of Washington, D.C. that have lights everywhere. For that matter, thieves also operate during daylight hours.

(7) Consider that the lighting ordinance was passed Nov. 6, 1989 after a public hearing and supported by an overwhelming majority of residents. I believe that this issue is only resurfacing so that a few "would-be" commissioners can use

it as a campaign platform.

The unfortunate point of all this is that your newspaper has twice printed half-truths concerning the lighting ordinance, and now you attempt to correlate thieves and sea turtles.

Where have you mentioned 10 foot poles versus 20-30 foot poles? To quote a part of the ordinance (15-6.18 Outside Lights) "it is the intent of this section to permit sufficient outside lighting to provide for the safety and security of citizens while preventing undue distraction to residents or guests."

I believe fair-minded citizens will understand that you have tried to suggest that Holden Beach residents (See LETTERS, Following Page)

We're All In The Wrong Business

It's only the end of February, but spring is in the air.

The temperature was in the 70s last week. Things are blooming. Local kids are getting ready for the upcoming baseball season.

Even some Major League baseball players started checking in for spring training last week. Hey, the season is only a month or so away.

But some of these big league athletes are still sitting at home. The problem is, they're still trying to work out their contracts for the year. They all love baseball, you know, but they're not going to play for free. They're not crazy.

So far this year, there have been some unbelievable deals arranged around the baseball diamond. In case you haven't been following it in the sports pages, these men eke out a pretty nice living by playing a game.

The shocker of the year has been the deal given to Roger Clemmons, who is a pretty good pitcher for the Boston Red Sox.

Doug Rutter



Clemmons recently signed a contract for \$5.38 million a year. That's more money than just about everybody else will make in a lifetime.

Not only is Clemmons the highest-paid player in baseball, he might be pulling in the highest hourly wage on the planet.

As a pitcher, Clemmons only plays every four games. And since he plays in the American League, the Red Sox have a designated hitter to bat for him.

I think it's safe to say that Clemmons has a pretty light work schedule. He puts in a few hours a week and spends the rest of the time

spitting tobacco juice and counting his money.

If he starts 45 games a year, which is pretty realistic, Clemmons makes about \$120,000 for each game. That's \$13,283 for each inning he pitches, as long as he finishes every game and none of the games go into extra innings. That's \$40,000 an hour if the game lasts three hours.

Of course, Uncle Sam gets his bite out of Roger's pie. But if the man known as The Rocket goes out on his day off and endorses a sneaker or fast food joint, he's back in business.

You think Roger worries about what his light bill is going to be next month or if he'll be able to make that car insurance payment? I doubt it.

If you ask me, his salary and the salary of most other baseball players are way out of line. Clemmons makes 269 times as much money as a well-paid school teacher. Something is not right.

Pitchers aren't the only ones making money in baseball. Oakland Athletics outfielder Jose "The Cry Baby" Canseco makes \$4.7 million a year. He gets by.

Dwight Gooden, pitching ace of the New York Mets, is one of the guys who was still trying to work out a deal with his team as of last week.

Gooden, who has a pretty good arm of his own, heard what Clemmons got and turned down a deal worth more than \$4 million a year. "It's a start," was what his manager told the press.

I probably would react a little differently if I were offered \$4 million a year to throw a ball. After picking my lower jaw off the floor, I probably would say, "It's a deal."

I don't like to brag, but I was a pretty good second baseman in Little League. You know, I think I'm in the wrong business. On second thought, we're all in the wrong business.