

Ocean Isle Board Undecided On Sewer Engineer

BY DOUG RUTTER

Which engineering firm should be hired to design an expansion of the Ocean Isle Beach sewer system?

Town officials wrestled with that question but made no decision when they gathered at town hall Tuesday morning for their monthly meeting.

Ocean Isle Beach Commissioners have been talking with representatives of three engineering firms: Andrew and Kuske of Shallotte, Houston and Associates of Shallotte and Boney and Associates of Raleigh.

"All three firms are very qualified," Mayor Betty Williamson said. "We want to make sure we make a decision that's in the best interest of Ocean Isle Beach."

After meeting in executive session for 40 minutes Tuesday, commissioners instructed Town Attorney Elva Jess to draft an engineering service contract the three firms can study.

Town commissioners met with representatives of the three firms March 21 to talk about the town's sewer treatment needs. The three firms were chosen from a field of six that met with the town board in February.

"All three firms are very qualified. We want to make sure we make a decision that's in the best interest of Ocean Isle Beach."

—Betty Williamson
Ocean Isle Beach mayor

Ocean Isle officials are considering having a holding pond constructed at the sewer plant so wastewater could be stored until it could be applied to spray fields.

The town could use the holding ponds in the summer to store excess wastewater, and then spray the water in the fall when the tourists are gone and water usage slacks off.

The east end of Ocean Isle Beach is the only area that isn't served by the existing sewer system.

Code Amended

Off the island, some people who own land in the Ocean Isle Beach area will have to start following new building rules designed to minimize flood damage.

Town commissioners amended the flood damage prevention ordinance Tuesday to include the extraterritorial area—mainland property within a mile of the town limits.

Building Inspector Druied Roberson said the code change creates a new flood zone on the mainland where there could be shallow flooding in a 100-year storm, which is a storm that has a 1 percent chance of occurring in any year.

People who build homes or businesses in the new zone will have to make sure the finished floor is at least two feet off the ground.

Roberson said some lots in Branchwood Bay and Tarheel Acres and land near the Ocean Isle Beach Golf Course will be affected.

Other Business

In other business Tuesday, commissioners:
 ■Voted to enter into a grant agreement with the N.C. Department of Transportation so the town can receive \$30,000 to help pay for widening the airport runway. The town also will pay \$30,000 for the project. Commissioners also authorized the mayor to proceed with paperwork so the town can receive an \$87,500 matching grant next fiscal year for land acquisition at the airport.

■Postponed further action on a town request for the Army Corps of Engineers to study the need for dredging Shallotte Inlet. The corps recently reported that money isn't available for the study, and nothing could be done without authorization from Congress.

■Heard the monthly building inspection report for March. Roberson issued four permits in the ETA on a construction valuation of \$38,100 and collected \$500 in fees. In town, the inspector issued 26 permits on a construction valuation of \$887,533 and collected \$7,184 in fees.

■Voted to proclaim April as Keep America Beautiful month.

ROBINSON LISTS PRIORITIES

Director Says Older Adult Program Facing Rough Time

BY TERRY POPE

Director Ronnie Robinson believes his Brunswick County Department of Older Adults faces a rough road ahead as state and county governments attempt to coordinate services for a growing elderly population.

"The next two or three years is going to be very critical for our aging program," Robinson said.

A March 1991 state aging services plan adopted by the N.C. Department of Human Resources would mandate that county governments develop and improve certain programs for the aging and impaired, at a time when state budget deficits are reaching an all-time high. The N.C. General Assembly is to consider the plan during the current session.

The state must cut about \$400,000 from its aging services allocation to counties this fiscal year, but Brunswick County's department isn't expected to feel the impact from such cuts right away.

"We will still get the same amount of state funding as last year," Robinson said.

That amount is around \$188,000 administered through the Region O Council of Governments, which oversees aging programs in Brunswick, New Hanover, Pender and Columbus counties.

About 48 percent of the Department of Older Adults' yearly budget is allocated by Brunswick County commissioners, Robinson said. The remainder comes from federal and state grants.

The state budget shortfall means some programs Robinson would like to see expanded may be put on hold. At a Region O public hearing Monday in Shallotte, several older adults commented on what they be-

lieve should be top priorities in funding for the 1991-92 fiscal year.

Robinson said the hearing was held at a senior citizens center in Shallotte rather than at the government complex in Bolivia to show what the buildings are used for. About 50 senior citizens attended the hearing.

Several said the Leland area needs a building that would be used primarily as a senior citizens center. The Leland community building is used during the day by senior citizens but is scheduled out to other groups during the evenings.

Better transportation was also a request from one senior citizen, who asked for more vans and better buses.

Robinson said he will present his own list of priorities: expansion of home-delivered meals; improved medical transportation; an improved nutritional program; rehabilitation of housing for the elderly; and renovation of county-owned buildings for senior citizens centers.

The State Aging Services Plan was developed as a long-range guide to prepare for future growth in North Carolina's senior citizen population. Between 1980 and 2010, the state's

65 and over population is expected to double to almost 1.2 million people. During the same period, the state's 85 and over population is expected to more than triple.

The N.C. Division of Aging estimates that Brunswick County's senior citizen population of 65 or older will increase from 7,127 in 1990 to 14,347 by the year 2010. During the same 20-year period, the number of residents age 85 and older is expected to jump from 497 to 1,771 persons.

"I think the county overall is doing a super job for our seniors,"

Robinson said. "It's a program that's not just for the poor. It is strictly for the 60 plus and above, regardless of income."

According to the aging services plan, the top three priorities for the 1990s listed by counties were in-home services, transportation and housing for the elderly. The main goal of the plan is to enable older adults to secure and maintain maximum independence and self-reliance.

"If we don't watch out, if we're not very careful with our priorities," Robinson said, "we're going to lose it."

More Indictments Follow Sunset Beach Burglaries

BY TERRY POPE

Three men charged in connection with a string of break-ins at Sunset Beach face additional charges of burglary this week.

Monday a Brunswick County grand jury indicted Roger Dale Godwin, 34, of Tabor City, on 12 additional counts of burglary, and two other men, Albert Lee Soles, 36, of Clarendon, and Bobby Lynn Watts, 23, of Whiteville, on 13 additional counts of burglary each.

The charges stem from a series of break-ins Jan. 27 of oceanfront homes along East Main Street. Sunset Beach Police Officer Lisa Hoagland arrested the men during an investigation.

It is believed that 36 homes were broken into. Goods taken from the homes were left in piles at different locations on the island and some were transported to Columbus County.

The indictments state the men broke into and entered the homes between 8:30 p.m. and 2 a.m. with the intent to commit larceny.

On March 18, a grand jury indicted the men on other charges relating to the break-ins. Godwin was indicted on 23 counts of burglary and 16 counts of breaking and entering.

Watts was earlier indicted on 23 counts of burglary and four counts of breaking and entering.

Soles was previously indicted on 23 counts of burglary, 16 counts of breaking and entering and one count of preparation to commit burglary. He is accused of having in his possession a pry bar, screwdriver, flashlight, binoculars and ski mask when arrested by Ms. Hoagland.

The grand jury also issued the following indictments Monday:

■Wilbert Leroy Hufton, of Brunswick, Columbus County, for assault with a deadly weapon with intent to kill inflicting serious injury, burglary, and arson. He is accused of breaking into the home of Jesse Long in Ash on Feb. 21 and stabbing his wife, Vickie Hufton, with a knife. Hufton is also accused of setting fire to the home of Waddell Evans of Route 2, Ash, on June 24, 1990.

■Raymond Adoff Hill, 40, and Linda Dianell Hill, 35, both of Shallotte, with maintaining a vehicle for the keeping and selling of controlled substances and possession with in-

tent to sell and deliver cocaine. The two were charged by Shallotte Police Officer George Samek on Dec. 21, 1990, for allegedly having in their possession a gram of cocaine.

■Scott C. Herring, 26, of Route 2, Shallotte, and Rodney Keith Suggs, 23, of Route 1, Ash, each for felonious breaking and entering, felonious larceny and felonious possession of stolen goods. They are accused of breaking into a store in Ash owned by Hillburn Evans on Jan. 9 where jewelry, batteries, two rifles, 15 cartons of cigarettes and \$325 in cash, with a total value of \$1,256.50, were reported missing.

■Kenneth Elton Hooper, of Route 1, Leland, with possession of a weapon of mass destruction. Hooper allegedly had in his possession a sawed off shotgun with an 11 7/8 inch-barrel when he was arrested by Brunswick County Sheriff's Deputy Ken Messer on Dec. 24, 1990.

■George David Wray, 36, of Route 1, Currie, with driving while impaired after having been convicted of DWI three or more times within the past seven years. According to the indictment, Wray was convicted in New Hanover County for DWI on

April 19, 1989, on Jan. 17, 1989, and on Jan. 7, 1985. He was stopped by Deputy Messer on U.S. 17-74-76 near Leland on Dec. 16, 1990.

■Robert Dean Rantz, 40, of Route 3, Supply, with driving while impaired after having been convicted of DWI three or more times within the past seven years. According to the indictment, Rantz was convicted of DWI in Salisbury on June 13, 1989, in Wilmington on Nov. 1, 1988, and in Fayetteville on Dec. 20, 1987. He was stopped by Officer Samek in Shallotte on Feb. 24.

■Danny Edward Larson, 29, of Wilmington, with abandonment of a child for more than six months and

failure to support. Larson is accused of refusing to provide support for his nine-year-old daughter from April 1984 to Dec. 14, 1990, and with concealing his whereabouts with the intent of escaping his lawful obligation to support the child.

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Ash Family Sues Funeral Service, Casket Company

An Ash family is suing a local funeral company and a Missouri casket manufacturer for what they claim is negligence in the February 1989 burial of a family member.

They are asking the court to award them more than \$1.5 million.

Roberta G. Simmons and her family filed suit in Brunswick County Superior Court March 25 against Coble Funeral Service Inc., which has a branch in Supply known as Coble Ward-Smith Funeral Home, and Amedco Funeral Supply Inc. of Springfield, Mo., a casket manufacturer.

Joining the suit with Ms. Simmons are Steve Simmons, Gene Allen Simmons and Elizabeth Geraldine Simmons.

According to the suit, Elijah C. Simmons, Ms. Simmons' husband, died Feb. 10, 1989, and was buried on Feb. 13. The family's attorney, William Powell of Shallotte, said Simmons was buried in a family mausoleum near their home in Ash.

The lawsuit contends that in May 1989 the family discovered air pockets in the mausoleum seals. An attempt was made to reseal the mausoleum, but in July 1989, according to the complaint, the family noticed odors coming from the tomb.

In September 1990, fluids were seen coming out of the mausoleum, the lawsuit states, and the walls were stained.

The complaint maintains the family was told that a York casket manufactured by Amedco was a sealer casket, allowing nothing to enter or

exit so the body would be preserved. It asserts that Larry Andrews, a representative of Coble, later told the family that a valve on the casket would allow gases to escape.

The complaint accuses Coble of negligence in failing to tell the family that the casket had such a valve. Other than the family's contact with Andrews, no one from Coble's has called or talked to the family, the suit states.

"Even after a decision had been made to open the mausoleum and transfer the body to a new casket, no representative of Coble ever talked with the plaintiffs or advised them of this," it states.

The incident has caused the family humiliation and severe mental anguish, the suit contends.

It claims the casket, under a 50-year warranty by Amedco, was defective because it did not resist elements as the family was told it would do.

The family is seeking from Coble in excess of \$60,000 in compensatory damages and punitive damages for infliction of mental anguish, embarrassment, humiliation and breach of warranties, it states.

It is also asking for \$500,000 from Coble for deceptive trade practices and that the amount be trebled as allowed by law.

The lawsuit asks in excess of \$20,000 from Amedco in compensatory and punitive damages and interest on all amounts.

It also asks for attorney fees and that a jury decide the case.

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