

State Law Allows Coastal Towns To Control Personal Watercraft

BY DOUG RUTTER

Sunset Beach, Ocean Isle Beach and Holden Beach are among a group of southeastern North Carolina coastal towns given the power to regulate personal watercraft along their shores under a new state law.

State Rep. David Redwine, who has seen people ride personal watercraft dangerously close to swimmers at Ocean Isle Beach, introduced the bill earlier this year in the General Assembly.

Concerned about the safety of residents and visitors, Ocean Isle Beach officials had asked for the law. Redwine later wrote to the other beach towns in his district and

asked if they wanted to be included in the local bill.

Besides the three South Brunswick Island beach towns, the law applies to Long Beach, Yaupon Beach, Caswell Beach, Topsail Beach, Atlantic Beach, Carolina Beach, Wrightsville Beach and Lake Norman, located near Charlotte.

"It's permissive. It doesn't tie their hands," Redwine said. "They can regulate it so it suits their particular situation."

Redwine said he has seen people riding personal watercraft in the surf at Ocean Isle and coming within a few feet of hitting young swimmers.

"I was sitting on the beach watching it,

and I must have had six people come up and ask me to do something about it," he said.

The legislator said he witnessed one incident at Ocean Isle Beach that nearly resulted in a fist fight. Redwine said people also have complained about the odor created when watercraft are refueled on the beach.

Sunset Beach Town Council adopted an ordinance in April 1989 regulating the use of personal watercraft in the ocean and finger canals.

The vehicles are prohibited in the canals and must stay at least 300 feet from the beach and fishing pier. The rules in the ocean apply April 1 through Sept. 30 between the hours of 7 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Town Administrator Linda Fluegel said the community hasn't had a lot of problems with the reckless operation of personal watercraft. "It's only when it's causing wake that it gets people upset," she said.

In most cases, Mrs. Fluegel said police officers prefer to ask people to follow the rules than write a \$25 ticket.

"We would rather have people do it because they're asked to rather than because they were given a ticket," she said.

Holden Beach Commissioners adopted a similar ordinance last summer, which applies to personal watercraft and boats. It prohibits the operation of all types of

powered watercraft within 500 feet of the beach and fishing pier April 1 through Sept. 30 between the hours of 7 a.m. and 6 p.m.

The ordinance also prohibits watercraft from operating in the finger canals "at a speed in excess of idle speed or at any speed that creates a noticeable wake."

Ocean Isle Beach officials have not adopted rules regulating personal watercraft, but they have discussed an ordinance off and on over the last two years.

Redwine said other legislators liked the local bill, and it might be amended next year to apply statewide. "Once they found out about this, they all wanted their area added to it," he said.

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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12/31/99
BOX 162
SPRINGFORT NC 28134



Twenty-ninth Year, Number 38

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Shallotte, North Carolina, Wednesday, July 25, 1991

25¢ Per Copy

36 Pages, 3 Sections, 1 Insert

Lightning Kills Golfer

BY DOUG RUTTER

A Charlotte teen-ager died after being struck by lightning Saturday afternoon at Ocean Isle Beach Golf Course.

Brunswick County Coroner Greg White identified the victim as 19-year-old Gerald David Harben.

Ocean Isle Beach Fire Chief Terry Barbee said an emergency call came in around 12:30 p.m. Saturday. The first responder's crew drove its four-wheel-drive vehicle onto the golf course, where the man was lying on the ground next to the green on the second hole.

"His friends were doing CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) when we got there, but I didn't think he was going to make it," Barbee said.

The first responders took Harben to the golf clubhouse, where a Shallotte Volunteer Rescue Squad ambulance was waiting.

Barbee said rescue workers continued life-saving efforts on the way to The Brunswick Hospital. The man was pronounced dead on arrival.

Harben was playing golf with three friends who were staying with (See LIGHTNING, Page 2-A)



Harvesting The Crop

Migrant workers help harvest tobacco on the A.W. Clemmons farm in Supply early Tuesday. Workers got an early start because of the summer heat and humidity. Brunswick County Health Director Michael Rhodes said persons working outside should wear hats and drink plenty of water to help beat temperatures in the upper 90s. "People need to be cautious and stay in the shade," he said.

STAFF PHOTO BY TERRY POPE

Health Board Upholds Firing Of Supervisor

BY TERRY POPE

The Brunswick County Board of Health apparently is standing behind the firing of the county's animal control supervisor by the county health director, and an 11-year veteran of the health department.

Following a four-hour, closed-door meeting Monday, the board recommended that Health Director Michael Rhodes "follow the county personnel policy in the matter that they reviewed," said Rhodes.

Rhodes said Tuesday the board's order apparently upholds his personnel action taken against Zelma Babson, who received a 10-day suspension on June 11 and was fired from her job on June 25.

"That's the way I interpret it," said Rhodes.

The board has five working days to officially notify Ms. Babson in writing of its decision. It met with Ms. Babson and her attorney, Sheila McLamb of Shallotte, in executive session Monday during an appeal of Rhodes' personnel decision.

The board met with Ms. Babson for two hours in executive session on May 13, but issued no statement afterward.

Ms. Babson, of Ash, said Tuesday that she had not been offi-

cially notified of the board's decision and didn't know if she would pursue the matter to the State Personnel Commission if her appeal is denied.

"Once I get the letter and see what the decision is," she said, "then I'll know what to do."

Ms. Babson has called the personnel action taken against her unfair.

Since the firing last month, she has remained unemployed, saying she doesn't want to commit to another employer with her job status still uncertain.

All county animal control workers fall under a competitive service employee policy adopted by the State Personnel Commission in June 1990, said County Attorney David Clegg.

The health director is responsible for personnel action. If an employee feels the action to be unfair, he or she can appeal the decision to the board of health.

If the employee disagrees with the board's decision, he or she may then file a grievance before the State Personnel Commission.

Mrs. Babson had been employed by the department for 11 years.

Incumbent Mayors File In Shallotte, Varnamtown

BY DOUG RUTTER

Incumbent mayors in Shallotte and Varnamtown and two Shallotte aldermen have filed for office in the past week as the 1991 municipal election filing period passed the half-way point.

Shallotte Mayor Sarah Tripp and Varnamtown Mayor Judy Galloway are seeking re-election in November, according to Brunswick County Elections Supervisor Lynda Britt.

Shallotte Alderman David Gause filed for re-election last week at town hall, according to clerk Sandy Hewett, while Alderman Joe "Junior" Hewett filed for election to the seat he holds now by appointment.

Mrs. Tripp was elected to the town board in 1985 and again in 1989 before being appointed mayor last year. She replaced former mayor Jerry Jones, who resigned to take the District 2 seat on the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners.

Gause is seeking his third four-year term on the town board. Hewett was appointed earlier this year to fill Mrs. Tripp's seat on the board of

aldermen.

Mrs. Galloway is seeking election to a second two-year term as mayor of Varnamtown. Nobody has filed for the three seats up for election on the town board.

No more candidates have filed in Calabash, Sunset Beach, Ocean Isle Beach or Holden Beach in the past week, according to county and town election officials.

Oak Island

At Long Beach, Joan Altman became the second candidate to file for mayor. She made an unsuccessful bid for town board in 1989.

Incumbent Mayor Johnny Vereen hadn't filed for re-election at the county government center as of Tuesday afternoon.

James R. Somers, a former mayor who lost elections in 1985, 1987 and 1989, has filed for town commissioner.

Carlton "Gene" Frazier also has filed for the town board, bringing the total number of commission candidates to five. Three town board seats are available this year in Long Beach.

Elsewhere on Oak Island, Esten "Jonnie" Gillis has filed for a seat on the board of commissioners.

Lucille Laster is seeking one of the two available seats on the Southeast Brunswick Sanitary District Board. The district is located between Southport and Oak Island.

Northern Brunswick

Two incumbents have filed for re-election in the past week in northern Brunswick County, according to Ms. Britt.

Eulis Willis is seeking re-election to the Navassa Town Council, and Councilwoman Carolyn Hamilton has filed in Sandy Creek.

Candidates have until Friday, Aug. 2, at noon to file at town halls or the county elections office in Bolivia. The filing fee is \$5.

Candidates Listed

Other candidates include the following:

- Calabash:** Jon Sanborn, commissioner, District II.
- Sunset Beach:** Mason Barber, mayor; Cherri Cheek, council.

Ocean Isle Beach: Betty Williamson, mayor; Debbie Fox, commissioner.

Holden Beach: James Shafer, mayor; Sid Swarts, David Sandifer and Larry McDowell, commissioner.

Boiling Spring Lakes: Steven Mark Stewart, mayor.

Southport: C.B. "Cash" Caroon and Norman R. Holden, mayor; Mary H. "Meezie" Childs, alderman, Ward I; Nelson Adams and William W. Delaney II, alderman, Ward II.

Long Beach: H. Michael Oxford, mayor; Jean Gray, William D. Easley III and Bobbie Larrison, commissioner.

Caswell Beach: Jack Cook, mayor.

Leland: Rev. S.L. Doty Jr., mayor; Jane Gilbert and Thomas Hyatt, council.

Sandy Creek: Louis A. Blouir and Brenda Gaye Mitchell, council.

Belville: Kenneth D. Messer Sr., mayor.

Dosher Hospital Trustees: Charles D. Johnson, Gib Barbee and Eugene Tomlinson Jr.

Dog Observed For Rabies After Biting Man's Hand

BY TERRY POPE

A mixed boxer that bit a man on the hand in Leland last Wednesday is being observed for rabies.

As of Monday morning, the dog appeared healthy and showed no signs of the disease, said John Crowder, environmental health supervisor I with the Brunswick County Health Department.

"It was reported that the dog was foaming at the mouth," said Crowder. "That was not the case at all."

The dog, owned by Garland Lewis of Mt. Misery Road, dug itself out of a fence last Wednesday morning, said Crowder.

It then went next door and entered a neighbor's car where Travis Johnson, 26, of Shadow Oak Mobile Home Park, was sitting.

The dog bit Johnson on the hand, said Crowder.

Johnson was able to free himself from the dog and walked to the door

of the owner's home. A woman there saw Johnson's bloody hand and called the sheriff's department, said Crowder.

"That's how we got involved in the case," he said.

Crowder is filling in for Zelma Babson, who was fired as animal control supervisor last month by Health Director Michael Rhodes. She has appealed her firing to the health board, and a replacement has not been named.

Johnson was taken to New Hanover Regional Medical Center in Wilmington for treatment. Since the dog accidentally got loose from its pen, Lewis will not be charged, said Crowder.

"The owner took full responsibility for the problem," said Crowder, and has agreed to cover medical expenses related to the bite.

The dog was placed inside a (See DOG, Page 2-A)

Group Offers Sunset Beach Boosters Alternative To SBTA

BY SUSAN USHER

Sunset Beach area residents looking for an alternative to the Sunset Beach Taxpayers Association need look no further than a new group that calls itself Friends and Neighbors of Sunset Beach Inc.

The group reflects the geographic base from which it expects to gain members, and the emphasis it places on people who live in the area influencing the community's future direction.

"We're talking about the people who live here, not 'snowbirds' so to speak, getting more involved in making decisions," said Macon McDavid, acting chairman of the recently chartered nonprofit organization. "I think we are the future of Sunset Beach."

The group is open not only to residents and/or taxpayers of the town, but also to people in the surrounding area. "There are no boundaries—only that they are interested in Sunset Beach," said Mayor Mason Barber, who said he believes the group can have a positive role in the town.

Friends and Neighbors of Sunset Beach Inc. began with a meeting of approximately 20 like-minded area residents and will make its formal debut with an organizational meeting sometime this fall. In the meantime, Ms. McDavid said organizers are getting calls at

home from people wanting to join the group.

Cherri Cheek is acting treasurer. Directors are Dean Walters, Al Morrison, Ed Kaylor, Larry Cheek and Don Safrin.

"I think we can be a positive force and have a voice in things," said Ms. McDavid. "It's been said we're against the beach, but that's not true. We came here because of the beach."

The group's ultimate goal is to improve the quality of life for those who choose to live there.

To that end the group is interested in fostering a "spirit of cooperation" in the community rather than the "polarity" that now exists among property owners; promoting protection of the beach through education and information; supporting measures to protect the general environment; ensuring continued public beach access; and increasing safety awareness of residents and visitors.

Walters and Ms. McDavid said the group also aims to "counteract the outside forces that claim to represent Sunset Beach and attempt to control its future course."

"I think that people are tired of hearing everything that comes from a certain group as always negative," (See NEW GROUP, Page 2-A)



DIRECTORS Dean Walters (left) and Al Morrison flank Macon McDavid, acting president of the new Friends and Neighbors of Sunset Beach. They're among the 20 or so area residents organizing to offer an "alternative" viewpoint in Sunset Beach affairs.

STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER