

# Holden Beach Moves Ahead With Sewage Management, Sidewalks

BY DOUG RUTTER

Holden Beach officials moved forward this week on two long-standing proposals to establish a wastewater management program and build sidewalks along Ocean Boulevard.

On a unanimous vote, commissioners have asked the new town manager, Gary Parker, to develop a job description and work out other details for a sewage management entity.

Town officials haven't decided how the program will work or how it will be funded. But the idea of the entity is to monitor and ensure that septic tanks and other wastewater systems on the island are being maintained.

Parker, former town manager of Erwin, received his instructions during his first day on the job. He was given 60 days to work out the details and recommend a specific program.

"That's a significant vote right there," Mayor John Tandy said. "I would just pat these guys on the back for that one."

Commissioners first endorsed the management entity last spring while working on the 1990 land use plan update.

Since then, the town's planning and zoning board has recommended that a wastewater management division be set up to document the location and capacity of existing septic tanks and recommend and implement a maintenance program.

The division would inspect and test for pollution, determine the feasibility of alternative systems and

work to educate homeowners, under the planning board proposal.

Sid Swartz, a former planning board member who is coordinating the management entity for the town, said there are no other programs in the country to serve as a model. "Whatever we set up is going to be best for Holden Beach," he said.

At a workshop last month, N.C. State University soil science professor Dr. Michael Hoover said septic tanks can be a long-term solution to wastewater management if they are properly maintained.

He said a management program could help ensure maintenance and also open the door to alternative systems, which require more monitoring than septic tanks but could allow for the development of land unsuitable for septic tanks.

In a related matter Monday, commissioners gave the building inspector the authority to "close down" houses with malfunctioning septic tanks.

Inspector Dwight Carroll said one system on the island had been operating for two weeks while it was uncovered and open on top. He said the opening was large enough for a child to fall in and drown.

At another location, Carroll said sewage had been running out of a septic tank for a month, preventing a neighbor from using his house.

The building inspector said the Brunswick County Health Department usually gives owners 30 days to repair the systems, even if they create an immediate health hazard.

Commissioner Kenner Amos said he recently saw a septic tank near



GARY PARKER (right) takes an oath of office Monday as new manager of Holden Beach. Administering the oath is Mayor John Tandy.

his house being pumped out. "They're failing left and right on us right now," he said.

**Sidewalks Coming**  
After several years of talking about sidewalks, town commissioners voted Monday to seek bids for a concrete walkway and start construction.

Based on their discussion, commissioners plan to build a sidewalk on the north side of Ocean Boulevard, somewhere between Jordan Boulevard and Sand Dollar Drive.

Town officials are worried about the safety of people who walk, jog and ride bicycles on the side of Ocean Boulevard, where traffic is

usually heavy during the summer. "We have more potential of someone being killed by cars than somebody drowning," Commissioner Gay Atkins said Monday. She has been a major proponent of sidewalks for years.

The town has had \$40,000 in the budget for sidewalks since the 1989-90 fiscal year. Gus Ulrich, the outgoing interim town manager, estimated that would pay for 5,600 feet of five-foot-wide sidewalk.

**Plan Adopted**  
Commissioners adopted the town's third land use plan update Monday, ending a process that started about two years ago.

Town officials say in the plan that they want to maintain a "quiet, family-oriented beach community of primarily single-family residences with limited commercial development."

The land use plan includes development policies and provides "a blueprint for future growth so that growth will occur on the community's own terms rather than in a haphazard fashion."

The Holden Beach Planning and Zoning Board did most of the work on the land use plan, working with consultants from Henry Von Oesen and Associates of Wilmington.

Changes and additions that were requested by the N.C. Division of Coastal Management delayed adoption of the plan by several months.

"It's been a long time," Mayor Tandy said Monday. "The wheels of government turned slow on that one."

The N.C. Coastal Resources Commission should give final approval of the plan when it meets in September.

**Other Business**

In other business Monday, commissioners:

- Delayed adoption of an ordinance requiring bulkheads on all canal lots before construction. Commissioners sent the rule back to the planning board. The proposed rule does not address whether landowners would

be required to maintain bulkheads or what would happen if there is an existing bulkhead.

- Adopted an ordinance setting the year-round speed limit along all of Ocean Boulevard at 35 mph. The limit used to be 45 mph west of the fishing pier during the off-season. The speed limit on all other streets is 25 mph.

- Agreed there is no need for a referendum on a proposed change in the 35-foot building height limit. Earlier this year, town officials discussed raising the height limit to offset changes in federal flood elevations. Some builders say the changes could keep people from building two-story homes and prevent homeowners from rebuilding storm-damaged homes.

- Adopted a preliminary assessment resolution and set a public hearing for Sept. 9 on the paving of Burlington Street. The board also authorized the town manager to accept bids on the paving of Salisbury and Shrimp streets. Work should begin after Labor Day.

- Voted to dispose of a 1984 sanitation department pickup truck.

- Made no decision on whether to continue membership in the Cape Fear Council of Governments. The group's new director, Jerry Walters, attended the meeting Monday and urged the town to continue its membership.

## Town Plans Removal Of Underground Gas Tank

Holden Beach will remove its underground gasoline storage tank before new federal rules take effect that require monitoring and special insurance.

Commissioners voted Monday to hire the Wilmington engineering firm Henry Von Oesen and Associates to supervise the removal, which will be done by town employees.

Chris Militscher, environmental resources manager with Von Oesen, recommended the 1,000-gallon tank

be removed as soon as possible. The tank stores gas which is used in town police cars and other vehicles.

Militscher said options include replacing it with an above-ground tank, a state-of-the-art underground tank or getting gas from a local gas station.

Holden Beach will pay Von Oesen \$1,160 for the engineering, construction, inspection and monitoring services. The engineering firm will ensure the tank is removed

according to state guidelines.

Militscher, who worked 10 years for the Environmental Protection Agency, said underground storage tanks have become "a national plague on our environment."

He said 40 percent of the underground storage tanks in North Carolina are leaking, and even a small amount of gasoline can contaminate a water source for 20 years.

Owners of leaking tanks face

finer for pollution and high costs to remove contaminated soil, he said. Carolina Beach has paid more than \$150,000 for the removal and cleanup of an underground tank that was leaking.

New regulations that will take effect in September will require more monitoring of underground tanks, Militscher said. Owners of underground tanks also will be required to purchase insurance starting in October.

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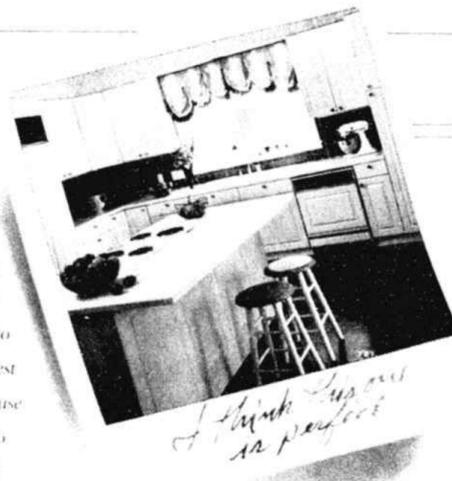
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*What a great idea! It'll brighten up the entire hallway. I love the shape. And it'll be easy to put in. The only real question is, how do I pay for it?*

*It seems I spend all of my time in the kitchen. So I decided to make it the best room in the house. Now how do I pay for it?*



*I can picture it now. Hardwood floors. Recessed lighting. Maybe even a stone fireplace! It'll be a great room. Now how do I pay for it?*



*It's amazing how fast they've grown. Maybe it's time to add another bathroom. The kids will love it. And we could use the privacy. Yeah, that would be nice. Now how do I pay for it?*



*The living area can be blue. The kitchen, a warm peach. And the exterior? Definitely pearl gray with white shutters. It'll look great inside and out. Now how do I pay for it?*



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