

# County Commissioners Dump 'Unfair' Garbage Fees

BY TERRY POPE

In a surprise move Monday, Brunswick County Commissioners voted unanimously not to charge county residents a fee for garbage disposal. The decision clears the way for the printing and mailing of property tax bills, which are running about a month behind schedule. Tax Administrator Boyd Williamson said a Cary firm will print the bills this week. They will be mailed no later than Sept. 1, which is the state deadline, he said. Commissioners have studied the parcel fee bill closely since it passed the N.C. General Assembly in July, but they didn't like what they saw.

"This bill would not have been fair," said Commission Chairman Kelly Holden. A large number of mobile home owners and renters would legally avoid paying a fee, said Holden. House Bill 86 would have given the county authority to charge each of its 29,000 improved parcels, or lots with a dwelling or structure on them, an equal fee to raise the \$1.8 million the county will pay this year for garbage disposal and recycling. A person owning a mobile home park or apartment complex would pay the same fee as a person with a single home on several acres of land. Individuals in the mobile home park, or renters that also generate trash, would not have to pay.

"It's not what we asked for," said Holden. Brunswick County had asked the General Assembly for a bill that would allow the county to charge a one-time fee for all property owners in the county, not just for improved lots. The fee would have ranged from \$15 to \$20. It had asked that the bill expire before the next budget session. County Manager David Clegg said other counties jumped on Brunswick County's proposal and it became open game. To charge improved parcels and to raise the \$1.8 million, the fee would now be close to \$60, he said. Holden said he did not know if there is a county in the state that got what it actually wanted with the re-

vised parcel fee bill. The item was a hot topic at the N.C. Association of County Commissioners' convention in Winston-Salem this weekend, he added. "I don't know of any county that's charging the fee," said Holden. The county must now turn to other areas to fund the solid waste department. A N.C. Supreme Court ruling last week will return \$250,000 to the county from the Lower Cape Fear Water and Sewer Authority that will now be used to fund solid waste disposal, said Holden. Clegg said other funds will come from state sales tax revenues, the capital reserve fund, budget cuts and the county's fund balance. (See COMMISSIONERS, Page 5-A)

# THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

HOAG & SONS BOOK BINDERY  
12/31/99  
PO BOX 162  
SPRINGPORT MI 49284

Twenty-ninth Year, Number 4 ©1991 THE BRUNSWICK BEACON Shalotte, North Carolina, Thursday, August 22, 1991 50¢ Per Copy 42 Pages, 4 Sections Including Supplement, 2 Inserts



BRUNSWICK COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COORDINATOR Cecil Logan (second from left) searches the Holden Beach surf for a drowning victim Sunday with fireman Ronnie Rabon (left) and rescue squad member Robert McLeod.

## Beaches Escape Damage From Passing Hurricane

BY THE NEWS STAFF

Brunswick County beaches escaped the first threat of the 1991 hurricane season with little or no damage to sand dunes and coastal property. But Shalotte Point meteorologist Jackson Canady hopes Hurricane Bob taught area residents a lesson as it skirted the North Carolina coast Sunday and headed north. "I hope people took the warning seriously because we had a real threat," Canady said Tuesday. "We were fortunate it did not materialize." The drowning of a swimmer at Holden Beach Sunday was attributed to the hurricane. But otherwise, local beach officials said the storm caused very few problems. Canady says people should use the experience to evaluate how prepared they are for the rest of hurricane season, which peaks next month.



A SURFER enjoys a huge wave Sunday near Holden Beach Fishing Pier. Waves up to 12 feet high shook the pier as they broke, spraying those at the end of the span.

### FIFTH DROWNING THIS SEASON

## Holden Surf Claims Another Victim

BY DOUG RUTTER

A young man vacationing at Holden Beach drowned in the surf Sunday while swimming in rough seas churned up by Hurricane Bob. The body of John Gateau, 22, of Morningside, Md., was recovered nearly 24 hours later about 200 yards from where he first entered the ocean. Gateau was the fifth person to drown off Holden Beach since May in swimming- or boating-related incidents, and the second to drown in the surf near the west end of the island. The local drowning was one of three deaths attributed to Hurricane Bob, which skirted the North Carolina coast over the weekend before making landfall in the Northeast. Another swimmer drowned in heavy surf Saturday night at Myrtle Beach, S.C., and an assistant train conductor was killed Monday near New York City when a tree smashed into the front of a commuter train. Brunswick County Emergency Management Coordinator Cecil Logan said Gateau and a friend were body surfing in the ocean ad-

acent to 1200 Ocean Blvd. West just before noon Sunday. Gateau was out beyond the breakers, and the friend was walking out toward him. The friend reported that Gateau disappeared behind one of the waves and he never saw him again. The Brunswick County Sheriff's Department was notified of the possible drowning at 11:43 a.m. Logan said Holden Beach Police, Tri-Beach Volunteer Fire Department and Coastline Volunteer Rescue Squad responded immediately. Logan and other emergency personnel searched for the man from the beach for several hours Sunday afternoon. Ocean Isle Beach's water rescue team circled the area where Gateau had been swimming in their surf boat. Fire and rescue personnel remained on the strand until dark, and police continued to drive a vehicle up and down the beach until they were forced off by the rising tide. The search resumed Monday morning around 6:30 a.m. Emergency personnel used the Brunswick County Emergency Management, Coastline VRS and Southport Volunteer Rescue Squad

boats to search for the body. Logan said the *Salty I*, a local charter fishing boat, and the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department airplane also assisted in the search. The body was found at 11:15 a.m. Monday just beyond the breakers. Logan said the victim was found about 200 yards east of where he had entered the water. The U.S. Coast Guard station at Oak Island was busy preparing for the hurricane and never sent a boat to help with the rescue effort, Logan said. Gateau was visiting the beach with his family, girlfriend and several friends. "The family was really upset," said Logan. With Hurricane Bob within 300 miles of the beach, Logan said the ocean was very rough Sunday. The storm created waves up to 12 feet high at Holden Beach. Given those conditions, Logan said the man probably shouldn't have been swimming. "I didn't question the family, but I question it myself," he said. "People come down on vacation. I reckon they think they can go in the (See HOLDEN, Page 2-A)

### COUNTY FINANCES \$7 MILLION PROJECT

## Water Tankers Ordered For Shalotte Point

BY TERRY POPE

Some Shalotte Point residents with dry or contaminated wells may be getting temporary help soon from the county. Brunswick County Commissioners Monday instructed County Manager David Clegg to see if water tankers can be pulled to the Point to serve families there. The board also voted unanimously to borrow up to \$10 million in certificates of participation to finance the county's Phase III and III-A capital improvements project that will route new water lines to the Seaside and Shalotte Point communities. The project, expected to cost up to \$7 million, is in the design stage with actual construction to begin next year. Shalotte Point, a community south of Shalotte plagued with water problems, has been asking the county for water several years. "A number of wells have dried up," said Commissioner Kelly Holden. "It's getting critical." Several Shalotte Point residents attended the commissioners' meeting Monday but did not speak. They have met individually with commissioners to ask for emergency help. "We went to see what they could do for us," said Joyce Land of Shalotte Point. "The tankers are one of the things we had asked for." Holden said some residents believe their wells are tainted with gasoline. Others have watched

their wells go dry in recent months, he said. "Even with all of the rain we've had recently, it's getting critical," said Ms. Land. She knows of three families whose wells have gone dry. "I'm sure the rest of them need help, too," she said. "It's going to help quite a few people out." Commissioner Jerry Jones said Shalotte Point has reached the same emergency situation as the Jennifer subdivision near Leland. A number of families there cannot use their wells because of gasoline contamination. For more than a year, the county has supplied water to Jennifer subdivision residents with a tanker that must be routinely filled by county employees. A line from the tanker feeds into the residents' wells. The tanker is on loan from the Du Pont company in Leland. The county has recently approved the construction of a water line from the Malmo treatment plant to that subdivision. On the Shalotte Point problem, Jones added, "We want to do what we can to assist those people. If we can get tankers in there it should help." Commissioners voted unanimously to seek up to \$10 million in certificates of participation to finance the projects to Seaside and Shalotte Point. State law allows counties to finance projects up to \$10 million without a referendum. The county will sell certificates to investors and pay the money back with interest from cus-

tomers fees and water assessments. The county will only borrow as much as it needs to finance the estimated \$7 million project. No one spoke at a public hearing held at the start of the meeting Monday to receive input on the county's plan to borrow money for the water project. The project will route a new main line from Shalotte and join an existing line on N.C. 179 at Seaside to relieve an increasing demand for county water in the Sunset Beach and Calabash areas. That new line will travel down U.S. 17 to Grissetown, then along N.C. 904 to Seaside. A second phase will carry lines from N.C. 179 south of Shalotte to the Point community. Special assessment districts will connect Point residents to the main lines. By a 3-2 vote on Aug. 5, the board fired Houston and Associates of Shalotte, engineers for the Phase III and III-A projects. Commissioners cited unnecessary delays in the design work as the reason for breaking its contract with the firm. Upon Clegg's recommendation Monday, the board voted 3-2 to negotiate a contract with Camp, Dresser and McKee of Raleigh to complete the project. Commissioners Donald Shaw and Jones voted no. The motion will allow Holden to sign a contract agreement with the new engineers without a vote of the board.

## Redistricting Choice Offers Fewest Changes

BY TERRY POPE

The county's 1983 and 1991 electoral redistricting maps have a lot in common. Of the five options presented to Brunswick County Commissioners Monday, the one they chose represents the fewest line changes, said Chairman Kelly Holden. Voters will decide Nov. 5 if the plan commissioners want is also the one that residents want. It was previously thought the vote would be non-binding, but County Manager David Clegg said the plan must be approved by a majority of voters, or else another referendum will be necessary. A local bill (H. B. 630) is expected to pass the General Assembly next year giving the county authority to redistrict in the future without a binding referendum. The county's five districts must be redrawn to reflect the county's growth since the 1980 U.S. Census, from 35,777 to 50,985 residents, or about 43 percent. (See REDISTRICTING, Page 2-A)

*Tasteful Diversions*  
DINING AND ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE  
INSIDE THIS ISSUE