

For Sunset Taxpayers, Opening Of New Access A Positive Step

BY TERRY POPE

The Sunset Beach Taxpayers Association wants to polish its public image.

At their Labor Day weekend meeting Saturday, members said they want the public to be more aware of their positive influence in town affairs, an example being the opening of Lot 1-A on the island this weekend as a public access to the beach.

News that the controversial extension of Sunset Boulevard to the ocean had opened as a public parking area was greeted with a round of applause from the approximately 60 members present Saturday.

"That property would not exist had it not been for this organization," said Cletus Waldmiller, SBTA president.

The SBTA carried its fight to the N.C. Supreme Court last year to get the 100-foot-wide vacant ocean-front lot declared a public access to the beach over the objections of its purported owner, Ed Gore.

"Not one person on the town council has said, 'Thank you,' to the Sunset Beach Taxpayers Association," said Waldmiller.

The SBTA argued that early maps showed Sunset Boulevard extending to the Atlantic Ocean, but a 1963 plat designated the area as Lot 1-A. No formal withdrawal of dedication was filed with the town and public use of the property was not restricted for many years by the owners.

The town will now spend \$146,000 to build a boardwalk and covered sitting area for the handicapped and elderly at the access-



PUBLIC PARKING opened on Lot 1-A at Sunset Beach over the Labor Day weekend. The Sunset Beach Taxpayers Association say their court battle to open the public beach access will help ease parking problems on the island.

STAFF PHOTO BY TERRY POPE

way, which is just west of the fishing pier.

"All of that I think is great," said Waldmiller.

Members will ask the town if a sign can be placed at the lot indicating the SBTA's role in obtaining the access.

"I'd like to name it after a guy that got a bloody nose over there," added Waldmiller, referring to Frank Nesmith, one of the plaintiffs in the five-year court battle.

Twelve years earlier, Nesmith had been convicted of trespassing and Gore had been convicted of assault in an altercation that took

place at the lot. Nesmith had parked his car there and then sat on the hood, openly defying Gore's efforts to prevent use of the land for public access to the beach.

Waldmiller said the goal of the organization is to keep Sunset Beach a family beach. An alternative public interest group has also formed that calls itself Friends and Neighbors of Sunset Beach.

While the SBTA has fought against replacing the floating barge bridge to the island, the new group says it favors improved access to the island.

Some SBTA members say they

are tired of being placed in a negative light. People should view the group's fight against the bridge as a positive step to help protect the island, said one member.

"I dislike the negative connotation that has been placed around our necks," added Waldmiller.

The SBTA "Save Our Bridge" campaign to prevent the construction of a high-rise bridge to the island has become a costly battle.

Last November, a U.S. District Court judge ruled that the state had failed to do necessary environmental impact studies on the building of a new bridge and canceled permits

for the project.

On June 17, the state dropped its appeal of the SBTA court victory and agreed to do an environmental impact study, which will include public hearings and may take up to three years to complete.

"It's going to be up to us to be vigilant," said Waldmiller. "When there are hearings, it's going to be up to us to have our opinions heard."

Attorney James Maxwell of Durham hopes a settlement with the state will pay some of the legal fees accumulated by the SBTA in its battle to save the barge bridge. Se-

cretary Fran Pelletier said the group has paid Maxwell around \$12,000 and still owes \$16,286, even with a discount.

"The amount is being negotiated at this time," said Waldmiller. "I don't want to go into it any further than that. We would hope that we would be able to recover enough to cover our indebtedness."

The group also discussed the impact of the proposed annexation of 100 homes in Sea Trail Plantation. Waldmiller said mainland annexation continues to dilute the votes of island residents. He said it should take more than three of five council members to change the zoning of property. Presently, a tract can be rezoned by the vote of three of five council after two readings.

When one member suggested the island declare its independence, like the Russian states have recently done, Waldmiller replied, "The coup failed."

"I would be lying to you if I said we had not thought of this and discussed this," said Waldmiller. "We even had our attorney investigate this. The investigation is not finished, but I would prefer to work within the system."

The group also heard from Albert Wells, immediate past president, who encouraged members to become involved in the Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA) land use plan which is required of coastal counties. It is another way property owners can express their concerns about the future growth of the area, he said.

Normal Weather In Forecast

Area residents can expect typical early September weather over the next few days.

Shallotte Point meteorologist Jackson Canady said he expects temperatures to range from the upper 60s at nighttime into the upper 80s during the daytime, with less than three-quarters of an inch of rainfall.

"We should see a fairly normal weather pattern over the next few days," he said. "I don't see any indication of the heavy monsoon type rains we had for several weeks."

For the period Aug. 27 through Sept. 2, Canady recorded a maximum high of 93 degrees on Sept. 1 and a minimum low of 65 degrees on Sept. 2.

A daily average high of 89 degrees and an average nightly low of 70 degrees combined for a daily average temperature of 79 degrees,

which Canady said is "just about normal".

He measured just over a half-inch of rainfall, .56.

Canady said the area received about 21 to 22 inches of rainfall during July and August, which is above the average of about 15 inches, but not excessively so.

Typically those two months are the wettest of the year and account for about 30 percent of total annual rainfall.

The South Brunswick Islands normally receives about 50 inches of rainfall a year. That means this season the area received approximately 40 percent of its annual rainfall during those two months instead of the usual 30 percent.

The heavy rains followed a dry period, which is typical. "One extreme usually follows another," said Canady.

Six Charged In Highway Narcotics Check Friday

Six people were charged over the Labor Day weekend with drug violations at narcotics checkpoints randomly established on Brunswick County highways.

Buddy, a drug dog with the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department, aided in the arrests, said Lt. David Crocker, narcotics officer.

The checkpoints were established with the help of the N.C. State Highway Patrol and officers from Southport and Long Beach Police Departments.

Six people were charged on drug violations while 35 charges were filed for traffic violations, said Crocker.

Since Operation RIP (Rural Interdiction Program) began in March, officers have arrested 62 people on drug charges, he said.

Charged in the operation were the following:

■William Brett McKeithan, 21, of 1018 Captain Adkins Road, Southport, was charged with felony possession with intent to sell and deliver marijuana, maintaining a vehicle to keep controlled substances and possession of drug paraphernalia. McKeithan's 1981 Toyota was seized by Southport Police Officer C. A. Williamson.

■Todd Bryant Zoller, 19, of 28 Elisha Drive, Wilmington, was charged with maintaining a vehicle to keep controlled substances, possession of drug paraphernalia and possession of malt beverages under the age of 21.

■Rowan Christopher Betts, 16, of Orchard Knoll, Apex, was charged with misdemeanor possession of marijuana and misdemeanor possession of drug paraphernalia.

■Thomas Allen McNeil, 33, of Oak Villa Drive, Southport, was charged with possession of drug paraphernalia.

■Leon Lawrence Miller, 42, of Route 5, Box 395-A, Leland, was charged with misdemeanor possession of marijuana by State Trooper Roy Murray.

■Herbert Dale Carling, 43, of Union Lake, Mich., was charged with misdemeanor possession of marijuana and maintaining a vehicle to keep a controlled substance.

The N.C. Highway Patrol also made 16 arrests for traffic violations, said Crocker.

"We may set up more checkpoints in the future," said Crocker. "They have been successful for us."

Whiteville Man Killed

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The accident occurred around 10:20 p.m.

Driver Charged

A Shallotte woman was charged with a stop sign violation following a two-car accident near Shallotte Point last Thursday morning.

Valorie Clarissa Holden, 16, was charged after she failed to yield the right of way at the intersection of Gurganus Road (S.R. 1151) and Bay Road about 2.7 miles east of Shallotte, Caulder reported.

Her 1988 Chevrolet struck another 1988 Chevrolet driven by Larry Clyde Holden, 49, of Shallotte, who received minor injuries. Holden was traveling north on Gurganus Road, Caulder said.

Ms. Holden received serious injuries in the 7:45 a.m. accident. Both were taken to The Brunswick Hospital for treatment.

Both vehicles received \$3,500 in

damage.

Motorcyclist Injured

A motorcyclist was seriously injured when his bike ran into a pickup truck on the U.S. 17 Shallotte bypass Saturday around 10 a.m.

Scott Thomas Williams, 21, of Camp Lejeune, was traveling south on U.S. 17 at a high rate of speed when his Kawasaki ran into the rear of a pickup truck, Caulder reported.

The motorcycle hit the rear of a 1988 Ford pickup driven by Larry Field Marshall, 50, of Supply.

Marshall had pulled into the left lane to turn onto Smith Avenue (S.R. 1357) when the motorcycle was unable to stop, Caulder reported.

Williams was charged with careless and reckless driving. He was taken to The Brunswick Hospital by ambulance.

Both vehicles came to rest in the median. Damage was estimated at \$1,500 to the truck and \$4,500 to the motorcycle.

BY TERRY POPE

Brunswick County may contract its garbage collection out to a private company, if the price is right.

County Commissioners Tuesday voted 4-1, with Frankie Rabon voting no, to seek bids from private industries for trash collection and the county's recycling program.

Saying the county could probably save money, District 2 Commissioner Jerry Jones' motion asked that County Manager David Clegg and County Engineer Robert Tucker prepare bid proposals.

"If the figures come back and don't show a savings," said Jones, "I'll be surprised."

The county budgeted \$1.8 million this fiscal year to cover both direct and indirect costs of garbage disposal, said Clegg.

The county had planned to seek bids for its recycling program this quarter, said Clegg. A private company would use the county's existing trash disposal sites, he added.

Bids have been advertised for a new trash disposal and recycling center on N.C. 904 near Grissetown. The county will seek bids next on a similar center for N.C. 211 near Supply.

Rabon asked why landfill operations was not part of Jones' motion.

"Based on conversations I've had with different people," said Chairman Kelly Holden, "the concern is with liability. Companies are not really interested in assuming the county's liability."

Jones said the county could "better control" operations at the landfill in Supply.

"We're just hoping to save some money by doing this," added Holden.

Head Start Concerns

Roscoe Butler, board member for the Four County Community Services Head Start program, said commissioners have never endorsed Four County. The lack of action is causing the Brunswick County Head Start centers to lose grant money, he said.

"This money is really allocated for Brunswick County," said Butler. "It's being split to those that's done their duty to accept it."

At the time a contract was awarded to Four-County to operate the county's Head Start centers, commissioners had decided not to become involved.

The issue became controversial when two agencies, Seneland and Four County, competed for the Brunswick County program.

Instead, commissioners asked that the Atlanta Head Start office choose a provider.

Clegg said such Community Service Block Grants also help to fund other county projects. He doesn't believe an endorsement is the only problem.

Holden asked Clerk to the Board Kelly Barefoot to check minutes from previous commissioners' meetings to determine what action needs to be taken.

Other Business

In other business Tuesday, commissioners:

■Re-established the Navassa Volunteer Fire Department. When the town's rescue squad dissolved last year, the fire department's charter accidentally got dropped as well, said Brunswick County Fire Marshal Cecil Logan. The firemen have never stopped fighting fires or assisting other departments, and its county funding has not been cut.

■Heard from Sybil Mitchell-Simmons, of Royal Oak, who asked that her community be served, as requested in a petition, by Coastline Volunteer Rescue Squad, instead of Shallotte Volunteer Rescue Squad, when 911 begins. Doug Ledgett, county Emergency Medical Services director, said the departments are still working to resolve the matter.

■Read, but took no action, on a memo from the Cape Fear Council of Governments regarding offshore oil drilling along the North Carolina coast, for which the N.C.

Environmental Advisory Board will receive public comments until Oct. 29.

■Adopted a resolution to change the structure of the Wilmington Area Transportation Advisory Committee to include a representative from Brunswick County (Commissioner Donald Shaw) and one from Leland and Navassa. Shaw had been the county's only representative on the board.

■Amended a contract with the state that forces the county to pay medical bills for juveniles held in custody at the detention center in Wilmington. Clegg said the county has no choice but to pay the bills or to build its own juvenile detention center. Rabon voted no.

■Accepted two budget amendments, adding \$6,000 to the sheriff's department in federal drug fines, and increasing the Department of Older Adults budget by \$2,694.

■Voted to stop giving occupancy permits to mobile home owners until a \$25 fee for underpinning inspections, as mandated by the state, is paid. There is a backlog of files at the building inspections department because homeowners get the final occupancy permit but skip the underpinning inspection and fee, said Clegg. Rabon voted no.

■Appointed Glenda Walker of Leland to the Southeastern Economic Development Commission.

■Declared Sept. 28 as National Hunting and Fishing Day in Brunswick County and declared Sept. 8-14 as International Literacy Week in Brunswick County.

■Endorsed the concept of joining the Resource Conservation and

Development program, which helps residents tackle rural development projects through volunteerism and federal grants. No county funds are involved. The county dropped out of the program in the 1970s.

Traffic Jam

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Wilmington, admitted Tuesday that the problem related to the wording of the written orders he sent to the Sunset Beach Bridge Friday, which were posted on the bridge.

The directive was not as detailed as the understanding reached by the other parties involved. The notice directed the tenders to open the bridge to boat traffic every half hour "for 15 minutes" during the indicated time blocks.

"It didn't specify it," said Messer, "but I figured if they didn't have a vessel there they would know not to hold the bridge open. They did it anyway."

He hastened to add, "I don't think it will ever happen again. It will be cleared up. I can guarantee that."

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