

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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PAGE 4-A, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 1991

Some Choices Are Expensive

When is the cost too great?
 That's the question Brunswick County's UOB must ask itself when deciding whether to proceed with special assessment water districts (SADs) in the Winnabow/Town Creek area.
 Not just monetary cost, but the cost of losing public trust.
 At a public meeting last week, residents of the proposed super SAD 19 area—which would include 572 parcels and several smaller proposed SADs—made it very clear that the cost of the proposed project or projects was too much for the typical property owner, initially estimated at \$1,879 to \$3,495 per parcel, depending on the road, and likely to drop only slightly if the projects are combined.
 While they might enjoy having access to county water, as residents pointed out at a recent public meeting, that same sum of money would allow a household to buy a lot of pumps and a lot of wells.
 They would just as soon wait a while longer on county water, until they have a few more neighbors or more spare cash.
 Residents were also quick to point out something that at least one county water official claimed not to know—that one or more housing development projects are planned on most of the roads in question. But the developer and residents of those subdivisions will not help pay the cost of getting the water to them, only the cost of the smaller lines that run through the subdivision itself.
 We've seen the county UOB force water on at least one other community, in the Holden Beach area. Residents of the community said, adamantly, that they didn't want and couldn't afford county water.
 But if they didn't get water, it was going to increase the cost of providing water to a planned subdivision that would be located behind that neighborhood.
 The county went ahead with the SAD, over the objections of the people who were going to have to pay.
 With as many neighborhoods as there are that want water and are willing to pay for it at apparently almost any price, why not skip the ones that can't afford it or don't want it right now?
 Nothing bothers taxpayers worse than having something shoved down their throats. It tastes like medicine, with the message, "Take it, it's good for you and someday you'll be glad you did."
 That may be, but if so the county hasn't done a good job of explaining how that might be.
 Rural county residents still haven't forgotten the promise made by certain county officials when the bond referendum was up for a vote, that the bonds would pay for water service to all county residents.
 Rural residents have waited and waited as lines were built to the more urbanized areas along the coast. When more lines were built it was to provide more water to that same urbanizing coastal strip.
 Now, they're told they can have water, but it's going to cost a pretty penny.
 Unless the county can find some way to soften the financial blow, why force this latest bitter pill on top of the other?
 Unfortunately, while the county holds public hearings on these projects, it isn't obligated to follow the wishes of the people affected by the SADs. It can do what it darn well pleases—and please whomever it wants—in the name of growth.

Sidewalk Is Long Overdue At Holden Beach

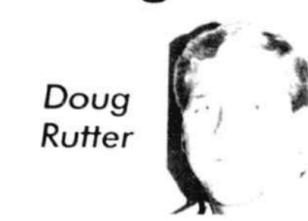
I could be wrong, but it appears that a sidewalk is in the works at Holden Beach.

Honest. It really looks like the town may finally crack open its vault and fork out some dough for a concrete walkway along Ocean Boulevard.

I know it's hard to believe. I can hardly believe it myself. In fact, I probably won't really believe it until I see the cement trucks rolling across the bridge.

Holden Beach officials have been talking about a sidewalk for years. They've had money in the budget since 1989, but the first drop of wet cement has yet to be poured.

Granted, Hurricane Hugo fouled things up two years ago. The town couldn't really afford a sidewalk after spending \$300,000 to rebuild the dunes.



Doug Rutter

There were no natural disasters to eat up the town's money last year. But commissioners were reluctant to build sidewalks with the underground utilities project going on.

I guess I can't blame them for that one. You wouldn't want to build a nice sidewalk one day and have it torn apart by trench-digging machines the next day.

So the sidewalk was delayed until this year. Holden Beach presently has \$40,000 safely tucked away in the bank, which should be enough for about 5,000 feet of walkway.

If you ask me, it would be a crime to delay construction of this mythical sidewalk any longer. The residents, property owners and visitors won't stand for any more excuses.

For one reason or another, Holden Beach folks don't agree too often. Some of them want a sewer system and some don't. Some of them want street lights and some don't. Some of them support annexation and some don't.

But the need for a sidewalk has never been disputed. In the three years that I've been following the comings and goings at Holden Beach, I can't ever recall hearing a

bad word about sidewalks.

Everyone agrees that a sidewalk on Ocean Boulevard will make the island a much safer place. As it is now, vehicles have to compete with bicyclers, walkers and joggers for a piece of the road.

Things can still change, but it looks to me like this may be the year for a sidewalk. Oh sure, town commissioners still have a lot of decisions to make about the deal.

They need to decide whether it should be on the north or south side of Ocean Boulevard and what section of the island needs it the worst.

But it shouldn't take long to iron out those last few details. I've never known the Holden Beach Commissioners to drag their feet...

On second thought, I'm not quite ready to hold my breath for that sidewalk.



Writing The Book On Building A Library

Nobody has worked harder than Edith Tillman to help build a new and much needed Leland branch of the Brunswick County Library for her community.

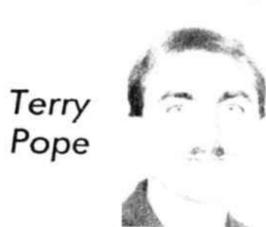
As chairman of the Leland Library Building Fund, she pleaded, pushed and combed the community for \$217,000 in donations to help build the facility. A \$50,000 state grant and \$60,000 donation from the town of Leland were part of the till.

In March, plans called for construction of the library to begin in May with a completion date in October. It's September, and no work has begun. A town road to the site hasn't even been built.

The talk around Leland is that the library was in danger of losing its state grant because the project had become bogged down in the legal shuffle, and the personalities involved have been at war.

At one time, the biggest hurdle of all was collecting enough money to build it. Once that monster was defeated, Ms. Tillman thought the rest would be easy.

Lately, she has been frustrated



Terry Pope

and angry at the turn of events. Last week, State Library Director Howard McGinn met with representatives from the town of Leland and a few members of the Brunswick County Library Board of Trustees to try to straighten out the mess and to calm everyone's emotions.

"I spent five years of my life on this," said Ms. Tillman. She feels her dream is slipping away.

The library was to be a Leland area library, not one owned by the town, which now may assume control of the project. The town of Belville has also donated \$21,000 for a Leland "area" library. Now they may want their money back, too, as tempers are starting to flare.

Leland Mayor Russell Baldwin and a few members of the town council convinced the library board to build the facility on land the town owns, behind the town hall on Village Road. The town also stepped in and redesigned the project. They enlarged it from 3,200 square feet to 4,000 square feet, gave it a different roof style and added colonial architecture and a clock tower.

The library building committee remained flexible.

"We have renegotiated twice," said Ms. Tillman. "We have changed things that people were not happy with."

Some in the community resent the town stepping in the way it did and hold Baldwin personally accountable for the delays. In his defense, Baldwin has dipped into his own pocket to donate \$1,000 to the building fund, so he appears to want what's best for residents.

The Leland Sanitary District had also offered the library board a place to build. That offer was declined, although it was a much less political invitation and probably the

best move.

At the rushed meeting last week, those involved didn't invite the one person who has been the backbone of the whole project. But Ms. Tillman heard about the meeting through the grapevine and made plans to attend. After all, she is on the library board, too.

She has in hand a contract signed by Luther T. Rogers Inc. of Wilmington who is ready to start building. She has enough funds to complete it. But the 12-member library board refused to sign the contract. This has been going on for months and months.

"The building committee has done all of the work," said Ms. Tillman. "Someone has instilled a fear in them."

Brunswick County's libraries are not controlled by county commissioners, as is the case with most other library systems. The local library trustees move at a snail's pace, meeting only every other month.

"That's one of the problems," said Ms. Tillman. "You can't get (See WRITING, Following Page)

So What's All This Flurry Over Quest?

Susan Usher

Ask any Miss America if she's not seen—in her mind's eye—herself, artfully gowned, walking down the ramp wearing a crown, carrying roses and smiling before a wildly applauding audience. That's one example of visualizing personal success.

Remember history class? One guy played General Washington and the other a fellow soldier trying to figure a way to get boots and coats and food for starving men whose toes were freezing off. All of a sudden the Revolutionary War seemed real.

The first scenario above is an example of visualization—the kind of thing Quest opponents say undermines our kids by teaching them that they, not God, are the source of all power. They see it as a tool of non-Christian religions, an aid to brainwashing and the like.

In the second, a moment in history may seem more real because of the personalities introduced. History became more than dates, places, numbers, a joy instead of an obligation. But opponents of programs like Quest would argue that the scene was an attempt "to reach the dead through a medium."

Ah! The occult, slipped in—wittingly or unwittingly—as part of a history lesson. At least that's what a stack of material provided me by Janet Pope would have us believe.

Ask yourself, Is this something we really need to worry about?

I could be wrong, but I don't think so and I'm personally glad the school board didn't think so either last Monday night.

You'll have to judge for yourself, based on your own experiences.

I listened intently last Monday night as Mrs. Pope and another mother, Jean Barber, asked the county school board to do away with a popular program called Quest. They think the program tears at the family structure and subtly involves students in aspects of the occult, Eastern religions and New Age thinking.

If Quest isn't trying to subvert our children, as they insist, what is it about? Why would a school actively choose it and why would a fine group like the Shallotte Lions Club support it? Here's what I think.

Quest attempts to help adolescents better understand and like themselves and learn some of the skills we all need to have, such as decision making and getting along

with people who are different from us.

Can it be wrong to teach a child to listen and hear out another's ideas—whether he or she agree with those ideas or not? It's called respect. It doesn't mean you have to adopt values contrary to your own, but it does mean learning that not everyone thinks like you do—even if you think they should and want to tell them so right then and there.

It means learning as my mother tried so hard to teach me, that "there is a time and a place..."

What about citizenship? Quest also has a service and citizenship component that helps young people begin understanding they have a responsibility to their communities, just as they do to themselves and their families. Students choose a project that will help their school or greater community and begin learning the joy of giving without expectation of reward. They also find out what it means to be part of a team, something those of us who aren't athletes don't always get to learn as children.

Can we expect young people to make decisions as an adult if they don't start taking some responsibility

for themselves before then? People from other countries who visit America marvel at how immature our young people are. That shouldn't surprise us.

How many times a day or week do we list the pros and cons of taking a specific action? On the other hand, how many times have any one of us—as a child or an adult—done something at the spur of the moment without having thought about the consequences and later regretted our action?

If we were lucky, that rash action didn't make a big difference. Eating a hot fudge sundae and adding on some calories generally won't change the direction of one's life.

But what about some other tiny, spur of the moment choices? Could they change a life? You bet. Accepting an alcoholic drink, crack or an unidentified pill from a friend could. Slipping upstairs after school for casual sex with a boyfriend could. The list goes on.

Ideally, most of the children in question shouldn't have too many serious decisions to make. After all, they are children, with parents supposedly guiding them along. Some may have been taught right from

wrong and perhaps know also they would suffer consequences—punishment—at home if not anywhere else should they do something unacceptable. In lots of cases there wouldn't be a "choice" at all.

But that's an ideal world, one that most of us realize doesn't exist. Many children these days are weighed with grown-up problems and fears they carry in small bodies dressed in bravado.

As for the value of a family passing along its values instead of letting a child develop his own, that assumes a family has consciously chosen a set of values in the first place.

Families and churches are opting out on some of their traditional responsibilities. It has fallen on the schools—with programs such as Quest—to try to fill at least some of the gaps in developing well-rounded young people in a society where children wearing \$100 sneakers are passed back and forth among parents like so much baggage.

No, it's not the schools' "job," but they can't do their real work unless this other stuff is taken care of first. Programs like Quest help,