

Shallotte Board Rejects Wrecker Service Bill

BY DOUG RUTTER

Shallotte Aldermen rejected a local wrecker service's bill for \$11,483 last week after meeting behind closed doors with the business owner and his attorney.

John DuBoise presented the town board with the hefty bill Sept. 18. He contends that the town owes him for storing three vehicles for more than a year and installing a motor for the police department.

Aldermen voted 4-1 last Wednesday against paying the bill. DuBoise and his lawyer, Harry Heilig, met with the board for most of a one-hour executive session that was held prior to the vote.

DuBoise billed the town \$10,085 for storing three vehicles and \$1,353 for parts and installation of a motor. He claims two of the vehicles have been stored at his shop since last spring and another since Aug. 18, 1989.

Alderman Wilton Harrelson made the motion to deny the bill, saying he couldn't determine whether it was legitimate. "The town may very well owe you some money," he told DuBoise. "I don't know this."

Town board member Jody Simmons said he based his

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—Paul Wayne Reeves
Mayor Pro Tem

vote on information from the town clerk and police chief, who said DuBoise isn't due any money.

Mayor Pro Tem Paul Wayne Reeves, the only board member who opposed the action, said he wanted the town to try to work something out with DuBoise.

He said a potential lawsuit could cost the town more than the bill. "If this thing does go into litigation, I think it's going to be an expensive ride for us," Reeves said after the meeting.

While discussing the bill last week, Reeves asked about the police department's normal procedure for

having work done on vehicles. "I don't like the embarrassment of this situation myself," he said.

Alderman Joe Hewett asked why the bills hadn't been signed by the person who had asked for the work to be done.

Mayor Sarah Tripp said the bills were never signed and were never given to the town's billing clerk. She accused the two aldermen of putting Police Chief Rodney Gause on trial.

But Reeves and Hewett disagreed. "We're just asking questions," Hewett said. "This is taxpayers' money being spent."

Harrelson, who has run a farm supply store for 35 years, questioned DuBoise's system of bookkeeping and asked why he waited so long to present a bill for work done in 1989.

He said the town must be run like a business, and if someone gave him a two-year-old bill at his store, he'd "think there was something a little screwy about it."

DuBoise said he deals with a lot of insurance companies and doesn't present a bill until the insurance agent

picks up a vehicle at his shop.

He said the town vehicles are still at his business on N.C. 130 west of Shallotte, even though he asked the police chief to remove them more than a year ago.

Besides discussing the unpaid bill last week, DuBoise said certain police officers have been harassing him and his fiancée when they drive through town.

"My fiancée cannot even come to town if they're not on her bumper," DuBoise said. "That gets old."

When Chief Gause asked DuBoise which officers had harassed him and how, DuBoise refused to give details. He said his answers would "jeopardize" the chief.

Heilig said it wouldn't be appropriate to call names because a traffic case involving DuBoise and a town police officer is pending in Brunswick County District Court.

DuBoise was one of the people who testified earlier this year in a closed-door hearing regarding the employment of Patrolman George Samek, who was suspended June 18 and reinstated July 10 on a 3-2 vote of the town board.

Council Will Take Second Look At Allowing Repeater

BY SUSAN USHER

Sunset Beach Town Council will take a second look next month at its Sept. 9 decision to ask a local communications company to remove its equipment from the town's elevated water tank.

David Kanoy of Kanoy Communications appealed to the board at its regular meeting Monday night to reconsider its decision not to renew a contract that allowed the firm to house repeater equipment on the tower.

He presented council members with letters from area businesses regarding the need for the repeater service and offered to move the equipment outside the tank. Town Administrator Linda Fluegel said Tuesday.

Council members put off a decision on the matter until they have an opportunity to read material regarding such contracts obtained from the N.C. League of Municipalities and other sources, she said.

However, they did agree Monday to allow Kanoy to keep the material at the tank until they respond to his request. He was to have removed the equipment by Nov. 1.

Kanoy had been paying the town \$50 a month. However, the amount of equipment kept in the tank had increased, Mrs. Fluegel told the council in September, and was limiting access to controls used to regulate the level of water in the tank.

Also, she questioned responsibility for paying the electric bill for heaters used to warm the communications equipment in the winter. Presently, she said, the county water system pays the electric bill.

Other Business

In other business during the 1 1/2-hour meeting at town hall, council:

- Amended the sign ordinance to allow freestanding signs for shopping centers as well as individual (but not freestanding) signs for individual stores within the center. Town Administrator Linda Fluegel said the amendment clears the way for issuance of a sign permit to Pelican Square.

- Reappointed Vernie Hickman to another three-year term on the Sunset Beach ABC Board;
- Following a public hearing, adopted an assessment resolution for paving of 33rd Street under the property owner participation plan.
- Took no action on an offer from the Sunset Beach Taxpayers Association to install handicapped parking signs at the new Sunset Beach Boulevard Extension parking area, if the town would also allow erection of a sign crediting the SBTAs role in getting the area opened to public use. Town Administrator Linda Fluegel advised that the extension is a public street with side parking, not a facility; that the town ordinances make no provisions for permitting the type of sign suggested; that the contractor has already had the handicapped parking insignia painted on the parking spaces. Police Chief J.B. Buell has requested erection of a stop sign, she said, which is appropriate and will be done.
- Adopted an ordinance for the annexation of a large section of Sea Trail Plantation effective Nov. 21. The public hearing was held in September.
- Following a public hearing, rezoned a lot near the Italian Fisherman Restaurant from residential to commercial, as recommended by the town planning board.
- Set a public hearing for Nov. 4 at 7 p.m. on a petition for voluntary annexation of a group of lots between the Food Lion shopping center and the South Brunswick Islands postal station now under construction on N.C. 904.
- Delayed action until the Nov. 4 meeting on a request from Ronald Spangler to withdraw from dedication of a portion of 19th Street to allow construction of a bulkhead. Meanwhile the town attorney was asked to check on the property involved and the effect of the requested withdrawal.

Commissioner Al Odom was absent Monday.

Calabash Eyes Zoning Change

BY DOUG RUTTER

Calabash officials are thinking about changing the town's zoning map so residents in a section of Calabash Acres could replace their mobile homes.

The subdivision east of town is split by N.C. 179. Lots on the north side of the highway have trailers on them, while the southern part of Calabash Acres is filled with "stick-built" houses.

Earlier this year, town officials zoned the area R-6, which prohibits mobile homes. While deed restrictions also prohibit trailers in the community, the land developer has sold lots in the northern section for mobile homes.

A.C. Blackburn, a resident of the area, presented a petition signed by 54 people to town commissioners last month asking them to rezone the area between Meares Street and Thomasboro Road to allow mobile homes.

"We're zoned like the Dunes,"

Blackburn complained at the Sept. 24 town meeting, referring to an exclusive golf community in Myrtle Beach, S.C.

The present zoning restrictions prohibit landowners from replacing mobile homes that are damaged by a fire or storm. It also prevents them from putting a newer mobile home on their property.

"It's destroying our neighborhood," Blackburn said.

The proposed zoning change would affect 128 lots, and Blackburn said all lot owners questioned agree with the revision. The number of lot owners contacted wasn't specified.

Blackburn said the neighborhood will become a "slum" if aging trailers can't be replaced.

Before the area can be rezoned, the Calabash Planning and Zoning Board would have to review the request and town commissioners would have to conduct a public hearing.

Seaside Intersection Turn Lane On State Panel's List

Plans for turn lanes at the intersection of N.C. 179 and N.C. 904 at Seaside go before the N.C. Board of Transportation for consideration Friday.

Sunset Beach Town Administrator Linda Fluegel said money for the project is to come from Division 3 board member Marilyn Williams' discretionary fund.

At the town council's request, Ms. Fluegel had sent copies of a resolution seeking improvements to the intersection to the Department of Transportation, Division Engineer Doug Bowers and to Mrs. Williams, of Wilmington. Bottlenecks occur at the intersection at peak periods such as Saturday afternoons, when vacation guests check in to local beach cottages and other lodgings. Periodic high traffic at the shopping center adds to the congestion.

Mrs. Williams and Bowers made two trips to Sunset Beach, first to discuss the need for improvements and then for Mrs. Williams to announce that she planned to use her discretionary fund for the project.

"She said she liked our area and thought we were doing a good job," said Ms. Fluegel, who said she explained to the DOT representatives steps the town has been taking, such as patching, to help with the state's upkeep of Main Street.

Bowers said Tuesday that DOT plans to widen N.C. 904, installing a center turning lane through the area where the shopping is to N.C. 179. Also, left turn lanes will be added on N.C. 179.

Plans also call for resurfacing N.C. 179 from Seaside to Sunset Beach and, after the main summer season ends, resurfacing of Sunset Boulevard on the causeway and the island's Main Street.

"We don't think we will be able to complete all the work in the contract by Memorial Day," he said. "We're planning on allowing the contractor delayed entry, probably after Labor Day."

Even with news of all the proposed improvements, she said some town council figures were disappointed that DOT is still not agreeing to install a signal at the N.C. 179 and N.C. 904 intersection.

"Everything takes time," she said. "But at least they're starting on it."

Bowers said that studies of the intersection show that traffic volume there continues to increase, but still does not warrant installation of traffic signals.

More Funds Sought For Work

The State Board of Transportation is expected Friday to approve an additional \$500,000 for right of way and utility work on U.S. 17 from the South Carolina state line to west of N.C. 904 at Grissetown.

The board will meet at the Highway Building in Raleigh starting at 9 a.m.

The board had previously approved \$3.4 million for the work along the 6.1-mile length of roadway. The new request reflects a revised estimated cost.

In other business the board is expected to approve these local projects:

- Paving the entrance apron to Calabash Volunteer Fire Department at an estimated cost of \$7,500;
- Allocation \$40,629 to construct an access road to serve Telechron Company in the Leland Industrial Park, which will begin operation with 70 employees and expects to expand within two years to 130 employees. Brunswick County is to build the road, with reimbursement from the state.
- Adding to state road maintenance a 580-foot extension of S.R. 1712; and, under the old subdivision rules, 6th Street and 7th Street in Sea Pines subdivision and Skipper Street and Short Street in Green Acres subdivision

- Improvements to the N.C. 904-N.C. 179 intersection at Seaside, \$50,000 (see related story, this issue);
- Name changes for 203 road in Brunswick County as part of county preparations for the 911 emergency response system. The county has been eliminating duplicate names to avoid potential confusion.

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Leland To Discuss Library

The Leland Town Council will hold a special meeting at 7 p.m. Friday to discuss the status of a new Leland area library.

The town wants to help build the library and assume control of the construction project so a \$50,000 state grant will not be forfeited.

At a meeting with town officials Monday, the Brunswick County Library Board of Trustees voted to table the matter until it can get legal advice on what to do.

Leland has donated \$60,000 and land for the \$217,000 project, but state officials now say a library board cannot own land on which a library is built.

Leland Mayor Russell Baldwin asked trustees Monday to enter into an agreement with the town in time to meet a Dec. 31 deadline for the state grant. The town would be willing to take back the land, build the

building and deed it over to the county, Baldwin said.

Brunswick County Commissioners have chosen not to discuss the issue to date. Asked Monday night by Leland Councilwoman Jane Gilbert when commissioners might take up the matter, County Manager/Attorney David Clegg said it was not the county's issue to discuss.

The library building committee, headed by Edith Tillman, has objected to plans that would deed the land back to the town and of turning the funds over to the town before the November election.

The library board is not incorporated and remains concerned about liability should it sign a building contract.

Also on the agenda Friday is a discussion of the town's street department, said Councilman George Yates.

Inmate Charged In Jail Fire

An inmate has been charged with setting a fire that forced evacuation of the Brunswick County Jail Monday night.

Mark Epps was being held on charges of writing worthless checks and unauthorized use of a motor conveyance, said Brunswick County Sheriff's Detective Gene Allen Caison. He will now be charged with burning a public building.

Approximately 50 inmates were evacuated to a holding cell in the rear of the building around 9 p.m. Monday after a fire alarm sounded.

"Afterward, they were all put back into their cells," said Caison.

Caison said Epps allegedly set a blanket and some sheets on fire in cell 16. Jailers used fire extinguishers to put out the fire.

The inmate and three jailers, Rebecca McDonald, Lewis Ward and Joey Adams, suffered from smoke inhalation and were taken to The Brunswick Hospital in Supply where they were treated and released.

Ms. McDonald also received a burn on her hand, said Caison. All of the jailers were back on their jobs Tuesday, he added.

Damage to the jail floor, walls and linens was estimated at \$400.

Units from Supply, Bolivia and Boiling Spring Lakes volunteer fire departments responded to the alarm along with Town Creek Rescue Squad.

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