

County Wants Main Line Water Customers To Pay

BY TERRY POPE

Brunswick County Commissioners served notice Monday that the cheap rides are over for customers who live along the county's main water lines.

In the past, residents on transmission lines—U.S. 17, N.C. 211 and N.C. 179—have not paid assessments, even when tapping onto the system. Bonds, repaid with tax dollars, were used to finance the capital improvements project.

Residents of Special Assessment Districts (SADs), who face mandatory assessment fees for extending water lines into their neighborhoods, have often complained at public hearings, saying they are paying for

both assessments and the bonds while the other group was not.

A policy to assess residents along the main trunk lines has been discussed by the Utility Operations Board for years, but an upcoming main trunk line project has added more urgency to its consideration.

Next month, commissioners will award bids for construction of Phases III and III-A, which will route main transmission lines to Seaside and Shallotte Point.

County Manager David Clegg told commissioners Monday it was time to settle on a policy.

The board has asked the Brunswick County Utility Operations Board for two recommendations: 1) to set

the boundaries for making the Shallotte Point community one large SAD, excluding the cost of an elevated water tower on Village Road; and 2) to set a point of delivery charge, in addition to tap-on fees, for customers not in SADs who want to tap onto the system.

Commissioners have asked that the Shallotte Point SAD boundaries be presented to the board Dec. 2, the same day the UOB is scheduled to meet an hour earlier. Commissioners also want a policy by Dec. 18 for charging non-SAD customers, possibly effective Jan. 1.

The board has asked that no grandfathering be included in the policy, thus charging all new hookups to existing transmission lines an assessment fee. Those al-

ready connected to the main lines cannot legally be assessed now, said Clegg.

"There are a great many ways to do it," said County Engineer Robert Tucker said of the proposed point-of-delivery charge or user assessment. "I'd prefer not to comment on it at this time."

The goal is to "create equity" between main line customers and SAD customers, said Tucker.

"There will be many miles of corridors in Shallotte Point," he added. "There will be a tremendous number of situations where one man and his next door neighbor would be treated differently."

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THE N.C. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION installed this oversized "signal ahead" sign with a 45 mph "advisory speed plate" and flashing yellow beacon on the U.S. 17 Shallotte Bypass Monday north of the N.C. 130 West intersection.

DOT Improving Bypass Intersection

BY DOUG RUTTER

State transportation officials have started making improvements to the intersection of the U.S. 17 Shallotte bypass and N.C. 130 West—the site of a recent double-fatality accident.

Flashing lights, textured pavement and other changes at the intersection should be finished this week or next, said Doug Bowers, division engineer with the N.C. Department of Transportation.

On Monday, workers installed oversized "signal ahead" signs near the bypass intersection. Yellow flashing beacons were placed on top of the signs, and 45 mph "advisory speed plates" were attached below. The beacons had not been activated as of Tuesday.

Shallotte businessman Steve Smith and West Brunswick High School student Misty Dawn Carmichael died from injuries sustained in a three-vehicle accident that occurred Nov. 1 when a logging truck ran a stoplight at the intersection.

Since then, local officials and Shallotte area residents have pleaded with state transportation officials to build an overpass at the intersection. They say it's especially dangerous because of traffic to and from the high school.

An overpass was discussed before the bypass was built, but it was never included in plans because it would have been costly and would have de-

layed construction of the bypass.

"Signal ahead" signs along the bypass on the north and south sides of the intersection that were 36-by-36 inches prior to the accident have been replaced with signs measuring 48-by-48 inches.

The 45 mph advisory signs do not officially lower the speed limit, but serve more as a warning for motorists, said Terry Harris, area traffic safety engineer with the DOT.

Harris said the state also plans to install six "strobe lights" at the intersection—white lights that flash when the traffic signal is red.

Two strobes facing each direction on the bypass will be installed, along with one strobe facing each direction on N.C. 130.

Rumble strips, or several patches of textured pavement, will be added on both sides of the intersection on N.C. 130.

Harris said the strips are designed to alert motorists that they are approaching an intersection.

State transportation officials will also change the timing of the traffic signals to hold traffic an extra half-second.

Instead of the all-red interval of 1 1/2 seconds, traffic will be held for two full seconds before one of the signals turns green.

Although the fatal accident prompted the changes, Harris said the wreck can't be blamed on the in-

tersection.

He said the traffic signal facing the bypass was red for at least 7 1/2 seconds before impact, and the driver of the log truck should have had time to stop.

The traffic engineer said it took at least 6 seconds for Miss Carmichael to travel through the intersection to the point where the accident occurred.

And the signal facing the bypass was red for 1 1/2 seconds before the signal facing N.C. 130 turned green.

"It was just a very unfortunate accident," Harris said, "but the accident was not created by the intersection."

In addition to the improvements, Shallotte Police Chief Rodney Gause said town officers and the N.C. Highway Patrol have been closely monitoring traffic on the bypass, particularly at the N.C. 130 intersection.

Since the Nov. 1 accident, Shallotte Police have issued 24 tickets for stoplight violations and speeding on the bypass.

Gause said news of the tragic accident and strict enforcement of traffic laws seems to be helping. People are driving more cautiously on the bypass, especially near the intersection.

"I think the word has gotten out," Gause said. "We've noticed the trucks and stuff are coming to a

complete stop now."

Despite the traffic safety changes at the intersection, Gause and other local officials still think the area warrants an overpass.

Harris said an overpass at the intersection, which could only be approved by the N.C. Board of Transportation, would cost an estimated \$4 million.

The traffic engineer said the state DOT has built interchanges at certain intersections in response to "a continuing pattern of severe accidents," but not after one accident.

To make room for an overpass, he said property owners would have to give up land presently being used for the Southeastern Welcome Center, Handee Hugo's convenience store and Shallotte Manor Apartments.

Harris noted that there are about 12 other grade-level intersections along U.S. 17 between Winnabow and the South Carolina line.

Bowers said improvements similar to those made at the Shallotte bypass and N.C. 130 West intersection will likely be made elsewhere in Brunswick County.

As the four-laning of U.S. 17 continues over the next three years, Bowers said large signs, flashing lights and rumble strips will be used at other locations, such as the intersection of U.S. 17 and N.C. 211 at Supply.

Gunman Robs Shallotte Store

BY DOUG RUTTER

Shallotte Police Tuesday were continuing their investigation of the Sunday night robbery of Hill's grocery store—the second armed robbery of a town business in less than a week.

A masked man carrying a handgun stole an undetermined amount of cash from the Main Street store Sunday around 10 p.m., said Police Chief Rodney Gause.

Gause said the man apparently hid in a store restroom until closing time, when the store manager and a bag boy were the only employees in the store.

When the bag boy went into the restroom, the man forced the employee to lie down so he could be handcuffed.

The robber told the bag boy to call the manager to the back of the store, where the robber then tied the manager's hands.

After tying the bag boy to the bathroom fixtures, the robber and manager went to the store safe, which was open.

The robber then put the manager in the restroom with the bag boy, and stole the money from the safe.

Police were not notified of the robbery until the two employees came out of the restroom around 11 p.m.

Gause said the suspect was described as a 25-year-old white male, about 5 feet 8 inches tall and weighing 165 pounds.

The police chief said the robber has a dark complexion and was carrying a nickel-plated, .45-caliber handgun.

The armed robbery at Hill's was the second of a Shallotte business in

less than a week.

On Nov. 11, a black man in his early 20s carrying a knife robbed the Handee Hugo's convenience store on U.S. 17 Business.

Police said the man fled with a "small amount" of cash and was last seen running across U.S. 17 between the Scotchman store and Shallotte Cleaners.

The suspect was approximately 5 feet 11 inches tall and weighed 175 pounds. Authorities said his hair was slicked back, and one of his front teeth was trimmed in gold.

Gause said Tuesday that police are still looking for a suspect in that case.

Anyone with information on either robbery is asked to call the police department at 754-6008.

Beacon Publishes Early Next Week

Because of the Thanksgiving holiday, *The Brunswick Beacon* will publish a day earlier next week and all advertising and news deadlines will be a day earlier.

All classified advertising must be placed by noon on Monday.

The newspaper will be available in racks and at dealer locations Tuesday. Mail subscribers in Brunswick County should receive their paper on Wednesday. Other subscribers should get their papers about the same time as usual since post offices will be closed for the holiday on Thursday, Nov. 28.

The *Beacon* office will be closed Thursday, Nov. 28.

Leland Man Dies In Single Auto Crash

A Leland man died Sunday evening when he was thrown from behind the wheel of the 1979 Jeep station wagon he was driving, said Ruby Oakley, spokesperson for the N.C. Highway Patrol office in Wilmington.

Thomas Wayne Caruthers, 29, of Lakeside Mobile Home Park in Leland was traveling east on Mt. Misery Road (S.R. 1426) approximately four miles northwest of Leland at about 6:05 p.m. when the Jeep ran off the right side of the road, according to a report filed by Trooper D.A. Lewis.

The report stated that the Jeep struck a ditch, a utility pole and a battery box and then overturned, Ms. Oakley said.

The car ended up on its left side after Caruthers was thrown from behind the wheel and killed.

Trooper Lewis estimated that Caruthers was traveling about 85 mph when the crash occurred. There were no passengers, said Ms. Oakley.

She said that Trooper Lewis reported that "alcohol was definitely involved" in the accident, but that blood test results were not known yet.

Damages were estimated at \$5,000 to the utility pole and battery box, which were owned by CSX Transportation of Navassa. Trooper Lewis estimated the damage to the Jeep at \$1,500.

(See HORSE, PAGE 2-A)

Health Board Freezes Seafood Ordinance

BY TERRY POPE

Saying it doesn't have the personnel on hand to enforce a new seafood vending ordinance, the Brunswick County Board of Health Monday tabled the proposal until June.

"We have it ready to adopt," said Bill Rabon, board chairman. "We've done the legwork on it."

But when told that existing workers did not have time to enforce the new rules, board member H.J. "Skip" Davis' motion to put the ordinance on ice until the 1992-93 budget is prepared passed unanimously.

"Then we'll see if a new position can be funded," said Rabon.

Adopting an ordinance without a way to enforce it would "encourage people not to comply" with the law, he said.

The ordinance was proposed at the request of District 3 County Commissioner Gene

Pinkerton, who raised concerns about the sanitary conditions of roadside seafood sites that do not have toilets or hand-washing facilities. Pinkerton said he was also concerned that spoiled seafood might be sold from trucks and that vendors were leaving trash at the sites.

The new ordinance would require roadside vendors to keep their seafood stored separately and on ice or refrigeration. Also, those selling from the rear of trucks or roadside stands would need a restroom within 100 yards of their vehicle. The vendor would also need a signed contract with the owner of the bathroom, giving permission to use the facility.

District 4 Commissioner Frankie Rabon, who serves on the health board, said he's glad to see the ordinance flounder.

"We're just going to shut everybody down except for the major markets," he added. "I was opposed to it from the very beginning. If people

don't want to buy from a peddler, they're going to go to a market anyway."

Both roadside and seafood markets would face an inspection three times a year under the plan, said Gary McDonald, environmental health specialist who helped draft the ordinance.

Existing markets and seafood dealers would be exempt from having to submit plans to the health department for building a sanitary market, but would not be exempt from the requirements to pass inspection, said McDonald.

The proposed ordinance had included a grandfather clause to exempt existing markets from having to upgrade their facilities, but that part was changed on the recommendation of County Attorney David Clegg.

McDonald said most markets are already up to standards.

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Area Churches To Hold Thanksgiving Service

A community-wide Thanksgiving worship service will be held Wednesday, Nov. 27, starting at 7 p.m. at St. James The Fisherman Episcopal Church in Shallotte.

The interdenominational service is open to all. It is sponsored by the South Brunswick Interchurch Council, a coalition of clergy and laypersons representing churches from across the South Brunswick Islands area.

Participants are asked to bring a can of food or other non-perishable food item for the Council's Food Bank, said the Rev. Dr. Richard W. Warner Jr., host pastor.

The Rev. Don Safrin, pastor of St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Shallotte, will preach. The St. James choir will provide music under the leadership of Susan Greene, director and organist.

Other ministers of the Council's member churches will also participate.

The annual service is traditionally hosted by a different church each year, said Warner.

St. James is located on Main Street, U.S. 17 Business, in Shallotte.