

# CRC Rejects Plan

(Continued From Page 1-A)

handed going on here and there's not."

Rhett also asked the town to delete a policy statement supporting a jetty at the east end of the island, which he said cannot be included in the plan because it's inconsistent with state policy.

"I can clearly tell them that it would be in their best interest to go ahead and make the changes," Rhett said. "I can't understand why they're balking at this."

Holden Beach Commissioners indicated at their meeting last week that they are frustrated with the land use plan update process and fed up with Rhett.

"I feel betrayed by the whole thing," Commissioner David Sandifer said. "I think Haskell Rhett has been a master of misinformation and created more problems for the town than he's solved."

The letter from the town board described the plan as "perhaps the most scrutinized and discussed issue ever to be approved by our town."

Commissioners also pointed out all of the work put into the plan. "This product represents much hands on work by our planning and zoning board. They have physically driven and walked each property shown on the maps."

Parker said at last week's town meeting he had talked with Rhett earlier this month about the number of corrections state officials have requested.

"You could spend a lifetime going over this word by word and paragraph by paragraph," Parker said.

"We've been through a lot on this thing, and it's hard to believe we're not over with it yet."

Holden Beach officials have been working on the land use plan update since November 1989, when Henry Von Oesen and Associates of Wilmington was hired to act as consulting engineer.

Three separate town boards and four town managers have dealt with the plan in one form or another during the update process, which was expected to be finished in mid-1990.

Commissioners adopted the plan for the first time last August, but it was returned when state officials found conflicts between the land classification and town zoning maps. It asked the town to make the two consistent and resubmit.

Following several revisions, the town board adopted an updated version of the plan in December. Several of those later revisions prompted recommendations from Rhett. Commissioners made several changes before adopting the plans, but not the changes Rhett had suggested.

Besides the new faces at town hall, Rhett said staff changes at Von Oesen also contributed to the delays. Four different consulting planners have worked on the plan since fall 1989.

Holden Beach officials will have to wait at least another two months to get their plan before the CRC for final certification.

The coastal commission's next meeting will be March 26 and 27 at Wrightsville Beach.

Holden Beach's 1985 land use plan will remain in effect until the 1990 plan is certified.

# County Gears Up For 1994 Tax Revaluation

BY TERRY POPE

Brunswick County Commissioners will decide next month whether to conduct an in-house 1994 property tax revaluation or to contract the work out to a private firm.



WILLIAMSON

It is a long and complicated two-year process that must begin in March, said Brunswick County Tax Administrator Boyd Williamson.

Tax values will likely increase for county property owners in 1994, but the cost of performing an eight-year revaluation will also rise, he predicted.

The 1986 revaluation conducted by W.P. Ferris Inc. cost the county \$400,000. The second lowest bid that year was \$575,000.

"The likelihood that we can do an in-house evaluation for \$400,000 is slim," said Williamson. "That someone would bid a contract at \$400,000 is unlikely today."

County officials are also concerned about shrinking space at the government center in Bolivia. Those hired to do the revaluation need office space that is not available. Portable trailer space may be needed.

"We don't have room to function under normal circumstances," said Williamson.

Commissioners are expected to solve the puzzle in February when Williamson is to attend the commissioners' regular meetings to explain the advantages and disadvantages of both in-house and contracted revaluations.

Although the county tax office has never conducted its own revaluation, it now has the capability, if additional personnel and computer equipment is also purchased, said Williamson. Some work would still have to be subcontracted.

"I don't think there's anybody in Brunswick County that may be able to do an appraisal on Du Pont," said Williamson. "There's no one here that qualified."

State law mandates a revaluation at least every eight years. Some counties choose to perform one every two years.

"It'll take 15 to 18 months to do it, at least," he said. "We have to visit it every parcel in Brunswick County."

Ferris also conducted the county's 1978 revaluation. The N.C. Property Tax Commission suggested that Brunswick County conduct another thorough evaluation—a horizontal adjustment—four years later, in 1982, which Ferris also performed.

Fifteen days after property owners received their 1982 notices, commissioners threw the new values out when angry residents protested. The company was paid \$150,000 to perform that four-year update.

Williamson said he can't predict how commissioners will want to handle the 1994 revaluation, but if his office is chosen, he says, it is ready to do the job. Workers will conduct field evaluations on every parcel to show residents that the tax office wants to list fair market values for homes and land. Some companies choose to rely on computer statistics to reach those values.

"The bottom line is, we can't do it that way," said Williamson. "If it's done in this county, there'll be a door hanger on every home in this county to let people know that we've visited that parcel."

Tax appraisers and listers hired to evaluate parcels look for new construction, alterations to homes and other improvements not noted in building inspection reports. It will take eight to nine additional tax office employees to conduct an in-house revaluation, Williamson estimates.

The program should be fully staffed by June. Field workers will then conduct parcel visits through December 1992.

Workers then enter data onto computers from January to October 1993. Property owners will receive their notices in November 1993.

Hearings and informal discussions will be held on the revaluation in January 1994. Commissioners will then have until June 1994 to accept or reject the proposal.

# Fire Victim Betty Harrelson Still In Serious Condition

(Continued From Page 1-A)

now is her respiratory system."

Mrs. Harrelson, of Bluff Drive, was admitted to the burn center Jan. 20 with first- and second-degree burns over approximately 20 percent of her body. She sustained the burns when her car rolled backward off an embankment adjoining the family's carport and caught fire.

Tuesday Mrs. Harrelson was being treated for a "touch of pneumonia," which Harrelson said is not that uncommon in such cases.

"The injury to the lungs is worse than they had expected and the burns on a small area of her back are worse than they had first thought," he continued. He said his wife is being kept heavily sedated and that her condition is "still serious."

Last Wednesday she was taken off the ventilator that had been in place since her admission, but was reconnected to it about 24 hours later.

Her condition turned critical in an episode last Friday in which her pulse rate "went out of sight" and her blood pressure fell to near zero.

"They didn't know what happened," said Harrelson. "The doctors were very frustrated. They didn't know what to do."

A heart catheter now allows closer monitoring of her condition. "Tell people that we're very grateful for all the cards and the concern everybody's expressed and to just keep us in your prayers," said Harrelson. "I'm trying to be optimistic. They think she's about on schedule in terms of progress. Hopefully she will begin to respond more to treatment soon."

Harrelson is also spending time with Frank Mogyorosi Jr., a 16-year-old county resident who was admitted to the burn center Saturday night following a fire at Brickland in which two other teen-agers were killed. Mogyorosi is also in serious condition.

"He's doing good, too," said Harrelson.

# Corps: No Plans To Dredge Shallotte Inlet

BY DORI COSGROVE GURGANUS

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers doesn't plan to dredge Shallotte Inlet any time in the near future, but the town of Ocean Isle Beach isn't giving up its efforts to see that the inlet is dredged.

Representatives of the Corps' Wilmington District Planning Division Tuesday told town officials the project doesn't have an acceptable cost-benefit ratio for users at this time. The Corps cannot consider recreation-related benefits in computing those ratios.

The Town of Ocean Isle Beach had asked the Corps to consider the project, due to the difficulty boats have in navigating the inlet.

As an alternative, engineer Beverly McKim told the commissioners that they could go ahead and get permits for the inlet dredging project, then wait until the annual dredging of the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway begins next time. Then, she said, the town could contract on an independent basis with the dredging company while it is in the area and save the cost of moving equipment to the area.

Bill Niesen, a Corps engineer who broke down the cost-benefit ratios, said that the Corps looks for the expense of a project to at least pay the community back no less than one dollar for every dollar spent, and hopefully more than that.

According to the Corps' calculations, dredging of Shallotte Inlet would yield about 22 cents of economic benefit for every dollar spent in dredging.

Niesen said the Corps considered such factors as the availability of the nearest inlet, the time and money lost to local fishing business from travel time and size of catch in alternate areas. Researchers also talked to local commercial fishermen to get a feel for their situation.

Ms. McKim said the Corps had to look at not only the initial cost of the project, but also the year to year maintenance costs involved.

"It's not a one-time dredging," she said, "we'll have to come back almost annually, especially in this area."

*"If you take away that access to the ocean, the island is hurt economically."*

—Kendall Suh  
OIB Commissioner

To dredge Shallotte Inlet to a depth of 6 1/2 feet and a width of 90 feet, said Ms. McKim, would cost \$424,000. Annual maintenance would cost another \$196,000 a year.

Dredging the inlet to a depth of 9 1/2 feet would cost around \$713,000, an annual maintenance expense of \$406,000.

These were the shallowest and deepest measurements respectively considered, she said, along with several depths in between.

The Corps also has the option of tying the project in with the nearly-annual dredging of the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway, which would save the cost of mobilization, that is, transferring the necessary equipment to the Shallotte Inlet area.

The intracoastal waterway project was begun this week, Ms. McKim said, with a mobilization cost of \$224,000, and around \$2.64 per yard for dredging. The waterway has about 277,000 cubic yards of material to be dredged, she said.

About \$200,000 could be saved by combining the mobilization costs of both projects, Ms. McKim said.

Niesen said a study of boat traffic and commerce through the inlet, in comparison to neighboring Lockwood Folly, simply doesn't justify the Corps undertaking the job.

Lockwood Folly, he said, has more boat traffic, and is on the Corps' list for regular dredging.

The Corps is not allowed by federal regulation to look at the financial benefits of recreational boating for the community, Niesen said, but could only investigate the commercial impact of such a project.

With less commercial activity in the Shallotte Inlet, he said, the user benefits were not as high as Lockwood Folly Inlet.

Ocean Isle Commissioner Kendall Suh pointed out that since commercial boats cannot pass through Shallotte Inlet, it would naturally have less traffic than Lockwood Folly Inlet.

The only factor in recreational costs the Corps can legally consider is the potential damage to recreational vessels that run aground due to the navigational danger of the inlet.

Niesen said the federal government decided several years ago "not to use recreational income as a primary tool to justify public works projects."

Suh said, "Our economy of this island is so dependent on that inlet, and we have a lot of folks who are buying real estate in this area because we have this great canal system, and we have access to the ocean. But if you take away that access to the ocean, the island is hurt economically."

"We're talking about real estate," Suh said, "and vacationers, people who spend \$1,500 a week just to stay in a house."

However, Niesen said, he and the other engineers are not allowed to look at that sort of economic situation in their study since it is considered recreational.

Audience member Rozell Hewett of Shallotte Point asked if the Corps could return the inlet to its condition before Hurricane Hazel struck in 1954, and then let natural dredging take place from there as it had in the past. He said that he is not able to get his boats through the inlet and has to go through other channels.

The printed version of the Corps' study would be sent to the commissioners in a few days, Ms. McKim said. Maps outlining the study were left for the town board to examine.

While thanking the Corps for its work with the town, Mayor Betty Williamson said the town will continue to pursue other outlets, "even as far as the federal level," to see that the inlet is dredged.

# Weather Returning To Normal

The South Brunswick Islands should be settling in to a more normal pattern of temperatures and rainfall in the next week, said Jackson Canady, local meteorologist.

Temperatures should remain near normal, while precipitation will be "somewhat above average," Canady said. He expects about three-fourths of an inch of rain to fall in the next week.

Temperatures should be in the mid 30s at night and in the mid 50s during the day, said Canady. "We won't be seeing anything unusual

for this time of year."

For the period Jan. 21 through 27, the maximum daytime temperature was 65 degrees, recorded on Jan. 23, and the minimum evening temperature was 24 degrees, recorded on Jan. 25.

The daytime average temperature was 59 degrees and the evening average was 35 degrees, for a daily average temperature of 47 degrees. That reading is two degrees above average, Canady said.

Canady measured .36 of an inch of rain at his Shallotte Point residence.

# 'Report Card' Rates County Schools Near Bottom

(Continued From Page 1-A)

to compare itself with school systems having similar levels of advancement, demographic features and economic characteristics.

Much of the data used in the report is tied to the state's 28 accreditation standards. A system must meet a minimum of 21 standards, 75 percent, fully or at level 1 to be eligible for accreditation. Brunswick County met 22 standards—14 (51.9 percent) fully, or in excess of the state's minimum expectations, and eight others (29.6) at level 1.

Its performance rated a "warning" level on three standards—third grade science, United States history and a subject added to the card this year, geometry. While performance in those areas met the criterion for

level 1, no improvement was shown. Progress must be made next year or credit for the standard will be lost.

The county did not meet the minimum criterion for two standards—Algebra I and average daily attendance.

The state standard called for student performance in Algebra I at the 40th to 50th percentile range; Brunswick County students fell just short, at the 37.8 percentile.

In attendance the school system scored at 93.5 percent, compared to a state standard of 94 percent.

The school system exceeded the state standard on the California Achievement Test (CAT) at grades 3, 6 and 9, and on the writing essay for 6th and 8th graders. It also ex-

ceeded minimum standards for student performance in competency in reading, compensatory reading, biology, the number of students qualifying for entry to University of North Carolina institutions, seniors earning five units of credit for graduation, seniors qualifying for the North Carolina Scholars Program and the acceptable drop-out rate.

Its vocational education unemployment rate also met the state standard, registering at less than the county youth unemployment rate and getting a follow-up survey response well in excess of the minimum required.

While scoring below standard in third grade science performance, the system exceeded the standard for

eighth grade science. Schools were not ranked by the state department. Instead it created graphics that showed each system in relation to the state average and to par—the performance of similar schools—in the four subject areas examined.

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# Victim's Family Circulating Petition

(Continued From Page 1-A)

Mrs. Smith and Gene Smith and Ted Smith, two brothers of her late husband, have been circulating the petition in the Shallotte area for about two weeks. Petitions have primarily been left at area businesses.

Ted Smith said Tuesday he already has 15 to 20 pages with at least 40 signatures on each page. Some pages have as many as 80 names on them.

"I've only had two people who wouldn't sign it," he said. "Everybody I've met wants to sign it and wants a copy of the petition too."

Gene Smith said the family wants something positive to come out of the death of his brother, who was a popular Shallotte businessman.

"Unless his death means something, in saving other people, then I feel it was in vain," he said. "We're interested in this not happening again to anybody, much less a school bus full of children."

Gene Smith said he has seen a lot

*"We're interested in this not happening again to anybody, much less a school bus full of children."*

—Gene Smith, brother of accident victim

of support for the petition. "Everywhere I go there's one and they're filling them up as fast as they can get them."

The N.C. Board of Transportation is scheduled to meet at Sea Trail Plantation at Sunset Beach on April 30 and May 1.

Mrs. Smith said she hopes local officials would be willing to present the petition to the state board at that

time. "Hopefully the board of education will show some support," she said.

Mrs. Smith, who heads the English department at West Brunswick, also said she hopes to have ninth graders at the school write essays giving reasons for an overpass.

Doug Bowers, division engineer with the N.C. Department of Transportation, said this week that the design study on the overpass is in the preliminary stages.

"I suspect in the next month something might come out about construction cost estimates and right of way cost estimates," Bowers said Tuesday.

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